

Chapter 34 Commentary

The promises made by our Lord in this discourse. He promised to give us a food, the effects of which would not be passing, but would endure forever. This Food is Himself: He is the living and lifegiving Food which came down from heaven. He promised to give His Flesh for the life of the world, and to offer this His Flesh to be our Food. When the Jews were scandalized at the idea of His giving His Flesh to be eaten, He did not say to them: "You have misunderstood Me." On the contrary, He re-affirmed the very thing which had scandalized them, and asserted repeatedly that His Flesh was meat indeed and His Blood drink indeed, and that those only will have life who eat His Flesh and drink His Blood; though, at the same time, He signified that the Flesh which He would give to be our Food was His glorified Body. When many of His disciples were still offended at the idea of His giving His Flesh to eat, and refused to believe His words, our Lord preferred to let them go, rather than retract or explain away one syllable of the words He had spoken. It is therefore undeniably true that our Lord promised to give His Body, His Flesh and Blood, to be the Food of His servants. Our Lord gave this promise at the time of the third Pasch, kept during His public life, and He fulfilled it a year later when, at the Last Supper, He instituted the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Our Lord is entirely present in the most holy Sacrament, under the form of bread, for He says: 1. "I (Myself) am the living bread"; 2. "he that eateth Me", and therefore he who eats His Flesh eats Him; 3. "I abide in him" (namely in him who eats My Flesh); 4. "the flesh profiteth nothing, it is the spirit that quickeneth." His Flesh, therefore, is penetrated by the Spirit and united to His soul and divinity.

Communion under one kind. It is evident from our Lord's words: "He that eateth this Bread (My Body under the form of bread) will live forever", that he who receives Holy Communion under one kind, does not receive less than he who receives under both kinds. Whether it be just under the form of bread, or just under the form of wine the communicant receives the whole body, blood, soul, and divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The necessity of Communion [the fourth commandment of the Church]. Our Lord makes the attainment of eternal life dependent on the receiving of His Body and Blood. "Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you." — "He that eateth My Flesh &c, shall live forever." Since it is the duty of every man to try to save his soul, and Holy Communion is necessary, as of precept, it is the duty of every man to receive Holy Communion, as soon as he is capable of understanding this divine mystery, and as soon as his will is sufficiently formed and enlightened to decide whether or not he desires to partake of this heavenly Food. The Church, therefore, is fulfilling our Lord's command, and providing for the salvation of souls, when she commands all the faithful to receive Holy Communion.

The effects of Holy Communion are rich in blessings. He who receives the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ worthily has, in His own words, everlasting life, and will be raised up by Him at the last day. "He abides in Me, and I in him. He will live in Me!" says our Lord. The Body of Christ is a living bread, which gives us supernatural and everlasting life, and is a pledge to our bodies of a glorious resurrection. Even after the sacred species have disappeared, a nourishing and vivifying strength is left in our souls, which is none other than the divine strength of the Son of God (Grimm). St. Cyril expounds the interior union which exists between our Lord and him who receives Holy Communion by the following simile: "Even as melted wax unites itself to wax, mingling with it, and becoming one with it, so does he who receives the Body of the Redeemer become one with Him, so completely is he united to Him."