

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Within our culture today, it seems as though we are fed a steady diet of, “us against them” along with a side of, “whose side are you on?” Well, that’s easy for any of us to digest because we are on the right side...of course...because “they” are just wrong. This type of divisiveness and divisive language and sentiment are all around us, so much so that it defines us by identifying us to one side or the other.

Currently, *politics* are not a phantom of possibility that lurks outside our door, they have seeped into every facet of our lives. The gossip papers in check-out line of the grocery stores that we used to peek at to see where Elvis has shown up, have become the template for mainline news outlets that feed us opinioned information about what is happening in the world around us today. Within our culture today, we are a house divided by sensationalized news that no longer feeds us truth, it simply feeds us what we like to eat...and that is anything that separates “us” from “them.” It appears we have become a society that has a gourmet pallet for truth and integrity but we are constantly eating a McDonalds’ version of that truth and integrity.

Our current culture is a political struggle caused by conflict between sets of social beliefs and cultural values undergirded by a distorted Christian understanding causing us to choose up sides. We are identified by our politics, our socioeconomic lot, our race, our sexual orientation, our chosen and our natural gender, and our faith and we are then parsed out accordingly to different sides. We in turn, with our social identifiers struggle to politically impose our ideological practices upon those who we claim are out of step with us or simply not like us.

Of course, as Christians, we are not part of this divisiveness. We are better, and we will claim that our culture will never do this to us, but we are part of it. As we *claim* to remain natural, we continue to choose the corporate news media that will allow us to hear the contrived bits of misinformation about the other side so we can feel better or superior to the “other side”...and we do so void of facts and continue to draw lines with great confidence. And for us “Christians” we do all of this in the name of Jesus Christ as we claim to be devout followers because we have convinced ourselves that our faith gives us a leg up on the divisiveness in our culture. And as we claim the moral-high-road that separates us from the rest, we also believe it keeps us out of the political divineness of our culture.¹

But as we metaphorically sit here safe from the workings of our culture, let’s think about our faith. Does our faith contribute to the divisiveness, the fanaticism, and does our faith contribute to closed-minded bigotry? In other words, do we feel our faith “betters us,” elevates us, or saves us and keeps us safe from all that goes on “OUT THERE?” If we do...then keep in mind, this statement itself is divisive because it is exactly what is taking place “out there” and we all still part of the divisiveness “OUT THERE.” Each and every one of us in here likes to pick and choose from the buffet table of what we like and don’t like out there. But just remember, when we point our finger at the politics and the destructive divide within our culture, we point the finger at ourselves because *we are the culture*.

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And like us today, they too are the same divisive culture and people that Jesus taught, it is the same divisive culture he loved, and it is the divisive culture he died for in order to save. Everything thing that we valued back then, as well as, everything we value today, Jesus continues to teach us and feed to us a better way. Jesus continues to teach that what we think is wealth is poverty. Jesus continues to teach that there is strength in weakness. He teaches that the last will be first and the first will be last, and that the greatest by our standards is the least in the Kingdom of God. His lifestyle conflicted with everything society held dear – rejecting popularity, power, and prosperity. Where we wage war on the poor and turn our backs on poverty, Jesus stood up for the poor and chose homelessness, loved enemies, defended the oppressed, He willingly faced persecution, remained silent when accused, and forgave His murderers simply by saying...“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing,” (Luke 23:34).

As the culture throughout the ages have divided us and fed us on fear of difference, fed us on misconceptions and falsehoods about each other, Jesus continues to feed us His love, His care and a concern for the people across any cultural divide with a simple piece of bread and sip of wine. Jesus continues to feed and to teach us that hatred is not overcome with more hatred, rather it is overcome with love, and that darkness is not destroyed with more gloom and darkness, but darkness is only overcome with light.

When we are fed the body and blood of Jesus Christ does it really separate us and teach us to hate the other side? When we are fed the body and blood of Jesus Christ does it aspire us to better ourselves by belittling our neighbor or does it aspire us to love our neighbor? Does this body and blood of Christ open our eyes to recognize that we are broken and we are starving our very souls by eating and digesting the junk food of fear, hatred, and divisiveness that our culture is feeding us today and has fed us throughout the ages. Our very souls are in need of the grace given to us through Jesus Christ and our souls are not fed by blaming our neighbor, hating our neighbor, or conforming our neighbor to our personal opinions.

