



## Twentieth Sunday Ordinary Time 2006

Proverbs 9:1-6 Ephesians 5:15-20 John 6: 51-58

From the book of Proverbs we have the lovely poem about Wisdom who hosts a banquet. The figure of Wisdom, Sophia, in the ancient Scriptures is in turn presented as proud, assertive, angry, creative and hospitable.

She is creator, teacher, lover, law-giver and host. Although this figure is rarely used as a subject for homilies, there are a large number of references to her in Scripture.

In this poem, Wisdom leads us to the table. The house built on seven pillars is the world. She not only sets the table she also kills and dresses the beasts, and makes her own blend of wine.

She sends out her handmaidens to make sure that the invitation is widespread. She takes the position on the heights to make sure her welcome reaches all. Women's voices have more carrying power than men's voices.

Her invitation is to ordinary people, those not disabled by too large an ego. Insights are to be gained through the food and wine of sound teaching. This reading relates very easily to the reflection by John on Jesus, bread of life, gift from God for the nourishment of the world.

The bread from heaven is pure gift, as was the manna in the desert. The manna was a temporary gift for a particular time and a particular need. The bread of life is for all people at all times and in all occasions of need.

The earthy image of feeding on Christ was picked up in art which portrayed Jesus as a bird ripping the flesh on her breast to feed her young. Verse 52 introduces discord. A violent dispute arose. In every age people have been disturbed by the language of eucharist. It seems to be embarrassing in its hints of the intimacy of love or the ecstasy of Dionysus.

Flesh and blood, stand for the totality of the person, flesh, a metaphor for weak, earthy, poor, and temporal; blood, a metaphor for life, mystery, and kinship. Let me solemnly assure you", old translations used, "Amen, Amen, I say to you."

This is a non-negotiable, the life we call Christian depends on complete union with Christ symbolised by eating and drinking. If our nourishment is not Christ we are not of the same vine, the same life must course through our spiritual veins.

As Augustine hears Jesus say to him in prayer, "You will not convert me like common food into your substance, but you will be changed into my substance, me".

This life of Christ is inherited from God. God's life, Christ's life, our life, we are of the one blood.

It is sometimes not easy to understand where the word "Eucharist" fits in. It is an attitude rather than the name of a ritual. Our Sunday worship is inherited in part

from our Jewish origins. It is most important that we stay linked to the tradition that nourished Jesus.

In all the stories around Jesus and food we see some common elements. With Jesus it is a case of so little for so many. In every case Jesus lifts his heart and mind to God in the word *berakah*, it is this word that is translated as “eucharist”. The word *berakah* can have three meanings, To praise, to thank, or to bless.

To have an attitude towards God expressed by *berakah* is to have an abiding sense of gratefulness.

A good Jew was encouraged to repeat, *berakah* a 100 times a day, the idea being that gratefulness needs to be learned.

To approach Eucharist with a grateful heart requires that we celebrate what we practise. For our families, our communities, our world, we praise you, we bless you, we thank you.

For each part of each day and the stretches of the night, we praise you, we bless you, we thank you.

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