

Corpus Christi Year "A"  
June 18, 2017

*Whoever eats this bread will live forever.*

Readings: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14-16; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:51-58

"...Whoever eats this bread will live forever." While I am not at all convinced that many people would in fact choose to live forever, there is no question that millions of Americans go to great lengths to feel and look as young as possible for as long as possible. It may surprise you that by 2018, experts predict that Americans will spend over \$10 Billion per year on skin care products. The highest selling product is an anti-aging brand known as Olay Regenerist Micro-Sculpting Face Cream. While I know nothing about the product, I certainly would give an A+ to the clever marketing strategist. Regenerate our skin? Sounds pretty easy, and it's only \$31.99 for 1.7 ounces at Walgreens. To "regenerate"... clever and enticing.

Of course there is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to look our best, as long as we do not allow vanity to creep into our attitudes and motivations. But due to Original Sin, we have forfeited any sense in which we live forever on earth.

While there is that natural tendency to want to preserve our lives, the fact is that God calls us to age with dignity and grace. Today's readings provide an example, a promise of living forever by eating this Bread from heaven. Jesus was neither referring to living forever on this earth, nor to improving one's appearance to look younger, and therein lays the difference. He is speaking of our souls.

The Eucharistic Bread of Life is food for eternal life, beckoning us to the banquet that is never ending in heaven. While we traverse this side of the grave, it is but a foretaste of the Banquet to which we have been called, fortifying us to face the challenges of life through the eyes of faith. We do so in witness to Christ our Savior who offered the sacrifice of the Cross, in atonement for our sins. The Eucharist is no ordinary food, as Pope Benedict XVI once observed:

“...while bodily food is assimilated by and helps sustain our organism, the Eucharist is a different kind of bread. We do not assimilate it; rather, it assimilates us to itself so that we are conformed to Jesus Christ, become limbs of His Body, a single thing with Him.”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps we ought to accept our physical limitations and take Jesus at his word. We will live forever in God’s presence when we receive this Bread of Life, the Bread of Angels and True Flesh of our Redeemer. St. Thomas wrote so beautifully of this mystery in the Eucharistic hymn sung at Benediction: *"Praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui."* (Faith supplies for the defect of the senses)

Jesus Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist to give those who believe in Him the power they need to remain alive in His grace. This is how we remain youthful, with a renewed spirit and childlike awe and wonder. May we all strive for this kind of youth.

If we try to understand the Eucharist intellectually, we may gain much that is worthwhile, but we will always come up short, just as we do when contemplating the Trinity. God is beyond our categories, and while our words teach Truth, they cannot fully encompass the Truth of His love. Today, we bow before the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, we offer our prayers of thanksgiving, receive His presence in our bodies to transform us, always mindful of our final calling.

We echo Saint Paul who wrote of heaven: “No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”<sup>2</sup> But we do not look to this without first having first “fought the good fight...finished the race...and kept the faith.” If we desire to live forever, may it be in heaven with the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, homily for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, 23 June 2011

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9 and 2 Timothy 7