

With Christ, Becoming Eucharist

Nathalie Roberge, OP
sisternath@hotmail.com

In his recent Apostolic Exhortation entitled *Rejoice and Be Glad (Gaudete et exultate)*, Pope Francis recalled that “A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth without seeing it as a path of holiness.” (19) As he explains, “That mission has its fullest meaning in Christ, and can only be understood through him. At its core, holiness is experiencing, in union with Christ, the mysteries of his life. It consists in uniting ourselves to the Lord’s death and resurrection in a unique and personal way, constantly dying and rising anew with him.” (20)

At a time when the Church and our religious communities are facing considerable challenges, Pope Francis is inviting us to revisit the paschal mystery of Christ, so that it increasingly becomes the underlying force of our daily lives. Indeed, fixing our gaze on what was the summit of the earthly existence of the Saviour can only reinvigorate our walk in his steps and keep alive the hope in our hearts.

An Extraordinary Dynamism of Creation

It is fascinating to take note of the extent to which the Christ Jesus—even when faced with the threshold of his death looming on the horizon—is outstretched towards life. One discovers him turned towards the Father in a surge of profound communion. Certainly, the attitude of confidence that animates him does not prevent him from experiencing in his very being the trouble, the misunderstanding and even the sadness with regard to the dramatic situation in which he is immersed—in that, he is in undeniable proximity to us. However, this test of his approaching death does not lead to simple fatalism, or even resignation.

The impasse with which he is confronted leads him to freely give his life to the end (Jn 10:18). More than that, it creates in him an extraordinary dynamism of creation. For it must be noted that it is in this reality—far from the Hollywood ideal—that Christ invents the Eucharist!

Loving to the End

The fourth Gospel reminds us that on the night of the Last Supper, Christ Jesus went “all the way to the end” of love. What exactly does it mean to go to the end of love for the one who, in his being, is both man and God? If the cross tells us about the life given until its very last breath, the Eucharist becomes a sign of a love that has neither border nor end.

Through this sacrament, Christ materializes his desire to abide with us, in the ever-present act of the total gift of his life. He is Body given up for us and Blood poured into the world of today. This testifies to how important the sacrament of the Eucharist is for our life as baptized. We understand why the Second Vatican Council reminded us that the Eucharist is “the fount and apex of the whole Christian life and mission of the Church.” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5)

This act of creation that Christ carries out on Holy Thursday, under the influence of the Spirit, can only be fully grasped in a dynamism of covenant and mission. By this gesture,

Christ gives witness to both the intimacy that binds him to the Father—indeed, to the whole Trinity—and to his desire to take up into it the whole of humanity. For Christ, loving to the end therefore means having us participate or share in him, in the abundance of life, which is that of the Trinity. That is true salvation.

Living in Union with Christ

By the grace of our baptism, from which our religious consecration flows, we are invited to enter into this impulse throughout the seasons of our lives. It is this impulse of trust, of communion, of giving of oneself and of creation that Christ teaches us. At the heart of the reality that is ours, we are asked to learn to become Eucharist ourselves.

To do that, there is no other secret than to listen to the Holy Spirit, through everyday events, who teaches us how to break the bread of our life for the glory of God and the salvation of the world. Even the crumbs that we often have to offer can be life giving when they are united with the offering of Christ. In short, it is a question of rediscovering the greatness of our baptismal ministry.

As Pope Francis points out, everything that is lived and offered in union with Christ is “mysteriously fruitful.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 280) From the humblest smile to the most engaging missionary projects, from the acceptance of our limits to the effort to offer a quality of presence to our neighbour—everything can contribute to revealing the love of God in action for today. Everything can invite you to live off this love and get ready to do your work.

On this path of configuration to Christ, let us not get trapped in what Paul Murray calls “the vice of being too sober.”¹ Let us dare an excess of love, knowing that in Christ there is “hope which will not let us down...” (Rom 5:5) In that respect, the Virgin Mary is a luminous model for us. Following in the footsteps of her Son, she is the first to have embarked on this path of total self-giving in anticipation of the unprecedented promise that God has made. May she help us, in our paschal mystery, to make our life an act of Eucharistic creation.

Questions for Going from Reading to Living:

To which dynamism of creation does the Holy Spirit challenge us as a community?

How can I make more of my daily life a Eucharist?

Loving to the end; what does it mean for me at this point in time?

What biblical text inspires and stimulates the gift of myself?

¹ Paul Murray, *Le vin nouveau de la spiritualité dominicaine. Un nectar nommé bonheur*, Paris, Salvator, 2017, p. 177 (*The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality. A Drink Called Happiness*).