

***Though we are many ... we are one Body... because we all share
in one bread***



When I was a child, my grandparents lived in a big rambling farmhouse. They didn't have a lot of money, so the house was full of all sorts of old curiosities and things that were mended and broken. There was an open fire for warmth. People had to gather together in those days where the heat was, not disperse, unless they wanted to freeze. It was a good thing, bringing us continually into community. There were good tales shared round that fire, debates about everything under the sun. And almost presiding over all of this, on the mantelpiece, was an old jug. I tried to google it for you, but I couldn't find a picture that looked like it. It was the head of a monk, with his cowl hood round him, a smiling brown face that looked like he had been outdoors all his life.

I am, as you know, not the most observant of people when it comes to things, and I confess I had never noticed it as a child and had no idea what the fuss and Upset was one day, when it was accidentally knocked from the mantelpiece and broken into ... literally hundreds of pieces. But that was when the beauty happened. My father gathered up all those tiny shards, and over many weeks around his full-time job and overtime, his dreadful health, and his demanding family.... slowly and painstakingly glued it all back together, piece by tiny piece. He took tiny brushes and

carefully painted what could be painted, and finally repaired the face of the monk by judiciously applying different gradations of shoe polish and polishing it back to its original brown and healthy shine.

I had never noticed the jug before it was broken, but I remember it to this day now. It was one of the few things in that battered old farmhouse that became a real treasure over the years that followed.

Sometimes I look at our world, and I see the brown healthy outdoor-rooted, community-rooted goodness that humanity is called to, and it looks like it is shattered to a million tiny pieces.

We know from the journey that we have travelled over the last six months, through from the birth in the stable, and the flight of the Holy Family, to the journey of Lent, Holy Week and Easter... that it is into that brokenness that Jesus enters, into the brokenness of individual hearts and lives, and into the brokenness of our world - enters with his painstaking love, seeing and knowing every piece and carefully bringing his healing, restoring powers to gently piece together, restore and renew. To bring what is broken and scattered, to peace and wholeness.

And so, here at the altar, all the brokenness of our hearts and world is held in one place. All the dispersion of our community, all the fragile shards of the world and of our hearts, and so we proclaim... *though we are many*, the deeper truth is *we are one body*, sharing in the one Body, the one Bread. One Body, held in the Body of the Lord who gives us his body to eat.

You are what you eat... it's true. As we eat the Body of our Lord, so we digest it, and so it becomes active within us. Like any food we digest, it becomes our body, cell by cell, it forms us and helps us grow. As we take the Lord within us, so we are formed by him, shaping us, helping us grow, becoming one with us, and we with him. Week by week, formed, shaped and nourished by his presence within us. We become what we eat.

And from that truth comes recognition of our shared belovedness and belonging in Christ, and our shared human family... and from that, heart by heart, grows love, compassion, grace, justice and peace.

And in deep truth when we lift and raise our hearts - and the bread - at communion, we raise up there too all the brokenness of the world, those we hold in our hearts and those we bring in our prayers. That's why it's really true when we say we are one Body, though many. We are held together with all those who are not here – those at home, unwell, travelling, busy with the calls of life, the Church around the world, *though we are many, we are one body.*

But the miracle is really that he does it through the everyday – Jesus could have used something really rich and fine to illustrate and reveal his ongoing presence with us. He used the everyday. Our Daily Bread. Table Wine, simple meals. It is through bread and wine, he heals and holds us; through simple love, through the grace of mud and spit, of touch and tears, through the love of simple people like my father, - the small everyday acts of compassion, and grace; tiny acts of mending and sharing, that pick up and restore, bless and heal.

So if you think you're too ordinary to be part of the miracle of God's Body in the world.... Think again.

I'd like to share with you a poem by George Herbert...

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
 Guiltie of dust and sinne,
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lack'd any thing.

A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,
 I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.

And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
My deare, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
So I did sit and eat.

There's a saint, called S. John Baptiste Vianney, and he said If we ever really understood the gift of the mass... we would die of Joy.

I wonder if today, as we celebrate this gift of Love in sacrament, we can open our hearts to rediscover that wonder. The Lord, choosing to make himself present in something so ordinary as bread, in what is broken, and fragile choosing to give himself to us in a way that binds us so intimately together, with him, and with each other....

... in the tiny simple wafer in which God makes all things whole. We break this bread, though we are many, to become one, one body, held in Christ.

In his love, and in his healing grace.