

Why do we call the central and primary Christian communal celebration the Eucharist? The word 'eucharist' comes from the Greek, meaning 'to say thank you.' But why call it that? Why not call it 'the offering' or 'the communion sacrifice' or 'the meal'? Why 'the thanksgiving'? It is first of all, biblical (Mt 26:27; Mk 14:23; Lk 22:17 and 19; 1 Cor 11:24). But there is a very profound reason why 'thanksgiving' has become the term by which we most often refer to the central act of Christian worship: it is the best description of our position before God.

If the absolute mystery which we call 'God' is *least wrongly thought of* (this is careful theological language often reserved for the Trinity) as perfect self-gift, then we stand before that mystery forever as the *recipients of gift*. Not only is everything we have ultimately God's gift to us, not only is the fact that we exist a gift, but we exist precisely in order to be able to be given the gift of God. We can give nothing to God which God needs. Indeed, as many of the thanksgiving prayers of the liturgy remind us, whatever we can give to God has first been God's gift to us. We are not created to be gifts to God; we are created to be recipients of God's gift to us. That is why we are. And the primary gift which God gives to us is God. So our basic stance before God is gratitude. We are the part of creation which is given knowledge and tongue to say what all creation longs to say: THANK YOU.

In the prayers for the feast of Corpus Christi, the annual feast of the Eucharist, there is a prayer written by Thomas Aquinas (died 1274) called *O SACRUM CONVIVIVM*, 'O SACRED BANQUET.' In it the church describes the Eucharist as the *pignus futurae gloriae*. A pignus in Latin is a pledge, a down-payment, a first installment. So the Eucharist is hailed by us as the first installment of future glory. It is the first stage in the process which St. Paul describes in what may well be the most breathtaking passage in the New Testament: at the end, having made all things subject to Himself, Christ will overcome the last of His enemies, death, and then He will turn the whole kingdom over to His Father, "And God will be all in all" (1 Cor 15:24-28). The Eucharist is the destiny of the universe.

This is why our tithing and stewardship are so fundamental to who we are as disciples of Christ. We are a people of gratitude – of thanks. We recognize that every breath we take is a gift. Our tithe tells us whether or not what we say is actually true. ARE we grateful? In fact as well as in word? In deed?

I mention all of this because, while we did so well last year due to the generosity of so many of you, we are now seeing things fall behind week after week. We are down over 11% from last year at this time. Yes, we realize that some of this is COVID. Some people have lost jobs. But many of us are still doing ok – if not even better than ok. I'm asking you to prayerfully consider your gratitude – and what you are doing about it in the support of our parish. We need those who can to push toward that 10% tithe, for those who can do more, who feel more grateful, we would be grateful for additional support. And for those who are simply unable to contribute, we need your prayers and whatever help you can give in our service to those around us. REGARDLESS OF OUR JOB SITUATION, ALL OF US CAN DO SOMETHING TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE. Also, I'm asking our retired folks to step up to the plate and prayerfully reflect on their generosity. Some folks are still thinking that \$5 or \$10 a week is enough. That's what my parents gave in the 1950's, while working as a school teacher and part-time nurse and raising 5 of us. But while they thought of their giving financially as meagre, they were huge volunteers at the parish – and all of us as their children were as well. If any of us are giving at the same rate now as we were 3 years ago, our giving has actually diminished....The Church's expenses continue to rise. We have also spent a good deal of money upgrading our technological capabilities in order to provide you with the videos of masses, children's liturgy of the word, virtual meetings, zoom,

etc....All of this in an effort for us all to stay connected as a community of disciples supporting one another on the way to the kingdom.

We are all part of creation which is privileged to know, to accept and to celebrate our destiny in Christ. According to St. Paul (Rom 8:19 and 22), the whole of creation is groaning to say what must be said but cannot be said until we human beings say it: THANK YOU.

THANK YOU for all that you do. Please help us to continue to serve in the name of – and for the love of Jesus Christ. (Inspiration and help from DOING THE TRUTH IN LOVE: CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD, RELATIONSHIPS, AND SERVICE, Michael J. Himes, p.126-128)

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