

Corpus Christi A First Holy Communion

A rich man had a dream in which he died and went to heaven. St Peter escorted him down a lovely street where each house was magnificent. The man saw one house that was particularly beautiful. 'That' said Peter 'is the house of one of your workmen'. 'Well,' said the man, smiling, 'if my workman has a building like that, then I'm really looking forward to seeing my own magnificent mansion.' Soon they came to a very small street where the houses were small and mean looking. 'You will live in that hut,' said St Peter, pointing his finger. 'Me, live in that hovel!' roared the man in anger. This is the best we can do for you,' explained St Peter. 'You must understand that we only build your home up here from the material you send up to us'.

And of course the material we send ahead are the selfless acts of love and kindness which we've shown while still in the body. But love is always borne of sacrifice and that is why it is connected up with the sacrifice of the Mass. It's not just the priest who offers Mass. Everyone does. Don't we pray in the Mass that 'my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father'. You will notice that Jesus didn't multiply the loaves and fish without human involvement. The apostles had to part with their precious five loaves and two fish before the miracle took place.

We don't come to Mass empty-handed either. The Mass is not magic. Our love will bear fruit only if it is modelled on Christ's self-sacrificing love. St Paul tells the Romans: 'we'll only share the glory of Christ if we've already shared in his sufferings'. The word 'sacrifice' comes from the Latin words '*sacrum facere*' - 'to make holy'. We can be sure that the holiest people are those who unstintingly give of themselves, their time, their talents, their possessions in the service of others. It is rather interesting to note that after Jesus had washed the apostles' feet at the Last Supper, he then told them to 'wash each other's

feet'.

The elements we use in the Eucharist also suggest sacrifice. The making of bread and wine involves the labour and work of human hands. Bread doesn't grow on trees, nor does wine. Both involve human labour before we get the finished product. The wheat has to be ground and grapes have to be crushed before the bread and wine are made. Our pride has to be ground down and self-centredness has to be crushed before people can savour the sweet taste of our love, the depth and quality of which depends on us.

Through our reception of Holy Communion which the children are going to receive for the first time today, we are nourished and then sent forth from the Mass so that the love of Christ may be multiplied among us just like the loaves and fishes were in the Gospel today. We are a vital part of that action. We become one with the one whom we receive.