

What can I bring to the table?

Whenever we hear Jesus speaking in the context of a meal, our minds should without any further prompting turn to the Last Supper. It is with this context in our thoughts that we must look to understand the meaning of what he is telling us about ourselves and about our relationships with each other.

We are all of us individuals with our own likes and dislikes, our own sensitivities and idiosyncrasies. These are the things which make us the persons we are and we should give glory to God for our diversity. We all have different talents and gifts and it is these talents and gifts which we must bring to the table. However we are responsible for our actions and therefore when we come to the table of the Lord, we are called upon to recognise and value the gifts and talents of others and it is Jesus who shows us how to understand this when he takes up the towel and bowl and washes our feet. This is the action of one who humbles himself and it is made manifest for us and present to us in the gift of self which he offers in the Eucharist. The trouble is that human nature, with its above mentioned sensitivities and idiosyncrasies, is so easily 'put out of joint'. The fact that Peter was so affronted by Jesus washing his feet bears witness to that. We have to be on our guard always to ensure that our motives are the correct ones; that we act with selfless love and not with selfish desire. Examine the motivation of the host in today's parable and you'll find that Jesus goes to the very heart of his scheme. He is inviting his guests (friends and rich relations) simply in order that it will lead to an occasion in which he may be seen in their company and thus allow him to bask in their reflected kudos.

Such outcomes can never happen if we build our lives and our motivations on the Eucharist. We come to the Eucharist to share our lives with Christ and with each other. We come to the Eucharist not in order to receive recompense, but to receive the fullness of his love poured out for us in his body and blood. In being called to share our lives with each other we expose ourselves to our own vulnerability, our own poverty and our own blindness. Our vulnerability is expressed in our unwillingness to open our hearts to Christ, our poverty in our unwillingness to be generous with our love and our blindness in our unwillingness to walk the path of love which Jesus calls us. The Eucharist is a moment of crisis. It is about recognising the truth about ourselves and in confronting this truth having the courage to accept it and live it.

So when we accept this invitation and sit in the presence of God's love let us do so with humility. Let us allow this love to enter into our hearts so that it shapes and models all that we are. Let us allow this love to answer our doubts and to confirm our hopes. Let us allow this love to bring us into an ever deeper relationship with Christ who shows us how to love. If we are able to allow our lives to be framed by this love then the challenge of living a truly Christian life becomes possible because if we see those sitting with us as people desirous of this love, then selfishness can have no place at this table.