

June Reflection

The Eucharist – ‘He thanked God for it and broke it, and He said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this as a memorial of me”.’ 1 Cor 11:24

This well-known verse of Sacred Scripture comes from the earliest writings of the Institution of the Eucharist, and is heard each year in the readings of Maundy Thursday, as well as being occasionally used (Year C) at the feast of Corpus Christi, which we just celebrated last weekend, though this year of course from Year B.

I would like to draw out three aspects of this verse, in particular what the Eucharist means to us as Catholic Christians, and for whom, the Eucharist is the Source and Summit of our (Christian) Lives (CCC1324).

Firstly we see here Jesus as he breaks the bread, is highlighting the sacrificial nature of his life and death – not only was the bread broken, but the very next day, his body was also physically broken, for us. Jesus literally gave himself for us, in this ultimate sacrifice. Whilst there are other natures of the Eucharist which we will reflect further on, let us not forget that Christ himself was truly broken for us.

Secondly we have the aspect of the community meal – Jesus sat at table with his closest friends, who came to that supper just as they were. They had their issues, they had their worries, there were even hidden agendas amongst their number! But Jesus welcomed them as they were, warts and all. I find this truly encouraging when we are often distracted or sometimes otherwise troubled when we attend Mass; sometimes we only bring baggage, but we sit together in a Community of the faithful, and share that same Holy Communion together, just as the Disciples did.

Building upon that, we also have the aspect of the remembrance of this sacrifice, where Jesus asks us to enter into this new covenant with Him. Whenever we too participate in this breaking and sharing of His body, we indeed do it in memory of Him. I think too of the later meeting on the road to Emmaus where the Disciples walked alongside Jesus unknowingly discussing the recent events surrounding His death, and yet at the shared table, where Jesus again broke bread, the Disciples recognised Him at that moment, and realised indeed the Jesus had risen,

and conquered death. Jesus was truly present to those disciples through that meal, and this is exactly what happens for us during each Mass, through the actions of the Priest, acting in the person of Christ. Jesus is truly present for us also.

Jesus promised us that he would be with us always, and in this unique gift of his Real Presence to us through the Eucharist, we have a wonderful ability to be able to be able to connect with, recognise, pray to, adore, and ultimately inwardly receive our Lord into our bodies. Renewing our very beings and our lives from the inside out! Likewise, when we have the opportunity to pray before the Blessed Sacrament in a time of Adoration, there again too, this same Jesus is truly present to us, and whilst we cannot ourselves reach out and actually touch the hem of his garment, (Mt 9:22) we can reach out to him in prayer and thanksgiving, very intimately through this gift.

I remember often hearing my friend Kevin talk about his time spent before the Blessed Sacrament in Prayer, and his Priest asking him if he felt he knew God. Kevin had spent at least an hour with our Lord each Sunday afternoon of his long life, and said that whilst he was not sure that he could say that he knew God, he was absolutely sure that God knew him! By spending time with Jesus in this way, we can grow and deepen our relationship with him, and indeed our love for him too.

My prayer for our Diocese during this Year of Prayer is that we take the opportunity to renew our Encounter with Jesus, physically present to us in the Blessed Sacrament, and to deepen our love for him as a Community. That when, during Mass or Exposition, that we can look upon the Sacred Host and Precious Blood, and can pray with wide eyes, as Thomas said, “**My Lord and My God**” (Jn 20:28).

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