

Twenty-Second Week of Ordinary Time
September 1, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #36

“No one has ever trusted in the Lord and been abandoned.”
(John A. Kane, Transforming Your Life through the Eucharist, p.38)

You may recall, from our reflection of last weekend, the main question I posed to all: Do you want to be like Jesus? The entirety of the homily centered upon you and I answering the question with a determined “Yes.” This “Yes” would also become an unspoken expression to live as Jesus lived, especially being willing to suffer as He did. This suffering, guided by the writing of Saint Paul, would ask us to join our sacrificial suffering with His Body, the Church. This union shall be our focal point for our Eucharistic reflection this weekend, for the union between God and man offers us a glimpse of Heaven upon Earth.

As we have spoken of in an earlier reflection, the Incarnation of Jesus unites God and Man. This union is different from any prior union mentioned in Sacred Scripture. Man, created in the image and likeness of God, was always apart from God. When Adam spoke to Eve, he (Adam) spoke to Eve. We can read where the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets spoke to God and for God, but, as with Adam, they spoke separate from God. In the person of the incarnate Jesus, God and Man are so united we are able to say: when Man (Jesus) speaks, God (Jesus) speaks. The words and actions of Jesus are perfectly united as both the words and actions of God and Man. This is a point of theology that has to be developed later, after much prayerful thought. We can now say that Jesus has two united Natures as God and Man. His Divine Nature does not overshadow His Human Nature, nor does His Human Nature diminish His Divine Nature. From the moment He became incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the union between God and Man became eternal. Jesus will never not be fully God and fully Man for the rest of eternity.

This union was not fully understood as Jesus walked around teaching and healing. We are left speechless, as the Apostles were, as He stands before us during His Transfiguration. Human words cannot express clearly or fully that moment. Only in time can later theologians begin to shape a coherent thought which expresses our belief in this union. One of the main reasons His union was unable to be understood by those around Him was, as we mentioned last weekend, His glory and grandeur were hidden by flesh and blood. His appearance was not intended to overwhelm anyone with a form of “shock and awe.” He desired that those who would come to accept His being both God and Man would do so through Faith. This same desire is expressed by His choosing bread and wine to become His Body and Blood. Faith is necessary to believe that after the words of consecration are said; Jesus is made present upon the altar under these appearances. He is fully present at that moment in the same fullness that He possessed some 2,000 years ago; the same fullness He possesses currently in Heaven.

We are required by Faith to believe His words to be true and to aspire to unite ourselves with Him through proper reception of Him. Honestly, if an important guest were to come to your home, would you not spend time trying to make sure your home was as neat and clean as possible. Would we not imitate the “flight of the bumblebee” quickly moving from room to room to make sure everything was in order? At this point, we might ask ourselves the best way to clean and prepare our souls to join ourselves with Jesus when we receive Him in the Eucharist. Remember, this is a precursor of what Heaven is. It is the union of God and Man where our wills, the desires of our hearts are one with God’s. We want what He wants and that is our eternal blessedness/happiness.

Our spiritual growth and development are necessary IF we desire this union found in Heaven with God. Through the generosity of God, spiritual growth is something that all people can and must invest in. The holiness needed to unite ourselves with God is available to all mankind. To experience this union, this holiness, we must examine the “Three Conversions” necessary for our spiritual lives. It will be through these “purgations,” we will come to live the two great commands of God: loving God and neighbor. Likewise, these purgations will assist us in receiving Him in a more worthy and reverent manner opening the desire of our hearts to Him and union with Him for eternity. Next weekend, we shall explore these “Three Conversions” and how they prepare us for this moment of union with Him in the Eucharist and later in Heaven.