

Pentecost Sunday
May 19, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #21

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

As we begin, I would like to remind all present of a prior image. It is the artist who, using their particular talents, is able to give flesh to a word. A gifted composer, through the use of certain musical instruments, can mimic the sound of a horse’s hooves as it gallops through city streets. God, the supreme Artist, spoke His Word into the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. His Word, now endowed with human flesh, is Jesus. The Catholic Church, as she developed her understanding, would define this action as the Incarnation. Likewise, we would also be correct to say the Incarnation of Jesus BEGAN the moment the Word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, became flesh in Mary’s womb. Let us pose a question for consideration. If this is the beginning of the glorious Incarnation, then, does the Incarnation have an ending?

Many may quickly respond: No, the Word of God will never stop being flesh, will never stop being Jesus. This is correct. Once the Word becomes incarnate, the Word can never be separated from the person of Jesus. This is the union between God and man revealed to us through the Incarnation and affirmed to us in the Creed we recite each Sunday. However, I believe this same conclusion can be arrived at solely using the gospel of Saint John, specifically Chapter 6.

In the sixth chapter of Saint John’s Gospel, Jesus offers much for our consideration. He begins by stating these points. He is the Bread of Life, the living Bread which came down from Heaven (verses 35, 48, 51 and 58). This Bread must be eaten (verses 51, 53, 54 and 56). His Flesh is real food and His Blood is real drink (verse 55). Saint John also makes clear these statements scandalize the Jewish listeners by showing their continued questioning of Jesus (verses 41, 52 and 61). Furthermore, Saint John also includes one very important verse to show the response of a number of His disciples. *“After this many of His disciples went back; and walked no more with Him.” (John 6:66).*

Returning to the image of the artist who makes present the word in flesh, Jesus intends to establish a means of worship based upon a continuing Incarnation. He will be made present to His disciples through bread and wine becoming His Flesh and Blood. He desires to do this and even allows a certain number of disciples to walk away without beckoning them to return. Before I conclude, allow me to read to you a few verses from the Gospel of Saint John, chapter 6, using the King James Bible, lest anyone say I am using only a Catholic Bible to agree with my conclusion. *“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” (John 6:53-57).*