



CORPUS CHRISTI 31/00 RSJ

Exodus 24:3-8 Hebrews 9: 11-15 Mark: 14: 22-26.

Today is a celebration of the gift of Eucharist.

The reading from Mark's Gospel gives a very brief account of what we call the Last Supper. It seems that the writer was interested in making just two points, First, Jesus knew his betrayer. We are reminded of Psalm 41:10 "Even my friend who had my trust and ate bread with me, has raised his heel against me" this is the ultimate betrayal of hospitality. Second, that their custom of celebrating a Eucharistic meal came from Jesus.

We can hear from the reading, that Mark was reciting what had already become a liturgical formula. The narrative shows us what Mark and his community understood. Jesus is approaching the end of his life. With his death, the visible union between himself and his disciples will cease, replaced by a new relationship leading to the full blossoming of the Kingdom. Therefore, for the interim, Jesus provides a means of tangible union with himself by investing a broken and shared loaf and a cup of wine with special significance.

For Mark and his readers Jesus was instituting a sacramental rite. All who partake of this food, experience not only union with Christ, but also union with all who partake, all members of the same body. The cup would also signify that the Covenant, regularly ratified through sacrifice, is now ratified once for all through the selfless death of Jesus. As the prophets urged, it was never blood that was acceptable, but mercy. By accepting the bread broken and the cup the disciples accepted a share in the self-offering of Jesus.

We are concerned about meaning for today and the experiences of our communities. If the concept of Eucharist is to symbolise the union between the Christ and the present and continuing disciples, not as individuals but as a body, this should be our starting point.

When we participate in Eucharist how do we see ourselves? Most of us inherited a non-communitarian concept of Eucharist. The emphasis was on being present at something that was "said". We did not see ourselves as being present to one another.

Even today after so much renewal there are people who regard other members of Christ's body as distractions. Look about you at Mass, do you feel a sense of being "one with"?

Eucharist, from the Hebrew, berakah, means to praise, to thank or to bless. This gives us the foundation of our Christian living. We are a people who gather and are gathered. We tell and hear the stories of the past to re-member ourselves that we are God's people.

We break and share the Word. Not to find answers to what we are called to be and do in our world, but to test our contemporary answers in the light of the whole story. In our poverty we are not without hope.

Our seeming insignificance is still the stuff of Eucharist. We praise You, we thank You, we bless You.

Our humanity collaborates with God in the future shape of the world. Our redemptive love is still needed in our communities. Our eating and drinking is a pledge to this community, and the world that we are one body, and as one body we will live the all-embracing love of God. That is why the scripture says, (Mat. 5:23) if you can't do it, go home. To hold anger and resentment against another is a weakening of community and a weakening of the sign of God's overwhelming love for all. Matthew was trying to impress on his community the corrosive power of anger, which if buried and not dealt with easily turns to violence, the very antithesis of community.

As a sign it is a constant call for reconciliation and forgiveness. We cannot exhaust the depth of the meaning of Eucharist but each year we are reminded to continue our reflection so that our lives will continue to be shaped according to the pattern of Christ, high priest of the good things to come, and animator of all our works.

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