

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2024 B

One of my small church music amusements is the title of the hymn tune for the song we know as *For All the Saints*. In Latin, the name of that melody is ***Sine Nomine*** ... literally, without a name. So the name of the song is the Song With No Name ... a nice paradox that might remind you of a certain brand of rib-eye steaks as well.

When God feeds the Hebrew people on their desert journey to the Promised Land with bread from heaven, they call it manna. But Manna is not really a name, it is a question, coming into contact with a mystery they cannot adequately label. As we heard, manna in Hebrew means “what is this?” ***In the same way, the Eucharist is for us a question – not What is this? But WHO IS THIS? We hear the echoes of the words from Scripture. “How can this man give us His flesh to eat?”, the crowds will wonder. “What are you looking for?”, Jesus asks His first disciples. And most important, down the ages, He asks each one of us: “Who do you say that I am?”***

There is another example in the Old Testament of a mysterious word the Jewish people generally did not speak aloud: Yahweh, the divine Name God revealed to Moses in the burning bush. Yahweh means “I Am Who Am,” and this Name was considered too holy for sinful people to speak. So when the Hebrew Scriptures were read and Yahweh appeared on the scroll, the reader said instead Adonai, or My Lord.

Once a year, however, the high priest would invoke the name of Yahweh, on the Day of Atonement, imploring divine mercy for the people’s infidelities to the Covenant. This is in the background at Jesus’ trial, when the Jesus, the true High Priest, is asked: “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” and He answers simply and clearly “I Am.” Jesus does not simply invoke the name of God to ask for Mercy ... He IS God’s mercy in Person, about to offer His life on the Cross in burning love. The Church

renews the Memorial of that sacrifice every day, as Jesus, the Living Bread come down from heaven, gives Himself to us throughout our journey of life to the place prepared for us.

Like the manna, the mystery of the Eucharist cannot be adequately labeled. Every Catholic can say something about the Eucharist, but none of us can say everything. The Eucharist is an infinite mystery, because it is simply Jesus, the Infinite made visible, the Divine made edible. Jesus comes to us in a way that we can take within ourselves to give us life ... not simply food for the life that perishes, but the nourishment of our eternal future in perfect joy. The Eucharist remains a question, not only Who do you say that I am – aware of Whom we receive – but even more, How will we respond? ***Jesus comes to change us into Him, to become more fully the Body of Christ in Communion with God and with one another. What will be different in my life this week because Christ is within me?***

So while the Eucharist is a mystery beyond our naming, it is not beyond our sharing. Bring the questions that weigh on your mind and heart to Jesus today; offer them along with His sacrifice to the Father. Then may you experience here His promise fulfilled: ***“Whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”***