

Activity Sheet 37

John 6:52-54 (NKJV)

⁵²The Jews therefore quarrelled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"

⁵³Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.⁵⁴Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Patristic Commentary

AUG. And that they might not understand him to speak of this life, and make that an occasion of striving, He adds, has eternal life. This then he has not who eats not that flesh, nor drinks that blood. The temporal life men may have without Him, the eternal they cannot. This is not true of material food. If we do not take that indeed, we shall not live, neither do we live, if we take it: for either disease, or old age, or some accident kills us after all. Whereas this meat and drink, i.e. the Body and Blood of Christ, is such that he that takes it not has not life, and he that takes it has life, even life eternal.

THEOPHYL. For it is not the flesh of man simply, but of God: and it makes man divine, by inebriating him, as it were, with divinity.

AUG. There are some who promise men deliverance from eternal punishment, if they are washed in Baptism and partake of Christ's Body, whatever lives they live. The Apostle however contradicts them, where he says, The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Let us examine what is meant here. He who is in the unity of His body, (i.e. one of the Christian members,) the Sacrament of which body the faithful receive when they communicate at the Altar; he is truly said to eat the body, and drink the blood of Christ. And heretics and schismatics, who are cut off from the unity of the body, may receive the same Sacrament; but it does not profit them, may, rather is hurtful, as tending to make their judgment heavier, or their forgiveness later. Nor ought they to feel secure in their abandoned and damnable ways, who, by the iniquity of their lives, desert righteousness, i.e. Christ; either by fornication, or other sins of the like kind. Such are not to be said to eat the body of Christ; forasmuch as they are not to be counted among the members of Christ. For, not to mention other things, men cannot be members of Christ, and at the same time members of an harlot.

AUG. By this meat and drink then, He would have us understand the society of His body, and His members, which is the Church, in the predestined, and called, and justified, and glorified saints and believers. The Sacrament whereof, i.e. Of the unity of the body and blood of Christ, is administered, in some places daily, in others on such and such days from the Lord's Table: and from the Lord's Table it is received by some to their salvation, by others to their condemnation. But the thing itself of which this is the Sacrament, is for our salvation to every one who partakes of it, for condemnation to none. To prevent us supposing that those who, by virtue of that meat and drink, were promised eternal life, would not die in the body, He adds, And I will raise him up at the last day; i.e. to that eternal life, a spiritual rest, which the spirits of the Saints enter into. But neither shall the body be defrauded of eternal life, but shall be endowed With it at the resurrection of the dead in the last day.

AUG = St Augustine THEOPHYL = St Theophylact

ACTIVITY (This task should be assisted by the Leader and not undertaken by the students on their own)

Write notes below and overleaf on the meanings that these two Fathers find in the text.