

Some people have weird eating habits. But none weirder than Michel Lotito.

Lotito eats everything. I mean EVERYTHING. In Amarillo, Texas, he ate a queen-sized bed. In Quebec he ate a whole bicycle. "The chain," he was quoted as saying, "was the tastiest part." Once he ate a car. A small car, true--a Renault, I think--but still a car.

As James Dent once noted in his humorous book, **James Dent Strikes Again**, Lotito is not an overgrown termite. He is a human-type person born about 30 years ago in Grenoble, France. He was a sickly child, prey to neighborhood bullies. As a way of keeping the toughs from beating up on him whenever they saw him, he decided to awe them by eating unlikely things. Who, after all, would hit a fellow who had just bitten off a mouthful of brick?

Well, his strategy worked. The bullies, jaws agape, stood back and waited in awe as Lotito ate his school desk and bit off the windowsill. He discovered that he rather enjoyed it. And since then he has been crunching his way steadily around the world. Lotito, invited to a buffet supper, will eat the buffet table.

He has eaten a half dozen television sets--considering the programs that have been on it's a wonder he didn't get terribly nauseous--and he went to Japan with the intention of consuming an airplane. He rejected that idea, however, after calculating that it would take him two years from propeller to tail to eat even the smallest model. Not wanting to disappoint the Japanese, he ate two more bicycles and a handful of transistor radios.

The next time you think that this is a relatively sane world, think of Michel Lotito.

Once there was an ugly accusation made against the followers of Jesus Christ. It had to do with their eating practices and it was based on our text from the Gospel of John:

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So, Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them." (NRSV)

You can imagine how the early church's neighbors responded to these words: *"Eat my flesh?" "Drink my blood?"* What kind of sect was this? Did they indulge in cannibalism? You and I know that Christ was foreshadowing the central feast of the early Christian community--the sacrament of the Lord's Supper--**but his words surely caused much confusion when he spoke them.**

In the early church, worship centered around the Lord's Supper. Christ himself had instituted the sacrament and the early church observed it faithfully. And why shouldn't they? It represented what they understood about Christ's ministry.

It represented, first of all, his death upon Calvary's cross. The broken body, the shed blood--through twenty centuries of history millions and millions of Christians have taken the bread and the cup and given thanks for Christ's sacrifice upon that holy tree.

A woman wrote into **READER'S DIGEST** sometime back. She told about her son who was studying medicine at McGill University. He told her of a patient brought into a hospital in Montreal whose life was saved by a blood transfusion. When he was well again this patient asked, **"Isn't there any way I can discover the name of the blood donor and thank him?"** He was told that names of donors are never divulged. A few weeks later he came back to give a pint of his own blood. Since then he has returned again and again for the same purpose. When one of the surgeons commented on this splendid anonymous service he answered simply, *"Someone I never knew did it for me. I'm just saying thanks."*

In some traditions the Lord's Supper is called the Eucharist--which means "Thanksgiving." How can we not be grateful when we remember what Christ did for us? **Ephesians 5:1-2 reminds us, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."** Only the most ignorant or withered hearts can perceive this truth and not feel overwhelming gratitude at God's enormous efforts to reconcile us to Him.

For Christmas one year, Phyllis Wohlfarth's husband gave her a gold lapel pin. Phyllis only took a second to thank her husband for his gift. A week later, as Phyllis put on the lapel pin, she reflected on her husband's thoughtfulness. With more sincerity, she thanked him again. Her husband replied that the pin had belonged to his grandmother, so it was very special to him. **Phyllis notes that if she hadn't offered the second "thank you," she might never have learned of the significance of the pin.** It was only when she took the time to reflect on the gift and offer a sincerer "thank you" that she really learned to appreciate her husband's gesture. **How often do we offer God a quick "Thank You" for our many blessings, and then forget about them?**

That is why we regularly celebrate the Lord's Supper. The more we reflect on Jesus' life, message, and death, the more we grow in gratitude. And gratitude creates joy. It's the exact opposite of a vicious cycle; ***it's a VICTORIOUS CYCLE***. Each time we share the bread and the wine, we have another chance to say "Thank you" to God, to praise God for God's abundant love and grace.

The Lord's Supper also reminds us of our unity as Christ's body. The first Lord's Supper took place around a table--a dinner table, if you will. We are a family--the family of Christ. We affirm that each time we break the bread and drink from the cup. We are also his body, according to I Corinthians 12:27. Revelation 21 calls us his bride. Peter called us a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:7).

