

A while ago, there was a documentary called *Super Size Me*. You may remember it. Morgan Spurlock wanted to see what would happen if he ate all of his meals at McDonald's. So, for an entire month, every day, three times a day, he ate there and recorded what happened. At the end of the month, he had gained 30 pounds. His cholesterol was sky high, and his doctor warned him that he had to change his eating habits or he would die.

His experiment confirmed the saying "You are what you eat." If you eat junk food, high-calorie fatty stuff, your health deteriorates. If you eat healthy, nutritional food, your health improves. It's that simple. You are what you eat.

Jesus knew this. That's why He told the crowds in our Gospel, "Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me." The Body and Blood of Christ is divine food that Jesus gives us to make us more like Him. We're called to follow in His footsteps, to be other Christs in this world. It's a high calling for sure, especially when you consider that we're weak and sinful. But every time we receive the Eucharist in faith, we grow in courage and confidence. It changes us.

We grow in courage because the Jesus we receive in the Eucharist is the same Jesus who faced the evil of this world. He knows what betrayal is, what suffering is, what loss is. He knows what death is. He faced those evils with courage in the Father who loves Him. In this way, the Eucharist helps us deal with the trials of our own life. It gives us strength to deal with rejection, with sickness, even death itself. When we receive the Eucharist, we receive the very courage of Jesus, the strength through which He was able to face His Passion.

The Eucharist also helps us grow in confidence because we receive the Risen Christ, who destroyed death and now sits at the right hand of the Father. He's the Jesus of limitless power and of limitless love, who is leading the world into God's kingdom. Therefore, we can receive

Him in confidence, because His power and His strength will be with us and in us. With Jesus, there'll always be hope for the future.

In the busyness of life, we can easily forget how wonderful this sacrament really is, to take the mystery and miracle of the Eucharist for granted. When we stop appreciating this heavenly food, we soon stop hungering for it. We start hungering instead for wealth, pleasure, reputation, and success. Then our spiritual lives become weak from lack of nourishment, and we give into temptations, wandering away from the Good Shepherd.

We celebrated three First Communion Masses earlier this weekend for our young people. They showed up in beautiful white dresses and suits and ties. Their friends and family were here with them. Father Jose gave great homilies. They were great celebrations and it was heartwarming to see them so eager with anticipation to receive Holy Communion for the first time. Today's Solemnity is meant to draw us back in and to help us recover that same sense of awe and gratitude in the face of such an indescribable, miraculous gift. And it should be that way every time we receive the Eucharist, whether it's the first time or the thousandth or the ten-thousandth.

As Catholics, we know that Jesus is not just symbolically present in the Eucharist. He is truly, really present. That's what makes the Eucharist a sacrament, instead of just a symbol. That's why Saint Paul in our second reading calls Holy Communion a "participation" in the body and blood of Christ. And that's why Jesus Himself in our Gospel repeats six times in seven verses that His flesh is real food and his blood is real drink.

Every time an ordained priest pronounces the words of consecration at Mass, Jesus Himself, in a mysterious, sacramental way, becomes truly present under the appearance of bread and wine. When we come to Church, we don't have to hope that Jesus will be here. His presence

doesn't depend on our mood, our feelings, our holiness, or even our faith. He is truly present in the Eucharist by His promise and power. Every Mass is a miracle in which God shatters the limits of time and space to bring Jesus' sacrifice on the cross into the here-and-now of our lives. This is what Jesus taught, and this is what Catholics have believed since the dawn of the Church.

Jesus gives us this food to eat because He loves us and wants us to stay as close to Him and He is to us. Only He can bring us true, lasting happiness. Only He can save us from sin. The Eucharist is not reserved for the perfect, but is given to help us along the journey of life. He will once again give us this food from heaven to bring us to heaven. Venerable Fulton Sheen once said, "The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host."

And although the gift of His whole Self is always the same, its effect in us, the influence it will have, is something very personal. He knows our needs. Through difficulty, pain, and problems, the Eucharist is our assurance that Jesus is with us. As we approach Holy Communion, let us bring with us the issues of life, whatever they may be. Let us bring the things that trouble us, the things that hurt us, the things that we're afraid of, all the things that preoccupy our minds and leave them with Him on the altar. He wants all these things that distance us from Him.

As we extend our hands to receive the host, let our 'Amen' be an affirmation that the Risen Jesus is becoming our food and a promise that we will strive to be more like Him by loving God above all things and, with the help of His grace, loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Brothers and sisters, today is an occasion to rejoice. In this marvelous gift of the Eucharist, we become courageous people, sharing in the very strength of Jesus, which allows us to live today. In this holy meal, we become confident people, sharing in the very power of the Risen Christ that always provides us with hope for tomorrow. In just a few minutes, Jesus will

renew His commitment to us by offering Himself in the Eucharist. Let's also renew our commitment to Him, so that we never forget how deeply God loves us. After all, you are what you eat.