



The Last Supper, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1524

*“The Eucharist
is Jesus
who gives himself
entirely to us.
Feeding on Him
and abiding in Him
through Eucharistic
communion
— if we do so in faith
— transforms our
lives into a gift
to God
and to our brothers
and sisters.”*

Pope Francis



Come and Eat...

One of my favorite memories of First Communions at St. Leo's occurred more than 25 years ago. The pastor at that time liked order and things running smoothly. If things continued as they started that day, it looked like it might turn out to be a rather messy celebration. But the Holy Spirit entered in and changed that day into a memorable one of great grace and joy.

When it was time for the homily Father sat down on the steps in front of the altar (something he hadn't done before or after) and invited the five First Communicants to join him there. He began to ask them one by one what they knew about God—“is powerful,” “made the world,” “came to us in Jesus,” “makes the flowers grow,” “was a human baby, like I was.” Then the priest told them that one day God decided to make a little boy/a little girl and he began to describe each one of the children individually. And that God who made them each unique and special, who fashioned the earth and all that is in it, made himself small to come and be part of them in Communion, he told them.. “God loves you that much”....There wasn't a dry eye in the church.

It's true. God loves each one of us beyond our imaginings and desires to live in us and to feed us through the Eucharist—real food that enters our bodies and strengthens us to carry Jesus with us as we leave the Mass and “glorify God with our lives.”

Can it also be that God hungers for us? If we are indeed flesh of God's imaginings then it must be true. And St. Augustine tells us that “our souls are restless until they rest in God.” God loves each one of us so much that God became human in Jesus and brought light to our darkness and is with us in the busyness and sometimes chaos of our everyday lives. The problem often is that we fail to recognize God's presence and instead get mired in our own fear and attempts to control.

The account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus reminds us of how God desires to console and uplift us. The saddened and discouraged disciples were walking on the road and talking about the disappointment and loss of Jesus' death. Their hopes were dashed when Jesus joined them though they did not recognize him. He gently listened and began to open the Scriptures for them, but it wasn't until they sat down to eat that they recognized him in the breaking of the bread.

How often do we miss the reality of the great gift we receive each time we go to Mass? That when we say “Amen” we are actually saying that I really believe that I am receiving the body and blood of Jesus—that God is enfleshed and becoming part of us?

Wow! What an amazing gift! God invites: “Come and Eat.” As the song we sing on Holy Thursday says “the table is set, come in... Come in, says the Lord.” And I bring my hunger and brokenness to the altar and am filled, healed, restored and sent out to do the same with the strength of Christ truly alive in me.