

HOMILY – 20TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 19 AUGUST 2018

Last Tuesday, I was on a pastoral visit to Helen Jeffrey, a parishioner of Broxburn, who was in St Columba's Hospice, in Edinburgh. Having not being able to attend Mass on Sunday, she was very much looking forward to receiving Holy Communion. I read the Holy Scripture readings and recited the prayers with her. Then, as I opened the pyx, the little box that contains the host, I discovered to my horror, that it was empty. A terrible oversight. I promised to return immediately and went first to Holy Cross Parish, Ferry Road, then to Our Lady, Star of the Sea, in Leith, before an Indian priest kindly provided me with the Sacred Host. On returning to the Hospice, Helen was relieved and much contented, to receive Our Blessed Lord in Holy Communion. This event reminds us all of how important Holy Communion, the Eucharist, is to our Catholic lives, here on earth, from First Communion until we depart from the world.

In today's Gospel from St John, Jesus teaches us that when we consume the Sacred Host, we are consuming sacramentally, His Own Body and Blood. The consecrated Host and the Sacred Chalice are definitely the real presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Bread of Eternal Life.

Christ is present in this special way, at the celebration of Holy Mass. There is a two-fold sending of the Holy Spirit. Firstly, to transform the bread and the wine, already symbols of our lives, into the Body and Blood of Christ. Secondly, to transform the lives of those who receive the Sacrament, into the Body of Christ, ever more united with one another.

Six weeks ago, in Lourdes, we celebrated an International Mass, with over 15,000 people present, women, children, people in wheelchairs, on stretchers, clergy, priests, deacons, bishops, choirs singing, all brought together, in faith, united by Christ, in Holy Communion, from every continent on earth.

You see, that is Jesus's plan, as sent by the Father, into the world, to unite us in faith and love, through His own Body and Blood. His Passion, Death and Resurrection. We draw life from Our Blessed Lord, Jesus, foretells that in John's Gospel. People are changed by the Eucharist, not just in Lourdes but throughout the world, every day, every hour, wherever Mass is celebrated.

If you prepare for it with care and enter into it with living faith, the Eucharist can draw you into the compelling love of Christ and set you 'on fire'. As it says beautifully in the 'little Catechism', "When you go out from the sacred mystery, you know you were caught up in it if you grasp, by deed, what you hold by creed. And if you return to the place where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, Christ present in the Tabernacle, you can regain your sense of the fathomless love His presence there silently speaks".

To put it another way, the Blood Transfusion Service are coming to Broxburn tomorrow so that we can sacrifice a pint of our blood, to save lives of others. To a much greater spiritual and sacramental extent, Jesus sacrifices His own Body and Blood so that He can give eternal life to us. His Real Presence is life giving. That we know, in faith and historical reality. If the Eucharist was not so life giving, the Church would not exist today because it is not centred on mankind but on God.

Just think about it, how consistent Our Blessed Lord is, how giving He is, in Holy Communion, in contrast to humanity which is so inconsistent in faith and love. That, despite all the errors, infidelities, broken promises, scandals, persecutions and betrayals, that God continues to give of Himself, in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

My empty pyx, in the Hospice, taken to Helen Jeffrey, taught me, that as a priest, you are no good to God's people, unless you can bring them Christ, in Holy Communion, in word and sacrament.

Amen