

**Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B
(Aug. 19, 2012)**

Come to the Feast

In thinking about what I might say today, I was reminded of some of my family gatherings. There are members of my family that I don't see very often, cousins and uncles and aunts – well not uncles and aunts anymore, they are all with the Lord, but cousins and their children and grandchildren. We get together maybe once a year or at weddings or funerals. But it doesn't take much time before we start telling stories from our past, part of the family heritage, stories that we tell over and over again at just such gatherings, and as the years go by, the stories get embellished and become a sort of mythology of the family. This inevitably happens in the context of a meal, a festive celebration. And the result is that we are more closely bonded, a more tightly knit family than we were before.

Our readings today talk about sharing food – even in festive celebrations.

In the first reading Wisdom has dressed her meat and mixed her wine and set her table, and she invites us all to come and share the feast, the good food and fine wine she has prepared. In this way, she says, get rid of foolishness that you may live and advance in the way of understanding.

Jesus, too, offers us food and drink, bread from heaven which is his body and the cup of salvation which is his blood.

In this Eucharist it seems to me that something happens that is analogous to my family gatherings and what we hear from Wisdom and from Jesus. We recall the past. We tell stories from our spiritual heritage. We share a meal, a banquet. O sacrum convivium, O Sacred Banquet, Thomas Aquinas called the Eucharist, and we are drawn together in communion, not just with Jesus but with one another as well. We become the Body of Christ, people who are growing together to be what God wants us to be. We celebrate who we are and who we want to become as the people of God. We remember the past; we do Eucharist in the present; and then take with us as we leave this church what we have learned and what we have become.

St. Augustine says that when the priest places the body of Christ in our hands and we say “Amen,” we are not saying Amen only to the presence of Jesus. We are saying Amen to ourselves as well for we have truly become the Body of Christ. Since this is true then it behooves us all to act accordingly: doing good and spreading love, doing what Jesus himself did and continues to do through each and every one of us. That means that as members of the Body of Christ we are all called to be other Christs in our world. That’s an awesome responsibility. Ask yourself how often you think about that except when you hear someone like me remind you of it.

Now we all know that the present political climate in this country does not seem to be reflective of the fact that most of our politicians claim to be Christians. Civility in public discourse is not highly valued today. Where is the Gospel? Where is love your enemies, pray for those who hurt you? I guess what Jesus preached does go far to help win political campaigns. Now I have a suggestion for two of our present political candidates. The two vice-presidential candidates are Catholics. I would like to see them come to church together on Sunday, walk together to receive the Body of Christ and say Amen to what they both are, members of the Body of Christ. Then I would like to see them go to brunch together and discuss the readings from Scripture that they heard and discuss the homily – if they were lucky enough to have heard a good one – and then reflect on what all this means in every aspect of their lives.

Of course, that will never happen, and you probably think I’m hopelessly naïve for even suggesting it – but it could happen, and I wonder what the outcome would be. But what I’m saying is not just for politicians. It’s for all of us.

In our second reading from the Letter to the Ephesians we heard the author admonish us not to live as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity because the days are evil. We have answered Wisdom’s invitation to come to the banquet. We will share the bread of life and the cup of salvation which are the body and blood of Christ. We are strengthened as members of the Body of Christ, more closely united with Jesus as our head. It remains for us to go out and make the most of the opportunity so that the days will be less evil. It’s our calling. It’s our vocation as Christians. With the grace of God and our response to that

grace, we can do it.