

In his 1826 work *“The Physiology of Taste: Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy,”* the French politician Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin wrote:

Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.

Brillat-Savarin was hardly a nutritionist though - his direction was more along the lines of gourmet foods, and getting the most enjoyment out of food.

The German philosopher Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach, who some believe influenced Karl Marx, wrote that *“A person is what they eat.”*

Although it’s not certain how what Feuerbach ate affected his philosophy or his atheism or his influence on the development of dialectic materialism.

It wasn’t until the 1940s that the American, Dr. Victor Lindlahr, following a successful radio show on nutrition wrote his book *“You are what you eat”* which was the first popular book on diet and nutrition ... selling over half a million copies.

And the rest is history. This spawned a whole series of diet and nutrition themed books which have given us the Grapefruit Diet, the Paleo Diet, the Cabbage Soup Diet, the Atkins Diet, and the South Beach Diet among many, many others.

As to whether we are or aren’t what we eat - well, I’ll leave that up to the philosophers and food critics ... and to the doctors and authors.

In today’s Gospel from St. John we hear the continuation of last week’s reading from Chapter 6 - what is commonly known as the Bread of Life Discourse.

Following the miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes, Jesus and His disciples depart from the area ... only to be mobbed by the crowd - who are in search of a free lunch.

The nuances of the dialog between Jesus and the crowd become more apparent when we examine the Greek text directly. We hear the word *“work”* used in the conversation. Jesus admonishes the crowd *“not [to] work for food that perishes,”* to which they reply *“What can we do to accomplish the works of God?”* Jesus replies that the *“the work of God, that [they] believe in the one he sent.”* And finally, they challenge Our Lord asking Him *“What can you do?”*

The words rendered *“work”* and *“works,”* *“accomplish”* and *“do”* in this dialog all come from the Greek word *ergon* that means *“to do business”* or *“to produce something by hand.”*

In other words, the crowds are haggling with Jesus over the price of a free lunch ... and Jesus is trying to point them to higher things such as the gift of God the Father, and His Son who has been sent.

One can only imagine their confusion when in the midst of the bargaining and haggling, Jesus drops them by saying:

*“I am the bread of life;
whoever comes to me will never hunger,
and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”*

After all, it would seem that they wanted a bargain - whereas Christ wants a relationship.

Indeed, *we are what we eat* - and Saint Paul makes this clear in Chapter 4 of his letter to the Ephesians when he tells his listeners, and us as well that what we:

*“have heard of [Jesus] and
were taught in [Jesus],
as truth is in Jesus,”*

should transform us - or as Paul says it, we:

*“should put away the old self ...
and be renewed in the spirit of [our] minds,
and put on the new self”*

Yet without the grace of God, we are sort of powerless to effect any real change. Like those failed fad diets that never really seem to work.

The connection between the desire for transformation in Christ Jesus and an actual transformation in, with, and through Him - comes to us through the infinite graces we receive in the Sacraments - and especially in the Eucharist.

By our worthy reception of the Bread of Life, we tap into the power to be transformed in Christ. When we recognize in the Eucharistic species the Real and True Presence of the Son of God ... and allow Him to have an affect on our selves and our lives - we begin to put away who we are and be renewed in Christ to become who we are meant to be.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us pray for an openness to His transforming grace. Let us beg Him to *“give us this bread always”* ... and in recognizing in the Person of Christ in the *“Bread of Life”* let us receive the manifold graces of this Sacrament to be *“renewed in the spirit of [our] minds, and put on the new self.”*