

## **Body and Blood of Christ**

Why was it that six thousand South Australians were not happy to stay at home and send emails to each other to say that Black Lives Matter? Why was it that two thousand Crows and Port Power members are sitting out in the cold and rain watching the showdown tonight when they could have been comfortably at home watching the game on television? They might say to us that watching a game on television is not the same as being there. Writing an email to protest against something is not the same as marching side by side with others who also want their voices heard.

During these last few months, we have come to understand that joining in the celebration of the Eucharist via the internet or television screen is not the same as being there. But we have appreciated that a virtual Mass is better than no Mass at all. I had an email this week from one couple in the Parish whose health has not allowed them to come Mass for some time now, to thank me for recording the Mass and making it available to them. With a touch of humour, they said, “We are able to get front row seats, and, even if we are a little late, they wait for us.”. Another email was in response to a birthday greeting. A friend was celebrating her 97<sup>th</sup>. birthday. She said that she had been a long-time watcher of the 6.00am Mass for you at

Home because they used subtitles at their Mass. “Even though I am deaf I can read the sermon.”

We are taking a while to get used to the idea of having to book a place at Mass. But maybe that is helping us to appreciate what a great privilege it is to be invited to sit around the table of the Lord. Today’s feast of the Body and Blood of the Lord provides an opportunity for us to savour the gift that the Eucharist is for us.

We listened first to a reading from the Book of Deuteronomy. Moses is reminding the people of Israel of the care that God had for them when He led them through the desert for forty years. It was a time of testing. “He humbled you, he made you feel hunger, he fed you with manna to make you understand that humankind does not live on bread alone but that humankind lives on everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord.” The manna became known as the bread from heaven. The time in the desert was a time when the people of Israel came to understand how much they depended upon God for everything that they needed.

We have been in a kind of desert during these last few months. It has been a time of testing when we have discovered things about ourselves and about how dependant we are upon God and upon one another. Few

of us in Australia have suffered material hunger, but many of us have suffered the spiritual or sacramental hunger of not being able to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. Perhaps some of us have discovered new ways of praying. We may have been doing more spiritual exercise as well as the exercise that comes from walking the dog or riding a bike.

St. Paul was writing to a very difficult and divided community at Corinth. There were a lot of wealthy people in the community as well as slaves and day labourers. They found it difficult to believe that they were all equal when they came together to celebrate the Eucharist. “The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf.” I think we all find this unity hard to imagine and even harder to live. When we were at home, we could choose which member of our family sat next to us while we prayed the Mass. We can’t do that when we come back into the church. Strangers sit next to us. When we share the Eucharist together, we all become members of the one family, even if we have never spoken to each other.

In our secular world we look for things that unite us. The world of fashion is one example of that. The football team that we support both unites us to those who wear the same colours as we do and divides us

from those who wear different colours. The banner, “Black lives matter” has been a cry that has united thousands of people who are concerned about the treatment of people of colour.

We Catholics look to the Eucharist as the symbol of our unity and the means of making us more one. This unity is on a different level than anything we can experience in the secular world. It is a unity with Jesus and one another that is both for now and for the future. Jesus speaks to us today about that. “Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise them up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him.”

Jesus then reminds us that our union with Him is not for ourselves alone. We are united with Jesus so that we can be more freely for others. When we are united with Jesus in the Eucharist, we are caught up in his mission of making God’s love known. “As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me.” It is that life that moves us to be people for others.

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