

# Holy Spirit Province

## PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER

Date - 7 April 2020



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### **SELF-GIVING LOVE ON HOLY THURSDAY**

In a nursing home not long ago, the residents were gathered in the chapel to celebrate Holy Thursday. One old lady, wheel-chair bound, was wearing two hats. A carer from the home tried to take one off, but the woman clung on tightly to her two hats. The carer saw that in her efforts to tidy up the situation she was now defeated. So she backed off, and let the old lady be herself.

Perhaps, like the old-time prophets, that old lady was acting out a message to the gathered group. Perhaps she was saying: 'You all should wear two hats, that of your own unique self with your own particular personality – as Kevin, Karen, Mark, Maria, Brian, Margaret, Luke, Jenny, Linda, Brendan, Diane, Luke, Rhonda, Mike, Laurelle, George, Damian, Zoena, Reg, Liz, Danny, Andrea, Max, Liseby, Anthony - whoever - but also who you are as your Christian self, which is to say, as "another Christ".'

Holy Thursday is the start of our grateful remembrance of the Passover of Jesus Christ, our Leader, which is to say his passing through suffering and death to joy and glory with God. On this special day we remember three important events for our lives as followers of Jesus: - the origin of the Eucharist; the beginnings of the priesthood; and the commandment of Jesus our Leader, 'love one another as I have loved you'.

In the 400s in North Africa, St Augustine, speaking of Holy Communion, said many wise and wonderful things about who we are as members, cells, and limbs of the body of Christ. Among them he said: 'You are what you have received.' In fact, the signs in which we receive Christ are those of eating and drinking. In the course of digestion, the bread and wine become one with us. They are assimilated into our bodies. So much so that a billboard in Sydney once carried this message: 'What we eat and drink today walks and talks tomorrow.' But since the bread and wine of the Eucharist become more than just bread and wine, actually Jesus Christ himself within them, and giving himself as food and drink for our journey of life, in Holy Communion we become more and more one with him.

But with this gift of Jesus Christ to us, there's a big difference. He is not changed into us, into our bodies. No, we are changed into him! We are assimilated into his body, and into that extension of his body, the body of Christians in the world today, the body which is his Church.

This makes Holy Communion a package deal. We cannot have him alone, all to ourselves. He comes to us with all others who belong to him.

Profound implications follow for living our communion, our being joined and bonded to Christ and one another. These could hardly be better put than in these striking words attributed to St Teresa of Avila:

'Christ has no body now but yours,  
no hands, no feet on earth but yours.  
Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world.  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands. Yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes.  
You are his body.  
Yes, Christ has no body now on earth but yours.'

At the Last Supper, in a stunning way, Jesus acted out his care and concern for, his bonding and union with his first followers. He got down on his knees like a slave, went round the group, and washed the feet of each of the Twelve, the traitor Judas Iscariot included.

It's interesting that in his gospel of the Last Supper John the evangelist does not mention the action of Jesus with the bread and wine. Instead he tells us of that other action of Jesus with a basin of water and a towel. In this way John is telling us the meaning of both actions of Jesus. It's about belonging to one another in the same community of Christ, the community we know and experience as Church. It's about bonding and union with one another. It's about receiving one another as we receive Jesus himself. It's about humbly and lovingly serving one another. It's about reaching out, reaching out with warmth, welcome and hospitality to our neighbour.

And isn't our neighbour, in the teaching of Jesus, any person who at any time needs me, and needs me now? Isn't that the message of his powerful parable of the Good Samaritan? And isn't it truer than it ever was, that our neighbour in particular need right now, is any person in the current corona virus lock-down, who is not only isolated at home, but is all alone as well?

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