
MAY YOU REMEMBER EASTER 2003!



As we enter into Holy Week, allow me to quote a few lines from a new book entitled “Living One’s Faith Fully,” (*Pour vivre pleinement sa foi*) by Archbishop Joseph Plourde. In the book he writes about the Eucharist. The quote will show you the soundness of his theology and the pastoral timeliness of his reflection. The book is a series of meditations on the Christian faith, based on the Word of God, the theological virtues, the seven sacraments, the requirements of the Christian faith, and devotion to Mary. The book is available [in French] at the Diocesan Centre (735-5578).

THE EUCHARIST

“Third sacrament of Christian initiation, the Eucharist, memorial of Christ’s paschal event, is at the heart and the summit of the life of the Church. Jesus says, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry; whoever believes in me shall never thirst’ (Jn. 6:35) These words need to be well understood because they deal with a basic need of humans, a matter of life and death: no one can live without food and drink. In our meditation on baptism we saw that God gives new life to those being baptised. That life, too, needs to be nourished. Let us not forget that, of the two lives we have, the human and the divine, the most important of the two is the latter, and the nourishment it requires is also the most important. This sacrament is part of the treasury of the Church; therefore, it is essential to understand it better.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH SOMEONE WHO TALKS TO US AND WHOM WE ANSWER

“It is within the Christian assembly that the Word of God is proclaimed most fully. That is why the liturgical gathering begins with the liturgy of the Word. There are some who sometimes complain that the mass is meaningless to them. If one comes to church without a deep conviction that God has something to tell us, to share with us, and that He awaits our answer, if we do not welcome the Word of God when the sacred text is read in the liturgy and explained in the homily, the mass will certainly be boring, as boring as a one-way conversation. What would human life be like, without dialogue? When one truly believes in God, one truly strives to get to know God better in order to love Him better. Otherwise, faith would be meaningless. Hence, can one truly know and love someone one does not listen to when that someone speaks, and to whom one has nothing to say? That is why the mass is a way – not the only way, but the special way – of knowing and loving God, because it is there that the Word of God finds its natural place.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH ONE WHO LOVES US

“After having conversed with God, after having better understood what he expects of us, we gain better insight into our failings into the fickleness of our efforts, and the need we have of Him and His mercy, for courage and perseverance. In other words, it is then that the liturgical action makes truly present the greatest proof of love to those we love, the sacrifice of one’s life. Jesus said to his Apostles: ‘Do not stop telling my brothers and sisters that I love them ... It is because sin abounds in the world that the proof of my love for them despite their weaknesses, always remains.’ A person of faith can no more remain indifferent to God’s love than a man in love remains cold to the love of another. As the young are especially sensitive to love, why would they not be as sensitive to the mass?

AN ENCOUNTER OF ONE WHO JOINS US

“How do lovers naturally act? They hug and kiss and want to be as close as possible to one another. And this is what happens between Christ and the Christian, during the third part of the Mass, the communion. This is the meaning of the eucharistic banquet. It is therefore by means of a meal that Christ wanted to be united to us. ‘I am the bread of life, and whoever eats this bread shall live forever. And the bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.’ Since the union between Christ and us happens through a sacrament which is food, it is important for us to understand the meaning of the word ‘food,’ or nourishment. Food is what supports and develops the body, it gives energy, rebuilds the body, wards off illness and the seed of death that are in us. Food maintains and develops not only physical life, but social life, too. Because the sacraments effect what they signify, communion produces in the one receiving, effects similar to those produced by physical nourishment.

AN ENCOUNTER OF DEEP FELLOWSHIP, WITH OTHERS

“In the Eucharist there are also the other Christians to whom Christ is united. When someone is united to Christ, he or she necessarily becomes part of the community, the great community of faith which is the Church, and the small local community of those who join in the liturgical action. That is where a sense of being Church and of one’s Christian responsibilities is rooted. For each Christian, this sense of gathering can and must be a special time where he or she experiences being part of the Church, of the People of God, and where he or she experiences solidarity with other Christians. If the Christian welcomes the Word of God and actively shares in Christ’s sacrificial banquet, he or she perceives even more, Sunday after Sunday, God’s plan for the world, for the family, for one’s job, and for society, and because of this one’s need of being united with other Christians is felt more acutely, for the sake of the Reign of God, so that parish, diocese, and religious communities reflect life and the hope of the Gospel. It is for all these reasons that the eucharistic mystery lies at the centre of the Church’s life, and it is through the Eucharist that the Church grows in unity and love. Once we know this, can we continue seeing the mass as an ordinary ceremony, a simple obligation, and attend just to calm one’s conscience, to fulfill a precept and avoid sin? The Mass is the source of the Christian life because it is there that our life finds meaning, in contact with the Word of God, and that it renews the option it made at baptism, an option for eternal life. True fellowship is founded on the Eucharist because through his passion, death, and resurrection, Jesus drew us together despite our oppositions and distinctions of colour, language, and race, to make us all brothers and sisters, a new nation, a new family where it becomes once more possible to live together, to love one another, and to feel close to one another despite all that separates us.” Happy Easter!

+ François Thibodeau

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