

God is Near.

We begin today's readings with a marvellous saying that brought joy and consolation to Israel: "What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?" The great St Thomas Aquinas took up this saying in his writings and reflected that we Christians can speak these words too; these words give Christians reasons to be joyful, hopeful and thankful, for in the Church these words take on a Eucharistic depth. God became flesh so that he can give himself to us as the bread of life. Thus, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass he puts himself in our lives and into our hearts. God is not the great unknown, rather He is here, in the Eucharist where he allows himself to be discovered. Even during these uncertain and troubled times: God is near, God awaits our return to him in the Blessed Sacrament. If you live near St Patrick's or St John's take time this week to walk past and say 'hello' or a little prayer (you don't need a QR code).

Awareness of his presence in the Eucharist.

During lockdown the church does not become an empty house, seemingly useless. Jesus is there! The house of God is a sign of the sacred proximity we share with God and with all believers. This is what is beautiful about Catholic churches, that within them there is, as it were, always worship, because the eucharistic presence of the Lord dwells always within them. Let us not forget that Sunday is the Lord's day. Even though we cannot worship inside the church, we can honour the Paschal Mystery, by prayer and fellowship. Keeping the Lord's day holy shouldn't burden us; it is a privilege, as the Lord has made the first day of the week his to share with us. By keeping Sunday holy, it lights up the whole week, giving us an awareness of his grace and his presence.

Awareness of his presence within us.

In the Gospel we become attentive that some laws do not give us peace. Some laws become burdensome and can no longer be internalised, but rather are broken down into a series of external obligations. Thus, Jesus reminds us that the law that God reveals is not an external matter, but something that dwells and lives within us. The true law gives us the inner direction of our lives. God speaks to us in our conscience. We must first be directed by him there in order to act as Christ's disciples. "The word (the Lord) is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it" (Deut 30:14).

The closeness of the Lord in our conscience, in his Word, and in his personal presence in the Eucharist constitutes the dignity of being a Christian. This reality is the reason for our joy, for our peace even in difficult times. Let us rejoice by praising God always! He is near us individually but also as a community. The Law of Christ brings us together and closer to each other for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). His presence in the Eucharist at our local churches, and his voice that speaks in our conscience, helps us to stay connected, across many households. Let us keep praising God for the joy of our redemption.