

A God with Flesh and Blood

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B)

August 19, 2018

Fr. Tony Davis

Whenever we think of God, we usually think of above. As if God was in the sky, transcendent, in another universe, totally other, and so far beyond us. While these aspects of God are true, they are highly incomplete. In Christianity, we profess a God who is transcendent, but also a God who is radically near. God is the very ground of our being, the foundation on which we stand, the environment in which we live, and the one who resides in our deepest self. We see the completed picture of God when we look at Jesus.

The words of our Gospel from *John* today warn us from floating into a lofty understanding of Jesus. In it, Jesus doesn't say 'I am a principle, theory, abstraction, standard, idea, or concept.' He says, 'I am flesh and blood.' Flesh and blood...how much more down to earth can we get?

As Catholics, our doctrine of Jesus being present in the Eucharist is so essential in that it challenges us to ground our faith in reality. Jesus' flesh is true food and his blood true drink. Whenever we receive communion, we do so not as souls, but as people with bodies and souls. And whenever we receive communion, we receive not just Jesus' soul, but his body and soul.

God isn't an idea. God lives in the flesh and blood of Jesus. God lives in us as the Body of Christ. That is why we are constantly eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ- lest we forget who we are.

Fr. Richard Rohr, a spiritual author and contemplative, tells the story of being on a retreat at a hermitage. As he was out on a walk, he spotted one of the hermits. The hermits at this monastery are so isolated that they hardly ever talk or interact with anyone else. Fr. Richard soon realized that he would have to cross paths with this hermit on his walk. As they passed each other, Fr. Richard recognized this well known man and the man probably knew him as well. Fr. Richard didn't want to disturb the hermit, but was surprised when the hermit stopped and opened his mouth. According

to Fr. Richard, the hermit said, “Fr. Richard, you preach to so many people. Tell them God is not up there.” And then he walked away.

The Eucharist reminds us that God is not up there, but is flesh and blood here on earth.

Am I repulsed by a God who resides in flesh and blood? This is a God who is messy, grounded, and involved. It is Jesus, who was like us in all things but sin. As we celebrate with this bread and wine, let us see not only the heavenly feast, but also the earthly feast. And let me add expound upon what that hermit said, “God is not up there. God is right here.”