

Sacrament of Christ's Closeness

For the feast of Corpus Christi, Pope John Paul II gave the following meditation on the Eucharist at a general audience.

"There is no other nation so great that has the Divinity so near as our God is present to us."

It is possible to speak of the Eucharist in different ways. In the course of history, people have already spoken of it in different ways. It is difficult to say something that has not been said already. And at the same time, whatever we may say, from whatever direction we approach this great Mystery of faith and the life of the Church, we always discover something new. Not because our words reveal this new element. It lies in the Mystery itself. Any attempt to live with it in the spirit of faith, brings new light, new amazement, and new joy.



"And marvelling at that, the son of thunder, and considering the sublimity of divine love ... exclaimed 'God so loved the world' ... Tell us, therefore, O blessed John, in what sense so? Tell us the measure, tell us the greatness, teach us the sublimity. God so loved the world ..."

The Eucharist brings us closer to God in a stupendous way. And it is the Sacrament of his closeness to man. God in the Eucharist is precisely this God who wished to enter the history of man. He wished to accept humanity itself. He wished to become a man. The Sacrament of the Body and Blood reminds us continually of his Divine Humanity.

We sing "Ave, verum corpus, natum ex Maria Virgine", Hail, true flesh born of the virgin Mary. And living with the Eucharist, we find again all the simplicity and depth of the mystery of the Incarnation.

It is the sacrament of God's descent to man, of his approach to everything that is human, It is the Sacrament of the Divine Condescension. The divine entrance into human reality reached its climax by means of the passion and death. By means of the passion and death on the Cross, the Son of God Incarnate became, in a particularly radical way, the Son of Man, who shared right to the end, what is the condition of every man. The Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Body and Blood, reminds us above all of this death which Christ suffered on the cross; reality in a certain way, that is, without blood. This is testified by the words spoken in the upper room about the bread and wine separately, the words which, by the institution of Christ, bring about the Sacrament of his Body and his Blood; the Sacrament of death, which



was an expiatory sacrifice. The Sacrament of death, in which all the power of love was expressed. The Sacrament of death, which consisted in giving his life to win back fullness of life.

"Eat life, drink life: you will have life, and it is complete life."

By means of this Sacrament, the death that gives life is continually proclaimed in the history of man.

It is continually realized in that very simple sign, which is the sign of the Bread and Wine. In it God is present and close to man with that penetrating closeness of his death on the cross, from there sprang the power of Resurrection. Man, by means of the Eucharist, becomes a participant in this power.

The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Communion. Christ gives himself to each of us, who receive Him under the eucharistic species. He gives himself to each of us, who eat the eucharistic Food and drink the eucharistic Drink. This eating is a sign of Communion. It is a sign of spiritual union, in which man receives Christ, is offered participation in his Spirit, finds in him again, particularly intimate, his relationship with the Father; feels access to him particularly close.

A great poet says:
"I speak to you, who reign in heaven and at the same time are a guest in the house of my spirit"

I speak to you! Words fail me for You;
Your thought listens to every thought of mine;
You reign far away and serve close at hand,
King in heaven, and in my heart on the cross ..."

In fact, we approach eucharistic Communion by first reciting "Our Father."

Communion is a bilateral tie. We should say, therefore, that not only do we receive Christ, not only does each of us receive him in this eucharistic sign, but that Christ too receives each of us. In this Sacrament he accepts man always, so to speak; he makes him his friend, as he said in the upper room, "You are my friends." This welcome and acceptance of man by Christ is an extraordinary favor. Man feels very deeply the desire to be accepted. All man's life turns in this direction, that he may be welcomed and accepted by God: and the Eucharist expresses that sacramentally. Yet man must, as St. Paul says, "examine himself," to see if he is worthy of being accepted by Christ. The Eucharist is, in a certain sense, a constant challenge to man to try to be accepted, to adapt his conscience to the demands of holy divine Friendship.

Deaths

Fr. Thomas O'Connor, Local Redemptorist; 81

Father Thomas O'Connor, CSSR, of the local Redemptorist community, died July 2, 1979, at the order's infirmary, Neumann Hall, in Saratoga Springs. He was 81 years old.

A Memorial Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Saturday, July 14, in Our Lady of Victory-St. Joseph Church.

The funeral was held last Thursday at St. Clement's, Saratoga Springs, and Father O'Connor was buried there.

He was an Army chaplain in Europe during World War II, came out as a captain and continued in the chaplaincy with the Veterans Administration. In recent years he was on the staff of Our Lady of Victory - St. Joseph's Church in downtown Rochester.

Father Joseph Reinhart described him as "a gentleman priest" who "loved to



FR. O'CONNOR

be part of the downtown scene."

"Even in his 80th year," Father Reinhart said, "He found time to visit the sick at St. Ann's Home every

Thursday, and to hear confessions at the French Church."

Father O'Connor was born in Brooklyn Oct. 30, 1897, was ordained June 17, 1923, at Esopus in Ulster County and worked in Annapolis, Md., Rochester and Boston before joining the military. After his return here he frequently helped Father Reinhart with the noontime Mass at the Propagation of the Faith office on East Avenue.

"He was a great homilist," Father Reinhart said. People were delighted with his "little whimsies," as he called them — anecdotes about Army life, usually.

"He enjoyed walking around and talking with people. He was a wonderful image of the Church to downtowners."

Sr. Agnes Patricia

Sister Agnes Patricia Breen, SSJ, a founder of Nazareth College and a longtime chairman of its



SR. AGNES

modern languages department, died July 5, 1979, in her congregation's infirmary. She was 90 years old and had been a Sister of St. Joseph since 1912.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark was the principal celebrant of the Mass of Christian Burial Saturday in the Motherhouse Chapel.

Msgr. William H. Shannon gave the homily.

Sister Agnes Patricia was one of the five who established Nazareth College in 1924 at 981 Lake Ave., at Lake View Park. She was a teacher of French and head of modern languages for 39 years, from the time the college opened. President Robert Kidera observed that strengths of the department "are traced back to her early enthusiasm and dedication."

Betty Schwab, an alumna, said, "Her insistence on perfection was always tempered by her sense of humor and her innate kindness."

Sister Agnes Patricia spent her undergraduate years at the College of St. Elizabeth in Convent Station, N.J. She took a master's degree at Canisius and a PhD at Fordham, and continued her studies in Paris, at the Catholic Institute and the Sorbonne. She retired from teaching in 1967.

There are no close relatives.

Health Clubs Welcome Bishop

Aware of Bishop Matthew H. Clark's interest in running, two downtown Rochester health clubs have offered him memberships.

Mark Evans of the YMCA said that "we thought it would be a nice gesture of welcome to offer a membership to this new resident of Rochester who is very much into fitness, especially running."

He added that "quite a few clergymen are members, including Father James Boyle (co-pastor of St. John the Evangelist on Humboldt Street, where Bishop Clark resides) and we thought they might want to run together." He mentioned that the indoor track serves well in the winter.

Craig Dengler, manager of the Plaza Athletic Club, echoed Evans thoughts. He said that he has read a lot about the bishop being an avid runner and decided to offer a membership to welcome him to town.

He also referred to the difficulty runners have during the winter months in Rochester, a far cry from those in Rome.