

Sunday Homily

Title Christmas Communion

Date: December 25, 2025

Sunday: Christmas

Scripture: Luke 2:1-14

By: Fr. Bob Schmitz

Text: Luke tells us twice: Mary wrapped Jesus in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.

When writing materials were rare and expensive, to write something twice means the reader best pay attention. Swaddling clothes were the first century version of Pampers. Luke might have been telling us, graphically, that the infant Jesus was fully human. But more likely, Luke wanted us to pay attention to the feeding trough, to the manger. In his Gospel, Luke records meal after meal, one food event after another. Luke refers to food over fifty times in his Gospel. It culminates in a most dramatic event. After the resurrection, Jesus walks along with two of his disciples. The disciples were fleeing Jerusalem where Israel's leaders crucified Jesus. Maybe their fear clouded their vision, but they did not recognize Jesus. The three stopped for dinner.

Jesus takes bread and breaks it—like we do here at Mass. Suddenly the disciples recognized Jesus. Luke proclaims: "he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread" (Luke 24:25).

At the beginning of the Gospel is the manger; at the end, is the breaking of the bread.

Many, perhaps, most food events in Luke are associated with a message of inclusion. Jesus forgave sinners at those meals. He welcomed the excluded and despised. Jesus raised up the victims of prejudice, those deemed second-class people. He fed the poor and hungry, sometimes numbering 5000 guests. Jesus tore down social boundaries keeping people apart. This theme began at the manger. The second time Luke tells us of the manger was part of an invitation to shepherds to attend the baby Jesus. In the first century, shepherds were the

poorest of the poor. Food and inclusion; hospitality for the excluded: Luke enjoyed using food events to bring people together.

We Catholics came up with a significant word for these inclusive food events: we name it *communion*. The word is associated with Eucharist, and rightly so. Our communion is with Jesus Christ and through Him with His Father. The Gospel of John tells us when we eat his Body and drink his Blood we come to live in Jesus. Consider the repercussions of that idea. We live life in the savior of all humankind. When we live in the saving Christ, every act of our love and charity, every one of our compassionate moments, our empathy, our kindness, every action leading to peace with others: our love raises us into eternal life. That's what Jesus said; we have eternal life (John 6:54).

Furthermore, our life in Jesus Christ allows us to share life with God the Father, the God who creates all that is, the Father of every person. That idea too leads to an amazing conclusion. Life in the Father unites us with creation for its beatification and with all humankind for justice and peace. Communion is the right word. We commune with the Lord and through him with the Father. Through the divine, we commune with all humankind and all creation. Luke is right putting the manger, a feeding trough, at the center of the Nativity.

Our first Christmas memories are likely of communion—not necessarily at church, but at home with family and friends. Those feasts nourished our bodies and nurtured our souls. That's the purpose of Holy Days: to nourish the body and more importantly to nurture the soul. I hope your feast at home does that for you this year, and our Communion at Mass does it too. Nurture the soul with thoughts of communion with the God of love. In God, you can commune

in peace with all who live. That's what Luke was trying to convey when he told us twice to celebrate a baby in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.