

Homily for Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ 2018

First Communion Celebration

Do you remember when your child took its first steps? After jiggling around the child tentatively leaves the security of the chair it is holding on to and ventures away a step or two. But at first it plops down onto the floor. Maybe it gives up for the time being and tries later. But the real change comes when mum or dad on the other side of the room say come on Tom or come on Mary. With a giggle the child once again finds its courage and steps out wobbling and almost rushes into its parents arms to much rejoicing. What is it that gives the desire, the determination and energy to take those first steps? I think perhaps it is the faith in the love and security that the parent holds for the child. It is called out of its fears into a new independence. That is a parable of our growth in faith,

You children may not realise that during all the years since you were born you have been telling a story to your parents and to all of us. Your family brought you to a Church and you were baptised in the font in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. On that occasion we celebrated the beginning of your particular story. And we said that you are a child of God in whom the Spirit of God dwells. Then, for most of you, last year we celebrated your Confirmation. At that time we rejoiced in the transformation that is happening in you by the power the Holy Spirit. It is a change that enables you and us to live courageous lives because of the love we have known. And today you are invited by the whole Church to the Lord's Table to share in the Body and Blood of Christ with all of us for the first time. Your parents are very proud of you today as we all are. You have prepared well for today which completes your initiation into the body of Christ.

Now that story you are telling by your life is not just about you. It is about all of us. You are reminding us of it today. The path we all take from the Baptism Font to the Altar of the Eucharist reenacts the journey we all must take from birth to the heavenly banquet in God's kingdom. We are called by our loving God out of our fears by the Holy Spirit living in us. The holy communion that Jesus invites us to inspite all our differences of personality, race, gender, status, or whatever, is what God wants for all the world: a oneness in love. In sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ in this way we are proclaiming that Gospel to all the world.

However, your parents will tell you that the journey is not without its difficulties. Sometimes great sacrifices must be made in order that we love as Jesus asked us to. All of us struggle at times to be true to the way of life Jesus calls us to have. It seems at times that we slide back into the Baptism font. We struggle as we wade through those waters of life that we fear will overwhelm us. Most of us are like that at times. We need to hear again the encouraging voice of God urging us on to life.

To receive Jesus in Holy Communion is to rest in the loving arms of God. We entrust ourselves to God's goodness and love who calls is to share in God's very own life. We call this reality the Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom of God is not a place we are going to. It is not even a reward that we will be given if we are good. It is simply living in the very real presence of God doing God's will, today and every day. As such it is a gift offered to us to accept or reject.

The first steps of a child to its parents truly is a journey of faith. It trusts the strong loving arms of its mother and father. But the journey does not end there. It continues throughout life. We seek to live by a faith that says we do not have to carry the burden alone. We do not have the impossible task to create a world all by ourselves. Many try that but fail. We journey as a people of God called forth by God to a fullness of life. This life is always a gift. It cannot be demanded. It is not the reward for our hard work and cannot be earned. It is and always was a gift now and into the future.

Let us rejoice that these children have said yes at this moment of their lives to become disciples of Jesus Christ, the way the truth and the life.

Fr Graham