

Pastoral Letter 11

Dear Friends

From Medieval times today's feast of Corpus Christi ('the Body of Christ') has been celebrated with great panache. Often there are colourful processions through the streets carrying the Blessed Sacrament - the Sacred Bread of the Eucharist - as a reminder of Christ journeying with his people and his continual presence with us.

The key word in our appreciation of the sacrament of the Eucharist is 'remembrance'. But the word Jesus used, and St Paul repeats, means rather more than 'evoke my memory' as if we might by looking at a photograph of a loved one. Both the word and the Hebrew one which is used in connection with the Jewish Passover mean more than that. They speak of taking an event from the past and making it dynamic and effective now.

When Christians gather to celebrate Holy Communion they bring an event that happened two thousand years ago - the death of Jesus on the cross - into their present day experience. The salvation won for us by Jesus Christ became part of our own faith experience in a dynamic way.

For many of us the celebration of the Eucharist is the bedrock of our Faith. Being part of virtual celebrations during lock-down has enabled our communities to better understand this sacrament and served wonderfully to bring us together. However, all online attempts are no substitute for the real thing.

Many of us are missing congregational worship, community life, the singing of hymns and songs and the leading of God's praise with choirs. As a priest I am missing terribly the joy of breaking bread and sharing wine in communion with the school community and St Alphege, Solihull since the lack of celebrating Mass has contributed to a feeling of exile which we are all experiencing at the moment.

The celebration of the Eucharist is something we do together, having heard the Scriptures together and prayed together. So we are currently prevented (quite understandably) from expressing in sign and sacrament what it means to be Christ's people sharing one bread and one cup.

After this period of lock-down and abstinence from the Eucharist I shall be really looking forward to our gatherings and the opportunity to cherish this gift more fervently.

I'll close with some words from the hymn writer, Stuart Townend which capture the meaning of Christ's love in the Eucharist

*How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He would give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the chosen One
Bring many sons to glory*

*I will not boast in anything
No gifts, no powr, no wisdom
But I will boast in Jesus Christ
His death and resurrection
Why should I gain from His reward?
I cannot give an answer
But this I know with all my heart
His wounds have paid my ransom*

With my prayers and blessing for you all

Father Andrew Hutchinson