

Homily for Corpus Christi

One of the consequences of lockdown was the inability to share a meal with others. I suspect that I am not alone in admitting that there have been times when I have cut corners, gone for a ready made meal or take away, and eaten in front of the TV. It was a real joy recently to be invited to eat in the company of four others and to enjoy, not only the food, but the company and the conversation. It was a sacred moment.

In the Gospel today Jesus and his disciples are sharing a sacred moment within the context of the most important meal that any family or friends would share, namely the Passover. The Passover was a ritual remembering of God's intervention in the lives of God's people and the first reading from Exodus celebrates this freedom from physical slavery, and also, at a deeper level, reminds them of their passage from darkness to light, from sin to grace. The ritual of sprinkling the blood over the altar and the people sealed the covenant relationship between God and the people who commit themselves to 'do everything that Lord has told us.'

In the gospel this twofold commitment takes on a whole new significance because at this meal Jesus uses common elements of bread and wine as signs of his commitment to us. He calls the bread his body, and the wine his blood, and tells the disciples to eat and drink. 'This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, which is to be poured out for many.' The events of the following day would demonstrate the cost of the gift of Jesus under the forms of bread and wine, a gift which enables us to fulfil our commitment, to be broken and poured out in the service of others.

The final words of the Mass 'Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord,' are a reminder that the Eucharist doesn't end when we leave the Church. The ritual in the previous hour, listening to God's word, praying for the world and the Church, taking part in the great prayer of Thanksgiving we call the Eucharist, and receiving the gift of Christ in communion, or in these times, spiritually, may be over but unless it makes a difference to how we live, then we are missing something important. As one writer put it, 'we eat the Body of Christ to become the Body of Christ.' And as the Body of Christ in our world we commit ourselves to responding to the needs of others. This might be a determination to 'live simply so that others may simply live'. It might be to inform ourselves about how our buying habits affect the lives of people on the other side of the world. We might want to check our carbon footprint and see if there are ways we can improve it. We know there will be many other choices we will make this week which will affect the well being or otherwise of other people.

"O thou, the wisest, mightiest, best, our present food, our future rest, come make us each thy chosen guest." As chosen guests we come seeking the nourishment that will keep us strong and determined as we continue on our journey. This is my body broken for you, this is my blood poured out for you, do this in memory of me.

Bidding Prayers for Corpus Christi:

Celebrant:

At the supper to which we are all invited Christ gives his body and blood for the life of the world. Nourished by such a great gift we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will always help us grow in our understanding and appreciation of the gift of Jesus himself under the forms of bread and wine in Holy Communion.

Lord in your mercy

For leaders of nations and Governments – that they will do all they can to bring about reconciliation built on justice so that all people may live in peace.

Lord in your mercy

For those for whom fasting is not an option but a daily occurrence – that there will be a more just distribution of the world's resources so that everyone may have sufficient to eat and drink.

Lord in your mercy

For those caring for family members who are suffering in body, mind and spirit – that they will have the wisdom to know how best to care both for those who are ill and for themselves.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died especially all victims of violence, accident, natural disasters and the COVID pandemic Paddy Cahill, Jack Mundy, Tommy Cresham, Ann Cassidy, Edith Cox, Jack Poulter and Pat Mullan whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

Merciful Father, grant the petitions we make as we are one in celebrating the holy mystery of the body and blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen