

**Corpus Christi, 2008**  
**St. Raphael, Springdale, AR**

Recently, I was over at a family's house for supper. I know you are shocked! And the mom mentioned that she really enjoyed cooking for the family; it was relaxing and she really found it fulfilling. I casually replied that even though I love to eat as much as the next guy, I can't stand cooking! It seems to me a huge waste of time: you spend hours cooking but the actual eating and enjoying the meal only takes 15 minutes. Then the father said to me: but isn't that the same with your homilies at Mass on Sunday? And after I thought about it, he was right. It often takes me hours to prepare a good homily – and by the way, a good homily is one that you can still remember at the end of Mass! – but it only takes 15 minutes to hear it. So, why do people spend hours cooking or work hours on a homily? Well I think it's because the real reward is in the joy of "feeding" someone, "nourishing" someone. Moms and dads who cook find deep satisfaction when they see their children enjoy a home-cooked meal. Priests find satisfaction in keeping people awake during their sermons. But you see, in both cases, it's the joy of "feeding" another person – whether it's with barbeque or with the Bible – that makes the sacrifice and the hours of preparation worth it. There's great joy in feeding others.

The gospel today is from John 6, a chapter that every Catholic should know by heart. St. John, who leaned on the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper, explains that Jesus came to give us His Body and Blood as food and drink. This chapter

contains some of the most profound theology ever written on the Eucharist. Please take time to read it today. But here's something that people often miss: the satisfaction that Jesus feels when He can feed us with Himself. Far more than the joy Dr. Chuck feels when he serves his famous spaghetti Bolognese, far more satisfaction than Archbishop Fulton Sheen ever felt after his stirring sermons, Jesus experiences a profound joy in giving us His Body and Blood. In other words, even though Jesus spent hours suffering and dying on the cross, it was all worth it for the joy of being able to feed us with the Eucharist. There is great joy in feeding others.

Blessed Mother Teresa never wrote a book. But many of her talks, lectures and letters were compiled into a small book called *Heart of Joy*. In one talk she explained that when we love and help the poor, we receive far more than we give. Here's what she wrote: "I have a memory of the terrible days we underwent when millions of refugees were fleeing to India; I asked the Indian government to allow some religious sisters from abroad to come and help us serve the refugees. Many came, about 16 or 17, from various religious orders. They spent six months with us, offering love, service, tenderness, and care to those who needed it. When they left, all of them said that what they received was much more than they had been able to give." Now, let me ask you: what did these religious sisters receive? They received that deep and lasting joy of feeding others: they "fed" others with bread, and with compassion, and with a smile. When you know the joy of

feeding another person, all the sacrifices are more than worth it.

Folks, there really are only two kinds of people in the world: those who feed others, and those who feed themselves. Which kind are you? We “feed” others when we forgive a husband or wife who has hurt us. We feed them with God’s mercy. We “feed” others when we listen attentively to a friend who is going through a hard time. There are dozens of volunteers in our food pantry who literally feed hundreds of people every week. These people have found the joy of feeding others rather than themselves.

Today is my 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination. I’ll never forget when I told my parents that I wanted to be a priest, they were actually a little sad. How would you react if your son or daughter said that? I’m sure my parents were worried that their son would be lonely and sad without a family and a career. But exactly the opposite is the case: I’ve never been happier and I’m never lonely – believe me, with 17,000, I would love some loneliness! But you see, what I discovered is the joy of feeding others, and my happiness is magnified exponentially every Sunday because I can feed thousands of people with the Bible as well as the Body and Blood of Jesus. There is great joy in feeding others.

You have probably heard this symbolic comparison of heaven and hell. St. Peter led a man first to hell, where he saw a large banquet table filled with delicious food and drink.

There were people seated on both sides. But the people were sad and angry because the spoons they need to eat with were 4 feet long, and they couldn't get the food to their mouth. Then St. Peter took the man to heaven, where he saw the exact same kind of long table, again loaded with exquisite food and drink, and with people seated on both sides. But the people were laughing and talking and happy. And he noticed that even though they also had 4-foot long spoons, the people used them to feed the person across the table instead of themselves. They knew the joy of feeding others. My friends, our time on earth is practice for the next life, where we will either feed others, or feed ourselves. Where are you practicing to go?

Praised be Jesus Christ!