

Ascension, 2020

When Our Blessed Lord first told His disciples about the Holy Eucharist, many if not all of them, were dismayed. “This saying is difficult,” they said. “Who is able to listen to it?” They said this because the only way they could conceive the meaning of wine becoming Jesus’ blood and bread becoming His flesh was in a revolting and cannibalistic sense.

Other disciples realized that He could not mean that – there must be a more spiritual sense to this, something that He intended for them to search out, by means of prayer and reflection. But the ones who complained were not persuaded, and were repelled by what He said. Yet did He change his message? Did He ask them to come back and engage in a dialogue about it? What He said He did not change in the slightest. Far from retracting what He said, the Master insisted on the direct and literal sense of His words and merely hinted that there might be a misunderstanding as to the manner of eating, as it would in no way be bloody.

“But Jesus, knowing within himself that his disciples were murmuring about this, said to them: Does this offend you? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending to where he was before?”

Thus, there can be no question of eating flesh like that which is carved out with the knife into portions for the dinner plate. For He Who ascends to heaven after His resurrection cannot die again. This therefore, is what will take place: Jesus will give Himself really, truly and entirely – as we say in the catechism – body, blood, soul and divinity – but under a mystical form.

He who would ascend to the right hand of the Father will give Himself substantially, but under the sacramental species of bread and wine that will *recall* His death, not repeat it.

He who would ascend to His throne in heaven will give Himself wholly in the Eucharist, in such a way as that His humanity and His divinity will be given together, un-separated.

He who would ascend in glory with all the angels in the universe taking the knee before Him, will give Himself entire, not divided, but multiplied.

He shall appear as the Bread from Heaven, since, having come down from heaven, He will ascend again, and though He will be received here below as a Victim, on high He will nonetheless be always a King, living, ruling from His eternal throne, resplendent with indescribable glory.

After His ascension then, men will grasp at every reason to apply themselves to understand more fully the doctrine and the supreme expiation of Him Who will have sealed all the work of His redemptive mission on earth with the prodigy of His Ascension.

From then on, after the Ascension, if anyone wishes to comprehend that which is not comprehensible, he must be penetrated by the words which the Master added to that first instruction on the Eucharist: "It is the Spirit who gives life. The flesh does not offer anything of benefit. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

Let not the senses therefore endeavor to find the flesh of Jesus Christ; they will not discover it. The Blessed Sacrament is the mystical flesh of Christ; it is for the spirit alone to find it, to feel it, to adore it while eating it. From the natural point of view, the Eucharist would be impossible. There is not one example in all the physical universe which will suffice as an analogy for the miracle of Transubstantiation. He comprehends it alone, who can silence his body, and can give ear with his soul alone, in the light of faith, and in the ecstasy of love.

The bread that is given is the King Himself, ascended to the right hand of the Father, and all together, forming but one people, one family, the organism of one mystical body – using St. Paul's beautiful expression, they constitute the most holy, the most worthy and the most divine homage that earth can offer to heaven.

Yet there were many who did not believe in a spiritual kingship, but clung desperately and foolishly to a temporal Messiah. "And they turned, and walked no more with him," as St. John recorded. That is one of the most tragic lines in all the New Testament. Yet at the same time the Church was purged of that dangerous leaven, except for one apostle only.

And forcing the Twelve to declare themselves openly, He said to them, "Will ye also go away?" And immediately St. Peter with his customary ardor and passion said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of everlasting life. And we have believed and have known that thou art the Holy One of God."