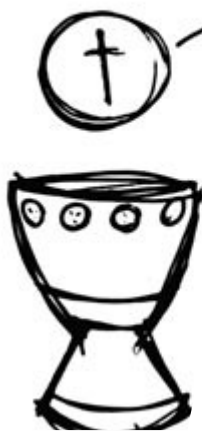


6 - Eucharist

How God plays hide and seek

God is humble, He seeks to take the lowest place. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he

writes of Christ's humility. Jesus is God, so this reveals God's humility.



"They will never find me in here!"

Though Christ Jesus was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.

Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

St. Francis talks of the humility of water, since it always flows down. God is humble to be able to join with us in our sin. We fall short of the glory of God. We are left down trodden by sin and its effects. We fall in a heap. God wants to get lower than us to be able to lift us up. God wants to enter into our sin. He wants to get into all the areas of hurt in our life, because he wants to heal us, free us, and give us joy and love. He doesn't just want to do this, he wants to be our friend and share eternal life with us.

How do we become friends with Jesus and share in the divine nature? Through the sacraments. Each sacrament is a special opportunity to share in the divine nature. Each sacrament is a fruit of heaven, that unites us with heaven and our eternal happiness.

WHAT IS A SACRAMENT?

Sacraments are signs and instruments of God and his love. A sign is something that points somewhere. Sacraments are signs that point us to God. Each sacrament has elements (eg water for baptism) that as we reflect upon them help us realise more about God and his love for us.

Sacraments are more than just signs, they are instruments, they actually bring about what they symbolise. Each sacrament is a 'God machine' which does something for God. Each of these 'God machines' are powered by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The blueprint of each 'God machine' is found in the life of Jesus. Over the centuries The Church has recognised seven sacraments.

Our Scientists have invented new spiritual night goggles for our SWOT Team (Spiritual Welfare Operations Team)



Each 'God machine' works because of what is used, the words and who uses it. Each sacrament installs a new feature in the soul or fixes the soul in some way. Once it has been performed, it is up to the recipient to actualise it. Some never unpack their gift.

If the sacrament has been performed correctly, it has definitely happened. The

sacraments do not depend upon the holiness of the minister of the sacrament or the recipient but by God's own authority and power. 'ex opera operato' (by the very fact of the action's being performed) (CCC 1128).

The full effects of the sacraments depend on the willingness of the recipient. The fruits of the sacrament (how well it works) depends on the disposition of the one who receives them, ie how much the person wants to live out the sacrament.

Four sacraments can only be celebrated once and three of them leave a special seal upon the soul, which is 'a positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection, and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church' (CCC 1121).

Salvation is only achieved through the sacraments of the Church. Baptism is necessary for salvation. But while God binds himself to the sacraments, he is not bound by them. Of course, God can save others as he pleases. Salvation is based on love. You can even receive the sacraments, but if you have no love (charity), you are not saved. This is Church teaching. "The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a "bodily" manner and not "in his heart."" (Lumen Gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, para. 14. 1964)



How does God save people?

SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION		
BAPTISM (baptism means to be 'immersed')		
Elements	sign	instrument
Oil of Catechumen	Like fly spray and athlete's oil. To ward off evil and give wisdom and strength.	
Water and words "[Name] I baptise you in the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"	Death (drowning) - death to sin. Death of Jesus Life (no water, no life) - resurrection of Jesus. Divine life. Washing - washed from sin	Brings about death to sin and entry into the life the Trinity, through configuration with the death and resurrection of Jesus.
Oil of Chrism	"anointing' of the Holy Spirit - as priest, prophet and king.	
White garment	Purity - being clothed with the purity of Christ.	
candle	Light - enlightenment. Being enlightened by Christ who is the light of the world.	
CONFIRMATION		
Laying on of Hands Anointing with the Oil of Chrism and the words "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit"	The oil represents an anointing, a pouring out of God's grace upon the person. The laying on of hands represent the passing on of the gift of grace, which has been passed on, person to person all the way back to Jesus himself. The words indicate what is happening	The Holy Spirit is given in a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost.
EUCCHARIST		
Bread and Wine	Bread (Jesus' body): food, the eternal banquet in heaven. Wine (Jesus' blood): drink - quench our spiritual thirst. Blood of the new eternal covenant for the forgiveness of sins.	"Holy Communion augments our union with Christ" (CCC 1391) "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56)

You may have noticed, that a funeral is not a sacrament. The person is already dead, and so we pray for the person but they can no longer receive a sacrament, since they have gone.

