

Reflection 12th December 2010

Last week in Church was for me 'one of those moments'. I came with a heavy heart. I was feeling pessimistic about our future, and feeling like the Rich Young Ruler, saying 'Well what else can I do? I have given my best, and our numbers are still going down! I have risked myself and worked hard. Why have we not been rewarded by God?

John Wesley used to say to his Lay Preachers "Preach faith till you have it!". Well that is what happened to me. In the preaching, it came to me that I am like the woman with the haemorrhage who is not game to come up to Jesus, but wants just to touch the hem of his Garment. Then she will be healed.

What she was looking for was the embrace of love, instead of the rejection of the 'unclean'. That is how I feel.

So it was in Church that this came to me. After the sermon, in the prayers, where we bring our deepest self into the company of God, these realities came to the surface for me. So I could respond to the hearing of God's word, preached by me, to me, in prayer.

This is the way it should be! This is why the Eucharist is structured the way it is! This is why, instead of doing 'praise and worship' all the time, or Morning Prayer the Liturgical revival of the 'sixties and 'seventies

brought the Eucharist back to the centre of congregational worship.

What we do in church on a Sunday is meant to achieve something: to reset our relationship to God and to show us what the world really looks like and to give us the opportunity to enter into that world, and to live in it for a while.

What a wonderful privilege! To be able to live in the world, as it really is in Heaven. (All you have to do is read the picture of heaven in the book of revelation, and you can see that the picture of heaven is exactly as we have set up the insides of our Church! What we do in Church reflects the picture of the book of Revelation.)

So sometimes, although there is a degree of 'ordinary time' in Church too, celebrating the Eucharist makes possible a lot of 'quality time.'

But this kind of quality time, depends not only on God's promise to be Jesus for us: Allowing us to touch the hem of his garment, turning to us and looking at us with love and embrace. It depends too upon our bringing into the circle of the Eucharist the offering of our lives. If we withhold ourselves from God in Church, then God is shut out. Because God is love, there will not be any forcing of our response.

In the paper last Sunday, I read this question in the 'advice comment' "Some people seem to find a

replacement 'love' after a tragic loss. Is 'love' is merely a need, relatively easily replaced by someone else if one is lost?"

The 'Agony Aunt' said this at the end of her reply "Even arranged marriages often result in genuine love. You have to open yourself up to love, even if you cannot explain it. By maintaining goodwill, you might *experience* love, which is far better than *understanding* it"

That is what I am talking about when I reflect on why it is we do Church the way we do it, and how we can *experience* the love of God, as we open ourselves to it by *bringing* ourselves into the company of God in Church.

Then it can never be irrelevant, or boring. Then doing the Eucharist becomes the most exciting and perhaps terrifying time of the week. In some ways, the most important words in the Eucharist are the ones at the invitation to communion "Rocks melt like wax in his presence, and mountains are shaken to their depths, but in these holy mysteries we come near to the uttermost depths of God."

As an experiment one time, I would like to spend two or three months just focusing on different parts of the Eucharist, and saying "Today, we really concentrate on what it means to say 'The Lord be with You' or to say 'Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open' etc. That would

give us the chance to 'live' the different elements of the Eucharist as we hear them spoken, for Eucharist is more about actions and experiences that it is about words.

The other time when this happens is in the discussion that we have on tuesday nights. If this becomes just an 'exchange of views' then all we are doing is being like those who wanted to have a discussion with Jesus. We speak from a known position of strength. But if we let the Word of God 'in' then we become like the woman with the Haemorrhage or Blind Bartimeaus. We become people who need something, who want something from God! There is a big difference between saying 'Well what do I think about prayer?' and "It's me, it's me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer!"

What happened to me in the Eucharist last week is one reason why I will not abandon it for other forms of worship as the main thing that Christians do. No amount of anything else can replace this gift for me.

Your 'Companion on The Way' and Priest



Paul Dalzell.

