

(Item #104: Serving Jesus Christ in the Eucharist)

One of the clearest examples of how Jesus Christ wishes to be served in the Eucharist is contained in Chapter 6 of the Gospel of John. The entire Chapter 6 of the Gospel is an example of how the teaching of Jesus is ordered to the salvation of those who believe in Him. This Item (already discussed above—see p. 64) will give a succinct outline of Chapter 6 of John’s Gospel and show how belief of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is considered essential for service of Christ by Christ Himself, and how Peter, as spokesman for the Apostles, agrees.

1) Vv. 1-15. Jesus miraculously feeds the five thousand. Those so fed wish to make Jesus king. Jesus refuses their efforts, thus indicating that His multiplication is not intended to refer to His power to multiply earthly food but has to do with a heavenly food.

2) Vv. 16-21. Jesus’ walks on water and uses the expression “I am” to refer to Himself, thereby explaining why He is more than an earthly king: He is divine.

3) Vv. 22-59. Jesus explicitly identifies Himself as Bread that has its origin in heaven and comes to believers to give eternal life. He gives it because His Father wills it so. This belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharistic Bread is the key to the eternal life that Jesus will bestow by raising from the dead all who believed in this Real Presence.

4) Vv. 60-71. Jesus brings in the Spirit as part of the source of life to be enacted by Him, but many disciples do not believe and walk away in disbelief. Jesus turns to Peter, the leader of the twelve whom He has appointed to witness to His resurrection, and Peter says that only Jesus has the words of eternal life, thus implicitly showing his belief in what the Resurrection that he and the other apostles will witness to implies. Jesus accepts this answer after making an exception for Judas Iscariot, the traitor.

Thus in Chapter 6 of John’s Gospel the importance of belief in the Real Presence for the mission of Jesus and its role in the mission of His followers is clearly revealed. This passage should be a constant source of prayer and meditation for anyone who wishes to be a follower of Christ. (James Swetnam, S.J., November 16, 2022)