

"I have always been deeply struck by the grace of [African] women who travel difficult paths and roads while balancing heavy bundles on top of their heads. Sometimes those bundles are baskets of food, sometimes cans of water, and sometimes unknown articles wrapped in cloth. I am amazed at their ability to walk so gracefully on difficult surfaces while balancing these articles on their heads. In addition, often you will see women helping each other to get the articles balanced so they can proceed. I am constantly struck by how difficult it must be to manage the rocky paths with the added burden of balancing something on your head. And yet, they don't just manage, they do it with such grace.

"I share this image because I have had conversations with many of you, and I am often struck by so many who continue their journeys on rocky paths and often with additional burdens of life (like the bundles balanced on the women's heads). Similar to seeing those women, we do not always know what each other might be carrying and yet we all seem to be carrying something.

I pray that as Christian men and women, however rocky the path or whatever the burdens we may be carrying, we may walk as gracefully as these women of Africa. I pray that, as the women often assist each other, we are all graceful enough to realize that our brothers often walk with burdens, even burdens that are not apparent to us, and that we are willing to extend to our brothers a measure of understanding, and when necessary, care and assistance.

In the gospel passage we hear today, "Jesus said to his disciples, 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day.'" (John 6:51, 54)

Billboards, wall posters, bumper stickers, refrigerator magnets, T-shirts, and ball caps all proclaim the certain truth: "You are what you eat." And if this is true of the daily mealtime fare, what of the Eucharist, the very body and blood of Christ? If you are what you eat, then he who eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ becomes Christ!

What, then, does this mean for us? It means that, just like Christ, we must become nourishment for others. We are to offer our very lives to feed others unto eternity. And Jesus has shown us the way, through the many gospel parables that continue to turn cultural values upside down.

For those of us who become Christ through regular reception of his body and blood, we are promised resurrection at the last day. What a comfort! But what a challenge! For, as Christ will raise us at the last, so must we do for one another.

How often we say the Lord's Prayer, with its petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." In the same breath we also pray, "Thy kingdom come." We have been boldly asking all along that we may become other Christs in the world that, by our lives, we may be builders of the heavenly kingdom.

So on this Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, for we really do become what we eat.