

- As we continue reading John 6, I'm reminded of a very powerful story that Fulton Sheen used to tell about a little Chinese girl who died as a martyr for the Eucharist.
- Sometime shortly after the Communist takeover of China in the late 1940s, some Communist soldiers burst into a Catholic school, ransacking it and forcing the children at gun point to throw statues and other sacred objects into the toilet.
- One little girl silently resisted, though, and so the Communists demanded that her father be found, and all the townspeople gathered into the local Catholic church.
- As the townspeople gathered in the church, her father was brought in with his hands bound behind his back. The little girl and her father were placed up front at the Communion rail.
- The soldiers then mocked the people's faith in the Eucharist, forcing open the tabernacle with their guns, and strewing the Hosts on the floor and stomping on them.
- Ultimately, the girl's father was hauled away, the parish priest was locked up in the coal bin adjacent to the sanctuary, and the church was closed to the people.
- Yet every day, the little girl managed to sneak into the church, where she would kneel down reverently and lower her head so as to pick up one of the Hosts with her tongue. Afterwards she would remain kneeling in prayer for a few minutes before leaving.
- The parish priest, who was locked in the coal bin, was able to witness all of this.
- After several days of doing this, a Communist soldier caught the little girl in the act, and he shot her. That little girl died for her faith in the Eucharist.
- Conventional wisdom would have told this little girl just to stay away from the church. Had she just cooperated with the Communists, all would be well enough.
- But such wisdom is worldly wisdom, and not the wisdom that we're called to have if we wish to be saints. While worldly wisdom places value on the here and now, getting ahead in this life, and preserving this life at all costs, Christian wisdom is different.
- Christian wisdom understands that there are some things worse than death, and that true wisdom entails seeking to preserve not one's earthly life, but one's eternal life.
- Throughout history man has pursued that lofty virtue we know as Wisdom. Ever since man began recording history, there have been writings exalting the virtue of Wisdom, praising the value of Wisdom, and encouraging others to seek out her counsels.
- We see this especially in the Greek cultures from which the study of philosophy first arose as a discipline. In fact, the word *philosophy* means "love of wisdom."
- In pursuing Wisdom the Greeks were not just interested in figuring out how the world works; they weren't just interested in knowledge for knowledge's sake. They sought wisdom as a means of living better, and they understood wisdom as the foundation of all virtue.
- For them wisdom was associated with goodness. While being wise meant to possessing some amount of practical knowledge, it really meant living a virtuous life, a holy life.
- The pursuit of Wisdom can also be traced through the various cultures from which the Bible originated. In Scripture wisdom refers to the proper ordering of life according to the norms of faith. For the biblical authors wisdom refers to an approach to life. It's a way of looking at the world and living in the world.
- Similar to the Greek understanding, this wisdom is a more perfect and profound knowledge of truths revealed by God that is acquired by prayer and meditation. And it finds expression in the way one conducts himself in daily life.

- In both our first and second reading today, we are given invitations to seek out Wisdom. In the first reading from the Book of Proverbs Wisdom is personified as woman setting out a table of food.
- The food and drink offered by Wisdom is instruction that leads to life. We are told to forsake foolishness that we may live; and we are promised that if we eat of her food and drink of her wine, we will advance in the way of understanding.
- In the second reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians we're given a fuller sense of wisdom. Here Paul equates wisdom with doing the will of the Lord. For St. Paul living in wisdom is simply a matter of living in Christ, Who Is Wisdom Incarnate.
- Thus, if gaining wisdom helps us to live a virtuous life, and wisdom comes from Christ, Who Is Wisdom Incarnate, the question we must ask ourselves is this: how do we live in Christ so that we might be truly wise? How do we remain in Him so that we can be virtuous?
- The answer to that question lies in today's Gospel. For the fourth week the Church turns our attention to John 6: *The Bread of Life Discourse*. And this week we reach the culmination of Christ's teaching on the Eucharist.
- Christ speaks clearly and forcefully, and in doing so He enunciates exactly what we believe about the Eucharist. Jesus tells us:

*I am the living bread that came down from Heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.*

- And the key line is this: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him."
- There are many spiritual benefits to receiving Holy Communion. But the most important effect of receiving Holy Communion is intimate union with Christ Jesus. In fact, the very word *Communion* suggests becoming one with Christ.
- While all the sacraments promote union with Christ through the reception of His grace, this union is most intensely felt through the Eucharist, for in It we receive not only grace, but the very Author of grace Himself; we receive the living bread come down from Heaven.
- And in this process, we become more like Christ. In receiving this most precious sacrament, we share in Christ's divine life and become truly wise.
- Worthy reception of Holy Communion is how we live in Christ and remain in Him. Holy Communion provides a divine intimacy that helps us to grow in wisdom, and in all the other virtues.
- Obviously, this is a tremendous gift – and not one to be taken lightly. We must guard ourselves so that we never take the Eucharist for granted but cultivate a love for the Eucharist like that of the Chinese girl, who preferred death than to live without the Eucharist.
- O Sacrament most holy, O Sacrament divine, all praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine.