



*From the Pastor  
The Nativity of the  
Lord [Christmas]  
December 25, 2022*

***"I AM THE BREAD  
OF LIFE."***

As you may know, I have devoted my bulletin article column to the USA Bishops' *National Eucharistic Revival* document *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*. This 3-year revival should help us better understand and celebrate our *Lord's Real Presence* in the *Eucharist*. This is part 20 in my series; for past articles on this *Revival*, the whole document, and a free study guide, go to our parish website - [easeton.net](http://easeton.net).

***A MANGER BED?*** Mel Gibson's 2004 movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, still shocks many by its very realistic rendition of what some say may be the most excruciating form of execution. [The word 'excruciating' is derived from the word 'crucify!'] Just as the many 'watered-down' depictions of the *Crucifixion* lessen its severity and brutality, our saccharine *Nativity scenes* or 'cleaned-up' *Christmas Creches* do the same to the *Infancy Narrative* in *Saint Luke's Gospel*. [Saint Matthew's Gospel only mentions *Christ's Nativity* in passing; neither *Saint Mark* nor *Saint John* record it.] What might our image of *Christ's manger* be misinterpreting or misrepresenting?

A *manger* is an animal's feeding trough, usually filled with dirt-encrusted straw, the saliva [and *God* knows what else!] from the animals who ate out of it, mold, bugs, and other critters. It is certainly *NOT* the most hygienic, germ-free place for a newborn child to sleep! Perhaps our *Blessed Mother* and *Saint Joseph*, being poor and on the road, had no other options and were grateful for a sheltered, warm site to cradle *"little Lord Jesus, Asleep on the hay."* However, some suggest that based on themes that run through *Saint Luke's Gospel*, the evangelist-physician - who wrote a *Gospel* and, many believe, the *Church's* first biblical history book, *Acts of the Apostles*, and who was a Greek doctor - may have been trying to teach us some very important lessons!

The most obvious lesson is: *God* identifies with the poor and knows their pain, for - in *Jesus* - He felt their hunger and experienced their rejection. So, *Saint Luke's Gospel* highlights *Jesus'* concern for the outcast and stranger, the marginalized and hopeless. However, there are two more pressing themes that pervade *Saint Luke's Gospel*.

***JESUS: OUR SACRIFICIAL LAMB.*** *Luke's Gospel* begins and ends in *Jerusalem's Temple*, the site of sacrifice, where an *Angel* tells *Zechariah* he will be *John the Baptist's* father. [Luke 1:5-25] *Luke's Gospel* ends with the *Apostles* "continually in the temple praising God." [Luke 24:53] No wonder the symbol for *Luke's Gospel* is a *winged ox*: the animal sacrificed to atone for sins. *Luke* has no ox or ass at *Christ's crib*; *Saint Francis* added them to his *Creche* based on this quote: *"An ox knows its owner, and an ass, its master's manger; But Israel does not know, my people has not understood."* [Isaiah 1:3] Hopefully, we are not as dumb - nor as stubborn as were our ancestors-in-faith!

***LUKE EMPHASIZES THE EUCHARIST.*** All three synoptic [*same eye*] Gospels [Matthew, Mark & Luke] record the *Last Supper* in detail; *John's Gospel* only focuses on *Jesus* washing the *Apostles'* feet, but devotes *Chapter 6*, the *Bread of Life Discourse*, on the *Eucharist's* significance. However, *Luke* records the most 'meals' - 12 in all - in which *Jesus* was the host or guest - stressing how He ate with the *rich* and *poor*, *friend* [Martha, Mary & Lazarus] and *foe* [Pharisees who despised Him]; *saint* [Apostles] and *sinner* [tax collectors & prostitutes]; *crowds* [4,000 & 5,000 at the multiplication of loaves] and *one-on-one* [Zacchaeus] - and these meals occurred *before* and *after* His *Death* and *Resurrection*!

Only *Luke* records our *Blessed Mother's* words in her *Magnificat*: *"The hungry he has filled with good things."* [Luke 1:53a] - which were fulfilled by the *Risen Lord* on *Easter* night with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: *"Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread."* [Luke 24:35] Although *Jesus* made a shoreline post-Easter breakfast for the *Apostles* [John 21:1-14], only *Luke* tells how the *Risen Lord* ate baked fish in their presence. [Luke 24:42-43]

So, as we put the image of *Baby Jesus* in His *manger bed* and add some *blessed straw* from our *Parish's Creche*, may it remind us to 'feed' on *Christ's Eucharistic Presence* often. That way, every time we receive *Holy Communion*, we can enjoy a little *'taste of Christmas!'* Merry Christmas and a blessed, healthy *New Year 2023!*

*In His holy Name,*

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