

HOMILY – CORPUS CHRISTI – 3 JUNE 2018

(Avery Dulles SJ) – Priest and Eucharist – No Higher Calling

Priesthood and Eucharist are profoundly interconnected. Priesthood is more a matter of being than doing.

Essence of Priestly Service (Heb 5:1, 3-4)

‘Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. For this reason, he is bound to offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not take the honour upon himself but called by God, just as Aaron was’

The priest is a mediator. To pray, to offer sacrifice and to distribute to the community, the heavenly gifts that God is pleased to bestow.

Jesus hastens to the Passion. There he declares (Luke 22:15) – “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer”. Thereby commissioning them to perform the same rite in memory of Him”. As a sign of the conviviality that characterizes the heavenly banquet, he opted for the form of a meal. NB Jesus is the host who both serves His guests and enters into table companionship with them. It is a unique ‘farewell meal’ in which Jesus bestowed His parting gift, his very self.

(John 6) – His flesh becomes real food and His blood real drink.

Pope John Paul II – General audience – 12 May 1993 – “I reaffirm with conviction and deep spiritual joy that the presbyterate is above all a man of the Eucharist. “Bringing into the midst of the faithful, the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Sunday Mass, in particular, should be the culmination of all parish ministry, catechesis, prayer and evangelization. The Mass should be an occasion when the parish joyfully experiences its unity as a worshipping community, coordinated by the priest or shepherd.

We should also note the ‘First Sabbath’ (Book of Genesis) commemorates that God himself, who pauses after the labour of creation, to contemplate the beauty of the world He had made.

Fostering a Eucharistic Devotion. Catholic teaching has constantly defended reverence for the reserved sacrament. Pope Paul VI, in 1965, published an encyclical on the Eucharist in which he asserted that adoration of the Blessed Sacrament had a basis in the writings of Christian antiquity and had risen to great heights, in the 13th, when the Feast of Corpus Christi was extended to the universal Church.

(St) Pope John Paul II – “The Church has a great need of eucharistic worship. Jesus waits for us in this sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him in adoration and in contemplation, that is full of faith and ready to make reparation for the great faults and crimes of the world.

My first memories of Holy Communion. Not knowing what all the words meant, body, blood, soul and divinity. But, I knew that when the priest placed the host on my tongue, I would meet Jesus Christ, in a most remarkable and intimate way, because He was somehow in the host. I was not disappointed. From that day, until this, a certain charity of mind has been mine. On that day, it became clear that

attaining heaven was the most critical thing in my life. It also seemed to me then, as now, that belonging to God was the most remarkable thing possible for a human life. I made my First Holy Communion 50 years ago in Edinburgh. It changed my life forever and led me to believe that it was God's call to provide the Eucharist, as an ordained priest, to the faithful people of God, in the years to come.

The history of Scotland has been transfused or injected with this divine spiritual food for over 1,500 years. In Glenlivet, in the Highlands of Scotland, during the darkest days of the persecution, after the collapse of the Jacobite cause, 95 priests were trained there, to celebrate the Mass and provide Holy Communion, to those who had been starved of this spiritual food.

We yearn, deep in our hearts, for Jesus in Holy Communion.