

The reason we go for mass

How many of us go for mass weekend after weekend just for the sake of going? I think many Catholics today undermine the true reason why they go for this essential and foundation of our faith, the breaking of body and blood of Christ. Many of us think that mass is just a boring one-hour Sunday ritual that we have to attend.

Fr. Fernandez of the Blessed Sacrament order gave a talk on Music and the Eucharist just recently. Though the intention of the talk was to prepare the catholic musicians to bring the Eucharist to be a living experience to the people, I came out feeling refreshed and strengthen as I was reminded of how our attitude should be towards the Eucharist.

Many Catholics spend hours and hours of their time on different type of devotions and prayers. These forms of devotions are good for us, but if to be compared to eating, these are just merely snacks. Eventually all Catholics will still need to return to the Eucharist for the full meal.

Another sad fact of life is that in today's fast paced world, the Eucharist has began to lose its real meaning as the reason why we are different from any other Christian denominations. I think people have just grown numb to the real meaning of mass. Fr. Fernandez mentioned that a good way to make mass more meaningful is actually to make a conscious effort to remind ourselves the true meaning of the Eucharist before we participate in the celebration. Fr. Fernandez used the following passage to explain the true meaning of the Eucharist.

'And this is because the love of Christ overwhelms us when we reflect that if one man had died for all, then all men should be dead; and the reason he died for all was so that living men should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised to life for them.' (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

There three major points highlighted from the reading by Fr. Fernandez were;

1. Love of Christ overwhelms us
2. one man died for all; all should be dead
3. Living men should live no longer for themselves, but for Him.

The first point is quite self-explanatory yet very essential; it simply explores the point that He loves us in great magnitude.

In the second point, the *'one man'* refers to Christ. The word *'all'* indicate that this passage is meant for everyone. A point to note here is that Christ death refers to physical death. But this does not mean that we will not die. We will still have to die physically, but our death will be different. Our death will be one without anxiety and fear.

Because now,

- (a) Our lives don't belong to ourselves anymore since Jesus' death.
- (b) We die knowing who we are dying for.

A good example: An accident happened, leaving your car hanging at the edge of a cliff. A doctor came to hold on to the car while the rescue workers try to pull you out. The doctor knew that he would be dragged down with the car when you were pulled out of it. But he held on. Finally, you were out and he plunged to his death with your car. From that day on,

you knew that your life would never be the same again. You realized that your life is not actually yours anymore. (This refers to point (a) above)

Then, you decided to study to be a doctor just like your saviour. And you became a famous surgeon. One day, a patient desperately needed your attention. You are the only one who can save her. Reading her datasheet before the operation, you realized that she is the daughter of your saviour. Now, it's pay back time. You performed the operation unlike the many other operations you did before. This one was filled with love, emotions, and meaning. Because, you now know who you are doing this for. (This would explain point (b))

To make the pasage more personal, replace the word 'all' with 'me'. Hence '**Christ died for me**'. If catholics are able to comprehend and experience this then mass would never be unmeaningful anymore. Imagine this, you were involved in an accident and lost your sight completely. Your friend upon hearing that you were in the hospital visited you and decided to donate both his eyes so that you can see again. Of course after the operation, you will be able to see again whereas he will lose his sight completely. Imagine how much you will treasure that sight. Imagine how grateful you will be for that gift and chance to be able to see the wonders and beauty of the world once more. Now, knowing how much you will be grateful for the eyesight that you had regained, imagine how much more grateful should you be if someone laid down His life so that you can live again. This person will have to die in order that you can live again.

To built on the 'eye-operation' analogy, imagine a photo was taken with the doctor, your friend and you who was blind then, a few hours before the operation. After your operation, you return back to your world. At times you will forget to treasure this sight of yours. You start not to take good care of it. Then one day, you came across the picture. And it reminded you of the moment at "Calvary". That is what the Eucharist is for; to make present Christ at Calvary so as to remind us of His death for us and how we should lead our lives now. Hence, Eucharist is like that picture.

The third point requires an action to be taken. Using the same analogy, imagine how grateful must we be towards the Christ as he gave up his life, so that we can live again. Now imagine how touched we will be and how much would that move us to use that precious gift of life that Christ had given to us for Him and His glory. And that is the reason why living men should live no longer for themselves, but for Him.

So, now you see why the Eucharist is important as it is a reminder of Christ love for us and what he had given up for us so that we may live again. And live in all life's fullness dedicated to Christ's glory is the exact expression that should come from us.