

FR ALAN'S REFLECTION

BEING REAL

This feast day of the Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) gives us the opportunity to reflect upon the meaning of Jesus' message and its implications for us in our lives.

In today's Gospel we hear the Words of Jesus 'I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.' He then goes on to speak about giving his flesh to eat. All of this was totally unacceptable to the crowd he was talking to. This was because of their Old Testament understanding that eating the flesh of animals with blood was prohibited. As far as they were concerned blood represented life and belongs to God.

When the crowd reacted, Jesus was given every opportunity to explain his words. He could have gone on to say something like, "Oh I was only speaking symbolically or metaphorically." Instead he intensifies his language. He says, 'I tell you most solemnly, if you do not eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you.' Here Jesus is emphasising that his message is very important. He is making it very clear that he is not speaking symbolically or metaphorically.

The crowd do not like the reality of his language. This passage forms the biblical ground of our Catholic faith. We hear the Words of Jesus at the Last Supper as he distributes the bread and wine he says, '...This is my Body, ...This is my Blood.' Because of who he is, Jesus has the power to transform reality at the most fundamental level. The substance of the bread and wine is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Other examples of Jesus being able to transform reality can be seen through his healing ministry where he cured people of their illnesses and he forgave sins.

As the Bread and Wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, so we too are called to transform our lives. We are called to be a real presence to others. There are several ways we can do this.

- i. To be truthful not only in the words we use but in the message we convey. It is possible to say something that is factually true and still tell a lie by leaving out information that the other person has a right to know.
- ii. That the public image we present to others and our private lives are congruent with one another. What do we do when no one is looking?
- iii. Being kind to all. It is easy to be kind to someone when they have the capacity to do something for us. Are we also kind to those who are unable to do anything for us in return? Are we just as polite to the person who serves behind the counter at a grocery store as we are to those who have authority over us?

- iv. Ensuring that my attitudes and behaviour are always oriented towards what is good for the community. In other words, receiving the Body of Christ reminds of our responsibility to act as the Body of Christ for the common good.
- v. Making a firm resolution to get rid of those things in our lives which are not life giving. At the heart of this we are called to reflect on the occasions which give rise to these things and resolve not to put ourselves in those situations in the first place.

If we were to continue this Chapter of John's Gospel, we would hear how many of Jesus' followers left him at that point. The implication of Jesus' message was too confronting. Despite this, Jesus does not flinch. He simply asked those who remained if they wanted to go away as well. He was not going to compromise his principles of being real under any circumstances. This Feast reminds us that we are called to do the same.