

Homilies on Sacraments [series 8]

Eucharist [part 3]: Our communion with Christ and fellowship with one another

Eucharist is our communion with Christ, union with Christ or celebration of the commandment 'love God with your whole heart'. All of St. John's gospel and letters explain this mystery of our life in Christ. 1John 1:1-4 says: 'that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, the word of life [Christ] we proclaim to you'. The apostles' historical experience of Jesus becomes our faith experience in our celebration of the Eucharist: we hear his word, we look upon the signs of bread and wine, and we touch Christ in our communion. Our life becomes life in Christ, a witness/proclamation of his love to the world.

- In John's gospel [1:35], the first thing Jesus says is an address to the two disciples who followed Jesus: 'what are you seeking'? Disciples asked: 'where do you stay'? Jesus: 'come and see'! The disciples went and stayed with him and then followed him. In our celebration of the Eucharist, Jesus invites us, 'come with faith, you stay with me, remain in me and follow me'. Following Christ is to love like Christ and even be ready to lay down life for love!
- In John 6:56 Jesus says, 'those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me'. Christ's ministry/giving himself in Eucharist is about reconciliation, inviting us to union with God and each other. Greek word menein [remain] is used 118 times in the New Testament and 68 times are in St. John's writings to signify our union with Christ. Jesus explains his longing to be united with us in the imageries of sheep and shepherd [John 10] and vine and branches [John 15]. Jesus is the shepherd king [Israel's kings were called shepherds] who gathers into unity his flock. Jesus says, my sheep know me, hear my voice, signifying our permanent relationship, loving union with Christ! The voice of Christ in the gospel, his presence, giving his life in the Eucharist builds our union with Christ, we his flock. The pasture to which Jesus leads his flock is the Eucharist, the sheep of Christ feeding on Christ [mutual indwelling]. St. Bonaventure explains the mystery of our union with Christ in the Eucharist in two simple sentences: 'In the Eucharist Jesus says, 'I give myself to you, you give yourself to me'!
- At the last supper Jesus knelt before his disciples and washed their feet. Jesus the king of love washes disciples' feet like a servant and asked them to do likewise. To Peter he said: 'if I do not wash your feet, you have no communion with me'. Our communion with Christ is an invitation to be servants of love, to build fellowship with one another or celebration of the commandment, love your neighbor as yourself'. Vine and branches is the other imagery of our union with Christ and love of neighbor that we experience in the Eucharist. Jesus says: 'I am the vine and you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit'. Fr. Antonio Rosmini said: 'Eucharist is permanent blessing within the earth. Blessing is releasing of all seeds for good and for love implanted by God at the core of everything. Eucharist blesses and stirs the seeds that are confirmed and nourished to

blossom to their full potential. All things in this world are sanctified by the body and blood of Christ'. Every time we receive communion the seeds of good in us are nourished to blossom into dynamic acts of service/charity.

- If we acknowledge Christ the king as king of our hearts/king of love, this king says to us [Mathew 25]: 'I was hungry, you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was stranger and you welcomed me, naked you clothed me, sick, you visited me, imprisoned, you came to me'; you are blessed of my Father. These are the fruits we the branches who remain in Christ bear through our merciful gaze, forgiving eye. We deny the self that urges to hate, divide, discriminate and our communion transforms us into Christ like self! Mary is the model; in her the word became flesh. Our communion challenges us to be God bearers like Mary and builders of the kingdom of Christ the king of love!

Father Jose