

Sermon notes 10 March 2023, Sarah Fagg

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

It is great to be with you and to be a part of your Lenten sermon series on the Eucharist. Today we will be thinking about what happens when we receive communion.

So much happens but I have tried to break this down into three different elements. These being:

- When we receive the body and blood of Jesus, we may receive personal healing within our lives;
- That we are united as the family of God reminding us that we are all part of the body of Christ; and finally
- That when we receive the body and blood of Jesus we may encounter our heavenly home with the angels and saints, we are reminded of the promise of eternal life and we see a glimmer of heaven.

For me personally I have sensed deep healing when I receive the body and blood of Jesus. Life has held some challenging times. I am sure we have all experienced some of the less joyful moments of life. Life can sometimes feel like a journey – a path in need of God's healing, which we can encounter in the sacraments.

I cannot say that once we receive the flesh and blood of our Lord, that all is healed instantly, but slowly each Mass at a time personal healing is occurring. Jesus is chipping away bit by bit.

This could leave us with a feeling of gratitude. A sense that God loves us so much and wants to provide healing.

Whenever we receive the flesh and blood of Christ, we may sense that Jesus becomes a part of us?

The Mass is where Jesus meets us. Wherever we may be in life whether we feel worthy or unworthy Jesus is there. This is not because we have lived perfectly but because Jesus recognises the pains and struggles that can come with life and wants to provide healing for each of us.

God's grace is extended to us. Whoever we are we are invited to this. God meets us by humbling Himself to enter us in the form of a tiny little wafer.

It is astonishing that God wants to meet us in this way. To become one with us, to enter into the places of pain and suffering and fill it with love and healing.

It is no wonder that just before we approach the altar we say the words "Lord I am not worthy to receive you but only say the word and I shall be healed".

I wonder what happens for each of us when we utter these words. Do we sense that God will heal us when we partake in this encounter and we receive Jesus?

Something that also may strike us is the sense of togetherness when we approach the altar. We share in this meal together, as one family - as the Body of Christ. It doesn't matter if we are best friends, strangers or even people with whom we may not get along with. We have one thing in common at this moment, we are hoping to have an encounter with God. But all carrying our own personal needs and desires for that encounter.

It does not matter who we are, what the week has held, whether we feel lost or alone, at this moment we are reminded that we are part of something bigger.

All divisions are broken down in that moment. This does not take away potential prejudices or pains that prejudices can cause, but we may become aware of our togetherness through God.

It can lead us to have more understanding and love for the people around us and our community. Christ wants to bring us together at this meal.

At the Mass we are also reminded of the promises of eternal life and our heavenly home. When we receive the flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ not only are we reminded of our earthly family, but we are also reminded of our communion with the angels, saints and the whole company of heaven.

When the Mass is celebrated heaven touches earth. Not only are we transported to heaven, but heaven meets us here on earth. Heaven pierces through whenever the Mass is celebrated. Its not a one off thing, or something that only occurs when we are aware of it, it is happening

even when we may not have eyes to see. Every time the Mass is celebrated, heaven rejoices with us!

I wonder when the Eucharistic prayer begins, can we feel ourselves being transported to our heavenly home. We join with the Saints and Angels and we sing “holy, holy, holy, Lord God of power and might heaven and earth are full of your glory Hosanna in the Highest.”

What an incredible gift that during the Mass we are transported to heaven and we are reminded of the promises of Christ.

I would like to leave us with two quotes one from Saint John Vianney and one from Saint Francis of Assisi.

Saint John Vianney says “there is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, he would have given it to us.” I think this shows how sacred it is when we are invited to the Altar and when we become one with God.

Saint Francis says “What wonderful majesty, what stupendous condescension, o sublime humility, that the Lord of the whole universe, God and Son of God, should humble Himself like this under the form of a little bread, for our salvation.”

As we approach the Altar in just a moment, I hope we can approach in faith of God’s healing that is offered to us through the Mass. That we can be reminded that we are all connected and a part of the body of Christ. Finally, that we may encounter the glimmers of heaven touching earth and the whole company of heaven joining us during the Mass. I hope that as we receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that it will remind us of how loved we are by God.

Amen