

**08/16/15 ..... 20 B**

-- I would guess that many of you have seen a mother playing with her small child, smiling and laughing with her. At one point she may have said to her child: *I love you so much I could eat you up!* Perhaps you've even said that to your own child.

-- People who love each other deeply are literally consumed with each other. And that's the sense we get from what Jesus is saying in the gospel today. There's a true sense that God is consumed with love for his people, for each and every one of us.

-- In Proverbs, the Wisdom of God sets up a big banquet for God's people. She invites us to eat and drink in the wisdom she provides. She reminds us that we have yearnings and desires in life, but they can only be fully met by God. Nothing on earth can substitute for God's wisdom.

-- When Jesus comes on the scene, he offers his own person as the living bread from heaven. He himself is God's presence on earth. Like the mother with her child, he offers us God's unconditional love.

-- But, instead of saying he could eat us up, he does just the opposite. He invites us to eat his flesh and drink his blood. In his immense love he offers himself to us. He invites us to consume his loving presence.

-- And he does this in rather stark language. In this gospel, the Greek word for eat is not the "polite" word, but the graphic word which is better translated "chew" or "munch." Jesus wants us to "chew on" his loving presence.

-- All the other three gospels save their Eucharistic language for the Last Supper on the night before Jesus died. John's gospel puts it right in the middle of Jesus' ministry.

-- This tells us that Jesus' entire life was an outpouring of divine love for our sakes, not just his death on the Cross. His death was simply the culmination of a life lived out in love.

-- So, when we come here to be fed at God's table in the Eucharist, we are partaking in the most intimate way of God's love. This is not merely a remembrance of something Jesus did for us long ago.

-- The Eucharist is God's loving presence given to us to be consumed today. We consume it because God is consumed with love for us.

-- And we are reminded that, when all is said and done, only God himself can satisfy the deepest longings we have in life. True, we have close relationships and friendships.

-- Yes, many of you have the most intimate human relationship with your spouse. Yet, as loving and nurturing as that relationship can and should be, even it will not meet your ultimate needs.

-- We only find that in God himself. As Jesus' followers, we have the privilege to meet him—body, blood, soul and divinity—in the Eucharist. He alone is the food that satisfies our deepest longings.

-- May we never take this gift for granted.