

August 18 & 19, 2012
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time.
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All Saints Parish
Syracuse, NY

My dear Brothers and Sisters. **Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.** It is both, our senses and our faith that together provide us with a truly human experience. To achieve this we should listen to the first reading of today's liturgy from the book of Proverbs: **"Forsake foolishness that you may live; advance in the way of understanding"**. These are beautiful words of Wisdom. In a different way, but nonetheless, the same powerful words have been expressed in the documents of the second Vatican Council in the section on the Church in the Modern World in § 62 which says:

"Let it be recognized that all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence". In this statement, the council built a bridge between "secular" truth and "spiritual" faith, and changed a hostile separation between present secular knowledge and the traditional ways of faith. We have to do this in order to **forsake foolishness that we may live; and advance in the way of understanding.** I cannot express in words the tremendous significance for our future of this effort on the part of the Council to connect faith with present knowledge.

My Sisters and Brothers, let me give you an example. For more than a century, ever since the publication of the Origin of Species by Charles Darwin in 1859, and the Oxford meeting that followed this publication a year later in 1860, a bitter controversy ensued. At the center of the controversy was the dilemma stating that one can either believe in the scriptures on creation against the scientific idea of evolution, or propose evolution and doing so deny one's faith. More than 100 years later we finally realized that both statements, that of science and that of faith, are true, because God created an ever unfolding world of Life. The consequence of this realization is, of course, the insight that our world is not something static and frozen in time, but it is in a process of unfolding towards its completion, and so, **in order to remain functional, we are to respond to present needs with present knowledge.** This insight was at the very heart of the second Vatican Council's understanding of the need for aggiornamento or adaptability. The problem is not between creation and evolution, because they are really the same, but between two world views, one being static and unchanging, frozen in time, the other dynamic and constantly growing and maturing following God's creative plan. Science tells us about our history and about our present, while faith gives all these meaning as we realize God's power, wisdom, and Love in all creation.

We find a somewhat similar dilemma of dichotomy in Jesus' greatest gift of life the most holy Eucharist. This is not because actually there is a dilemma, but because we so often refuse to follow the advise of Wisdom to **forsake foolishness that we may live; and advance in the way of understanding.** Jesus said to the crowd: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." When the people heard this, they began to quarrel among themselves saying: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So the dilemma is this: If the Eucharist is just bread and wine, we can eat it and drink it, but then we do not become part of Jesus and eternal life. On the other hand, if the Eucharist is truly the body and blood of Jesus we ask the same question as the quarreling crowd: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Are we cannibals or something?

The answer is that the Eucharist is both, bread and wine for our senses, and at the same time, the Body and Blood of Jesus to our faith. And that is why we hear with joy the words of Jesus saying: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. The Eucharist is both, bread and wine, and the Body and Blood of Jesus. Our sensory experience and our faith experience are one and the same, bringing us God's unconditional love. After all, it is Jesus who says at the consecration, as the priest holds the bread and the cup of wine: This is **my** Body, and this is **my** Blood.

My Sisters and Brothers. Let us always receive the most holy Eucharist with faith, reverence, thanksgiving, and joy. **Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.**