

Take-Home One

The Hard Saying

Abide

The Eucharist, Grace, and Staying in Christ

What We Found

In John 6 the language gets harder, not softer. At verse 35 Jesus is the bread of life, which anyone could hear as an image. At verse 51 the bread is his flesh. At verse 53 he adds his blood and makes it a condition of having life, and then he keeps returning to that eating and drinking all the way through verse 58.

His hearers state the literal reading out loud at verse 52: how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Again and again in John, when someone takes him too literally, the misunderstanding gets cleared up. Nicodemus is corrected at 3:5-8. The woman at the well is corrected at 4:13-14. The disciples are corrected about food at 4:32-34 and about Lazarus being asleep at 11:11-14. Here, disciples walk away at verse 66, and he lets them go and asks the Twelve whether they will leave too.

And Paul tells the Corinthians that a person can be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord, and reports that some had become ill and some had died. It is difficult to be guilty of a symbol.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch

Letter to the Smyrnaeans, ch. 7

Around the year 107 he describes people who stay away from the Eucharist because they will not confess it to be the flesh of our Saviour. He identifies them by that refusal, which means that in the churches he knew the confession was already the ordinary position.

Voice of the Church

St. Justin Martyr

First Apology, ch. 66

Explaining Christian worship to a pagan emperor around 155, he says this food is not received as common bread and common drink, but is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.

Voice of the Church

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Mystagogical Catecheses, no. 4 (summary)

Instructing the newly baptised, he tells them not to judge by taste: what appears to be bread is the Body, and what appears to be wine is the Blood.

The Sealed Question

Do not discuss this with anyone. Write your answer, fold this page, and bring it still folded to Session Five. We will open them together.

MY ANSWER

A friend asks you, directly: “Are you saved?” Write down exactly what you would say.

Ready Response

“Verse 63 says the flesh is of no avail.” Ask them to read it again slowly: he says the flesh, not my flesh. Twelve verses earlier his flesh is given for the life of the world. In John, flesh in that sense means human capacity acting on its own, as in 3:6 and 8:15.

“He also said he was a door and a vine.” Concede it warmly; John is full of metaphor. Then: “Nobody ever walked out over the door. Why do you think they walked out over this?”

Live It This Week

- Read John 6 in one sitting, without stopping to look anything up.
- Go to Mass once during the week if you can, and watch the elevation without doing anything else.
- Find out when your parish has adoration.
- Pick one person you will pray for by name for the whole of this study. Start tonight.

Memory Verse

“For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” **John 6:55**

Before Next Session

Read: Psalm 116:12-14. Three verses. Notice what the psalmist decides to lift up.

Catechism: CCC 1373-1377. If you read only one, read 1374.