



Remember the Covenant

As Christ's people, we are commanded by our Lord to keep watch: to keep our lamps burning so as to avoid falling into temptation, to stay awake and practice holiness, be alert and ready to welcome Jesus when He comes again. Vigilance is one of our great Christian virtues. So, did you notice Jesus when He came to us last Sunday? Were you alert to the fact that He actually came to us here at St. Barnabas every day this week? Or are you only looking for Him to come from the sky one day in the future? How does Jesus come to us, here and now, before the end of the world? He comes to us in every celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist, for as the Scripture tells us, "As often as we eat the bread and drink the cup" of the Eucharist, we make present the death and resurrection of our Lord until He comes again.

Last week, we spoke of the importance of preparing our minds as disciples of Jesus, and of keeping them lifted up to God. Essential to keeping our minds focused on God is to be constantly mindful of His presence with us, and to remember always what He has done for us in giving us His Son as our Savior. And yet, we are so forgetful. Even before we leave Church today, we will forget what we are hearing and witnessing here at Mass. Here, we are in the presence of Jesus Christ, and His Angels and Saints; here, Jesus makes new His covenant with us, feeding us with His body and blood, and charging us to go out into the world to make it holy. But we will soon forget. Sadly, we always become forgetful.

Bad things happen in life when we forget our Lord, and our higher calling. When we forget our Lord, and His love for us, we become earthly-minded; swayed by secular thoughts and habits, we become cowardly, anxious, selfish, petty, and we add to the darkness of the world. The armies of ancient Israel rode white mules into battle. Before they charged into the fight, they would cry out at the top of their voices, "Remember the covenant!" God had made His covenant promises with Israel, and they were to live every moment of their lives remembering the covenant. At the Last Supper (which was the First Eucharist) Jesus made a "new" covenant with us in His own blood. The old covenant is now fulfilled in the new covenant of the Eucharist. On that night, Jesus blessed the bread and wine and said, "Take and eat, take and drink: this is my body, this is my blood, given for you."

But when we look at the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist, and when we touch and taste them, a part of our mind says, "This is just bread and wine. How can it possibly be the body and blood of Jesus?" It is here that the limits of the mind keep us from experiencing divine mystery. This is where faith is required. Faith asks the mind, "If there is an all-powerful God, who created all things, is it unreasonable to believe that He could come in the flesh, and then give that flesh to us in the form of bread and wine?" The mind must be content with its limitations, and surrender to faith. Only by faith, which looks beyond the limits of the mind, can we enter into sacred mystery. And to meet God in the sacred mystery of the Eucharistic covenant requires humility: on the part of God, and ourselves. For the God, whom the Universe cannot contain, humbles Himself to come to us as our food. So, we must humble ourselves to receive Him in the way He chooses to come to us.

"Remembering" the covenant implies more than mental recollection: it means that the Eucharist shapes every part of our lives. It means not forgetting who we are as Christ's covenant people. Remembering also means how we prepare to meet Jesus through the sacred mystery of the Eucharist. How do we dispose ourselves for Mass? Do we live daily in such a way that prepares us for receiving Holy Communion? How do we prepare ourselves in the hours leading up to Mass? Once Mass begins, are we being attentive, and allowing ourselves to be drawn into this sacred meeting with God? Do we spend some time afterward, reflecting on what has just happened to us, and who it is we have received? Do we allow our meeting with Jesus in the Eucharist to transform us completely?

May we always be attentive, always alert, always mindful of the new covenant God has made with us in the body and blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. May each moment of our lives be preparation for Holy Communion. May we always be watchful for Jesus to come again. May the way we live remind others of what it means to be a Eucharistic people. And may our rallying cry for life be, "Remember the Covenant!"

Fr. Roberts