Today, right now our very souls are fed the bread of life and the cup of salvation that is Jesus Christ...in this Word and in this Holy Meal set before us. Today in our Gospel, Jesus' words and actions are the very flesh he feeds us today. His flesh, His words, and His actions are the way for us to see reality. When we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus Christ, we learn today that we abide in him and he in us. In other words, when we eat his flesh and drink his blood in the Holy Eucharist we live in that reality, the way of living life that goes against the so-called norms of our culture all while being part of that culture.

The culture cannot nor will it give of itself totally as Jesus does on the cross, but if we eat of the flesh and drink of the blood of Jesus Christ, we become countercultural but not counter to culture. In a blog on line it indicated studies show that our society sees most Christians and churches not as countercultural but counter culture.² In other words, It's like St Paul wrote in Romans:

^{12:1} I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. (Romans 12:1-5)

But as we are in the world Jesus says to us today:

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. (John 6:56-57)

We know by these words of Paul and of Jesus that we are not divided or separate, we are one body in Christ Jesus...who is in the world through each of us. By these words, Jesus is saying that if we are taking part of this Holy Eucharist that is set before us then this bread and wine ought to open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts to a new way of seeing and living reality. By this Holy Meal before us, may we live now as Paul reminded the Galatians:

²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

In this bread and wine, Jesus feeds to us a new way of seeing reality.³ This bread and wine calls us to be more radical with our compassion and less vocal about our personal opinions that would divide us, separate us, or isolate us. This bread and wine allow us to see that it's illogical to impose a moral standard on our neighbor...a standard that none of us are able nor are we willing to live by.

This Holy Meal of bread and wine allows us to abide in Christ, it opens our eyes to see His reality...a reality where it is more effective to pray, to care and to share with the “others,” those who we identify by their politics, their socioeconomic lot, their race, their sexual orientation, their gender, and even their faith. Luther also reminded us that when we read, “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them,” the word “abide” calls us to much more. Luther writes:

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The something that transcends human strength and human work is a faith that is given to us by the Father and allows us to see and to know that all we do and to fix, Jesus has already done and by this Holy Meal allows us to become more through the reality handed to us in this bread and wine. In this bread and wine, we are able to see that Jesus is not only the full revelation of who God is but also the revelation of who we are as children of God...and who we are meant to be as God’s children.

We cannot learn our true purpose and meaning by isolating and dividing ourselves by what we assume to be our opinion of what is righteously correct. In this Holy Meal we are fed a vision of reality that looks beyond the self to see that we are equal to others both in sin and in the grace received from these simple elements of bread and wine. Today among us in this gathering, may we come to believe and know that this Holy Meal and the Words that are proclaimed and lifted up in this worship and have come to us to rescue us from ourselves and turn us all toward Christ who is the true reality for each and every one of us.⁵

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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In this bread and wine, Jesus feeds to us a new way of seeing reality.³ This bread and wine calls us to be more radical with our compassion and less vocal about our personal opinions that would divide us, separate us, or isolate us. This bread and wine allow us to see that it's illogical to impose a moral standard on our neighbor...a standard that none of us are able nor are we willing to live by.

This Holy Meal of bread and wine allows us to abide in Christ, it opens our eyes to see His reality...a reality where it is more effective to pray, to care and to share with the “others,” those who we identify by their politics, their socioeconomic lot, their race, their sexual orientation, their gender, and even their faith. Luther also reminded us that when we read, “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them,” the word “abide” calls us to much more. Luther writes:

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The something that transcends human strength and human work is a faith that is given to us by the Father and allows us to see and to know that all we do and to fix, Jesus has already done and by this Holy Meal allows us to become more through the reality handed to us in this bread and wine. In this bread and wine, we are able to see that Jesus is not only the full revelation of who God is but also the revelation of who we are as children of God...and who we are meant to be as God’s children.

