

By Pat Haggerty

Our society is obsessed with body image. We are constantly being reminded of what we should look like and what we should eat. It's everywhere---celebrities espouse the benefits of one diet over another. One doesn't know who to befriend Jenny Craig or Dr. Atkins. Which power shake is better or which snack cracker? Is it better to eat three meals a day or six small meals? What does the latest food pyramid look like? And, the ultimate question---what is your BMI?

Looking at the big picture (no pun intended), we also have to consider that we are waging a battle against national obesity. Our adult population is expanding and not necessarily in numbers but in girth. Our children are facing challenges of poor eating habits, a lack of exercise, and poor health due to obesity.

These are real issues, and they are not to be ignored. We need to approach weight and body image from a health perspective. What do we need to do to live a healthy lifestyle? What do we consider healthy for us? How do we view food consumption and world health issues?

I could go on and on. However, the real issue that I want to address is not body image but spiritual image. How often do we obsess over that? How are we doing spiritually? How do we promote our own spiritual health? What do we use as a "scale" for our own spiritual well-being? What do we need to do to live a good spiritual life?

I think we can answer many of those questions by reflecting on the readings for the feast of Corpus Christi, the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Paul tells us in his first letter to the Corinthians: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.” We see in our reception of the Eucharist the essence of our redemption and the true proclamation of our faith.

In the gospel reading we hear about Jesus feeding the multitudes with five loaves of bread and two fish. The disciples were amazed that they could feed five thousand people with so little. Yet, “they all ate and were satisfied.” (Luke 9:17)

We can find our own satisfaction in the Living Bread. Every time we approach the table and receive the Eucharist we are partaking in the body and blood of Christ. We nourish ourselves spiritually; we share in the Mystical Body; and we experience a piece of redemption. Not only will the Eucharist sustain us on a temporary basis. As the gospel acclamation proclaims: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord; whoever eats this bread will live forever.” What a promise that is!

So, don’t minimize the importance of your BMI but focus on the beauty and true importance of your spiritual nourishment. The Eucharist is our most important food. It is what we need to develop our spiritual image.