

## Convent 2016

Jesus talks of himself as the bread of life in the Gospel today (John 6:41-51) What does this mean?

The Eucharist is at the centre of the Church. The Church was born at Pentecost, but a decisive moment in the shaping of the Church was the institution of the Eucharist in the Upper Room during the Last Supper. It is what Dom Gregory Dix gloriously writes about in *The Shape of the Liturgy*.

In the Eucharist Jesus shows a love which goes to the very end, and knows no measure. Our relationship with Christ begins at baptism, and is strengthened daily by the Eucharist. Whenever the Eucharist is celebrated we are led back in spirit to Calvary. The Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross, it does not add to it, or multiply it, but it makes Christ's sacrifice present in time. The sacrifice of Christ, and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice.

We talk of the *Real Presence* of Jesus in the Eucharist, because Jesus' presence in the Eucharist is a presence in the fullest sense, where Jesus is wholly and entirely present.

In our Gospel today Jesus promises eternal life:

This is the bread come down from heaven  
So that a person may eat it and not die...  
Anyone who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:50-51)

Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the next life to receive eternal life, they already possess it on earth as the first-fruits of future fullness. In the Eucharist we receive the pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world, and when we celebrate the Eucharist we are united with the liturgy in heaven where the angels and saints are continually praising God.

We are all united through the Eucharist, though we are many, we share one bread (1 Cor 10:16-17). Bread is made up of many grains of wheat, but in the bread the difference between them is not apparent, likewise we are joined to one another, and united in Christ through the Eucharist.

It is also pleasant to spend time with Jesus, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple, (cf. Jn 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. If in our time Christians should be distinguished above all by the “art of prayer”, how can we not feel a renewed need to spend time...in silent adoration, in heartfelt love, before Christ, present in the Blessed Sacrament?

The Eucharist brings us union, or communion, with God, and therefore it is not by chance that the term Holy Communion is one of the names given to this sacrament.