

“Let’s get to know Jesus.” We think we know Jesus, but it never hurts to review, re-imagine, or simply recall what we think we know.

Perhaps the crowd who follows Jesus speaks for us and gives us insight to who Jesus is.

John narrates that these people who have followed Jesus, regarded him as a teacher, and witnessed his miracles, also know him as one of their own. (Yes, that fits my thinking about who Jesus is.) *{teacher, miracle worker}*

Beyond that, they knew his parents and his brothers and sisters, they watched him play and learn his trade, grow up and eventually leave home. In other words, they *know* him, just like they know all the kids from their old neighborhood. And for this reason, you see – because he is just like them, because he is common –he can’t be all that special, and he certainly can’t be the one God sent for redemption.

While we don’t have the “I lived along side nature/experience of the disciples and people of Judea. What we do have is this: We have His presence in our life.

He offered a significant continuation.

Jesus says that the bread he gives for the life of the world is his flesh, and whoever eats this bread has eternal life now and will be raised on the last day. In Ephesians Paul tells us what this life Jesus gives us looks like, this life we live as those marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit in baptism. We live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. The whole purpose of life is giving yourself for the other.

**Is Jesus like the kid next door?** Or, in your mind (faith) is he someone different?

Does the crowd speak for you? (wondering how a common kid can do so much?)

When you are in need or distress, when you are hurt or afraid, do you want to see a God who shows in strength and through miracle, do you want to call upon a God who answers clearly and quickly? Do you want to rely on a God who is there, when you need him.

Little wonder, then, that the people in the crowd – and perhaps we – are put off, offended, angered even, by Jesus’ suggestion that he, a man just like they are. ***God in humanity?***



Think of the audacious claim that Jesus is making. Who ever heard of a God having anything to do with the everyday, the ordinary, the mundane, the dirty?

Gods are made for greatness, not grime; they are supposed to reside up in the clouds, not down here with the commoners.

Who ever heard of a God who is willing to suffer the pains and problems, the indecencies and embarrassments of human life? No wonder the crowd grumbles against Jesus' words, for such words seem to make fun of their understanding of God's majesty and, even worse, to mock their own deep need for a God who transcends the very life which is causing them so much difficulty. But, the human life of Jesus exceeded the flesh.

The crowd is upset. They know, first-hand, of their own flaws and shortcomings, of their own faithlessness and failures. They know of their doubts and fears, too, of their betrayals and broken promises, their petty grudges and foolish prejudices. They know all the shame and disappointment and regret which each person carries around on his or her back like a snail carries its shell.

So, if Jesus is really like they are, then they think they are doomed. For how can someone who is like them save them? How can one like them *be* saved? They grumble because they are angry, and they are afraid, afraid that, in the end, they're not worth saving.

Are we all that different? I don't think so.

Rarely does a day go by that I don't think of just how fragile is the foundation upon which we base our faith.

Do the words we speak in our conversations with other people make much of a difference? Shouldn't someone more eloquent speak about God? Or maybe even a heavenly chorus be singing God's praise? We are so common, like the kid next door.

And **the water we use in Baptism**: it's *not holy*, or special, or different. It's from the same tap from which we drink and bathe and brush our teeth.



Same with the bread and wine of communion – these aren't special either. They're ordinary, common, mundane; hardly worthy of God's attention, let alone God's use.

But, that is how we believe that God does operate.

God does use such ordinary things, such common elements, to achieve God's will and to bring to the world God's salvation.

Jesus, who was common, ordinary, mortal like you and me, and yet **who was also uncommon, divine**, the very Son of God. This is the claim Jesus makes in today's gospel reading,

- For where we expect God to come in might, God comes in weakness;
- where we look for God to come in power, God comes in vulnerability; and
- when we seek God in justice and righteousness – we find God in forgiveness and mercy.

This is the claim and promise Jesus makes today: that God became incarnate; that is, became carnal, took on flesh, became just like us, so that God might save us and all people who come to faith by God's word! He did this in a body just like yours and mine.

Let's look at our humanity.

We try to eat healthy. We enjoy the bliss of bellies filled with good food. And then: our hunger returns and returns again. The cycle of searching for and preparing food begins again. We remember our humanity with the growl of a hungry stomach. Did Jesus? Did Jesus' stomach growl?

We all know that as humans we must eat to live, every few hours, every day. Most (but by no means all) of us in our country are blessed with enough food, just as God provided bread and water for Elijah, filling him with strength for the journey.

Jesus calls us beyond our bodily hunger to notice our hunger for the grace of God. Jesus provided bread and fish in the wilderness, satisfying the physical hunger of the multitudes. Jesus calls us to see food for what it is and what it is not.



This is the truth of our humanity. We eat each day, and still we die. God provides food for the moment, for the day. Our daily hunger returns, and God provides food.

But there is more than bodily hunger. Jesus proclaims to us a holy satisfaction of our hunger for life with the reassurance of love and hope in him. Jesus provides sustenance beyond our daily hunger with the gift of his life (the Bread of Life). This sustenance sustains more than our bodies; it also meets our fears and struggles. We need not overeat comfort food to satiate our hunger for reassurance, love, and hope. Christ offers us his very flesh, given to us to fill us with the grace of God's presence in our bodies, our minds, and our stomachs. There is no greater comfort than the reassurance that God loves us and is ever present with us. God feeds us with eternal life.

Each time we receive Christ's body and blood at the table of Jesus Christ, we receive this living bread from heaven. Bread and wine fill us again and again, renewing God's promise of love and hope. Living bread that changes us and frees us to see that living bread is more than bread for one moment. Being filled with the living bread of Jesus Christ, we become the living bread, Christ's own flesh for the sake of the world. So, we are like Jesus ... He is like us in the human body ... Comparison. – But more ... much more.

The carnal God; the God who does not despise the ordinary and common but rather who seeks such out by which to achieve God's will: this is the promise that rests behind the sacraments. In the sacraments we find God's promise to take hold of us and make us God's own, to remain with us and to never let us go.

We also find in the sacraments *another promise* which God makes to us. It is the promise not only to redeem us, but also *to use us* – to make use of our skills and talents, inadequate or insufficient though they may seem, to continue God's work of creating, redeeming, and sustaining all that is. And that, is an incredible promise.

We find this promise in the sacraments. For just as surely as God uses ordinary bread and wine to bring to us God's saving word, God also uses each of us to accomplish God's will and work in God's world.

I know it can be hard at times to see God at work through our gifts, our talents, our money, our labors, and our lives. But for this reason, God gives us the sacraments.



So the common kid next door (you and me) are the presence of God in the lives of others.

At the Font, at the Table God speaks to us most clearly; as God's promise of forgiveness and acceptance, of wholeness and of life, is given to each of us in a form we not only can hear, but also see, taste, touch, and feel. (bread, water, wine, juice)

The sacraments bid us to raise our eyes from the confusion and ambiguity of life *for a moment*, so that we may receive God's audacious and faith-provoking promises and thereby return to our lives in this confusing world with courage and hope.

Eat healthy, eat spiritually, pay attention to the kid next door ... Jesus is the Bread of Life.

