

Defending the Faith



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November 2018

Eat My Flesh and Drink My Blood

“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them” (John 6:56).

The above passage from scripture is not well known. However, in John 6:53-58, Jesus repeated these words five times! He was definitely emphasizing the importance of this teaching. Christ’s followers complained that *“This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?”* (John 6:61). Although He explained that these words described a spiritual truth, many of His supporters unable to comprehend, stopped following Him. These words would not be understood, until after Christ’s resurrection, and after the church was established by the twelve Apostles.

Jesus was referring to the Holy Eucharist or Holy Communion. He instituted this practice of receiving the body and blood of Christ with His disciples at the Last Supper. *“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood”* (Luke 22:19-20). We also learn that the Holy Eucharist was celebrated on Sundays, when Paul states that a group of Christ’s followers met *“on the first day of the week”* (Acts 20:7) to break bread. It was on the first day of the week that Christ rose from the dead, so therefore, we celebrate the resurrection by partaking of the Eucharist. In I Corinthians 11, Paul states that the Lord handed down the celebration of Holy Communion to him, and he taught the early church members.

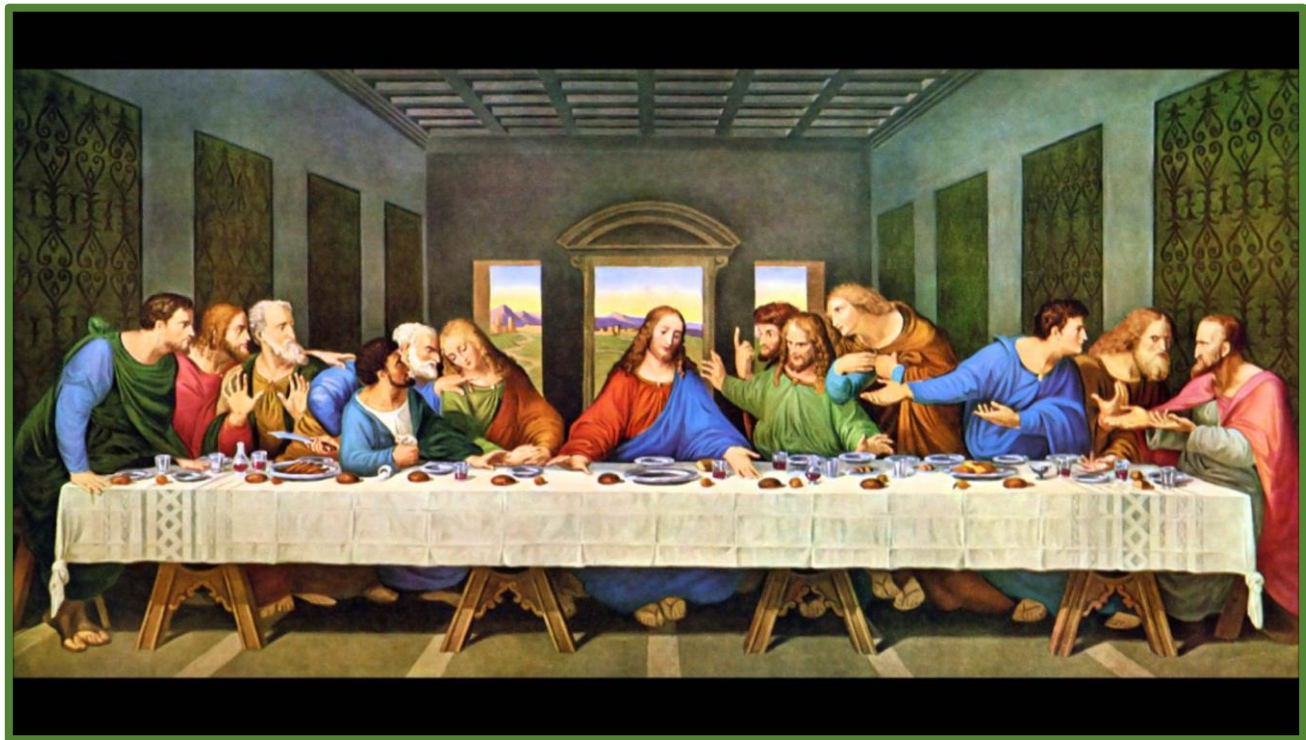
The Eucharist replaced the sacrifice of animals, which God instituted from the very beginning with Cain and Abel (Genesis 4). It was Abel’s sacrifice of a lamb that God found pleasing, which angered Cain so greatly that he murdered his brother. God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, and just as Abraham was prepared to bring down the knife, an angel stopped him, and God provided the ram for the sacrifice (Genesis 22). The Jewish priests sacrificed animals in the Temple regularly, especially on the feast days. Sacrifices were only permitted to take place in the Temple at Jerusalem because God dwelled in the Holy of Holies within the Temple. The priests would offer up sacrifices brought by the people. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross replaced the Temple sacrifices because He was the perfect lamb. No longer were other sacrifices acceptable to God. In 70 A.D. the Temple was destroyed, and the Jews have not been permitted to offer sacrifices since then. The presence of God was no longer to be found in the Temple. Since Pentecost, God dwells within believers through the Holy Spirit.

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Eat My Flesh and Drink My Blood (cont'd)



The Greek noun εὐχαριστία (*eucharistia*), means "thanksgiving", while the word Communion comes from the passage in 1 Corinthians 10:16, "*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ.*" These words describe a spiritual reality. When we receive the body and blood of Christ with thanksgiving, we receive Christ Himself and become spiritually united with Him and our fellow believers. Therefore, we become one body in Christ with many members. "*For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another*" (Romans 12:4-5). In other words, the church is one group in agreement with Christ, but there are many members of our group. Just as a body has eyes, ears, and hands, we are one body working together for God.

