

Year "A" Corpus Christi

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

I have decided to adapt part of Simon R. Green's story titled "Food of the Gods" for our reflection on "Corpus Christi" Sunday. According to Green "We are what we eat. No. Wait. That's not quite right.

I wake up, and I don't know where I am. Red room, red room, dark shadows all around and a single, bare red bulb, swinging back and forth, coating the room with bloody light. I'm sitting on the floor with my back pressed against the wall, and I can't seem to remember how I got here. And set on the floor before me, like a gift or an offering, on a plain white china plate, is a severed human head.

I'm sure I know the face, but I can't put a name to it.

I can't think clearly. Something's wrong. Something has happened, something important, but I can't think what. And the severed head stares at me accusingly, as though this is all my fault. I can't seem to look away from the head, but there isn't much else to look at. Bare walls, bare floorboards, a single closed door just to my left. And the blood-red light rising and falling as the bulb swings slowly back and forth. I don't want to be here. This is a bad place. How did I end up in a place like this?

Why can't I move? I don't feel drugged, or paralyzed. But I just sit here, with my hands folded neatly in my lap, while the face on the severed head stares sadly back at me. I know that face. I'm sure I do. Why am I not shocked, or horrified? Why can't I look away? I know that face. The name's on the tip of my tongue....

I can smell the hunger on you, he said in his soft rich voice.

Tell me, I said. Tell me everything.

I eat only the finest food, said the Epicure, made from the finest ingredients. The food of the gods. I have a meal waiting, already prepared. Would you care to join me?

Of course, I said. I'd be honored.

It was excellent. Delicious. Good beyond words. I asked him what was in it, and he smiled a slow satisfied smile.

The last journalist who came looking for me

I was too angry, too disappointed, to be shocked. I laughed, right in his face.

That's it? That's your great secret? You claim you're a cannibal?

Oh no, he said. There's far more to it than that....

Memories, memories, good and bad and everything in between, things I hadn't let myself think of in years, rushing by me faster and faster, sharp and vivid and yet somehow strangely distant.

The Epicure continued eating as he lectured me on traditional cannibal beliefs. How certain ancient peoples believed that eating a brave man's heart would give you courage, or eating a big man's muscles would make you strong. How recent medical science had both proved and extended these beliefs. Take a planarian worm and teach it to run a maze. Then chop up the worm and feed it to other planarian worms. And they will run the maze perfectly, even though they've never seen it before. Meat is memory. Eat a man's mind, and you can gain access to all his most precious memories. For a while.

He laughed then, as the drug he'd put in my food finally took effect, and I lost consciousness.

I finally recognize the face on the severed head. Of course I know that face. It's mine. Because I'm not who I think I am. I'm somebody else, remembering me. The Epicure doesn't care about the meat, he eats minds so he can savor the memories. All my most precious

moments, all my triumphs and despairs, all the things that made me who I am . . . reduced to a meal, to satisfying another man's appetite. I want to cry at what I've lost, at what has been taken from me, but they aren't my eyes. Already my memories are fading, my thoughts are fading, as he comes rising up inside me, like a great shark in some bloody sea, eating up what's left of me so he can be himself again.

There's a rich, happy, satisfied smile on my lips.

You are who you eat. But not for long" (Simon R. Green)

We are celebrating today the feast of Corpus Christi – The most precious holy body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is the apex and summit of Christian life. As Green noted in his story, in the celebration of the Eucharist "all the most precious moments, all our triumphs and despairs, all the things that make me who I am ..." is reduced to meal while at the same time exalted in gratitude to God.

We remember that during the time of emperors Nero and Domitian when the Christian religion was considered an illicit religion in Rome, the early Christians who celebrated the Eucharist in the catacombs were branded cannibals who slaughter their new born babies to eat their bodies and drink their blood. Little did their persecutors know that Christians gathered to celebrate the Eucharist so that they could eat the body and drink the blood of Christ.

Today, whenever we gather at mass, we celebrate who we are – the body of Christ: the church. We share what we shall become – the eternal body of Christ living and true. The Eucharist we celebrate becomes the most pure and perfect sacrifice of the church on earth. In this celebration, the memory of Christ is made present and as a pilgrim church we renew our divine mandate - our mission on earth.

We are a pilgrim church – people on a journey. While in this body, everything we have and everything we are is a gift from the Father

almighty. It is given to be used for the realization of ourselves in Him and through Him who has given us the best of His divine Godhead in the person of Jesus Christ who died on the cross and rose from the dead for the salvation of the world.

The Eucharist is a food of a wounded, broken and sinful people. We do not celebrate the mass to show how holy we are but rather to acknowledge our sinfulness, weakness and wickedness. It is by acknowledging our weakness and knowing the extent to which we are unable to help ourselves, that in the celebration of the Eucharist, human efforts, desires, hopes and expectations are sacrificed, sanctified and transformed in an exponential manner to become a fitting oblation to God.

We are a Eucharistic people. We are a hopeful and joyful people because we have God who does not desert us in our sinfulness. The Eucharist becomes the celebration of the eternal life we all hope and long for. The Eucharist we celebrate achieves its aim when all who share the one bread and one cup become what they eat – the living body of Christ on earth. ... Seeing how broken and divided our world is, we know that we have work to do to become a truly Eucharistic people.