

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Love the Lord, Love His Kingdom

The Eucharist and JPIC: Radical Love, Divine Love, Transforming Love

Our blessed St. Francis called us to live a Eucharistic life. Specifically, our rule reads, "Let them participate in the sacramental life of the church, above all the Eucharist." (Chapter 2, Article 8). I read that to mean the Eucharist serves as the inspiration and pattern of our lives. As I reflect upon that statement, I remember a retreat from many years ago. After Mass at the retreat, our retreat master, a wise priest, asked the retreatants, "Do you believe in God? All gathered without hesitation responded "Yes, of course." Then he asked, "Do you believe God?" The room fell silent. I think part of the silence was grounded in confusion about the meaning of the question and the purpose of it by a priest we all admired. But, as the conversation unfolded, I realized that we are all somewhat intimidated by the depth and implications of the question. Over the next few days and as the years have unfolded since that time, I have concluded that we all have to submit that important question to God in prayer and contemplation, answering it for ourselves. What does it mean to believe God? I humbly offer you my answer, at least in part. My answer is love, radical, divine Love, as shown to us in the Eucharist given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, as a gift and model of our lives. The Eucharist is Love.

During the consecration, the celebrant at the Mass takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to us. Taken, blessed, broken, given. As Franciscans, we too are taken, blessed, broken, and given. At our profession, we are asked, "Before this fraternity and the other members of the people of God gathered here, I ask you to express your will: Do you wish to embrace the gospel way of life by following the example and words of St. Francis of Assisi, which are the heart of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order?" We respond, "Yes, this is what I want.." Immediately, of course, we think of St. Francis' conversion, his moment of being "taken," when he embraced the leper and immediately saw Christ in him. Soon thereafter, St. Francis says, I left the world. We are then blessed at our profession, and in this way given for the life of the world. We "leave the world" as St. Francis did, by now viewing all that we see, hear, and do through a Franciscan lens. The words at our profession continue, "You have been called to give witness to the Kingdom of God and to build a more fraternal world based on the Gospel, together with all people of good will." As each of us considers how we will fulfill that promise, we are often guided by what breaks our hearts, and realize that it is through our hearts being broken we come to see our brokenness propelling us forward to be given in service for the life of the world.

God's radical love has called us, and we are taken, blessed, broken, given, to carry forth His love into the world, as servants of the living Lord, and His disciples. Ah, sisters, and brothers, how blessed we are to have been called to our Franciscan life. Let us encourage each other as we fulfill our divine purpose. Let us love.

Peace and All Good

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