



**JESUS IS MOST CERTAINLY PRESENT WHENEVER THE COMMUNITY KEEPS HIS MEMORY BY DOING WHAT HE DID AND SERVING** (Lk 24:33).

Christ?" Does this community and its members live the gospel? At the moment of mystical union with the eucharistic body of Christ does the community recognise the risen Jesus and will others recognise him in the mission of that community? Jesus is recognised in the community so that it might be Jesus in the world.

### CONCLUSION

In these days of fast food and the frozen TV dinner families are missing out on the experience of the community meal. The human values which are experienced in the meal are basic for eucharistic formation in the community (DMC#9). Jesus left in a meal of friendship a lasting memorial of his life and service. Jesus did it all-for-us and the lesson for those who shared his food and drink was that they should do it all-for-each-other. Through this lived companionship (cum=with, panis=bread), Jesus would continue his work building the community up for service in the world. Eucharistic Prayer for Masses with Children II presents the kingdom as an extension of the eucharistic table, where the friends of Jesus will gather. This is what Paul had

## SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION

♦ The Catechism of the Catholic Church quotes a beautiful passage from the writings of St. Augustine who relates the Body of Christ in the Eucharist (on the altar) to the Body of Christ that is the Church (at and around the altar).

At the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Augustine writes:

"If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that you receive. To that which you **are**, you respond: **Amen** (Yes, it is true!), and by responding to it you assent to it. For you hear the words **The Body of Christ** and respond **Amen**. Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true." (#1396)

♦ "The Eucharistic food makes of many people one single body, the Body of Christ in the Holy Spirit. And so it shapes in time a people which expresses at the social level-and not just at the individual level-the power of the Spirit of Christ transforming history. It makes of humanity a new people, according to God's design.

In this way the Eucharist makes the Kingdom real in the world, not by human power but by the action of the Spirit of the Risen Lord. Putting the Eucharist at the centre means recognising this formative power of the Eucharist and being ready to allow it to act in us not only as individuals but as a Christian community, accepting the conditions and implications of this unique and revolutionary event: Easter cast into our human time."

(Journey With the Lord: Reflections for Every Day, Cardinal Carlo Martini)

♦ "The fundamental "serious" question remains: do we really know how to celebrate God's mystery? Is it really a value for all of us, a supreme value? Does the Mass transform our life? Do we feel drawn to the Mass? Is the Eucharist truly the centre of everything for us, or as Christians do we at least live our commitment to try and make it the centre, to try and open ourselves to the inspiration that comes to us from the Word, from the breath of the Spirit which invites us to put it at the centre?"

(Journey With the Lord: Reflections for Every Day, Cardinal Carlo Martini)

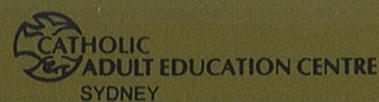
in mind when he wrote in I Cor.12:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes."

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# We do what Jesus did

## THE PRESENCES OF JESUS IN THE EUCHARISTIC COMMUNITY

"Any reflection on the Eucharist is fundamentally a reflection on the very special life of Jesus Christ and, as a result, is a reflection on Christian community. But, far, far more it calls, in the beginning, for a reflection on human beings open to mystery and, in the end, for a reflection on the witness to the love of God given by people today." (*Journey With The Lord, Reflections for Every Day*, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, 1987)



In this article Fr Dan Donovan invites us to reflect on the full meaning of Eucharist in the light of this comment.

Some of the flags which were carried by the veterans who marched on Anzac Day carried the slogan: "Their Service-Our Heritage." Apart from the lasting truth which these words express about the Australian character there is also a sense in which the phrase contains a eucharistic insight. The eucharist is the Christian heritage which is the result of Jesus' life of service. So frequently when squabbles arose among the disciples about who was the greatest, Jesus would remind them that the greatest was the one who served. He had come into the world to serve and to give his life for all (Mk 10:45). It is not surprising therefore that Jesus enshrined his service in a meal structure which centres on table fellowship and service (Lk 22:27). Jesus continues to serve his disciples whenever they gather to celebrate eucharist.

### THE MEANING OF THE JEWISH MEAL

Meals occupy an important place in most cultures and as a result there are various levels of meaning. Three such meanings of meals are of particular importance as a background to understanding the place of meals in the ministry of Jesus. The most basic meaning of the meal is the natural meal which nurtures human life. Parents go to work in order to sustain and nurture the life of their children. In very early times the men went out and hunted or became farmers in order to provide for the daily needs of their family. Labour took its toll on the men and women who battled the elements and the seasons to keep food on the table. Since the event of the money economy people have sold their labour or the fruits of their labours to provide for their families. The parents work and give of their own energy and life so that their children might live. The meal has then about it the cycle of life and death.

The second meaning is the religious meal. This is the purpose of blessing

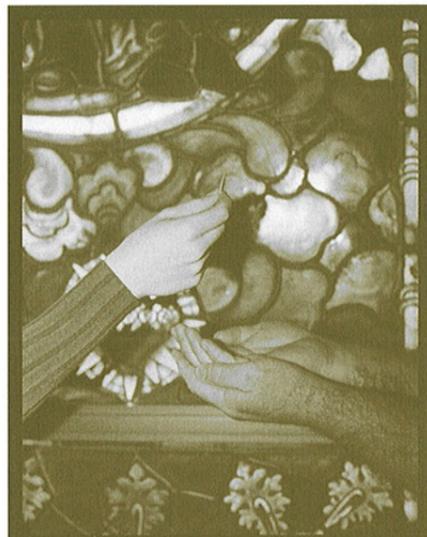
the table or saying grace before the family eat. As much as parents put effort into their working, they are aware that their efforts alone do not provide the food for the meal. There is a real sense in which everything is a gift from God who is the giver of all gifts. God provides for all creatures from God's abundance (Ps 104:24); everything looks to God who "gives them their food in due season" (Ps 104:27). Grace before and after meals framed the Jewish meal and recognised that all meals had this religious element.

The third meaning is the ritual meal. In the ancient near East, it was common for the peoples to use the meal with sacrificed food which had been offered to the gods and was subsequently eaten by the community. This provided a communion between the gods and those who ate the food. Covenants were usually sealed with such a sacrificial meal, in which the parties to the covenant and their gods were linked in a sacred bond.

Such covenant meals were well known to the Jews. It was common in the land of Canaan for important and powerful kings to form a treaty or covenant with less powerful peers. The covenant ensured that the weaker king could expect help in times of trouble while the Suzerain or powerful king could expect tax and complete obedience from the vassal or vassals. The process was not unlike the modern treaties between nations. Israel did not believe in gods but it adapted the covenant structure of its neighbours to explain its relationship with Yahweh (Deut 26). Covenants involved ritual meals which established a vital communion between the deity and the table fellowship. Jesus shaped these various meanings of meal and used them as a metaphor for the fellowship of the Kingdom.

### JESUS' MEAL FELLOWSHIP: A SIGN OF THE KINGDOM

The gospel of Luke describes the various meals which Jesus shared



JESUS IS RECOGNISED IN THE COMMUNITY SO THAT IT MIGHT BE JESUS IN THE WORLD.

with his disciples during his public ministry and after his resurrection. The meal for Luke was central to Jesus' preaching of the kingdom. In fact the opponents of Jesus denounce him as a "drunkard and glutton, a friend of tax collectors and sinners," (Lk 7:34) and take scandal at Jesus' eating with them (Lk 15:2). For the Pharisees, the meal was much more than a cultural activity, it was a religious rite which established a solidarity and fellowship among those who sat at table. To include sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes and the like in this fellowship would be to share in their sinfulness. (Lk 7:39-52). The Lucan parables of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32) and Lazarus and Dives (Lk 16:19-31) demonstrate Jesus' attitude toward the outcast and the sinner who repents. The better people in the society had become the outcasts (Lk 14:15) while the poor and sinners shared in the banquet of the kingdom. (Lk 7:52; 19:1-10). Jesus' desire to seek out and save those who were lost, was expressed as service.

Meals simply encapsulated Jesus' service. The journey of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and his paschal mystery (life, death and resurrection)

are central in Luke's gospel (Lk 9:51-19:48). During this journey Jesus invites those along the way to follow him and to serve (Lk 18) then they will have "treasure in heaven". As the journey ends in Jerusalem, Jesus prepares himself to suffer and die on the cross. In this Passover context Jesus "earnestly desired" to share this last meal with the disciples. Luke chapter 22 explains the new meaning, which Jesus' service and sacrifice give to this meal. The words and actions of Jesus over the bread and wine make present his service and sacrifice for others (Mk 10:45; Lk 22:19-20). No longer are the gifts simply bread and wine but the flesh and blood of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31). Those who share this new covenant meal participate in Jesus' saving mystery and pledge themselves to serve as Jesus served (Lk 22:24-26).

### THE POST-RESURRECTION MEAL IN LUKE

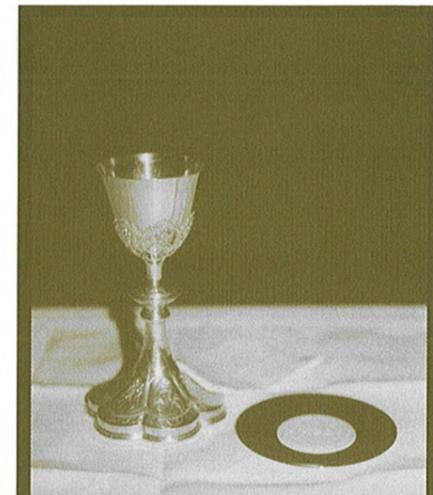
Jesus commanded the disciples to continue to do what he had done in the meal "in remembrance of me". The disciples had to do what Jesus had done and he would be present among them to serve. Cleopas and his friends on the road to Emmaus provide us with a very early understanding of the eucharist and its meal structure. As the disciples are discussing the terrible events of the arrest and death of Jesus, a stranger catches up to them and walks with them (Lk 24:13-24). However, they do not recognise the stranger as Jesus. There follows a liturgy of the word in which the risen Jesus explains his servant mission from the scriptures (Lk 24:25-27) and that the Christ would suffer but then the Father would glorify him. However the disciples still did not recognise the risen Lord. When the group sat at the meal table and the stranger took, broke and gave them the bread to eat and the cup to drink they were able to recognise Jesus. This event addressed a very basic concern about the presences of

Jesus. Was the risen Jesus really present when the community gathered, listened to the gospel, shared the eucharist and was sent out? Jesus is most certainly present, not only in his real presence but whenever the community keeps his memory by doing what he did and serving (Lk 24:33).

### EUCHARIST: THE ACTION OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY

The Sunday eucharist continues the encounter with the risen Jesus. The community participates in the paschal mystery (General Instruction on the Roman Missal #2). The community is transformed through the power of the Spirit of Jesus. The community not only repeats the words of Jesus at the last supper but also his actions (GIRM #48). At the presentation of gifts the bread and wine represent God's many gifts to his people. The community takes these natural gifts of food and drink as the focus for its remembering God's saving deeds, (TAKE).

The eucharistic prayer expresses the community's thanksgiving to the Father who has revealed his loving kindness in the two great events of creation and redemption in Jesus. This great prayer of consecration (GIRM#54) is filled with the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. At the invocation (epiclesis) the Father sends the Spirit to change the bread and wine into the reality of Jesus' body and blood. However, the same Spirit effects another transformation of the community which obeys Jesus' command to repeat his words and actions, (BLESS). The memorial prayer plunges the community into the paschal mystery. The Father effects in this community what has been achieved in Jesus. This is the meaning of the memorial acclamation in which is expressed the reality of the community's transformation and new existence in Christ (Gal 3:28). So important is this command of repetition that the adapted



"...ARE YOU THE BODY OF CHRIST?"

eucharistic prayers for masses with children have inserted "Then he said to them," between the words of Jesus over the bread and wine and the command. The purpose of this phrase is to help the children to realise the importance of the command. The meaning and purpose of this repeated command must be included in eucharistic catechesis (Directory for Masses with Children #12) to foster internal participation which nurtures living faith (DMC# 55). The point here is that not only children but the entire Sunday assembly need a catechesis of the eucharistic prayer and its meaning.

The other two actions of Jesus are in the communion rite. The bread is broken (BREAK) so that the community remembers the body which was broken so that sin might be forgiven. Jesus is the glorified victim whose victory over sin and death gives hope and courage to a world redeemed. Finally, the people are invited to communion (GIVE). Again the community has obediently done Jesus' bidding and at the moment of receiving the eucharistic Lord the acclamation AMEN affirms a much unheralded truth. Maybe this truth is clearer when the verse the BODY OF CHRIST is followed by a question mark. The truth would then be, not only "is *this* the body of Christ" but "are *you* the body of