



Priestly People

WE ALL ARE THE PRIESTLY PEOPLE OF GOD. TOGETHER, WE ARE LEADERS IN RESPONDING TO THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF PRIESTS AND BROTHERS.

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“We must look back to see how God has saved us, follow – with our hearts and minds – this path with its memories and in this way arrive at Jesus’s side. It’s the same Jesus, who in the greatest moment of his life – Holy Thursday and Good Friday, in the (Last) Supper – gave us his Body and his Blood and said to us ‘Do this in memory of me.’ In memory of Jesus. To remember how God saved us!”

Just as the Church describes the Sacrament of the Eucharist as a “memorial,” and in the Bible, the book of Deuteronomy is ‘the book of the Memory of Israel,’ Pope Francis said we similarly must do this in our personal lives.

“It’s good for the Christian heart to memorize my journey, my personal journey: just like the Lord who accompanied me up to here and held me by the hand. And the times I said to our Lord: No! Go away! I don’t want you! Our Lord respects (our wishes). He is respectful.”

“But we must memorize our past and be a memorial of our own lives and our own journey. We must look back and remember and do it often. ‘At that time God gave me this grace and I replied in that way, I did this or that... He accompanied me.’ And in this way we arrive at a new encounter, an encounter of gratitude.”

Pope Francis reminded those gathered that Christian hearts must give rise to a sense of gratitude towards Jesus who never stops accompanying us ‘in our history.’

“How many times, he admitted, have we closed the door in his face, how many times have we pretended not to see him and not believe that He is by our side. How many times have we denied his salvation... But He was always there.”

Memory, the Pope highlighted, makes us draw closer to God, especially “the memory of that work which God carried out in us, in this recreation, in this regeneration, that takes us beyond the ancient splendor that Adam had in the first creation.”

Saying he was giving ‘simple advice,’ the Pope told the faithful to memorize what God has done for them.

“What’s my life been like, what was my day like today or what has this past year been like? (It’s all about) memory. What has my relationship with the Lord been like? Our memories of the beautiful and great things that the Lord has carried out in the lives of each one of us,” the Pope concluded.

– *Excerpts from Morning Homily: Pope Francis*

Our collective and individual response to the plight of our world

THE CORPORAL AND SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY – PART II

Raymond J. Gunzel, sP

The Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy are then seen as a formulary for a proper and true re-alignment of our human relationships with ourselves, our neighbor, creation and finally with God. Our spiritual passage of return to a life-giving relationship with the creator is accomplished through our realignment with the natural rhythms of the created order. It begins with a re-organization, a realignment of our own heart with the revealed mind and heart of God, the Father of Mercy, to take on the suffering the pain, sorrow, and despair of the human family. To pick up where Jesus left off and invited us to take his place. Thus the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy are fundamentally transformative and transforming beginning with the release of the human ego from the tyranny of the cultural mores and seductive self-interest with our own needs and wants. They uproot us from self-interest, to an openness to recognize and honor the fact that our needs and well-being are inseparable from the needs of material creation and those of our brothers and sisters. We are one, and the healing of the wounds of our human condition begins with the liberation and healing of our heart and mind.

Jesus was a man who was totally and unreservedly given in service for others. Every breath, every heart beat was expended for the poor, the marginalized, the outcast, the forgotten and feared of his time.

At the Last Supper he gave his Apostles his flesh and blood to consume as food. This was more than an empty gesture, a sign with no inner meaning; the sacramental sign reaches back into time and gathers the actions, words, signs and wonders into his heart beating with love for all creation. His words, his healings and signs, his every breath given for others fills this sacramental sign with the same energy that had driven his life. Taking and consuming his body and blood we take that energy into ourselves and make it the driving energy of our life and action; it is designed to awaken within us the same divine driving,

redeeming, merciful energy that will be carried into our lives and actions. We take in order to be taken into a new way of being human, we consume in order to be consumed and transformed into the very body of Christ.

St. Augustine states it thus:

The Bread is Christ's Body, the cup is Christ's Blood... If you therefore, are Christ's Body and Members, it is your mystery that is placed on the Lord's table!

