

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

I usually play golf on Mondays, but last Monday I visited a friend in hospital in Elizabeth. After my visit I drove to the Parra Wirra Conservation Park since I was in that part of the world. There are many tracks and trails there and I came across one called the Tree creeper Loop. I didn't know where it would go, but I knew that if I followed it I would come back to where I started. The beginning and the end of the loop would be at the same place. If I stayed on the track, then I knew I would not get lost. And along the way I hoped to see and hear a tree creeper or two.

Today is a good day to look back at the track that we have been walking as disciples of Jesus. Most of us can identify where we began our journey. We were brought to the waters of Baptism in a place like this. If we were baptized as infants we would have been carried for a long time before we began to walk on our own. For most of us it took a while to catch hold of the faith that our parents wanted to hand on to us. But once we had come to know Jesus for ourselves, once we had come to know something of the love that Jesus had for us, then we knew we were on the right track. We knew that we could not get lost.

Every journey of faith is something like a loop. No matter where we go, we keep coming back to where we

began. We keep coming back to Jesus, the one who first called us to begin our journey. Over the last few weeks we have been listening to the Sixth Chapter of St. John's gospel. We have been hearing how Jesus revealed himself as the Bread come down from heaven to give life to the world. We have been listening to the ways that Jesus feeds us. We have come to understand that Jesus feeds us first through the Word that he speaks to us, a word that reveals the depth of the love that our God has for us.

But John has helped us to understand that Jesus did not use only words to reveal God's love for us. Everything He did he did as an expression of God's love for us. He allowed himself to be taken as a criminal, to be tried and crucified. It was when his body was broken, and his blood was poured out for us that God's love was made known in the deepest possible way. It was then that Jesus gave himself to us as the bread of life. He gave his life so that we could live with him forever.

As we have been listening to John's gospel we have come to realise that it is here, when we gather for Eucharist that we encounter Jesus as the bread of life for us. We listen to him speaking to us in his Word. We are caught up again in his self-offering to the Father. We go with him again to Calvary and witness again the depth of his love for us. The words that we hear the priest pray

over the bread and the wine, can only be understood when we look above the altar and see the crucifix on the wall or in the window behind him. “Take this, all of you and eat of it, for this is my body which will be given up for you.” “This is the chalice of my blood, the blood which will be poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.” It is the Jesus who gave his life for us on the cross who becomes present on the altar.

Today we hear Jesus say to us “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.” We hear those words most profoundly when we are invited to the Eucharistic table. Here we are drawn into a deep communion with Jesus and His Father. “The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in them. As I who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me.”

The reading chosen to be is first reading today is from the Book of Proverbs. We can hear it as Jesus invitation to come to a deeper understanding of what he is offering us. “Who is ignorant? Let him step this way. To the fool she says, ‘Come and eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared! Leave your folly and you will live, walk in the ways of perception.’. Whenever we receive Jesus in Holy Communion we eat and drink again of the life and

love he has for us. You and I know that we never stop learning what it means to be in Communion with Jesus. Jesus keeps revealing his love for us. In the changing conditions of our lives we keep discovering that Jesus is there for us in new and beautiful ways. And we know that we need to learn new ways of responding to the love that Jesus has for us.

When we set out to walk the road of a disciple of Jesus we come to understand that the Eucharist is the place where we begin our journey and the place we need to return to over and over again. Jesus feeds us here and sends us out to make him present wherever we are. But in our weakness we know we have to keep coming back to be fed again for the next part of the journey. We get lost at times and have to come back for new directions. We get weary and we need to rest and be refreshed. We get hurt and we need to be healed. We are overcome by our sinfulness and we need to come back to Jesus to be forgiven.

To walk as a disciple of Jesus we need the strength that comes from being often fed by him in the Eucharist. Our communion with Jesus will only come to its perfection when we are called home to live the eternal life that Jesus shares with us here in Holy Communion.