THE EUCHARIST

The time has come to explore the greatest source of God's grace on Earth, the Eucharist. What we have learnt about from the covenant comes to perfection and completion in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is God's total gift of self to you. It is Jesus' body, soul and divinity in the appearance of bread. It is true food for our soul. The key to making the Eucharist alive is to give yourself to God through it. God gives everything to us and invites us to do the same.

We should give everything to God, all our sin, hopes, dreams, possessions, friends, family, our will, heart, soul, body, our very selves. Through this gift of self to God, this submission to God, we come into union and communion. This is an action of the heart particularly when we receive. To open our heart and invite Jesus in to every part of our lives and share all with Him. As we share, his love enters through us into every aspect of our lives. This love poured into our hearts overflows out through us into the world.

So what is the Eucharist?

One key to understanding the Eucharist, is that God is humble. Let us revisit the Philippian hymn:

"Though Christ Jesus was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross." (Phil 2:6-8)

We can add another ending...

Humbler still,
Jesus takes on the appearance
of bread,
The blood of forgiveness,
To be food for our souls
And so within us,
united we become one.
Lover and beloved.
God, Himself, infinity, given,

"I freely give myself at every mass"



"These Days there's nothing for free."

But I offer myself at every mass, because I love you.



-MASS IS Boring

You only get what you give



Our limited self, longing, fulfilled.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

The words of the priest at Mass, through the action of the Holy Spirit. Turn the substance of the bread into the actual body, soul, and divinity of Christ. It appears to be still bread and still 'functions' as bread, but IS in reality, the body, soul and divinity of Jesus. It IS

Jesus. It remains Jesus until it no longer functions/appears as bread.

It was St. Thomas Aquinas who first confirmed the Church's teaching on the Eucharist and used the term, 'transubstantiation'. It is only by faith that this can be accepted and perceived. St. Thomas puts it this way, "And therefore, properly speaking, Christ's body, according to the mode of being which it has in this sacrament, is perceptible neither by the sense nor by the imagination, but only by the intellect, which is called the spiritual eye." (St. Thomas, Summa, 3, 76,7)



Jesus is with us always. He is truly present in every Catholic Church. There are special graces given through adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The eye is the window of the soul. To look upon the Eucharist is to look at God and let God look upon you. To let his light shine deep into your soul, dispelling the darkness and bringing warmth and love. Try to visit a Church often and just 'waste' time with Jesus, letting him love you. It is this love that we truly seek in life and that truly satisfies.

How can we make Mass more meaningful?

And now for something completely different....

THE LAW

Last week we explored the covenant. We can now complete that understanding as we reflect upon the law. The requirements for fulfilling the Sinai covenant is called the Law or Torah in Hebrew. The Torah is the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These books contain 613 'laws' or precepts that the Jew should follow. The first ten are quite familiar to us as the ten commandments and are the most important. The rest of the 613 precepts covers many things such as how to deal with leprosy, sickness, stealing, and many other issues within a community. The ancient Israelite loved the law. The longest psalm is in praise of the law. Please read psalm 119, this will give you an insight into the ancient Israelite mind.

