

The readings this morning have told us the story of a God who is deeply in love with and committed to his people. Beginning with a reading from the book of Exodus we learn about a covenant of blood and sacrifice.

Paul then speaks to us of a new covenant. A covenant of love, living in and a part of each of us. If you Google the word ‘covenant’ you will find the theological definition of a covenant as being an agreement that brings about a relationship of commitment between God and his people.

In the gospel Jesus says to us “this bread is broken, my body is broken for you. Just as this cup of wine is poured out, my blood is shed for you.” Jesus was speaking of a new covenant – not one dependant on obedience or law but a covenant of love – between God and you and me. It flows from God to you and to me, back and forth from each of us to the other and back to God. A communion of love. The Body and Blood of Christ

For the past couple of weeks I have thought and reflected on this covenant, this bond of love. I’ve found myself reflecting on fleeting images that would come and go. Whispered thoughts that seemed to be behind a veil yet I knew them to be there - but to put into words to describe it all? This is a great mystery that we know intimately within our beings.

St Augustine in one of his sermons said “you will not understand, unless you believe.” Even with great belief it may be difficult to explain, for this understanding may be hidden deep within us.

The best that I can do is to share the words of others who are perhaps both wiser than I and more capable of sharing their experiences of the Body and Blood of Christ. I suspect they experience it all very similarly to myself but may better able to put them into words.

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, an Oblate of Mary Immaculate calls the Eucharist - God’s Way of Embracing Us. He explains that we are all human beings, physical creatures and so we need something physical – which is represented here with the Body and Blood of Christ.

He says that Jesus “gave us the Eucharist, His physical embrace, his kiss, - a ritual within which he holds us to his heart”. *Pause* A ritual within which God holds us to his heart – *I invite you for a moment to close your eyes and sit in that thought pause OK now you can open your eyes again, but hold on where you have just been.*

G.K. Chesterton wrote: “There comes a time, usually late in the afternoon, when the little child tires of playing policeman and robbers. It’s then that he begins to torment the cat!” Mothers, with young children, are only too familiar with this late afternoon hour and its particular dynamic. There comes an hour, usually just before supper, when a child’s energy is low, when it is tired and whining, and when the mother has exhausted both her patience and her repertoire of warnings: “Leave that alone! Don’t do that!” The child, tense and miserable, is clinging to her leg. At that point, she knows what to do. She picks up the child. Touch, not word, is what’s needed. In her arms, the child grows calm and tension leaves its body.¹

Ron continues: “We are that tense, over-wrought child, perennially tormenting the cat. There comes a point, even with God, when words aren’t enough. God has to pick us up, like a mother her child. Physical embrace is what’s needed. Skin needs to be touched. God knows that. It’s why Jesus gave us the Eucharist.”²

In Ron’s book “Our One Great Act of Fidelity – Waiting for Christ in the Eucharist” Part three is titled –A Spirituality of the Eucharist – Receive, Give Thanks, Break, Share. He writes that “The Eucharist is not intended to be simply a ritual prayer within which we participate regularly, but is also meant to be something that touches and colours every area of our lives.”³

The Eucharist needs to be a defining attitude, a way we meet life, receive it, and share it with others. It needs to be a spirituality, a way we undergo the presence of God and others in this world⁴.

¹ From Eucharist as God’s Physical Embrace – 2001-02-25

² Ibid

³ Our One Great Act of Fidelity – Waiting for Christ in the Eucharist by Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

⁴ Ibid.

This is what we celebrate this Sunday, this is what we take with us into our daily lives – from this community and into our homes, into our work places and into our school rooms and even into our play. We receive the gifts of the bread and wine, we give thanks, we break and pour and we share with each other.

I want to leave you with a few words that Fr. Andy spoke on Friday in his homily at Josephine Flaherty's funeral. He said: "Jesus took us, blessed us, broke us and gave us – a true relationship of love".

We are the Body and Blood of Christ. Happy Feast Day!

Authorities:

Exodus 24:3-8

Hebrews 9:11-15

Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

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