

Comprehending the Eucharist

One of the great revealing moments in our lives is the moment when we come to realise the centrality of the Eucharist to our Christian vocation. It comes to each of us individually, at different times and in different circumstances, but when it arrives, we see that without the Eucharist our discipleship is incomplete. When we awake to this revelation it colours all that we are and it pervades all that we do. Subsequently we value things differently. We see our relationships in a new light. We sense that our experiences are now open to new possibilities offering deep and profound insights into the relevance of our faith and the application of it to our lives. How though does this come about? Is it by virtue of many hours of prayerful reflection that we are able to experience the Eucharist in this way, or is there another pathway? I think today's gospel offers us that other pathway.

The image of the disciples fishing is such a familiar one for us, that we have become attuned to its theme of vocation. Essentially what we read in today's gospel story is the call of the apostles, and so we think we know what to expect. Sadly familiarity can become something of a negative experience, to the degree that even our own lives, with our routines and daily tasks can speak that same negative language. We are so used to it all that we know what to expect. But if we read on, we find that the totally unexpected is about to take shape and invade that sense of certainty with which the disciples set out. The whole story is shot through with imagery of the everyday suddenly becoming renewed and transformed by the presence of the Risen Lord, and this is what Eucharist achieves. Look at how this story when presented to us in an alternative setting, delivers a different message.

The disciples are at work; they are fishing, doing what they know and do best, and it is in the midst of doing what they know and do best, and what they are most familiar with, that the Risen Lord comes to them. How beautiful an image is that for our own situations? Think about the tasks we do each day, the routines we follow, and then think of how in the midst of our daily work, the Lord Jesus comes to us and affirms us. The disciples had caught nothing, but with the presence of the Risen Christ alongside them, the possibilities become limitless. It is then that the essence of the Eucharist bursts through to overwhelm the reality of our situation. In the tasks which we do, in the very heart of our days work, we find the Eucharist at play, presenting its themes and revealing its presence. It is in these moments that the Risen Lord asks us the most profound of questions – do you love me? Of course like Peter we are perplexed and Peter too displays his incomprehension, and we too are unsure how to express or demonstrate our love for Christ. It is only when we are prepared to let go and allow the presence of the Lord to be the belt around us and lead us that we will have that question “who are you?” answered.

Where will the answer take us? Hopefully in to recognition of our own vocation as disciples called to serve each other in the way that the Eucharist expresses. “Lord, you know everything you know I love you.” “Feed my sheep”. This call embodies all that we are called to be and where we are called to carry it out. It is amongst our families, in our relationships, and in our communities and places of work that our service is to be lived out. It is the Eucharist, the Risen Lord present amongst us and metaphorically wrapped around us, who in our daily tasks draws for us new landscapes and delivers us into new and awesome possibilities