

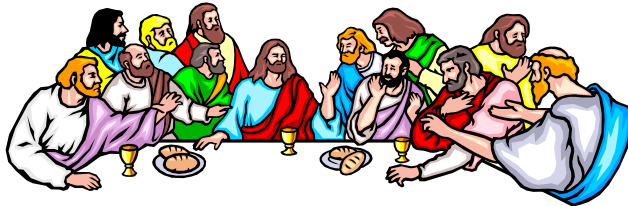


On 'Sharing the Gift'



(James Arblaster was asked to share during a recent gathering of Highschool Students at Gerringong who were being trained to be Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, what 'Sharing the Gift' means to him.....here is an abbreviated version.)

.....right from the event that was the life, death and life of Christ, and specifically that moment one thousand, nine hundred and eighty years ago, when Jesus Christ had his disciples gathered in the room and proclaimed that the unleavened Passover bread



and the local wine that he was offering on the table was his body and was his blood and the acceptance of what he was offering the

world then and there would lead to eternal paradise – that event had been honoured and remembered in an unbroken line through the ages and reigns of kings and popes, through colonisation, democracy and down to us today in the Diocese of Wollongong, a far cry from small homes in the Jerusalem of Peter and Paul.....

.....We all know the theology – at the moment of consecration, the priest speaks the ritual words and, as the bell tolls, God becomes physically present in the same way He was physically present in Jesus' body and walking the earth. God in the Eucharist can heal us and care for us in the same way that Jesus did in Judea, if we only have the faith in Him to meet Him half way, for in encountering Him in communion, we are doing a lot more than the woman who grasped at Jesus' cloak as he passed her or the blind man calling to him and look what happened to them. We are consuming the Creator of the Universe and this is the great gift from God to us – the gift of Himself. And today, with the theme of 'Sharing the Gift', we can look at Jesus' call to follow him, returning the ultimate gift of God Himself with our own lives and selves in a grossly imbalanced exchange, but really all that God asks.



..... Sharing the Gift means taking the ultimate gift of God in Eucharistic form and distributing it amongst the gathered congregation. You all know how it works, the special people called Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist get up and go to the altar at an appointed time where they humbly wait until the priest presents them with the Body and Blood and then they assist the priest and acolyte in giving it out to the people. Then there are a few announcements and Mass ends and everyone either runs home as quickly as possible or stays and chats until someone evicts them from the property. Mission accomplished.....



....However, it may be a little early for mission accomplished. We need to examine all the other possible meanings of Sharing the Gift before we can go about hanging banners on naval destroyers. The role of a Eucharistic minister, in the same way as our duties as Christians and the same way I see my faith, doesn't stop at the door or with the parish roster system.

..... This faith is also a gift and it is something that not everyone has, but also something that not everyone yet has the capacity to



have. So 'Sharing the Gift' can also mean the sharing of the gift of your faith with others. But let's examine the word sharing – the role of a Eucharistic minister is yes sharing the gift of God out to those gathered for Mass, assisting the priest because otherwise it would take too long. But does sharing just mean giving God's gifts out to those who are sitting in the pews – is 'sharing' limited by the size of your church?

What if another gift of the Eucharist is the development of your talents, the miracle of God in your life is the growing of compassion for others or the love of a significant other? What if the Eucharist also triggers an idea or a feeling or ability that can be used to assist others?

.....When the disciples were gathered in another famous room back in the day, minus Jesus this time, and the Holy Spirit came

down upon them, they ran out into the streets screaming in every language under the Sun. God the Holy Spirit, when He was present



among them, gave them the gift they sorely needed, the courage to go out and fulfil Jesus' mission. And so begins now a lifelong journey, a mission for all of us gathered today in this room, to identify what of your personality is given or strengthened by the Eucharist, and in a companion journey, to find ways to share those gifts of God with the people in your church and school, but also with diverse

types and numbers of people you will meet throughout your earthly life and then to go on to truly reap the Eucharistic rewards in Heaven.

.....Giving out Communion is one of the most sacred duties people can undertake – giving others not only a physical piece of our God, but also the chance to develop aspects of themselves and their talents and sharing their unique gifts. For if it wasn't for Peter, Paul, and the innumerable ancestors and pioneers of our faith, who in every age made individual links in the unbroken chain of the Eucharist, then you and I wouldn't be here today training to continue serving in the eternal sacrifice of God. You and I give God out to the people, and receive Him ourselves, and so it is God who is doing the hard yards within people's lives, but still I like to think that I'm a small part of the process (ignoring the fact that they would just get it from someone else if I wasn't there).

Giving our Eucharistic Lord to someone will form a bond with them, because they could develop great talents and help other people through the Host which you distributed to them, and so their successes also become yours and the community becomes truly united in Christ. So when you give out your first piece of the Eucharist, that first holy wafer, think of the enormity of what you are giving them, the God of the Universe and the means through which they can change theirs and others' lives. And you are part of that.