We cannot learn our true purpose and meaning by isolating and dividing ourselves by what we assume to be our opinion of what is righteously correct. In this Holy Meal we are fed a vision of reality that looks beyond the self to see that we are equal to others both in sin and in the grace received from these simple elements of bread and wine. Today among us in this gathering, may we come to believe and know that this Holy Meal and the Words that are proclaimed and lifted up in this worship and have come to us to rescue us from ourselves and turn us all toward Christ who is the true reality for each and every one of us.⁵

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Currently, *politics* are not a phantom of possibility that lurks outside our door, they have seeped into every facet of our lives. The gossip papers in check-out line of the grocery stores that we used to peek at to see where Elvis has shown up, have become the template for mainline news outlets that feed us opinioned information about what is happening in the world around us today. Within our culture today, we are a house divided by sensationalized news that no longer feeds us truth, it simply feeds us what we like to eat...and that is anything that separates “us” from “them.” It appears we have become a society that has a gourmet pallet for truth and integrity but we are constantly eating a McDonalds’ version of that truth and integrity.

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But as we metaphorically sit here safe from the workings of our culture, let’s think about our faith. Does our faith contribute to the divisiveness, the fanaticism, and does our faith contribute to closed-minded bigotry? In other words, do we feel our faith “betters us,” elevates us, or saves us and keeps us safe from all that goes on “OUT THERE?” If we do...then keep in mind, this statement itself is divisive because it is exactly what is taking place “out there” and we all still part of the divisiveness “OUT THERE.” Each and every one of us in here likes to pick and choose from the buffet table of what we like and don’t like out there. But just remember, when we point our finger at the politics and the destructive divide within our culture, we point the finger at ourselves because *we are the culture*.

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And like us today, they too are the same divisive culture and people that Jesus taught, it is the same divisive culture he loved, and it is the divisive culture he died for in order to save. Everything thing that we valued back then, as well as, everything we value today, Jesus continues to teach us and feed to us a better way. Jesus continues to teach that what we think is wealth is poverty. Jesus continues to teach that there is strength in weakness. He teaches that the last will be first and the first will be last, and that the greatest by our standards is the least in the Kingdom of God. His lifestyle conflicted with everything society held dear – rejecting popularity, power, and prosperity. Where we wage war on the poor and turn our backs on poverty, Jesus stood up for the poor and chose homelessness, loved enemies, defended the oppressed, He willingly faced persecution, remained silent when accused, and forgave His murderers simply by saying...“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing,” (Luke 23:34).

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When we are fed the body and blood of Jesus Christ does it really separate us and teach us to hate the other side? When we are fed the body and blood of Jesus Christ does it aspire us to better ourselves by belittling our neighbor or does it aspire us to love our neighbor? Does this body and blood of Christ open our eyes to recognize that we are broken and we are starving our very souls by eating and digesting the junk food of fear, hatred, and divisiveness that our culture is feeding us today and has fed us throughout the ages. Our very souls are in need of the grace given to us through Jesus Christ and our souls are not fed by blaming our neighbor, hating our neighbor, or conforming our neighbor to our personal opinions.

Today, right now our very souls are fed the bread of life and the cup of salvation that is Jesus Christ...in this Word and in this Holy Meal set before us. Today in our Gospel, Jesus' words and actions are the very flesh he feeds us today. His flesh, His words, and His actions are the way for us to see reality. When we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus Christ, we learn today that we abide in him and he in us. In other words, when we eat his flesh and drink his blood in the Holy Eucharist we live in that reality, the way of living life that goes against the so-called norms of our culture all while being part of that culture.

The culture cannot nor will it give of itself totally as Jesus does on the cross, but if we eat of the flesh and drink of the blood of Jesus Christ, we become countercultural but not counter to culture. In a blog on line it indicated studies show that our society sees most Christians and churches not as countercultural but counter culture.² In other words, It's like St Paul wrote in Romans:

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And like us today, they too are the same divisive culture and people that Jesus taught, it is the same divisive culture he loved, and it is the divisive culture he died for in order to save. Everything thing that we valued back then, as well as, everything we value today, Jesus continues to teach us and feed to us a better way. Jesus continues to teach that what we think is wealth is poverty. Jesus continues to teach that there is strength in weakness. He teaches that the last will be first and the first will be last, and that the greatest by our standards is the least in the Kingdom of God. His lifestyle conflicted with everything society held dear – rejecting popularity, power, and prosperity. Where we wage war on the poor and turn our backs on poverty, Jesus stood up for the poor and chose homelessness, loved enemies, defended the oppressed, He willingly faced persecution, remained silent when accused, and forgave His murderers simply by saying...“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing,” (Luke 23:34).

