

Every Sunday the Church gathers to proclaim Jesus and him crucified. This Eucharist is the source and summit of our lives as a Christian people. By making what this Eucharist celebrates alive in our world, then we are allowing the world to see how brightly the light of our faith shines. To live a Eucharistic spirituality means we live out the fullness of the Incarnation. Jesus took on human flesh and consecrated the whole of human life. By offering his life on the Cross, he shows us that we need to offer our life for the sake of the world. By joining our lives to his sacrifice on the Cross, everything about our lives is an opportunity of grace. By living out the meaning of the Eucharistic Liturgy, we live out the mystery of being the Body of Christ.

In the Sermon on the Mount of which we heard a part of today, it is easy to see that what attracted people to Jesus was the encounter with him. If those who gathered there had not encountered someone whose life was attractive to them, then they would have walked away and not been changed by his words. In the Eucharistic and in the community that gathers, we encounter the Risen Jesus who calls us to a new and more abundant life. The Eucharist transforms us into a community which meets the Jesus who sat and taught on that mountain so many years ago. A Eucharistic spirituality is an encounter with the Jesus who taught and healed, who suffered and died, who rose from the dead and continues to live in the splendor of his Father.

The center of a Eucharistic spirituality is based in the power of God. It challenges us daily to give our lives to Christ just as he freely gave his life to the Father for us. We need to strive to daily give all we can to God. This is living out the Eucharistic mystery every day. We take the Body and Blood of the Lord into the very fiber of

our being every time we receive the Eucharist. By doing this, we are changed in the very core of our being. To live a Eucharistic spirituality means that the values and direction of our life are God's and not our own. By allowing the Eucharist to change our hearts and lives, and it is a choice; we shine brighter and brighter in our world that can seem darker and darker with poverty, sin and selfishness.

The core of our lives as Catholic Christians is this Eucharist. It tells us who we are and who we are called to be. The Word of God and the Sacrament we receive enables us to be the salt and leaven that this world needs. How can we season the world if we are not seasoned by the Eucharist ourselves? How can we be the light of the world if we are not being enlightened ourselves? A personal relationship with Jesus is primary in our lives, but as Catholics our spiritual lives are lived out in the midst of the community. As a Eucharistic people, we are bound to each other by the bond of this altar upon which we share the saving mystery of Christ's cross and resurrection.

So, how do we make this happen? There is not person here who would not prepare for something important that has to be done. In the next few months, most of us will be having our taxes done. who will go to the tax person or sit down to do them without all the paperwork needed? What young person here would go and take a test without having studied? Can you imagine taking a regents exam without going to class and studying? Who here would not plan an important meeting at work by doing some preparation before? Who here who loves to cook would not spend time preparing the meat, making sure all the necessary ingredients were in the kitchen? It seems a reasonable assumption

that we all put preparation work into the things we love and values and want to have a good outcome.

So, we need to put the same time and effort into preparing ourselves to come here. In the pre Vatican II liturgy, the priest would have special prayers to say before Mass was celebrated and a specific prayer was said as each vestment was put on. In those days, and in some Christian communities today, people wore their "Sunday best"; clothes that when worn allowed the person to begin to prepare for the Mass. We are a church of sign and symbol. Rituals allow us to make the transition into this celebration and then to carry out what we do here into our everyday lives.

Some suggestions:

- try to be here 10-15 minutes before to get ready to celebrate
- The Eucharistic fast as a way to make room for Christ and for the Body of Christ that is the community of faith
- silent reflection before the opening hymn
- friend who doesn't look at the Sunday paper until after he comes home from Mass
- a special breakfast before or after Mass
- taking the time after Communion to ask God what part of our life he will change this week
- reading the readings during the week, at least the Gospel

- stopping in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel before Mass
- stopping after Mass to greet and talk with neighbors maybe somebody you see every week and have never spoken to
- committing to learn one new way to pray during Lent
- When you sit down and have a meal, let the food remind you of this meal.....eat with reverence and care.....be mindful of those who are not at your table: family, friends, the hungry, the cold
- making the Sunday Eucharist each week the high point of the week and as Gary said last week not allowing anything to replace it whether it be work or sports or something that may seem more important.
- pray the words of the Mass, especially the Eucharistic prayer
- see the dying and rising of Christ in your life every day

The new words of the Missal will only come alive for us if we open ourselves up to encounter Jesus. In fact, if the words of the current Missal have not allowed us to meet Jesus here than the place to start is not with new words, but with asking Jesus into your heart today, right now. This holds true for the entire community. If Jesus is not the center and source of what we do as God's people, if this Eucharist is seen as an option, then we as a community need to open our lives to Jesus. If our encounter with Christ here is not the center of all we do, then we will be a noisy gong, a clanging symbol as St Paul says in his letter to the church at Corinth,

Let us commit ourselves to be a Eucharistic people. Let us be a people who live out what we do here by selflessly offering ourselves in service. May we open our hearts here today and allow the Jesus who is present to us in the Eucharistic sacrifice to transform us into salt and leaven for the world.