

Fr. Perozich comments —

There is a time to fast and a time to feast.

For you laity, when priests get together for recreation, often there are steaks, wine, and cigars. The dinner and conversation go on for a while, so that everything, including the brotherhood, can be savored and last beyond the time in which food, drink, smoke, and friendship are actually enjoyed.

Each of us tastes them differently according to his constitution. Some consume more, others less, and some of us abstain from smoking, but still have the effect of the cigar aroma from our friends and brothers.

Prayer and the sacramental life where we encounter Jesus should be savored and extend far beyond the time where we actually engage the Lord. The enjoyment of our time with Him is a savoring of the faith that carries us through the day, the week, into the anticipation of our next feast with person and love of Jesus.

Thick Steaks, Good Cigars, and the Catholic Faith

H. Merritt Baker [August 12, 2020](#)

G.K. Chesterton once remarked, “the Catholic Church is like a thick steak, a glass of wine, and a good cigar.” When most secular people think about the Catholic Church – or, more often, some mischaracterization of it – I doubt

anyone would list such a delightful series of sensory metaphors. Rather than dignifying the tired, boorish criticisms of the modern secularists, Chesterton simply laughs, lights his cigar, and kicks back above the shallow criticism. Why? Because he *sees* something. He understands at a deeper level. He grasps the deep truths behind the nature of things, without the silliness of engaging in a petty debate. Instead, he presents sensory images that illuminate the mind, far more than any intellectual squabbling.

This prompts the question: what did Chesterton see in the Catholic Faith that made him compare the Church to steaks, wine, and cigars? Simply put, he saw something to be *savored*. He saw Truth as a juicy, thick, perfectly cooked steak – something you could really sink your teeth into. He saw Beauty as a fine glass of French burgundy – something delicate, robust, and timeless. He saw Goodness as the smoky taste of toasted tobacco – something satisfying, mystifying, and captivating. Chesterton reaches for the height of savory indulgences, combining them, mixing them, placing them in our minds to elevate our understanding of the Faith: something worth cherishing, enjoying, sharing, and especially, savoring.

Chesterton is exactly right to make this comparison. The Church is the only thing, on this side of heaven, that a human being can infinitely savor. If the Faith must be savored, how do you savor the Faith? Firstly, by *knowing* the Faith. Saint Anselm of Canterbury described the Church as the “Faith seeking understanding.” A Catholic, who seeks understanding through diligent study and prayer, will be rewarded with incredible treasures and joys, and will never tire of contemplating God. A non-Catholic who searches genuinely for God will find his questions answered, his heart set on fire,

and be shocked and wonderfully amazed because his deepest longings are satisfied.

But, you may be asking, how does this *really* happen?

Thankfully, Our Lord has made this possible. Because of the Incarnation of Christ, heaven and earth have come together. Since Pentecost, the Church has been – and always will be – the great meeting-place of God’s People. Our knowledge of God is no longer obscured by the darkness of pagan days. We are re-connected with God’s inner life, and the Church continues to immerse Mankind in Truth, Goodness, and Beauty itself. As a Catholic, you don’t have to agonize and beg for spiritual fulfillment, nor do you have to fill your life with distractions, as the world does. The treasures of heaven are so readily available! A Catholic can spend his entire earthly life in prayer, reading, instructing, pondering, and savoring these transcendentals of the Faith. Even ten thousand lifetimes would not be enough time to ponder, wonder at, and savor these treasures.

This brings us to the second – and most important – step to **savoring the Faith**. The life of Faith abounds with savory trails, but the main highway is built on the Sacraments. Want to ponder the inner life of God? Want to know the secrets of Creation? Want to have inner peace, and rest face to face with the Lord at his heavenly banquet? The secret is right in front of us: consume his own Flesh, drink his own Blood, surrender to his own Divinity, and welcome his own Soul within you. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the direct face to face encounter with God. The Holy Eucharist will overflow the Divine Life within you. All the Sacraments – Baptism, Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist, Penance, Marriage, Holy Orders, Extreme Unction – are the well-spring of God’s Life,

and the taste of these savory realities they will unlock the joy that Chesterton points us towards.

Having received the Sacraments, there is so much dynamic richness to delight in: mysteries that satisfy the spiritual yearnings within our hearts and the study of rational arguments that expand the searching of our minds. We cannot take this for granted, nor can we ever let our minds become distracted from the simple fact that only in the Catholic Church do mystery and reason work together to create the ultimate spiritual playground. The scholasticism of Saint Thomas Aquinas perfectly compliments the mysticism of Saint Teresa of Ávila. Savoring the Faith occurs through a joyful combination of both, forming a two-lane highway directly to God.

