

## ***Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Jesus***

A theme Pope Francis often returns to is solidarity – a global solidarity, rich and poor, derived from recognising that we are children of God. This is clearly linked to the eucharist and the church which build and reinforce this recognition to draw people together. This recognition includes the responsibility to live in solidarity with rich and poor - and caring for each other. As Jesus give us the bread, his body, we also experience 'God's solidarity' with humanity. Jesus shares our journey, and becomes bread for the journey in our service, sharing and giving – 'what little we have, what little we are, if shared, becomes wealth, because the power of God, which is love, descends into our poverty to transform it. (Pope Francis). Our celebration can become so routine that we do not hear the call of the Gospel to engage and commune with our suffering sisters and brothers. The celebration of the eucharist cannot be a 'religious refuge' from problems, tensions, and relationships. It challenges the tendency to individualism, seeking self-interest. It is oriented towards creating fraternity.

In his attempts to overcome contemporary divides that hinder recognising 'fraternity' (our sisterhood and brotherhood), Pope Francis has tried to promote peace in many places around the world. He frames ***Fratelli tutti*** with St. Francis and Blessed Charles de Foucauld who lived in times and places filled with violence and oppression. Francis of Assisi is presented as one who gave up power and 'became one of the poor and sought to live in harmony with all' (no. 4). Charles de Foucauld – a former French soldier – also chose humility over power and, 'by identifying with the least...did...come at last to be the brother of all' (no. 287) by living quietly and humbly among Muslims. Francis' inclusion of Charles de Foucauld ***Fratelli tutti*** highlights a *particular* emphasis on friendship with Muslims as a vital calling for Christians today whilst at the same time concerned with universal sisterhood and brotherhood – or fraternity. We need only see how our wealthy country and its treatment of refugees and asylum seekers deprived of welfare, health care assistance and obliged to live off charity and many people facing eviction and youth without a clear future. We can close our hearts or become more caring.

In St Mary Major's (Santa Maria Maggiore) Basilica in Rome has a non-traditional painting of the Last Supper by Italian artist, Jacopo Tintoretto, (1594),. It does not portray Jesus and his disciples sitting solemnly around a table. It is full of activity. People are busy serving. Servants anxiously looking for a place for themselves. A cat with its nose in a basket of dishes. One servant raising his hand to stop another speaking in order to hear Jesus. It is a scene full of distractions and interruptions. The suggestion is that our faith is messy and will never be perfect or complete; that our love may falter; our best resolutions and commitments wain over the long haul. The painting reminds us that whatever we bring - our moods, anxieties, concerns, sinfulness, distractions, busyness, heartaches and half-heartedness - Jesus still says, 'take' and eat; 'take' and drink. These make up the Body of Christ in the world. It is a ***call to not forget***.

Henri Giroux, in ***The Violence of Organised Forgetting***, speaks of the USA (and Australia) where historical, political and moral forgetting is practiced and celebrated to foster an amnesia by assaulting critical and rational thinking. The legacies of resistance to racism, militarism, privatisation and individualism are made invisible, forgotten or punished that undermines social solidarity. Attempts at this organised forgetting were evident when media posts where bombed in Gaza recently. Attacks on charities in this country, and schools, public radio, sections of the media, human rights activists are under siege because dialogue and civic engagement threaten the power structures.

Today's feast is counterbalance to this. We need to turn our attention away from self towards others, i.e., solidarity. The one bread and one cup remind us that the eucharist cannot be celebrated in isolation from the cries of the world, e.g., the food insecurity for millions of people in Ethiopia now since the last famine 40 years ago. We are called to become the agents of God's justice and mercy in an aching world. It seems many focus too much on the real presence of Jesus in bread and wine which is a given. The problem is that we do not see that we are to be the real presence of Jesus in the world. The small home communities in the early church sent a disturbing message to a 'pagan' Rome based on a slave-run economy, that was a feast of the

powerless, not the pompous, where life around the table included slaves and masters, women and men, Jews and gentiles sitting as equals. We associate 'anamnesis' with Eucharist. It is the Greek word for 'remembering'. The opposite is **amnesia** or 'forgetting'. This concerns the temptation to forget the victims of this world – the poor, unemployed, abused or asylum seekers, people living with mental illness or other disability, gay and lesbian people, people of colour or different social status. We easily forget the humanity of our enemies. *Anamnesis* seeks to undo this forgetting (amnesia). The German theologian, Johann Baptist Metz speaks of the 'dangerous memory' where Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection disrupts the world's forgetfulness, or the 'forgetfulness of the forgotten.'

Listening to Jesus and sharing his life is a call to have his concerns about judging others; living simply; giving ourselves for others; championing the outcast; representing the marginalised, the poor and despised. We are of one Body, his Body. 'This is my Body, this is my Blood!' It has a material, bodily and tangible dimension. It connects with Friday's Feast of the Sacred Heart which celebrates the love of God made flesh (incarnate) and tangible in each one of us. There are no geographical limitations, no temporal limitations. In saying, 'This is my body'..., 'this is my blood', Jesus was saying, 'this is my life!' We are meant to repeat this action to effect social change by giving, serving and relating to replace systems that try to commodify people.

Can we imagine a world where love makes a way? Can we imagine a world where empathy is not a zero sum game; where disagreements are not resolved by ad hominem attacks; where people are not attacked or vilified in the street; where they are not ridiculed for showing emotion; where one person's feelings are not more important than anyone else's; where one's humanity is explained away by academic theories or scripture; where one is labelled a terrorist or imperialist without denying the realities of white supremacy, patriarchy and colonialism; where the missiles from one group are more or less tragic than those of the other; where there are no gated communities or borders to shut out people in order to deny that we are

neighbours; where every story matters and those that have been dismissed are prioritised. Of course we all fall short but it is never too late to engage in small, banal acts of love that become powerful when gathered together by the God who is love. We come back to the message of the painting mentioned earlier.

Jesus consistently gave himself with a priority to the needy and least-favoured in society. His self-gift to us implicates us as we are called to share what we receive with others. As we receive the body and blood of Jesus in the bread and wine we commit ourselves to Jesus' way of life.

Pope Francis references to solidarity stem from the recognition that are all children of God. This recognition is not without responsibility. Recognition and responsibility go together. It applies to our First Nations' people, it applies to asylum seekers and refugees and anyone else who is ill-treated. We are all required to live in solidarity with each other, caring for each other, both rich and poor. As Jesus' disciples we are called to share, to close the gaps that divide people. We are called to be instruments of communion. The spirit of the world does not look kindly on a solidarity that confronts *'the violence of organised forgetting'* where we forget that the other is flesh of my flesh and made in God's image. So Jesus' injunction 'Do this to re-member me' contains the awareness that that are one and that we must remember who we are and continually work to 're-member' (as in reconcile, heal, put together) the Body of Jesus in our world. This powerful meal is where many and separate members the Body of Christi are re-membered so that all may act in a concerted way in imitation of Jesus. When we are 'lectured' about the Real Presence, we need to remember that the real presence is us.

May our celebration be a true anamnesis, a remembering, a consciousness raising as we move from a culture that focuses on our needs and those closest to us towards a culture that is oriented towards those people that Jesus is pointing to every day. People in all places are yearning for the healing touch and reconciling mercy of God in Jesus through us.