It is your own mystery that you are receiving! Be a member of Christ's Body then so that your amen may ring true. Be what you see; receive what you are... All who fail to keep the bond of peace after entering the mystery receive not a sacrament that benefits them, but an indictment that condemns them (St. Augustine on the Eucharist, Sermon H272).

So when we receive the Eucharist we are surrendering into a rite that imparts God's very energy revealed in his son into the depths of our being. We are celebrating and publicly proclaiming our willingness to be taken into the mystery, to being taken to the cross and surrendering our worldly, culturally conditioned ego to put on the mind and heart of Christ. As Christ rises to new life in us we surrender our selfishness, our greed, fears, anxieties and all self-concern in order to die that Christ might live in and through us.

What gives the Eucharist the power and energy of his life is that he got up from the table, went out into the darkness of the night, into the Garden of Gethsemane and offered himself, soul and body to the Father and was taken to the cross. On the cross Jesus confronted and overcame for all time all the evil, violence, hatred and cruelty of the world by a response of love and forgiveness. In the fragile, whisper, the sigh of divine love that poured from his broken heart, you and I received and were anointed with the same power to bring the forgiving love and mercy of the father to our

world in our time and place. Like Jesus we are called to get up from the table, go into the dark corners of our world and anoint it with the boundless mercy and forgiveness of the Father. The Divine Love of the Father God requires our bodies, our wills, our actions in order to touch and heal our world.

Love and mercy require bodies, hearts, and living breath, to be effective in the world. Our bodies are the living temples within which divine love and mercy, forgiveness and healing find living flesh. The Corporal and Spiritual works of mercy are the sum and summit, the absolute fullness of the Father's love and mercy for our fallen world. As such they make complete and effective the Eucharistic Sacrifice that Jesus offered on the Cross and which you and I participate in when we celebrate this sacred mystery in our time and place. We are the bridge over which Divine Love passes from the heart of the Father to our hearts and beyond into the hearts of all men and women with whom we share our life. Just as Christ had to complete and fulfill the mystery of the Father's love for humanity by getting up from the table and going into the heart of darkness, so too are we called to leave our comfort, our security, our safety and take God's love and Mercy into our broken world.

The wonderful paradox of this process is that as we day by day push aside the demands of our cultural ego and make room for the action of Christ in our hearts through the Corporal and Spiritual works of Mercy, the inner space of our hearts expands to be enlarged and conformed to the divine heart of God in Christ. The doors of our heart open into the chambers of the eternal divine heart of the triune God. Heaven breaks into the chambers of our heart and we discover the full truth of our humanity. We have found the well-spring of the living waters of Divine life that is the life of our life. We are one with the source of All. To the extent that our hearts beat in union with the heart of the Father, we discover and awaken to the fact that our heart was created to find its truth in union with the Divine Heart. In union with God's heart our heart finds its true home.

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are far more than calculated acts arising from our cultural

ego, driven by our will. They are expressions of a heart energized and motivated by the Heart of Christ living and beating in union with our heart. They flow into and through us as living water flowing from its source. They are not influenced or budgeted according to our convenience, but take possession of us according to the need of our brothers and sisters without regard to race or creed. They are the purest expression and emanation of the body and blood of Christ living in us.

We are the agents of Divine Action in the world. True spirituality emerges from our inner self as an expression and reflection of our relationship with God, the essence of whom is love. Love flows from God as living water flows from a well-spring. When our life is aligned with the will of God, God's energy takes possession of our life and becomes the source of all our actions and relationships. God's love for all creation flows into and through us as the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. Our life is the conduit through which God's divine essence, love, finds its way into our world through our actions and relationships. Perhaps a rather pithy way of stating it is to say that we do not do, or own, our virtuous acts. Rather they take possession of us and work through our actions and relationships. We don't do them, they do us according to the given circumstances and demands of life. They reflect the blending of our personalities with the person of the risen Christ living and loving, serving, healing, guiding and caring for creation and the human family through our mediation.

*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – **that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God** (Eph. 3:16-19).*



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