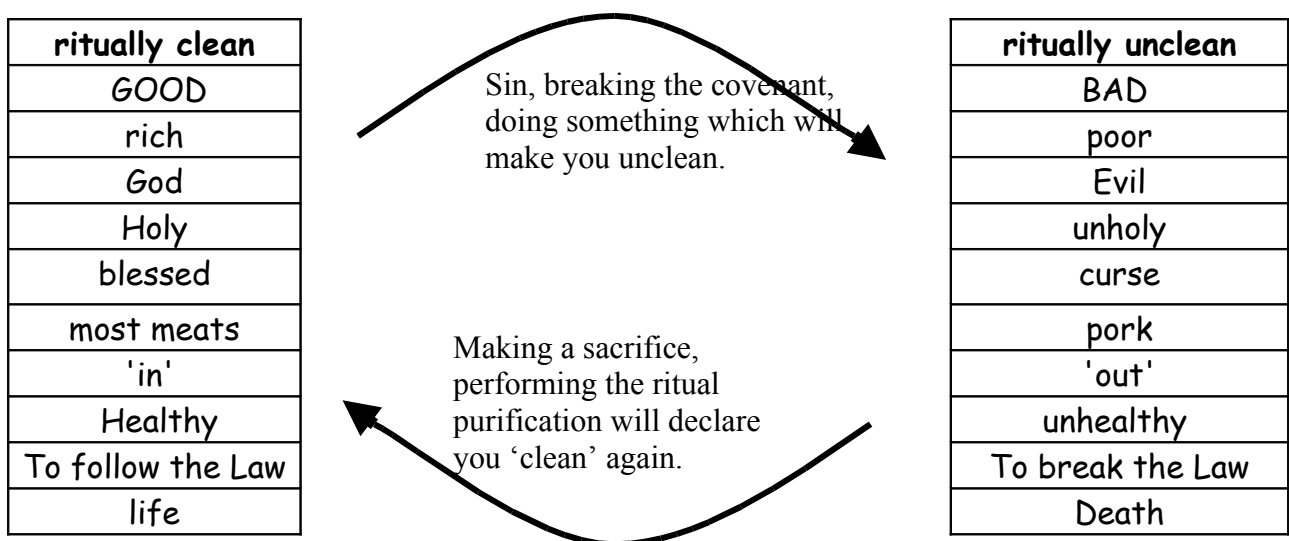
Why did they love the law so much? For people of the ancient world, they believed that if they pleased the gods, then the gods would take care of them. If they didn't then disaster would happen. That is how they explained suffering. If there was a drought then it was because they didn't do the right thing by their gods. We can think like that sometimes as well. "Don't do that, God would strike you with lightning!" or

"What have I ever done to deserve this?" But Jesus teaches us that God the Father loves everyone and cares for everyone. Sin itself has negative effects. But God does not seek revenge, but in fact gave us Jesus so we can be saved.

But let us get back to the covenant. For someone in the ancient world, if things are going well it is because the person is pleasing the gods or if not, then they have done something wrong. Of course it is more complicated than that. Which god is to be followed? Which one is more powerful? How do you please the gods? When your life depends on getting this relationship right it becomes something very important. It also becomes a joy to know you are on the right path, and this is what makes the Law such a great joy.

There is so much to be explored about the Law. For our purposes this week, we will focus on the Jewish understanding. I am now going to simplify the Law down which does not do credit to it's richness, but will give an insight into some of it's aspects. But please remember it is an oversimplification and therefore does an injustice to some aspects.

The Law can be oversimplified into determining 'ritually clean' from 'ritually unclean'. Let's make a table about these points. This was a very simple way to understand reality. People were meant to stay 'clean'. There were some day to day things that would make you unclean, eg touching blood. There were other things that meant you were dangerous, eg a skin disease, so you were unclean and expelled from the camp because you were a danger to health of the community. Committing sin was also seen as a danger to the camp. To make amends depended upon what caused the uncleanness. It could be a simple washing. In sever cases, there was no return, and the person was killed. This does not reflect God's intention as Jesus clearly reinterprets this law, many times.



The ancient mind thought health was a sign of God's favour, and sickness as punishment. So things that caused sickness, the ancient mind might ban. Pork was a meat that could easily go off, so one explanation is that it was counted as unclean

because people died from eating it.

For the Pharisees this system of in and out was paramount. Jesus came along to turn it upside down. Jesus did not come to do away with the Law, but to fulfil it. To perfect it. Jesus teaches the way of the heart. By living the law of love, we are able to fulfil the ten commandments. Jesus even teaches that all foods can be eaten, thus 'changing' some of the laws. Jesus is the fulfilment of the law. Through Jesus we truly learn what God requires and are able to actually do it.