The Creed of the Catholic Church is a treasure trove of mysteries, paradoxes, and revelations about the fundamental foundations of reality. These Truths have withstood two thousand years of intellectual bombardment precisely because they are true. Alongside the truths of her mysteries, the Church unleashes an unmatched intellectual tradition.

The Catholic Faith does not merely satisfy the intellect: the Faith engages the body as much as the soul. The raw beauty of the Church can overwhelm the senses. The Catholic faith is a visceral experience, engaging the full array of the senses, elevating the heart and mind to spiritual realities. Clouds of incense, echoes of chanting, throwing of Holy Water, the communication of the Precious Flesh and Blood, the laying on of hands, anointing of Holy Oils, blessings of Holy Rosaries and scapulars, penitential fasts, and joyous feasts are essential dynamics and foundations of the Church. Furthermore, the Church continues to unleash the grace of God upon the world through the Sacraments that Jesus

commanded his Apostles to administer. The waters of baptism, the words of absolution, the Holy Sacrifice of Flesh and Blood upon our altars, the exchange of rings between husband and wife, the laying on of hands at Confirmation – this is grace communicated through nature. Chesterton understood these dynamics. Steaks, wine, and cigars also reflect the intoxicating incense, the haunting chants, the rays of light through stained glass, the rich textures of priestly vestments. These sensory experiences are also worth savoring. We must note that these are not distractions from God. Rather, these physical realities are essential to elevate our minds to the higher spiritual realities. We are both physical *and* spiritual beings, and we don't worship God in some abstract, gnostic sense. As Catholics, the physical beauty of the practiced Faith is purposeful, because we order all things – both physical and spiritual – to God.

Chesterton is telling us something else about the Church, and her relationship with modernism. The Church – like steaks, alcohol, and cigars – is considered *unhealthy* by modern society. Unfortunately, the modern secularist rants and rails against the Church. He calls the Church oppressive, judgmental, and patriarchal. But, as in Chesterton's day, this happens because the modern secular culture has created a skewed moral code for itself. Modern society has a secularist moral code with certain behaviors it deems acceptable, and other behaviors it has deemed unworthy. Without listening to God's guidance, everything under this ideology has gone out of balance. According to the secular code, enjoying a cigar is off limits, but killing little babies in an abortion facility is a "right" worth fighting for. This secular code seeks to regulate our speech and behavior at a fundamental level – and not in conformity with the will of God, but rather, in obeisance to the

whims of man. Society considers tobacco taboo; it also considers the Church taboo. The Church is considered unhealthy for allegedly being too judgmental and too strict. The vegan secularist, who fasts from certain foods for reasons he believes will benefit his physical health, sharply rebukes the Church for her fasts, which are undertaken for good of man's spiritual health. The modern health-nut, who struggles to resist a piece of chocolate cake, criticizes Catholics who have successfully mastered their desires to resist much more dangerous temptations. The politician, who seeks to destroy anyone with opposing opinions, slanders the Church as being intolerant for her opinions. The abortion doctor chastises the Church for "backwards thinking," while butchering an innocent child in a "clinic."

Chesterton knew that the Catholic Faith was the real treasure. And without the Church, we can see that modern society has gone off the rails. Modern society is like the prodigal son, but it has not returned to its senses and come home. Despite the doomed course of the modern-day pagans, the Church will always be here. She waits patiently, with open arms for any seeking soul. She proclaims boldly, unafraid to expose the hypocrisy and set things right. She sacrifices, endures, and marches forward through history, because she has already triumphed. Two thousand years ago, the Church was right when she announced the news of Christ's Resurrection. And two thousand years later, the Church is still right. She will always be here, helping men to become better men, and helping women to become better women, by bringing all of mankind to God.

The treasures of our Faith must be savored. The secular culture offers only bitter fruits. The real delicacies are right in front of us. The sweetest experiences of God's inner life are

fully ready for any Catholic who seeks them. Chesterton knew this, and we know it too. So, at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we should savor the gifts of God's own Presence alongside His choirs of angels. At Adoration, we should relish in the sweet whispers of Our Lord. At confession, we should taste the goodness of Our Lord's mercy in the Divine Courts. In prayer, we should sit in Holy Silence, knowing Our Lord will give us everything you need.

As Saint Paul told us, "rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). A Catholic who wishes to savor these things, therefore, should devoutly pray a Holy Rosary, go kiss his wife, play with his children, watch the sunset, and savor a good cigar, remembering to be thankful by savoring all that God has given him.



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