

Reflection for a Holy Hour on Corpus Christi

“This is what I received from the Lord, and in turn passed on to you.” (*Cor 11:23*). These words from St Paul’s account of the last supper give us two significant phrases which illuminate our baptismal vocation; ‘Receive’ and ‘passed on.’ Here St Paul is specifically speaking of the Eucharist, but this is true also of our faith. The gift of faith, received in baptism, is the faith of the Church which we receive individually, but is something which we are called to pass on to others. What we celebrate in the sacramental life of the Church we are commissioned by our baptism to pass on to others by the witness to our living faith.

What is it that we receive and in turn pass on? The Book of Proverbs gives us an insight in the reading for the our Holy Hour. Wisdom offers a generous hospitality to those who respond to the call of the maid servants to come. Her house is a symbol of the Church, built on the seven sacraments and those who come need not be the “learned and the wise” (Matt 11:25) but the “ignorant,” the ones with open hearts to receive in love what is offered; not just bread and wine, but that which brings insight, the meeting with the Lord. When we gather as a Church, we are offered these precious gifts which lead to deeper understanding of our faith and our lives.

Therefore, when we share in the Eucharist, we receive nourishment for the journey which helps us to perceive, or put another way, to discern more clearly the pathways of the Lord. We become like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, who not really understanding what had just happened at the events of the first Easter are drawn into the Lord’s presence through listening to the Word of God and sharing in the Breaking of Bread. Hopefully, when we are at Mass, we can enter ourselves into their experience and be able to say that our hearts too are burning because we have realised all that the Lord has done for us, and like them, be spurred into action to tell of this to others (Luke 24:33) We, then, pass on to others what we ourselves have received from the Lord’s generosity, like the two from Emmaus.

When the Catholic community gathers to celebrate the Sunday Mass it does this so as to ‘relive with particular intensity the experience of the Apostles on the evening of Easter when the Risen Lord appeared to them as they were gathered together. This close connection between the appearance of the Risen Lord and the Eucharist is suggested in the Gospel of Luke in the story of the two disciples of Emmaus, whom Christ approached and led to understand the Scriptures and then sat with them at table. The gestures of Jesus in this account are his gestures at the Last Supper with the clear allusions to the “Breaking of Bread”, as the Eucharist was called by the first generations of Christians.’ (*Dies Domini* 33).

This gathering of the community Sunday by Sunday, according to Pope St John Paul II is so that in each place where the Eucharist is celebrated, the Church is truly present and, in this way, Sunday becomes the day of the Church where the People of God are nourished by the Lord in his Word and in his Eucharist. Through the gathering of the people, their experience of being fed in Word and Sacrament, they in their turn, become disciples and witnessed to him. Sunday is the day where each parish community is united in this great sacrament of love and draw deeply from this fountain of the Lord’s goodness. The weekly gathering for Mass, its celebration and the sending forth of all present, becomes the very heartbeat of the Church. “Renewed and nourished by this intense weekly rhythm Christian hope becomes leaven and the light of human hope.” (*Dies Domini* 38)

Pope St John Paul expresses how we are to be the light of hope and leaven for the world when he says that; “With the offering of the Sunday Eucharist, the Church crowns the witness which

her children strive to offer every day of the week by proclaiming the Gospel and practising charity in the world of world of work and in all the many tasks of life; thus she shows forth more plainly her identity 'as a sacrament, or sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the entire human race'" (*Dies Domini* 38). When we see it in this way, we know how dependent we are on this spiritual food for the work of Christian witness, bringing the message of hope and mercy to the world.

This sense of hope is extended when we come before the Lord for a prolonged moment of adoration. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament gives us the opportunity to come into the Lord's Eucharistic presence and quietly speak to him, to listen to what he says to us in silent contemplation, to be enfolded in his abundant love and to offer him the joys and sorrows of our daily life. Jesus speaks to our hearts, and we become conformed to him united in prayer to his passion, cross and resurrection.

How can we not fail to be in awe of the one before whom we kneel? How can we not be humbled by his generous love and mercy for us? Can anything stop us from bringing his love to others? "To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognise him wherever he manifests himself, in the many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and blood. *The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist*; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened. The Eucharist is both a mystery of faith and a mystery of light. Wherever the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the faithful can in some way relive the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: their eyes were opened, and they recognised him." (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 6).

Present to the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, we can pray that our eyes will be opened to know truly all that the Lord has done for us and pray for the courage to pass on to others the goodness that we have received.

*Come, then, good Shepherd, bread divine,
Still show to us thy mercy sign;
Oh, feed us, still keep us thine;
So we may see thy glories shine in fields of immortality.
O thou, the wisest, mightiest, best,
Our present food, our future rest,
Come, make us each thy chosen guest, Co-heirs of thine, and comrades blest
With saints whose dwelling is with thee.*

(The prayer of St Thomas Aquinas, used by Pope St. John Paul II to conclude *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*.)