As the culture throughout the ages have divided us and fed us on fear of difference, fed us on misconceptions and falsehoods about each other, Jesus continues to feed us His love, His care and a concern for the people across any cultural divide with a simple piece of bread and sip of wine. Jesus continues to feed and to teach us that hatred is not overcome with more hatred, rather it is overcome with love, and that darkness is not destroyed with more gloom and darkness, but darkness is only overcome with light.

When we are fed the body and blood of Jesus Christ does it really separate us and teach us to hate the other side? When we are fed the body and blood of Jesus Christ does it aspire us to better ourselves by belittling our neighbor or does it aspire us to love our neighbor? Does this body and blood of Christ open our eyes to recognize that we are broken and we are starving our very souls by eating and digesting the junk food of fear, hatred, and divisiveness that our culture is feeding us today and has fed us throughout the ages. Our very souls are in need of the grace given to us through Jesus Christ and our souls are not fed by blaming our neighbor, hating our neighbor, or conforming our neighbor to our personal opinions.

Today, right now our very souls are fed the bread of life and the cup of salvation that is Jesus Christ...in this Word and in this Holy Meal set before us. Today in our Gospel, Jesus' words and actions are the very flesh he feeds us today. His flesh, His words, and His actions are the way for us to see reality. When we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus Christ, we learn today that we abide in him and he in us. In other words, when we eat his flesh and drink his blood in the Holy Eucharist we live in that reality, the way of living life that goes against the so-called norms of our culture all while being part of that culture.

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In this bread and wine, Jesus feeds to us a new way of seeing reality.³ This bread and wine calls us to be more radical with our compassion and less vocal about our personal opinions that would divide us, separate us, or isolate us. This bread and wine allow us to see that it's illogical to impose a moral standard on our neighbor...a standard that none of us are able nor are we willing to live by.

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The something that transcends human strength and human work is a faith that is given to us by the Father and allows us to see and to know that all we do and to fix, Jesus has already done and by this Holy Meal allows us to become more through the reality handed to us in this bread and wine. In this bread and wine, we are able to see that Jesus is not only the full revelation of who God is but also the revelation of who we are as children of God...and who we are meant to be as God’s children.

We cannot learn our true purpose and meaning by isolating and dividing ourselves by what we assume to be our opinion of what is righteously correct. In this Holy Meal we are fed a vision of reality that looks beyond the self to see that we are equal to others both in sin and in the grace received from these simple elements of bread and wine. Today among us in this gathering, may we come to believe and know that this Holy Meal and the Words that are proclaimed and lifted up in this worship and have come to us to rescue us from ourselves and turn us all toward Christ who is the true reality for each and every one of us.⁵

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But as we metaphorically sit here safe from the workings of our culture, let’s think about our faith. Does our faith contribute to the divisiveness, the fanaticism, and does our faith contribute to closed-minded bigotry? In other words, do we feel our faith “betters us,” elevates us, or saves us and keeps us safe from all that goes on “OUT THERE?” If we do...then keep in mind, this statement itself is divisive because it is exactly what is taking place “out there” and we all still part of the divisiveness “OUT THERE.” Each and every one of us in here likes to pick and choose from the buffet table of what we like and don’t like out there. But just remember, when we point our finger at the politics and the destructive divide within our culture, we point the finger at ourselves because *we are the culture*.