Because Jesus was changing people's understanding of the law, the Pharisees who saw themselves as 'better' than others because they kept the law could not handle Jesus 'changing' the rules on them. So they thought Jesus was breaking the law and therefore was not on God's side. They were more concerned about rules than love. Love still has clear rules. There are still laws to be followed. But through the Holy Spirit and Love.

TODAY'S 'LAW'

This system of life is still around today, but in a different form. Society has its politically correct ways, and if you break them, you are on the outer. Such things as big brother is all about who is going to get kicked out. Who is in and who is out. Every group has unspoken rules about what is important and what is to be rejected. Holden fans don't like Fords. The 'in' and the 'out'. Jesus teaches us that everyone is 'in'. He rejects no one. But he utterly rejects sin. He teaches us to love the sinner, but hate the sin. He teaches the right way to build society.

What are the unspoken rules of our social group?

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Jesus was rejected by his own town. So what does he do? He sends out the twelve in pairs to the other towns. Any set back for Jesus is an opportunity for a grander plan. We then have the multiplication of the loaves and the fish and the walking on water. Jesus is teaching us that he controls nature. That his grace is abundant. That the more we give the more we get. He is also preparing us to understand the Eucharist. This gift of himself. Just as Jesus can multiply bread and command the wind, so can he turn bread into himself.

We also see this week Jesus finishing explaining a right understanding of what is 'in' and 'out', that is, sin causes us to be 'out' of relationship with God. But God always seeks us, to forgive us, to bring us back into relationship with him. Because he loves us.

Do you have any experiences where you received more than you gave?

Day 1: Summary of Jesus teaching and the Mission of the Twelve Mk 6:6b-13

All that Jesus can do he shared with the Apostles. They could heal, preach and cast out demons. This shows leadership. At some point we must start to actually do what Jesus did. What is Jesus asking you to do?

Day 2: Who is Jesus? Herod's opinion about Jesus Mk 6:14-29

Herod thought Jesus was John the Baptist raised to life. We have a contrast here with Peter's declaration (which we will examine next week). This is a sad passage in Mark's gospel. It would have reminded Jesus of his own impending death. But there is humour at work here - John will be raised eventually and Jesus is the resurrection. So in the midst of this hardship is the promise of the resurrection. Sometimes life is hard and dark. A bit of humor can help along the way, but hope can take us the whole journey. We encounter people who have a wrong opinion of Jesus, like Herod. Think of someone who has a wrong opinion of Jesus and say a prayer for them.

Day 3 Feeding the Five Thousand Mk 6:30-46

Five loaves and two fish. Our meagre efforts are like that, so small, but in the hands of Jesus, they are multiplied. God sees the little things we do. Think about a random act of kindness you can do to help brighten someone's day.

Day 4 Jesus Walking on the Water Mk 6:47-52

"Take heart, it is I. Do not be afraid." Jesus can quite literally do anything. He is Lord of heaven and Earth. He is also humble and relies upon us. Sometimes our 'boat' - our life is a struggle. By spending a little time in prayer we allow Jesus to come into our boat and encourage us. Prayer is so important. Take a moment to ask for a deeper gift of prayer and to call upon Jesus during the storms of our life.

Day 5 Unwashed Hands Mk 6:53 - 7:13

We have already explored how the Pharisees viewed the law and used it to work out who was 'in' and who was 'out'. What are our rules for good and bad? How do we judge people? Are we ready to just accept others as they are, like Jesus?

Quite clearly we have in this passage the

Day 6 Things which Defile Mk 7:14-23

Quite clearly we have in this passage, Jesus' answer to the Jewish longing to be right with God. It is sin which defiles. By being cleansed of sin, will lead us into right relationship with God. Quite clearly we have in this passage the

Day 7 The Children and the Dogs Mk 7:24-30

Jesus is cheeky. He can play tricks with us, but for a purpose. He wants us to grow in faith. Sometimes we have to keep asking, keep trusting and we will be rewarded.

Again Jesus performs a miracle, and tries to keep it secret. But to no avail. Jesus healed anyway. He did not let peer pressure stop him from doing the right thing. So must we.

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