

“My flesh is true food... and my blood is true drink.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a college student named Marie wrote an article called,

“I Bring Jesus to John.”

Marie is a Eucharistic minister in her parish. Each Sunday she attends Mass 8/9:30/11:00. After Mass, she takes the Eucharist to a man named John, who lives alone. Marie describes him:

“His rocking chair creaks as he sways back and forth beside his living room window. His hearing is bad, his eyesight is poor, and a heart attack has slowed his movement. But... (& there’s that proverbial BUT in life again, my friends), John’s 88-year-old faith is strong & vibrant.”

Each Sunday, John waits, eagerly, for someone.

“That ‘someone,’” says Marie,

“is Jesus, and I, a 22-year-old college student, am privileged to bring Jesus to John.”

While Marie attends Mass in their parish church, John watches Mass on T.V. Thus, when Marie arrives with the Eucharist, John feels a part of it, too.

After taking off her coat, Marie sits down beside John. Then she re-reads the Sunday Gospel, in case John’s poor hearing caused him to miss any of it on T.V. Next, she reviews the homily, which the priest had given her a copy to leave with John. Next comes the moment John has been waiting for all week. Marie begins by praying, with John, the Lord’s Prayer.

Then she holds up the Body of Christ and says:

“Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who comes to take away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb.”

John answers with the ‘new form’ in a soft, but vibrant voice:

“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”

After a few moments of silence, Marie opens a book and prays:

“God, our Father, may the Body of Christ, which Brother John has just received, bring him lasting health in mind and body.”

She concludes with John’s favorite prayer:

“Lord, Holy Father, free your servant, John, from sickness, restore him to health, strengthen him with your power, protect him with your might, and raise him to new life on the last day.”

After this, they chat together for a while. They hug, say good-bye, and promise to pray for each other until they meet again next week.

That simple story of John & Marie is truly beautiful...for 2 reasons.

“How so?” you ask. **Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

1st, it illustrates the kind of faith Jesus invites us to have in today’s Gospel, which I just read to you from St. John:

“I am ... the living bread that came down from heaven.... My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.”

Both Marie & John witness to their faith in these words of Jesus: Marie—by bringing the body of Jesus to John; John--by faithfully receiving the Body of Jesus. And they both do it **by their prayers** together before and after Communion.

It is right here, **in their prayers** before & after Communion, that the story of Marie and John has a **practical message** for each of us.

They remind us that, if the reception of Communion is to be a **'faith-filled-experience,'** it must be done in a **'prayer-context.'**

Allow me to explain:

The moment of receiving Communion... could be compared... **to a diamond**. The time before & after Communion might be compared... **to a gold band**. A diamond, in and of itself, is beautiful. **BUT**...it becomes incomparably more beautiful if it is placed in the center of a gold band and made the centerpiece of a gold ring!

The same is true of Holy Communion. Communion, in and of itself, is a beautiful experience. **BUT**... it becomes incomparably more beautiful if we place it in a setting, the centerpiece, of prayer.

NOW...

if our own experience of Communion seems to be missing something, m-a-a-aybe it's missing the setting, the centerpiece, of prayer.

How prayerful ARE we before and after receiving Communion?

1st, **What goes on** in our mind and heart **as** we approach the Eucharistic minister to receive the Body & the Blood of Christ? What goes on in our mind and heart **after** we receive? Do we speak to Jesus as a **friend**? Do we **thank** him, **ask** his forgiveness, **seek** his guidance?

2nd, --what makes John & Marie so beautiful: Besides the kind of faith Jesus invites us to have in today's Gospel, their story also illustrates the kind of love Jesus invites us to have as Christians.

The warm friendship that has grown up between John & Marie is the kind of friendship that **all Christians** should try to cultivate toward one another.

And so, a second question we might ask ourselves, in our heart of hearts, is this:

Does our reception of Communion make us more loving in our lives...especially towards those who need our love the most? In other words, does it draw us closer, not only to Jesus, **BUT** to one another--the true test of our Christianity!

See what St. Paul believes our faith & love should be because of our reception of the Eucharist:

"The cup we use in the Lord's Supper and for which we give thanks to God: when we drink from it, we are sharing in the blood of Christ. And the bread we break: when we eat it, we are sharing the body of Christ. Because there is one loaf of bread, all of us, though many, are one body, for we all share in the one loaf (...and the one cup)." ¹Cor.10:16-17

So-o, really, the story of Marie and John illustrates the kind of faith & love Jesus talks about in today's Gospel when he says:

**"My flesh is real food;
My blood is real drink.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
lives in me and I live (...and remain) in him."**

May our astoundingly, loving-God, our Abba, bless you...
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.