



25 July 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am going to be writing bulletin articles that go along with my homily series on the Eucharist. These articles, starting with this one, are not simply the homily in written, paragraph form. Rather, they are meant to be complementary to one another. This is due, in part, to the fact that my homilies will be recorded and available online, on our parish Facebook and YouTube pages.

As Catholics, our teaching on the Eucharist is deeply biblical. There are four texts that contain what we call the "Institution Narrative", the account of what Jesus did when he instituted the Eucharist. These are Matthew 26: 26-29; Mark 14: 22-25; Luke 22: 15-20; and 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26. While together they are too long for me to print here, I encourage you to read them in your bible. Together they form the earliest account of the genesis of the Eucharist in the New Testament. You will notice that the accounts agree on all the main points: Jesus took bread, he blessed it, broke it, gave it to them, and told them that it is his body. The italics point out the central action taking place, which remains the language and action that we use to this day.

These accounts also attest to the Eucharistic Assembly in the life of the Church in the time of the Apostles (we call this Eucharistic Assembly the Mass). St. Paul says in his First Letter to the Corinthians, "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread ..." He had already handed this on (*traditio* in Latin) to the Church in Corinth what he now repeats in his letter to them: the language and narrative used in the Eucharistic Assembly.

The sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, from which we are reading this Sunday and for the next few Sundays, gives us not a narrative of the institution of the Eucharist, but an early theology of the Eucharist. "For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" Jesus says to all of those following him. From very early on the Christian community has understood that Jesus is speaking with bold honesty here, and that the Eucharist is true food and drink. Those who left saying "This saying is hard; who can accept it?" (John 6: 60-66) give evidence to the reality of Jesus' words.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Scott Nolan



1 August 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

In his incredible work *Corpus Mysticum* (The Mystical Body), Henri de Lubac makes the incredible claim that “The Eucharist makes the Church.” His claim is then reinforced by the Second Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, when it says that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the whole Christian life.” (#11).

The Eucharist is the source: from the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ, flows all the spiritual good of the Church and of the Christian life. All the other sacraments derive their efficacy from the Eucharist, for all of them derive their efficacy from Christ. The love and passion that drives the engine of the Christian life is received from the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is the summit: the other sacraments and all the works of the apostolate are oriented toward the Eucharist. Any activity of the Church and of particular Christians is meant to be oriented toward the Eucharist. This is so both in terms of where such activity should find its high point, and that toward which all activity should be directed. To say that the Eucharist is the summit of the whole Christian life is another way of saying that the Christian life is oriented toward union with God forever in heaven.

“The Eucharist is the cause of our life in Christ; in other words, the Eucharist makes the Church. That is the conviction that unites this first period [patristic period of the Church, roughly 33AD-800AD].” (Sacrament of Salvation, Paul McPartlan). In the first 800 to 1000 or so years of the Church, there was widespread agreement on the centrality of the Eucharist and on its centrality in the life of grace. There is also the fact that there were no “theologians” in the more modern academic sense of the word. There were only those who taught the faith to the local Christian communities, and some who wrote that down for posterity. This means that the celebration of the Eucharist on the one hand and studying the faith, interpreting Scripture, and teaching the faith on the other hand were always intimately connected.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Scott Nolan



8 August 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

“Belonging to God has nothing to do with destruction or non-being; it is rather a way of being. It means emerging from the state of separation, of apparent autonomy, of existing only for oneself and in oneself. It means losing oneself as the only possible way of finding oneself. ... And so we can now say that the goal of worship and the goal of creation as a whole are one and the same – divinization, a world of freedom and love.” (Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*).

Liturgy is a short way of describing the public prayer of the Church which is either sacramental (Mass, Baptism), or related to the sacraments (such as blessings). Liturgy is both the work of God in bringing about his blessing on all creation, and is our response to the work of the Trinity giving us grace.

