

## Annual Diocesan Fiesta----20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 16, 2015 12:00 Noon Immaculate Conception, Hartford

*La bienvenida a todos y cada uno!* This Annual Diocesan Fiesta is such a joyful and happy event, which brings so many of us all together from many different places----our own individual families coming together as the much larger Catholic Family----so that we can celebrate our shared Faith in Jesus Christ in this Holy Mass!

Even though it's a very hot day today, we give thanks to God for all of our many blessings: for the good weather----for the good growing season that is taking place---for the ability to work--for our families, and for all those we love and work so hard to provide for----and, most especially, we thank God for the Gift of our Faith, and in particular, for the Gift of the Holy Eucharist!

The Scripture Readings we just listened to from God's Holy Word speak directly to each of our hearts, and remind us, clearly and lovingly, how much God wants us to respond to His invitation to come to Him---to live our lives according to His ways---to be in "communion with" Him!

In the First Reading from the Book of Proverbs, God spoke to us using the name of "Wisdom." As we heard, "Wisdom" (that is, God) had prepared a great Feast----*una gran Fiesta*----and God sent out invitations for ALL those who were "simple" to join in this sacred Meal. In the Scriptures, being "simple" really means being wise enough to know what is really important; it means not foolishly looking for pleasure and satisfaction in all the wrong places. And a "delicious meal" is also a symbol that God uses to remind us that as human beings, we absolutely need food and drink to stay alive physically. So, too, as spiritual beings, we need God's Word and God's Food, to stay alive spiritually.

That's why today's Gospel passage is so important. In today's passage from St. John's Gospel, we heard Jesus make an amazing statement: "*I am the living bread come down from Heaven.*" And then, Jesus makes an even more amazing promise: "*Whoever eats this bread will live forever....Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood....has eternal life....remains in Me and I in him...will have life because of Me....and will live forever.*" That was pretty hard for some of the people there to accept. St. John tells us that some of the people "grumbled", and eventually went away.

The only way we can understand this amazing statement and this even more amazing promise that Jesus makes in giving us the Precious Gift of the Eucharist is through faith. What Jesus says doesn't make sense if we only try to use our human reason; however, it makes complete sense when we listen with the ears and see with the eyes of faith!

*Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo*, we know that we are human beings----we are sinners----we have weaknesses----we suffer, we fail, we make mistakes. And yes, as human beings, we are mortal----one day, we will die. But, we are human beings who are also spiritual beings. We are human beings made up of a body and a soul, and we are loved by the God of all the Universe. We are precious and special in God's sight. That's why coming together to celebrate Holy Mass is SO very important for us to make time for each and every week. Even though there might be lots of other things we could be doing---maybe even important things like working----we always need to make time to come together to celebrate our faith.

Even more important than keeping our bodies strong and healthy, is our need to keep our souls strong and healthy by coming to hear God's holy Word, and to receive the precious Gift of the Eucharist. That is the most important thing for us to do because that is what will help us to get to Heaven when our lives in this world are ended. Through being faithful to Christ in this life, He will make sure that He brings us safely Home to Heaven in the life to come.

Right before Holy Communion at every Mass, we admit our weakness when we say: "*Senor, yo no soy digno de que entres en mi casa, pero una palabra tuya bastara para sanarme.*" And the Lord does! He heals us----He forgives us---He feeds us with His own Body and Blood. Why? Because He loves us unconditionally.

That's why every Mass is a celebration, *una gran Fiesta*. When we come to Mass, we have the opportunity to thank God for all His blessings, and to show God that we are "simple", which to God means that we are truly wise!

*Alabado sea Jesu Cristo! Praised be Jesus Christ!*

God bless you, now and always!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Bishop Paul J. Bradley