

# Archbishop Smith: What's on the Label?

During visits to the grocery store, I've noticed that shoppers rarely just pick an item off the shelf and throw it into the shopping cart without first looking at the label attached to it. Here I don't mean simply the price. People take a serious look at the ingredients they will find labelled on the side of the item's package. Calories. Fats. Sugars. Salt. Carbohydrates. Protein. Food manufacturers spell it out, because they know that people want to be informed.

This is good. We should know what we are putting into our bodies, because the ingredients in the food we ingest bear directly upon our physical health.



The Corpus Christi procession in 2015 makes a stop at Ezio Faraone Park. Lincoln Ho, Grandin Media

On Sunday our attention was drawn to spiritual nourishment. We celebrated the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, otherwise known as Corpus Christi. In this high feast we give thanks to God for the wonder of the Eucharist, in which simple gifts of bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of our Lord. It is necessary to ponder this. What are we, in fact, receiving when we take into our bodies this gift from Heaven?

In both Sacred Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, we find a kind of "labelling" that helps us appreciate the wonder of the gift. In the mystery of the Most Holy Eucharist we are given the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. From this central truth we refer to the Eucharist also as:

Lamb of God;  
Perfect sacrifice;  
Spotless victim;  
Hidden God and Saviour;  
Bread of Life;

Bread from Heaven;  
Bread of Angels;  
Cup of blessing;  
Mystery of faith;  
Medicine of mercy;  
Medicine of immortality;  
Sacrament of love;  
Bond of charity;  
Food for our journey;  
Food for everlasting life;  
Pledge of future glory.

This is what is “contained” in the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ. No food can match it. It nourishes life and has associated with it, in virtue of the Lord’s own promise, the pledge of eternal life. The “labels” say it all. Our health, our very life and salvation, depend upon the Eucharist.



The Corpus Christi procession makes its way back to St. Joseph's Basilica after a route in central Edmonton. Lincoln Ho, Grandin Media

Early Christians would celebrate the Eucharist, even when doing so could very well be punished by death. In many parts of the world today, Christians continue to go to mass in spite of the possibility of being killed. Just think of what happened in Sri Lanka at Easter. Even though participation at mass places them in danger, they know that they need the food that is the Eucharist. They know what it “contains”, and they will not be held back from it.

We have the opposite situation in North America. We can worship in freedom; we can attend Mass without fear of reprisal; we can access in complete liberty the one and only food that leads to life. Yet, many are choosing not to do so! Yes, I know that many people feel alienated from the Church. Often this is for understandable reasons that we must seek to address and heal. Whatever the reason, though, the fact remains that deliberate separation from the Eucharist is detrimental to the soul. It is a decision to refrain from the gift that the Lord Jesus himself offers as spiritual nourishment, source of hope and pledge of eternity. Separation from the Eucharist is a form of self-starvation.

Following mass on Sunday I participated in the traditional Corpus Christi procession. The Blessed Sacrament was carried through the Edmonton streets that surround our cathedral. This procession symbolizes the Church's invitation to the world to recognize that Christ, the Crucified and Risen Lord present in the Eucharist, remains with his people to be their food that accompanies them on their earthly journey and gives them the pledge of eternal life. May we each continue to make that invitation by the "eucharistic procession" formed by the words and actions of our daily lives. Let's pray that people, who have yet to know Christ, will heed the invitation and discover the Lord Jesus as the Bread of Life.