Among the various Christian denominations, there are only a few who celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday, including the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholics. Many Christians do not place the emphasis on Holy Communion that Christ did. Jesus declared, "*Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you*" (John 6:53). According to Jesus, receiving the Holy Eucharist is imperative and essential to our lives as Christians. Christ established Holy Communion at the Last Supper. The Apostles and early church celebrated the Holy Eucharist weekly.

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Eat My Flesh and Drink My Blood (cont'd)

Many do not fully comprehend the spiritual reality and power of the Holy Eucharist. Paul explains what happened to those who received Communion without properly asking for forgiveness: *“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord...For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died”* (1 Corinthians 11:27-30). Paul warns us that we must properly judge ourselves and repent for our sins before receiving the body and blood of Christ. Some even died when they received the Holy Eucharist unworthily. Mystically, the Eucharist *is* the body and blood of Christ.

After properly repenting for our sins and receiving the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit forgives our sins and seals us. *“It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, ²² by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment”* (1 Corinthians 1:21-22). In ancient times, a wax seal was used by kings to authenticate their communications. The seal of the Eucharist is God’s signature on us confirming His new covenant, our contractual agreement. We acknowledge that agreement with God each time we receive Communion, and in return, God fills us with the Holy Spirit. It is the seal of the Holy Spirit, which lets the devil know that we belong to Christ.

Many Christians believe that they can pray at home and develop their relationship with Christ on their own. They do not feel it necessary to attend church on a regular basis, and in some cases, they do not feel it necessary to attend church at all. However, we cannot participate in the Holy Gifts without attending church. Christ’s church requires community. It requires we not only participate in Holy Communion with one another, but it also requires that we share our own personal gifts with one another. Each of us has been given gifts by God to build up the church, but if we do not come together as a church, all of us suffer from the loss. Our faith may not be as strong as it might be when we are able to encourage one another. We are not available to one another when we need comforting or guidance. Our gifts bear little or no fruit in the church of Christ. We cannot be His eyes, ears, or hands. It is the fruits of our gifts that build one another’s faith. It is those times when God sends us just the right words from a fellow believer that helps us experience the love of God. It is those times when God sends us to give the right encouraging words to a fellow believer that makes Him real in our lives.

In today’s world, more important than anything, our children need the community of the church. They need to learn about God and build their faith. There is so much depression, anxiety and hopelessness among our young people today. They need to know the love, faith and hope of Jesus. Children need to grow up in their churches, experiencing God and the power of His Holy Communion, which unites us with one another and with Christ. Parents take your children to church and participate in the Eucharist regularly.

“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is” (1 John 3:1-2).

Helen Kamenos
Readers’ Favorite Author

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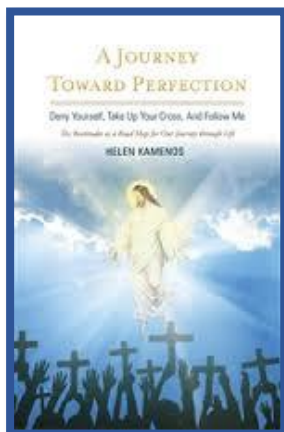
Happy Thanksgiving!



In the United States, we observe Thanksgiving in November, which traces back to the Pilgrim celebration in 1621. According to tradition, the first 3-day Thanksgiving feast was attended by 53 Pilgrims and 90 Native Americans. After several years of drought and hardships, the Pilgrims wished to give thanks to God for the abundant harvest.

Although we set aside this special day to give God

thanks, He loves it when we are continually thankful, *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things”* (Psalm 107:1,8-9, NIV). And again, *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).



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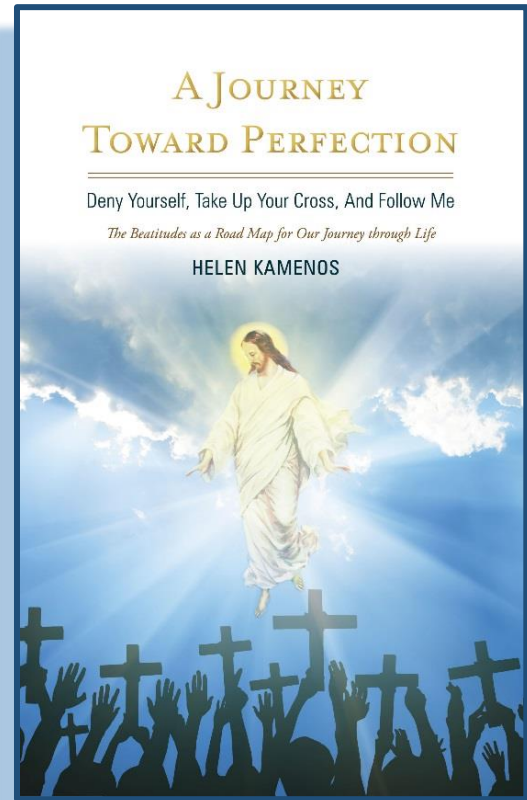
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A Journey Toward Perfection

The Beatitudes from Matthew 5:

- ³ *Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- ⁴ *Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.*
- ⁵ *Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.*
- ⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled.*
- ⁷ *Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.*
- ⁸ *Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.*
- ⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.*
- ¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- ¹¹ *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and
say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*
- ¹² *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward
in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were
before you.*



Blown Away

"I truly was blown away by *A Journey Toward Perfection*...I very much enjoyed it because, as is true of many Christian books and especially the Bible, passages will seem to be written just for the reader. For example, things I have been thinking about in my daily life recently were referred to in the pages of this book...It can speak to *your* situation and give biblical counsel." (Mary C. Blowers)

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