

No.27.

1st April 2021

Dear Friends,

This week, as we approach Easter - the greatest feast in the Church's year - we reflect on what it all means. Over the past couple of months or so we have been looking at Prayer - our journey into our relationship with Jesus, both personal and communal. This journey leads us to the Cross and beyond - which is re-presented in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Hence, our newsletter today draws on a passage from Pope Benedict XVI's book on Jesus and the Last Supper.

This also connects with the lovely words of a well-known hymn : O Bread of Heaven. Often when we sing a hymn we don't always take in the meaning of the words. This is an opportunity to ponder the words of this hymn.

This week I am including three sermons by Bishop Barron - one from this year's Palm Sunday, just gone, and two from previous years - for Good Friday and Easter Sunday itself. I hope you agree with me that they give a very powerful and thought-provoking message. Good Friday brings home to us the COST of the Cross for Jesus. As Bishop Barron says, we are often in danger of "domesticating" the Cross. Easter Sunday, however, has the last word!

There will be a break for a few weeks until we know where Covid restrictions are taking us.

Meanwhile, we remember especially Joan and Mary, who are being received into full communion with the Catholic Church at this Easter Vigil - and also, Dorothy who has been received as a Catechumen on her faith journey. May we all keep them and each other in our prayers.

Take care and God bless,  
John de Waal.

## **The Last Supper.**

The New Testament message is not simply an idea; essential to it is the fact that these events actually occurred in the history of this world : biblical faith does not recount stories as symbols of meta-historical truths; rather, it bases itself upon history that unfolded upon this earth. If Jesus did not give his disciples bread and wine as his body and blood, then the Church's eucharistic celebration is empty - a pious fiction and not a reality at the foundation of communion with God among men.

This naturally raises the question of possible and appropriate forms of historical verification. We must be clear about the fact that historical research can at most establish high probability but never final and absolute certainty in every detail. If the certainty of faith were dependent upon scientific-historical verification alone, it would always remain open to revision.

It is faith which gives us the ultimate certainty upon which we base our whole lives - a humble commonality of belief in company with the Church of every age under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus "broke the bread". The breaking of bread for all is in the first instance a function of the head of the family, who by this action in some way represents God the Father, who gives us everything, through the earth's bounty, that we need for life. It is also a gesture of hospitality, through which the stranger is given a share in what is one's own; he is welcomed into table fellowship. Breaking and distributing that creates community. This archetypically human gesture of giving, sharing, and uniting acquires an entirely new depth in Jesus' Last Supper through his gift of himself. God's bountiful distribution of gifts takes on a radical quality when the Son communicates and distributes himself in the form of bread.

This gesture of Jesus has come to symbolize the whole mystery of the Eucharist : in the Acts of the Apostles and in early Christianity generally, the "breaking of bread" designates the Eucharist. In this sacrament we enjoy the hospitality of God, who gives himself to us in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.

(from : Jesus of Nazareth, by Pope benedict XVI).

## **O Bread of Heaven.**

O bread of heaven, beneath this veil  
thou dost my very God conceal;  
my Jesus, dearest treasure, hail;  
I love thee and adoring kneel;  
each loving soul by thee is fed  
with thine own self in form of bread.

O food of life, thou who dost give  
the pledge of immortality;  
I live, no 'tis not I that live;  
God gives me life, God lives in me;  
he feeds my soul, he guides my ways,  
and every grief with joy repays.

O bond of love, that dost unite  
the servant to his living Lord;  
could I dare live, and not requite  
such love then death were meet reward;  
I cannot live unless to prove  
some love for such unmeasured love.

Beloved Lord in heaven above,  
there, Jesus, thou awaitest me;  
to gaze on thee with changeless love,  
yes, thus I hope, thus shall it be:  
for how can he deny me heaven  
who here on earth himself hath give,?

St Alphonsus Ligori (1696 - 1787).

## **Bishop Robert Barron's Sunday Sermon.**

### **Palm Sunday Sermon.**

<https://youtu.be/hzKOJq8hA10>

### **Good Friday.**

<https://youtu.be/aOGvkV0vSmo>

### **Easter**

<https://youtu.be/4KzTGbYBRhM>

**Final Prayer** - taken from Compline (the Night Prayer of the Church).

**Antiphon.** Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

### **Nunc Dimittis.**

At last, all-powerful Master,  
you give leave to your servant  
to go in peace, according to your promise.

For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all nations, the light to enlighten the Gentiles  
and give glory to Israel, your people.

**Antiphon.** Save us, Lord, while we are awake; protect us while we sleep; that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace.

A short time for silent prayer.

### **Concluding prayer.**

Lord our God,  
restore us again by the repose of sleep after the fatigue of our daily work;  
so that, continually renewed by your help, we may serve you in body and soul.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen

**Blessing.** Lord, grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. Amen.

### **A final thought.**

“May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord uncover his face to you and bring you peace.”

(Book of Numbers. 6 : 22-27)