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But as we metaphorically sit here safe from the workings of our culture, let’s think about our faith. Does our faith contribute to the divisiveness, the fanaticism, and does our faith contribute to closed-minded bigotry? In other words, do we feel our faith “betters us,” elevates us, or saves us and keeps us safe from all that goes on “OUT THERE?” If we do...then keep in mind, this statement itself is divisive because it is exactly what is taking place “out there” and we all still part of the divisiveness “OUT THERE.” Each and every one of us in here likes to pick and choose from the buffet table of what we like and don’t like out there. But just remember, when we point our finger at the politics and the destructive divide within our culture, we point the finger at ourselves because *we are the culture*.

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And like us today, they too are the same divisive culture and people that Jesus taught, it is the same divisive culture he loved, and it is the divisive culture he died for in order to save. Everything thing that we valued back then, as well as, everything we value today, Jesus continues to teach us and feed to us a better way. Jesus continues to teach that what we think is wealth is poverty. Jesus continues to teach that there is strength in weakness. He teaches that the last will be first and the first will be last, and that the greatest by our standards is the least in the Kingdom of God. His lifestyle conflicted with everything society held dear – rejecting popularity, power, and prosperity. Where we wage war on the poor and turn our backs on poverty, Jesus stood up for the poor and chose homelessness, loved enemies, defended the oppressed, He willingly faced persecution, remained silent when accused, and forgave His murderers simply by saying...“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing,” (Luke 23:34).

As the culture throughout the ages have divided us and fed us on fear of difference, fed us on misconceptions and falsehoods about each other, Jesus continues to feed us His love, His care and a concern for the people across any cultural divide with a simple piece of bread and sip of wine. Jesus continues to feed and to teach us that hatred is not overcome with more hatred, rather it is overcome with love, and that darkness is not destroyed with more gloom and darkness, but darkness is only overcome with light.

When we are fed the body and blood of Jesus Christ does it really separate us and teach us to hate the other side? When we are fed the body and blood of Jesus Christ does it aspire us to better ourselves by belittling our neighbor or does it aspire us to love our neighbor? Does this body and blood of Christ open our eyes to recognize that we are broken and we are starving our very souls by eating and digesting the junk food of fear, hatred, and divisiveness that our culture is feeding us today and has fed us throughout the ages. Our very souls are in need of the grace given to us through Jesus Christ and our souls are not fed by blaming our neighbor, hating our neighbor, or conforming our neighbor to our personal opinions.

Today, right now our very souls are fed the bread of life and the cup of salvation that is Jesus Christ...in this Word and in this Holy Meal set before us. Today in our Gospel, Jesus' words and actions are the very flesh he feeds us today. His flesh, His words, and His actions are the way for us to see reality. When we eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus Christ, we learn today that we abide in him and he in us. In other words, when we eat his flesh and drink his blood in the Holy Eucharist we live in that reality, the way of living life that goes against the so-called norms of our culture all while being part of that culture.

The culture cannot nor will it give of itself totally as Jesus does on the cross, but if we eat of the flesh and drink of the blood of Jesus Christ, we become countercultural but not counter to culture. In a blog on line it indicated studies show that our society sees most Christians and churches not as countercultural but counter culture.² In other words, It's like St Paul wrote in Romans:

^{12:1} I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. (Romans 12:1-5)

But as we are in the world Jesus says to us today:

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. (John 6:56-57)

We know by these words of Paul and of Jesus that we are not divided or separate, we are one body in Christ Jesus...who is in the world through each of us. By these words, Jesus is saying that if we are taking part of this Holy Eucharist that is set before us then this bread and wine ought to open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts to a new way of seeing and living reality. By this Holy Meal before us, may we live now as Paul reminded the Galatians:

²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

In this bread and wine, Jesus feeds to us a new way of seeing reality.³ This bread and wine calls us to be more radical with our compassion and less vocal about our personal opinions that would divide us, separate us, or isolate us. This bread and wine allow us to see that it's illogical to impose a moral standard on our neighbor...a standard that none of us are able nor are we willing to live by.

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The something that transcends human strength and human work is a faith that is given to us by the Father and allows us to see and to know that all we do and to fix, Jesus has already done and by this Holy Meal allows us to become more through the reality handed to us in this bread and wine. In this bread and wine, we are able to see that Jesus is not only the full revelation of who God is but also the revelation of who we are as children of God...and who we are meant to be as God’s children.

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