

'We come . . . to
keep our
holy feast
as members of
Christ's body;
in making us his
members
Christ spreads the
garment of his
own sanctity
upon us.'

Austin Farrer (1904-1968)

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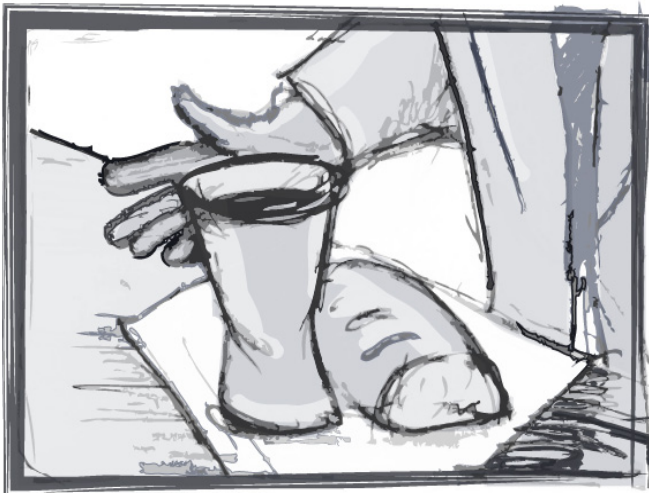
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Living the Eucharist



It never ceases to amaze me how when I've spent most of a Eucharist thinking about anything and everything except the service I've still been changed by it. Even if my mind has wandered as I received the bread and wine, I've realised at the day's end that I've been a little more hopeful than I might otherwise have been, a little kinder and less prone to be critical of other people, a little more diligent in my work. And I know that these are because I've received Holy Communion. In spite of myself, grace has been working itself out.

For God, who in Jesus came to us 'while we still were sinners' (Romans 5: 8), doesn't wait for us to come to him in a perfect, attentive frame of mind. No, the grace that is offered in the Eucharist is offered with the divine generosity that asks of us only that we don't reject it. In fact, if we're there at all, we've come with the necessary sense of our need, and the God who knows our needs before we ask gives



himself into our hands and joins his life to ours.

As the weeks and years go by, the different parts of the Eucharist become more and more part of us. We see more clearly the true state of our lives and our need for forgiveness, healing, re-creation. We allow the Gospel – the good news of our redemption through Jesus Christ – and the Faith we affirm in the Creed to strengthen us and save us from discouragement or cynicism about the world or about ourselves. In the light of the mercy God shows us, we more readily and generously pray for other people. We come to know more deeply that Christ is our peace in whom even I can be reconciled with God, with others, and with myself. And our response of thanksgiving becomes the prevailing (if not yet invariable!) motive for our daily actions and words: our day-by-day expression of the indwelling of Christ.

Now we don't carry all this in our conscious minds Monday to Saturday; we don't have to. The Eucharist becomes so intertwined with our living, so much the basis of it, that its critical, formative, and essential role is almost as unregarded as

' To be reverent becomes more natural: the obvious response to the Christ who patiently, mercifully, and even imperceptibly accompanies us in our daily lives . . .

the foundation bricks of the house I'm sitting in: the house rests on them, has its shape and size determined by them, couldn't stand without them, but rarely do I pause to notice them.



So good though it is (as when reading this) to ponder how our eucharistic worship and communions change our lives, that change is there whether we think about it or not . . . and it in turn changes our worship. To be attentive becomes easier, less forced, more and more a matter of awareness than of will. To be reverent becomes more natural: the obvious response to the Christ who patiently, mercifully, and even imperceptibly accompanies us in our daily lives . . . the Lord who in the sacrament of the Eucharist joins our life to his.