

The Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper: A Meditation

At this evening's Mass of the Lord's Supper which begins the celebration of the Easter Triduum we reflect on the three gifts given us by Jesus on that occasion: the Eucharist, the priesthood and the command to love one another as he has loved us.

The 2nd Vatican Council expressed the centrality of the Eucharist in the Christian life when it said that it was its source and summit. The 2nd century Christian saint and martyr Irenaeus anticipated the teaching of the Council when he said that "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking."

The Eucharist is, our faith tells us, the Church's sacrificial banquet. Here, through the ministry of the priest, Jesus is present, sacramentally offering himself to the Father, inviting us to unite our lives and our good works to his offering, made once and for all on Calvary and now present for us in the Eucharist, the sacrificial memorial of the Church.

With the Eucharist Jesus also provides us with our banquet. He is our bread of life, nourishing us with his word and feeding us with his body and blood. United with him in offering and in feasting we are to become increasingly attuned to live his command to love and have that love confirmed and validated and brought to the Eucharist.

May I conclude by drawing attention to a poem of the late Alberta Aschmann, a Poor Clare nun, and someone attuned to the Eucharist. A dust storm had blanketed her convent. She noted with the eye of a poet its impact - the dust and the footprints in the dust. This observation became a source of inspiration for a poem entitled, "Holy Thursday".

What might have been a source of annoyance was interpreted by our poet as the symbol of sisters living a Eucharistic life. May I quote the first two stanzas:

It was the dust storm did it,
Coated halls
With fragiler-than-clay beds for imprinting
Footprints for Eucharistic meditation.

Sisterhood is written
In the toes
Lapping and overlapping in the dust.
Bare feet going and bare feet returning.

Maybe in the quiet of Holy Thursday this year at home we might see, like Alberta Ashmann, symbols of a love that is attuned to the Eucharist, the source and summit of our Christian life.

Fr David Willis op