There is an Arabic Baptist church in Israel that has a way to celebrate the breaking of bread. When they come together, each member brings a handful of grains of wheat. It may be from one's own field, or from their personal supplies at home. As they enter the church, they each pour their grains into a common pot. When all have come, and while **We meet Christ in this sacrament, but we also celebrate our common calling as his people.** The worship goes on, the pot is taken to the kitchen and somebody quickly grinds the wheat in a stone mill, mixes in water and salt, and kneads the flour into a loaf. It is put into the already-heated oven and baked.

By the time the service is finished, and the church moves into the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the breaking of bread, **the loaf is ready.** As each member breaks off his own portion, he or she is sharing grains of flour from every member of the church. When asked why they do this, one member replied, "As individual seeds we are each alone and separate from each other. **Only when we are broken into flour and baked together can we experience full fellowship.**"

The Lord's Supper reminds us of Christ's sacrifice in our behalf. It also reminds us of our unity as fellow believers in that sacrifice.

So how do we prepare ourselves properly for sharing in the Lord's Supper? What can we bring to the table, so to speak, that will allow us to experience it in all its mystery and glory?

First, we bring to the table an attitude of JOY!! Yes, this a place of reverence, but it is also a place of deep, abiding joy.

Gordon Cosby, founder and pastor of the Church of Our Savior in Washington, D.C., tells about preaching at a church where the worship was dull and uninspiring. Afterward, he and his wife were depressed. The church had reserved a room for them in a roadside inn, above a tavern. And they couldn't help but compare the sounds of laughter, music and camaraderie at the inn with the grim, lifeless service they had experienced.

Cosby later wrote, ***"I realized that there was more warmth and fellowship in that tavern than there was in the church. If Jesus of Nazareth had his choice, he would probably have come to the tavern rather than to the church we visited."***

John M. Buchanan has a pastor friend who is passionate about joyful worship. In fact, he has threatened to stand up in church one Sunday and shout, "**What's the matter? Somebody die in here?**"

And we would have to answer, technically, yes. Somebody did die. But he rose again from the dead and is reigning in heaven. He has defeated death, and promises eternal life to all who give their lives to him. As Jesus said, "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*" That's what the Lord's Supper commemorates: Jesus' death in our place. Every Sunday, we should be having a party. We should be dancing and cheering and shouting for joy. We should gather around the Eucharist table and yell, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*" (John 3: 16) **And then we should dance for joy.**

If you only view the Lord's Supper in terms of Jesus' suffering and death, then you are missing its full meaning. Jesus promised eternal life to those who take his life into theirs. He wanted us to remember him with joy.

And secondly, we come to the table with an attitude of HUMILITY. When we come to worship, we come with a bowed heart. For the hour or so that we are in worship, we forget about ourselves and focus on our Savior and Lord, the one who created us and saved us and now owns us. We come with an attitude of humility, ready to obey whatever he calls us to do.

In a great cathedral there is a statue of Christ. A person who stands before that statue will be disappointed with the ugliness of the Christ's face. It is rough and strangely shaped. But on the base of the statue is an inscription: "*Kneel down and look up.*" A person who obeys these instructions sees something entirely new. The face of Christ is not ugly anymore. In fact, it is attractive and gentle. **What makes the difference?** It is the position of the observer. **The sculptor carved the face in such a way that its true beauty could only be seen by those who bow before it.** How can we, who are hopeless sinners, ever fulfill God's standards of perfect holiness? We can't. The wages of sin are death, and we have earned every penny of our condemnation. But Romans 5: 8 reminds us, "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*"

In 1992, Don Butcher's wife, Helen, became ill. This occurred in the middle of the wheat harvest and Don, a wheat farmer, asked his friends to store up his wheat for a season while he took care of his wife. Sadly, Helen died later that year. While reading his Bible for comfort, Don was inspired by a passage in Isaiah about giving to the hungry. He decided to ship his surplus wheat to the Soviet Union. This gift would serve as a memorial to his beloved Helen.

With the help of other farmers, Don Butcher shipped many tons of wheat and dried beans to the former Soviet Union, Moldova, and Belarus. In each sack of flour, he included the name and address of the farm family who sponsored it. As Don said, "*I want this grain to go to a family, from a family. I want to say it's not bread alone, but sharing God's love that can make a world of difference.*"

Any time we gather to worship, and especially any time we celebrate the **Lord's Supper**, it is about more than the **BREAD**. As a family, we are sharing God's love--with one another and with the world for which Christ died. **So, as we "EAT & DRINK" let's prepare our hearts to receive the Lord with "JOY, GRATITUDE & HUMILITY," knowing the great difference it will make for you and for me.** Amen.