

August 2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

During August the Sunday Gospels will focus on the lengthy "Bread of Life" discourse in John 6 where the evangelist gathered his Eucharistic teachings. As we listen, we will hear the Johannine Jesus inviting us to renew our reverence for and faith in the gift of the Eucharist. We must be willing to be fed, and in being fed, be willing to be changed into the body of Christ.

On the reality of this change the 4th century church father John Chrysostom, who is known as the "Doctor of the Eucharist," wrote: "We are that same body. What is the bread actually? The body of Christ. What do communicants become? The body of Christ. In fact, just as bread is the result of many grains, and although remaining themselves are not distinguished from one another because they are united, so, we too are mutually united with Christ."

Unlike ordinary food, which is digested and assimilated by the one who eats, believers who share in the Eucharistic body and blood of Christ become what they eat, the body of Christ. Those who are willing to be fed by Jesus are also changed by the grace and goodness of his real presence. This transfigurative change in the believer carries with it the possibility and potential for transforming the world from darkness to light, from evil to good, from a myriad of separate peoples into one body of Christ.

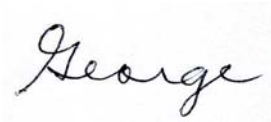
As we are renewed this month in our faith and reverence for Christ's real presence among us in bread and wine, in sacred word and in one another, the late Karl Rahner would ask us to be mindful that we, as church, "are most manifest and in the most intensive former, attaining the highest actuality of our own nature as church when we celebrate Eucharist."

For this reason, Augustine urged believers to remember who they are: "It is your own mystery that is placed on the altar. You reply 'Amen' to that which you are and by replying you consent. You hear 'The Body of Christ' and you reply 'Amen!' Be what you see and receive what you are." What a profound challenge!

This month we celebrate our own Marianist martyr, Jakob Gapp. May our gracious God continue to bless and strengthen us to live our faith with the same conviction he and many others had!

Attached to this e-mail is a listing of August feast days.

Affectionately,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

George J. Cerniglia, S.M.
Assistant for Religious Life