

Dear Parishioners,

A few years ago it was reported that one of the National Football Teams went undefeated in their preseason games. Now, that's not saying much, but in an interview one of the players was asked to reveal the secret of their success and he told the interviewer that before each of their games each player drank a full glass of dill pickle juice. They didn't drink Gatorade, there was no mention of steroid use; they all drank pickle juice. As the article went on it was stated that there is absolutely no scientific proof that dill pickle juice makes an already behemoth football player stronger, faster, more intelligent, or disciplined. As it turns out, the practice was more of a superstitious prank. Everyone knows it takes a real man to drink a full glass of dill pickle juice. Anyone man enough to do that is good enough to win four NFL preseason games. I can't remember how that team did during the rest of the season, but I don't think they won the Super Bowl that year.

As we listen to the Gospel again this weekend we hear Jesus the Christ say these words, "This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever." Jesus refers to himself when he talks about "this bread." The verb he uses for the word to eat can best be translated as to gnaw, or chew. So, to that crowd of Jewish people, whose ancestors had been fed with bread from heaven in their forty-year journey through the desert, Jesus' statement about eating this bread - his body - sounded very strange. Jesus also said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you." So, he was also referring to the spiritual lives of the crowd. This almost sounds insulting, like their faith lives as good Jews were not good enough. Jesus also says, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day." So he was also talking about the resurrection of the dead, a concept in which very few Jewish people in Jesus' day believed. His message sounded as strange to that crowd of people as drinking dill pickle juice might sound to us. Certainly his message was far more radical.

We who are baptized into the Roman Catholic faith, however, believe every single word Jesus says. This is not some superstitious prank; it is not a magic trick: we believe in the real presence of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist. We may not understand it completely, but we believe that what

we receive in the sacrament of Holy Communion is the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ our Lord and our God. We believe that what we receive in the Eucharist is living food to sustain our souls for the journey into God's eternal kingdom and that without this bread come down from heaven we have no life in us.

Now, I am quite certain that if we all drank a great big cold glass of green dill pickle juice we would all soon come to know how alive we are, and it wouldn't take us very long to wish we were not *that* alive. All we need is the simplest forms of bread and wine that exist on the planet. All we need is a taste of His living Flesh and Blood to know that in this sacred meal our sins are forgiven, God's Word is now enfleshed in our lives, that with this sacred meal we shall live forever.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel,
Pastor