After this brief explanation of what we mean by “liturgy”, we can then understand more deeply the words of Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI). The Eucharistic liturgy (the Mass) is the central act of worship of the Christian people, handed down to us from the apostles. It is, thus, the central mode of belonging to God. To belong to God and to worship God are, in one sense, the same thing. For reference, confer the visions in the Book of Revelation in which the saints in heaven are in a perpetual state of worshipping God.

Participation in the Eucharistic liturgy is participation in God’s bringing about a world of freedom and love. To worship God, to belong to God, is to be set free of the constraints of a pretend autonomy and brought into the rich and deep world of God’s love for you and for all of creation.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Scott Nolan



15 August 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

Today we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven. We believe that she was assumed into heaven, body and soul, and did not suffer the corruption of the grave. As Catholics, we love the tombs and relics of the saints. For the Blessed Virgin Mary, we don't really have either. There are no bones of St. Mary kept anywhere, there is no place revered as her tomb, no record of the date her earthly life ended. So, Blessed Mary, the Mother of God, is in heaven with her Son, Jesus, and has a body. What we do with the body is important.

Our tradition has enumerated what has come to be known as the seven deadly sins. These are: pride, avarice (extreme greed), envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth (acedia). The death they cause in us can be described as turning us away from communion in the Body of Christ; a communion which is started in Baptism and made closer and more perfect in the Eucharist.

Let's take avarice (greed) for an example. It is an inordinate desire for money or riches. Meaning the desire for more stuff for the sake of having more stuff. Note that an inordinate desire can have a proper place, so there can be a legitimate desire for some stuff. This desire turns us away from the radical call of the Gospel to deny ourselves and take up our cross, and is thus destructive to the Christian life. At the same time, avarice is a sin against justice and charity, for a person who gives in to the sin of avarice does not give to the poor and needy in accord with Gospel values.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is cause for great rejoicing, for we celebrate that she who is the Mother of the Savior is our mother too. And she is the image of and hope for the goal of the Christian life: communion with God forever.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Scott Nolan



22 August 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

We come at last to the fifth and final week of the John 6 cycle of readings, the great Eucharistic discourse in the Gospel of John. In today's Gospel reading, and the reading from last week that was omitted (John 6:51-58), we come to the apex of Jesus' teaching on His flesh and blood being true food and drink. We read too of the tragedy of those many disciples who "returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him." (John 6:66).

"This saying is hard; who can accept it?" they ask (John 6:60). Wow, what a question, what a thing to ponder in one's heart: Jesus' teaching is hard, who can accept it? And they walk away.

What does it look like in our day to "no longer accompany him?" We can answer this question with two categories: private acts and public acts. Private acts can be stated rather briefly as mortal sins, which can take place in thought and/or in outward action. Recall that a mortal sin is: a) a big thing b) known to be a big thing, and c) done anyway. The Church directs us to abstain from communion when we are in a state of mortal sin. Repentance and confession is the next sacrament to be received.

Public acts by which we cause ourselves to no longer be in communion with Jesus Christ and His Church are just that: public declarative actions that run contrary to the faith. While there is much discussion these days about specific political actions to support abortion, few remember that in 1962 three catholic politicians were excommunicated by the Archbishop of New Orleans for their attempt to use government means to stop the catholic schools in New Orleans from racial integration. These political acts contradicted clear Church teaching that all persons are created in the image and likeness of God. Those who chose to take such public actions separated themselves from communion with Jesus Christ and His Church. The Archbishop was simply acknowledging the reality of their actions.

If you find that any of this hits home for you, come talk to me or to another priest. The Sacrament of Mercy (Confession) is available to all who struggle with sin. If the public action part is what hits home for you, come talk to me or another priest. We want to be there for you, to understand your situation, and to talk through what kind of remedy may be possible.



Jesus did not condemn those who walked away from Him. He also didn't change His teaching to make it easier to accept or live by. He offers us his Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Eucharist. He offers us participation in the life of the Trinity by incorporating us more deeply into His Body – the Church. Jesus wants to make us like Him by giving us to eat of Himself. And so, with Peter we too say, "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Scott Nolan