

20th Sunday of the Year B

Recognise what is the will of the Lord. (Ep 5:17)



First Reading

Proverbs 9:1-6

Wisdom has built herself a house, she has erected her seven pillars, she has slaughtered her beasts, prepared her wine, she has laid her table. She has despatched her maidservants and proclaimed from the city's heights: "Who is ignorant? Let him step this way." To the fool she says, "Come and eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared! Leave your folly and you will live, walk in the ways of perception."

Second Reading

Ephesians 5:15-20

Be very careful about the sort of lives you lead, like intelligent and not like senseless people. This may be a wicked age, but your lives should redeem it. And do not be thoughtless but recognise what is the will of the Lord. Do not drug yourselves with wine, this is simply dissipation; be filled with the Spirit. Sing the words and tunes of the psalms and hymns when you are together, and go on singing and chanting to the Lord in you hearts, so that always and everywhere you are giving thanks to God who is our Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to the crowd: "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world." Then the Jews started arguing with one another: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they said. Jesus replied: "I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever."

Meditation

This Sunday's gospel is the conclusion of the bread of life discourse. It is useless to try to separate what Jesus intended to say from what the evangelist understood. The discourse is grounded in the Church's reflection on the experience of Jesus in his word and in the eucharist. He is and remains for us the living bread from heaven, flesh and blood given for the life of the world.

The conclusion of the discourse is closely linked with the synoptic accounts of the Last Supper. Jesus declares that in his sacrifice he will offer himself in food and drink which must be consumed. To receive him is to enter into a wholly new intimacy with him.

The words of Jesus illuminate the actions of taking and eating. They who eat are themselves assimilated into the life of Jesus. In turn, they are invited to give their lives without measure.