

BREAD OF LIFE



A Hard Saying

One day when Jesus was teaching the people, He said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eat of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." (John 6:51).

When the people heard this, they began to argue among themselves. They wondered how it was possible for Jesus to give His flesh to eat.

Jesus continued and told them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:53-54).

When they heard this, some of Jesus's followers said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" (John 6:60). They were confused and didn't really understand what Jesus was saying. In fact, some of Jesus's followers found this statement so hard to understand and accept that they left Him and were no longer His followers.

They Begin to Understand

Sometime later, Jesus was with His Apostles (those who He had chosen to carry His message to the world). They were eating together in the Upper Room for the Jewish feast of the Passover. Because this supper was the last one that Jesus had with His Apostles before He died on the cross, it is called the LAST SUPPER.

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And then, He took a cup of wine and gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

When the Apostles saw and heard what Jesus did and said about the bread and wine, they began to understand what He had meant when He said that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood.

An Important Lesson

After Jesus had been crucified and three days later risen from the dead, two of His followers were going to a village named Emmaus which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked, they were talking about what had happened to Jesus and about how He had died on the cross.

As they walked and talked, they were joined by someone who they thought was a stranger. It was really Jesus, but they didn't recognize Him. He asked the disciples what they were talking about. So, they told Him all that had happened to Jesus. They talked about how He had been betrayed and arrested and condemned and nailed to the cross and died on the cross. They even told Him that some of the women who were Jesus's followers had later gone to the place where Jesus had been buried, but they couldn't find the body. They also said that some of the other disciples had also gone to the tomb and they, too, reported that Jesus's body was not there. They said that some of Jesus's followers had even seen Him. They all believed and knew that He was still alive, that He had risen from the dead.

The three still continued on their journey. As they walked, the one who they thought was a stranger began to explain the Bible to them and to tell them what it had to say about Jesus.

Soon, they arrived at the village of Emmaus. The two disciples then invited Him to stay and eat with them. As they were eating, He took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

Then the disciples realized that they had been with Jesus all the time. They also knew that whenever they broke bread, that is receive Holy Communion, Jesus is with them.

For Us Too

Just as the disciples realized that they would find Jesus and He would be with them when they broke bread in receiving Holy Communion, He is with us in a very special way when we receive Holy Communion. In fact, in our Church,

in each and every Divine Liturgy, the priest repeats the very same words that Jesus said over the bread and the wine. This also shows us that Jesus will be with us just as He promised when He said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (John 6:56).

How Shall We Receive Holy Communion ?

In the Holy Bible, we read the words of St. Paul in which He tells us, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord." (I Corinthians 11:27). Here, we see that when we receive Holy Communion, we must do it in a worthy manner.

But what must we do in order to worthily receive Holy Communion?

- 1.) We must be sorry for our sins; decide and try not to commit them again. This is called **REPENTANCE or CONFESSION**
- 2.) We must not eat or drink anything before receiving Holy Communion. This is called **FASTING.**

In regard to repentance, the Holy Bible tells us, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8). We also read, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9). This, of course, tells us the importance of confession.

Also, in the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament, we read the following about fasting: "Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and supplications with fasting." (Daniel 9:3).

An Invitation

Jesus tells us, "Come to me." (Matthew 11:28). And in every Divine Liturgy, the invitation is given, "Come to the Lord and take the light; O, taste and see how sweet the Lord is."

Truly, we are being called to receive Jesus in a special way. We are being called to receive Jesus in the way He has shown us. That way is by receiving Him in Holy Communion.

This very special invitation is always being given to us. As we listen to the invitation and remember Jesus's promise that, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (John 6:56), let's prepare to receive Holy Communion as often as we can.



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