



# Allocutio



Presentata Curia 27th August 2015

Allocutio: Bread of Life.

“Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.” There it is again, that reference to life beyond the grave with the clear indication of Resurrection and with Heaven implicit in it. Jesus is the bread of Heaven. Indeed I had the great sense recently after receiving communion that heaven had come to me. And in this month (August) of so many saints whom we believe are friends in Heaven let’s reflect a little on that reality.

Is this not the great vision that was presented to us Irish in Knock on August 21st 1879? We see the Lamb of Sacrifice on the altar surrounded by heavenly creatures, worshipped too by the Holy Virgin and those saints who were closest to her on earth. This Lamb represents Jesus who says, “The bread that I shall give is my flesh for the life of the world.” And at the Last Supper when he took the bread in his sacred hands he said, “This is my body which will be given up for you.” He makes then a very clear connection between the bread of the Eucharist and the sacrifice he will make on the Cross the next day as the true Lamb of God, sacrificed for the sins of the world. The vision shown in Knock made clear the connection between Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross, the Eucharist and the final realisation of Heaven.

He emphasises this again for us in the incident on the road to Emmaus. On that journey he walked close to the two disciples and shared their disappointment but pointed out that if they read the scriptures carefully they would notice that it had been necessary that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory. And then he broke the bread with them and they recognised him and realised the enormous truth. But in this incident he is also connecting his sacrifice, the glory of heaven and the Eucharist all together. The Eucharist links us to both the suffering of the Cross but also to the Glory of Heaven.

All this began in the Incarnation when God became man, when Heaven was united with earth, when glory and defeat met. Two natures became intertwined; the lesser nature of the fallen mankind is crossed with the divine nature of the saving God. The bread from heaven will do what the many breads of earth have failed to do: rescue the defeated. The breads of earth cannot reach where the flaw lies: in the depths of the human spirit. Sin can only be undone by the divine touch.

I speak of the divine touch. Yes, we may be spirits but our spirits do operate through this flesh we have and that flesh can be either damaged or healed by touch. How often have I heard of just one physical slap or even harsh word seriously undermine a marriage or relationship? But equally tenderness in a contact can bring great healing. The Lamb of God knows both and experienced the gentle touch of Mary’s anointing but also the misery of human cruelty.



# Allocutio



He knows the importance of the tangible for us. And so we can see the Eucharist as this Lamb of God, who prefers himself to suffer than cause us harm, providing us a definite tangible contact with him. The Eucharist in the form of bread and wine is bringing us a healing medicine for our souls. It is God himself. He said to us, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him." We consume the food only to be consumed in God. And if we really open our hearts to this divine touch our spiritual health will be transformed and already the life of heaven will be taking over in us.

Here I must mention the word charity. "Whoever eats me will draw life from me." If we really take Jesus on board then we will take his way on board. It is his love that gives us the Eucharist, it is his love that offers us Heaven. The proof that we have truly eaten this bread is when our lives themselves become life giving. The Eucharist calls us to reach out and bring the goodness we have received from God to others. Do we need to remind ourselves of how often and in how many ways Jesus clearly indicated that Heaven would be for those who rendered the goodness of charity to others? Look even at the vision of Knock and see how it speaks the same to us. Mary is there, she who for the love of humanity permitted God to use her, whose charity is seen in her thoughtfulness for Elizabeth, her concern for the couple at Cana, her solidarity with the Church in its infancy. And let us not underestimate the charity at the foot of the Cross. Or what of St. Joseph who took Mary and her child in? Or what of the Beloved disciple who so beautifully tells us that God is love and he who lives in love lives in God? To meet Jesus is to meet the bread of heaven who nourishes charity in us.

I have this prayer for us all, that we will all welcome the bread of life with the best disposition. This Lord is all kindness and full of compassion. He comes, not to condemn us for our sins, but with the disposition of a truly friendly heart. Let's welcome him. Let's thank him for bringing us the healing medicine from heaven that he is. Let's thank him for his wanting us to be part of his team. Let's offer to be part of his work of charity. With him let us love all those whom he loves. And let us ask his continual help in our frailty.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill