

20th Sunday
8/18/2024

WHERE ARE YOU HAVING DINNER?

Wisdom has built her house. Hopefully any graduate of Rockhurst University would recognize this as the motto of that school. Our first reading shows us wisdom represented by a woman. Lady Wisdom we are told has, *dressed her meat, mixed her wine and spread out her table.* She invites people to eat and drink what she has prepared and gain understanding. A few verses later in the same chapter she is contrasted with Dame Folly who also invites people in saying, *stolen water is sweet and bread taken secretly is pleasing.* Those words don't just refer to water and bread they were also code words for adultery. We're told her way leads to death. Two banquets: that of Lady Wisdom and the Woman Folly. Where will you have dinner?

St. Paul says something very similar in the second reading. He contrasts foolishness and understanding. He calls people to grow in understanding, worship and praise guided by the Holy Spirit, rather than turning to drunkenness and all sorts of immorality.

Our gospel picks up where it left off last week. Jesus says I am that living bread that came down from heaven and that this bread is his flesh to be given for the life of the world. People have a hard time grasping what he is saying and to drive the point home Jesus says, *Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.* To say, *Amen, Amen,* is a biblical method of emphasizing a point. It's like saying, Look, I really mean this. Jesus continues to double down saying, *My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink.*

He goes on to talk about those who eat his flesh and drink his blood and then taking it even further, he says, *the one who feeds on me.* The Greek word there is more earthy than eating, it means gnawing or chewing. This rather clearly demonstrates what we call the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. There's real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist but there should also be our real presence at the celebration of the Eucharist.

Jesus is the wisdom of God, Jesus is true bread, his is the banquet of true wisdom. It is the banquet of true life, eternal life. In just seven verses, some for the word living or life are used nine times. Jesus comes to give life. Now a lot of people who have received Communion in this life, including many we have known and loved, have still died. The life that Jesus gives isn't just a continuation of what we have now, earthly, temporal life although that in itself is a gift of God and something good.

Elsewhere Jesus says, *Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.* What Jesus offers is eternal life, a sharing in the eternal life and love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, sharing in the life of God. The feast that Jesus offers isn't just understanding like Lady Wisdom; it is himself, it is eternal life.

Two invitations are set before us. The banquet of wisdom and the feast of folly. We must choose between those two and it's not as easy as it may seem. Dame Folly can be deceptive and alluring whether by lust, greed, power, money or so many other ways. We choose between these two several times a day, sometimes perhaps in big ways but also in every *little way*. The banquet of wisdom isn't a worldly wisdom but the wisdom of the cross that says it is in giving that we receive, in forgiving that we are forgiven and that in dying we are born to eternal life. Jesus doesn't simply invite, he gives himself to us.

When we receive the Eucharist, when we share in Communion, it's a public act. While something deeply personal, it's not private but a public profession of the oneness of our faith, not just regarding the Eucharist but also with the whole content of the faith. This requires that we are properly disposed, that our hearts are open to receive him. That means that: On some level, we are trying to live the Christian life, living, loving, believing and forgiving. That if we're aware of a mortal sin, we share in the Sacrament of Reconciliation before sharing in Communion and that we fast for one hour prior to receiving Communion.

Holy Communion isn't just a gift we receive. It's a way of life and a responsibility. In the communion of marriage both the husband and wife have an obligation to maintain their marital communion, in good times and especially in bad.

So too, as members of Christ's faithful people, we have the responsibility to safeguard and promote our communion with and in the Body of Christ, with and in the Church in good times, and especially in bad.

Think of the word, com-panion. It literally means with bread. A companion is one with whom you share bread, one with whom you share life. Jesus, by his human birth, shares life with us, accompanies us but he is also our food for the journey. Jesus comes to us as both friend and food. Pope Francis has said, *The Eucharist shapes us so that we live not only for ourselves but for the Lord and for our brothers and sisters.* And he goes on to say, *When we receive Communion we receive the very life of God.*

Jesus comes to lead us into the way of goodness and truth. He comes to lead us into the life of God, eternal life. With lives of intentional faith, may we avoid the table of folly and walk in the way of wisdom, the wisdom and love of our God. The banquet of wisdom and the feast of folly. Where are you having dinner?