

June 22, 2025 Portugal 12th Sunday in OT
Carmel of St. Teresa Church Coimbra, Portugal.
Father Juan and Deacon Roger (homily)

First Reading Zechariah 12:10–11; 13:1

I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of mercy and supplication, so that when they look on him whom they have thrust through, they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and they will grieve for him as one grieves over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to purify from sin and uncleanness.

Responsorial Psalm 63:2–6,8–9

O God, you are my God it is you I seek! For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts, In a land parched, lifeless, and without water. I look to you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory. For your love is better than life; my lips shall ever praise you! I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands, calling on your name. My soul shall be sated as with choice food, with joyous lips my mouth shall praise you! You indeed are my savior, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy. My soul clings fast to you; your right hand upholds me.

Second Reading Galatians 3:26–29

For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

Gospel Luke 9:18-24

Once when Jesus was praying in solitude, and the disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, 'One of the ancient prophets has arisen.'" Then he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said in reply, "The Messiah of God." He rebuked them and directed them not to tell this to anyone. He said, "The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." Then he said to all, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

The words in today's Gospel must have been difficult for the disciples to hear: *"The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised."* and *"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."* These words are no easier for us to hear today. I wonder how we take these words to heart every day. I have to confess I don't dwell on them myself. It's so easy for us to go to Mass, to pray every day, to worship God...But, taking up our cross and following Jesus, that is the hard part. Following Christ is not easy!

Following Christ begins with the Eucharist, the "Source and Summit of our Christian Life"....But we must remember that this sacrament is the culmination both of God's actions and our actions...God blessing the world in Christ's actions, and our actions not only of worship, but most importantly, our actions of sharing His love, mercy and forgiveness with the world.

So you see, Eucharist can be called a verb, it is not just a passive noun. It's THE action of Christ truly present in our lives. Actually, there are four actions: Take, Bless, Break, and Give. These sum up and embody Jesus. These are the actions we are commanded to do in Jesus' memory and to do when we follow Him...nothing is left to chance.

In a few minutes at the Presentation of the Gifts, our gifts of bread and wine are Taken. They represent the gifts of Jesus' life. In the Eucharistic Prayer, the gifts we offer are Blessed – the bread, the wine, being Blessed to become the Body and Blood of Christ. In the Fraction Rite the bread is Broken and the cup poured out. In Communion the Body and Blood are Given that we might become truly who we receive...Given by Christ to benefit the whole world. So you see, Eucharist is not some-thing, Eucharist is some-one acting in our lives...Christ Himself!

But, you know we are not merely watching the priest do these actions. We are acting as well and then glorifying God with our lives. We are remembering Christ's offering in a very Jewish way: it's as if we were there at the one sacrifice for all, not merely recalling or recreating His sacrifice. We are offering ourselves to be Taken by God, Blessed by God, Broken open and poured out by God, and then Given by God in love to the whole world. Remember last Thursday when Jesus said, *"Give them some food yourself?"* We do this by joining ourselves to

Christ so that we will be transformed into His hands and feet throughout the world. As St. Augustine said, *“Be what you can see, and receive what you are.”* ... *“Be what you can see, and receive what you are.”*

Truly this is amazing. God loves us so much that He invites us to join our lives to His. We don't come to celebrate Eucharist to merely get something. We come so we can BECOME someone who we are most deeply called to be. We celebrate His Body and Blood to put on the mind and heart of Christ. That is following Christ! You know, if we ever say about Mass, “I don't get anything out of it,” we are missing the point entirely...people, we are here not only to receive something...we are here to give ourselves to be changed by Christ Himself.

Eucharist is infinitely more than a moment when a bell rings during the Eucharistic Prayer. It is infinitely more than a private “me and God-in-the-host” moment. It is infinitely more than adoration and devotion as those are traditionally understood.

When Eucharist is understood as these four actions that begin with the Presentation of the Gifts, it becomes obvious what it means to be the Body of Christ, the Church. The gifts are presented by and then to those of us who are fully initiated in this Communion with God. And, we present our lives to be offered with Christ, and then we receive back our transformed selves...We proclaim our AMEN realizing who we are becoming and the responsibility that this entails! This is what full, conscious and active participation in our Eucharistic celebration means.

Eucharist is a choice to do something...to take action...to fully, consciously and actively participate in offering ourselves to follow Christ...to be Taken, Blessed, Broken open and Given out in love every, single, day...to everyone. To celebrate Eucharist is an amazing and radical life changing activity because the truth is, God will change us in ways beyond our imaginations!

As St. Augustine said, *“the Amen’ we say at Mass must ring true in our lives.”* Imagine how our Church and our world might be changed if we all participated this way!

A few years ago, Pat and I spent the weekend at my sister's house on Lake Hartwell. We ended up attending their non-denominational church service. As we were leaving, I mentioned how I thought it was a very "Catholic" sermon Pastor Mark gave. Especially the part where we are commanded to care for the widows, the single moms, and care for the orphans, and care for the sojourners, the immigrants, and care for the poor. "Now I know what you are thinking," he said. "Pastor Mark this sounds like a very liberal agenda. But I have to stop you right there. God's commandments are neither liberal or conservative. Let me tell you if we are thinking that way, we are bringing God's way of thinking down to our human way...a misguided way. Pure and simple, God's way is love, not a political agenda." Well, that was a very Catholic Social Teachings sermon if I ever heard one. But, what really surprised me was how we had several brief discussions about Pastor Mark's sermon during the rest of the day... You know, I can't help but think how we glorified God that weekend by sharing Christ's love, mercy and forgiveness in moments when we were vulnerable telling our stories and even sharing how we have been offended by loved ones (I mean, how Eucharist can you get!)

How Blessed we are to be called to this table. How Blessed we are to be able to celebrate the Body and Blood of Christ so frequently, and to taste the Kingdom of God. How Blessed we are to be the Body of Christ carrying our cross, and Giving His love, mercy and forgiveness to the whole world!