

Sacramental Rest

I wonder if such a phrase resonates with us and if it does how do we achieve it and experience it? We are by nature physical beings. We like to understand things; our surroundings, the way things work, and how they are put together. To achieve this more often than not we take things apart in order to explore what makes them do the things they do. This involves a great deal of physical and mental exertion and at the end of it all if successful, we can feel exhilarated. If on the other hand, all our activity ends in frustration, then exhaustion quickly sets in. I think many people experience the latter when they turn their minds to God. What is needed is some sacramental rest, and in the midst of this rest a chance to experience God in a way that subsumes our frustrations and gathers them up.

The sacramental life that we live emanates from Jesus Christ. Each sacrament embodies every aspect of our lives and thus coming to him is in itself a sacramental act. Sadly the pathways which allow us to walk this road are becoming more and more overgrown. Our desire for personal fulfilment draws us further and further away from the reality of life as it is lived, and the demands that only the dream will suffice, leave people with a sense that anything less than what was promised is somehow a real betrayal. It breeds a cynicism and mistrust that ultimately leads to a flawed understanding of what relationship means, to the degree that concepts such as commitment and obligation have become practically meaningless.

What we need is to instil into our communities and our young the truth that the pathways which we walk are indeed lined with the presence of Jesus, and in whatever situation we find ourselves we are, through the sacraments, close to him. So when we find ourselves overburdened, his living sacramental presence is beckoning us near. When we find ourselves frustrated, we are offered an invitation to come to him. We have to make this invitation real and relevant, meaningful and accessible to others. We have to teach people again that their lives have value and dignity, that the frustration and exhaustion they feel stems not just from physical factors, but perhaps more importantly, from a spiritual dryness which they may not even have thought of. We have to teach our children that the rest which Jesus offers, is not simply the rest of weariness or the rest of physical exertion, no; this rest is a truly sacramental one because it comes from his heart.

On the cross, from his heart came blood and water, symbols of baptism and eucharist; the one opens the soul to God, the other the means by which the soul is fed and nourished by God. Such words are hard for our world to comprehend because we've lost the ability to explore them. We have lost the desire to enquire into them to see how vital they still are. We need to engage once more with our spiritual selves, and through the gospel, with Jesus as the sacrament of rest. We need to use all the tools at our disposal to explore him in depth and to appreciate the truth of his words, the compassion of his deeds, the joy of his life and his desire to bring each person to fulfilment through living in the truth of his love. It is the love which he poured out for us and it is the love which leads to the Father in whom all understanding, knowledge and rest are found.