

THE SECOND COMING (J.F.M.H. – 5.1.2017)

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand ‘Come O blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ (Matt. 25. 31-34 then to end of Chapter for the complete quote)

After the birth of Christ and the formation of the Church, a new dimension was added to our prayer life. Those who were validly baptised not only received the Holy Spirit and it's Graces, but became members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Henceforth, our prayers said with love, are united with the Mystical Body, whose head is Christ, so we pray through Him, with Him, and in Him. We now have a worldwide scope to our prayers. It is the basis for preparing for the Second Coming of Christ. This prayer is essential for our all too weak human nature in need of continual forgiveness.

Prayer is the raising up of the mind and heart to God. It is what we are doing right now, as we think about God with love. It's a type of prayer called "Meditative Prayer". All human beings are composed of body and soul, so if we want to pray with our whole selves, it is a good thing to engage the body as well as our minds. A good example of a prayer that engages both the body and soul is sacrifice to God. The most perfect sacrifice of all is that of Christ on the cross. In this sacrifice Christ was both the priest offering the sacrifice and the victim being offered to His Almighty Father for us. Christ told us that if we wished to be His disciples we should take up our cross and follow Him. (Matt 16.24) St. Paul urged the Romans *"I beg you, through the mercy of God, to offer your bodies a living Sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."*(Rom.12.1) By uniting ourselves with Christ's sacrifice, we can make ourselves a living sacrifice to God. Through our baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we begin a new life. It's beautiful and profound now that we are actually united to Christ. He makes His Home in us: *"I live, now not I, but Christ in me"*, (Gal.2.20) as St. Paul puts it. This union with Our Saviour is so complete that we are part of Him: as a body belongs to the head. Hence we speak of ourselves and other baptised believers as forming the mystical body of Christ. He is within us and we are in Him. Jesus simply says: *"Make your home in Me as I make Mine in you."*(Jn. 14.23) This is not a fiction or a devout symbol, but how things really are. Each of us bears Christ in our heart and soul so that we are children of the Father, brethren of the Son and temples of the Holy Spirit.

It follows that all our actions, however unimportant they may seem, are carried out in Christ. Nothing is trivial. All the details of our day should be done lovingly, since all of them may be offered through Christ for the salvation of the world. Nor are we separated from other members of Christ's body. The good we do has a very definite effect on others, even if they are not aware of it, and are not the direct object of that good. Alas, the evil we do also has a similarly far reaching, but damaging, effect. So all prayer by baptised Christians is actually in the mystical body of Christ. The Christian at prayer, however solitary and hidden, is the Church at prayer: and our private words about our personal needs, and quiet expression of our secret emotions are joined to others' needs and taken up for the good of all. First, we must acknowledge our true worth as Christians, and give humble thanks to God for the wonderful intimacy He has bestowed upon us. St. Peter put it very well, He said: *"You were bought at a great price."* (1 Cor 6.20, 1Pet.18) It is too easy and too tempting to evaluate ourselves, and others, in merely material terms; and come to the logical conclusion that because we may achieve little, have no money, power, glamour, nor influence we are no good. One of the Christian's subtlest enemies is a low sense of worth. We can admit that in worldly terms we are insignificant yet thank God for the true value He has placed on us. We should say to ourselves from time to time, "God thought I was worth dying for. And He loves me still today".

Humility is essential here, as our prayers go through Christ. That conclusion to the prayer at Mass "Through Christ Our Lord Amen." is in fact stating a wonderful mystery. We utter our prayers of thanks and praise and requests with and through Jesus, as our Brother and Saviour and Friend. So we are acceptable and pleasing to the eternal Father in a way we cannot grasp. Then as if that were not enough, St. Paul tells us that through the gift of the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sends at Jesus' request, we become temples. (1Cor.3.16) The Paraclete takes up His abode in us for active work, speaking, loving, and praying within us. This amplifies the scope of our prayers, to the entire world, and the power of them, to being unlimited. God, the Third Person is praying within us. And His praying is always according to the mind of God. The Mystical Body of Christ is sustained by the Holy Spirit who is "vivificans", The Lord of Life.

One can see the same twofold things that occurred in Christ's life on earth, occurring within Christ's mystical body, the Church. Through the Sacraments, we receive Sanctifying Grace, and have a share in the divine life. We then operate on two levels at once. Of course this applies not only to Catholics, but also to all people who are validly baptised, for all receive Sanctifying Grace. Christ in his glorified body is impassable, that is, his glorified body can't suffer physically, but we can, and are able to offer that suffering for others. We are associated with His suffering as the body with its head. In fact one of the greatest glories of the Christian is that his sufferings and Christ's are bound up together. Knowledge of this share in the Passion can turn a human sorrow into the highest supernatural Sacrifice.

While Christ our Redeemer was being crucified, knowing He was about to die, gave His mother into the care of John, not by saying, "Look after her", but seeing the disciple whom He loved standing near said to His mother, "*Woman behold your son.*" Then He said to His disciple, "*Behold your mother.*" (Jn. 19:26.27) In that way it was no mere caring relationship but one of mother and child, love. We are all children of the Father, children of Mary, and brothers and sisters of Christ. At the Crucifixion, Mary, the mother of Christ and a few other members of His mystical body were left grieving at the foot of the cross. Nearly two thousand years have passed since then and we continue to grieve at the foot of the cross.

In the sacrifice of the Mass, we have the same sacrifice Christ made on the cross. It is the most perfect of all sacrifices, made present for us in a bloodless manner. It is not a different sacrifice, but the same one re-presented. It has the same priest, Christ, and the same victim, Christ, offered to the same person, God, the Almighty Father. Christ remains the eternal Priest and Victim. At Mass we are invited to share with Christ not only his sacramental body but also his sacrificial act. As members of the mystical body of Christ, we are even allowed to have a share in the reparation for sin. This reparation is effective because it is not our individual reparation, but the reparation of the whole Christ (head and members). St. Paul makes this point when writing to the Colossians "*I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of his body, that is the Church.*" (Col. 1.24) Note that St. Paul in suffering for others indicates that he is also a victim. Although St. Paul uses the personal pronoun "I", he is but one member of Christ's mystical body, we are other members and together with Christ our head, make up the whole Christ continuing his saving sacrifice. Our Lord's sacrifice was sufficient for saving all of mankind; yet, it was not completed in terms of his infinite love. In his mystical body he continues it today and will continue it until the Second Coming. Uniting ourselves with His sacrifice we make ourselves a living sacrifice to God. It seems that the twofold dimension operates in the mystical body on earth and in heaven at the same time. The Mass is a God given wonderful gift, and a continuous preparation for the Second coming of Our Lord. However as individuals with Free Will we remain free to use the Mass or reject it. No individual is forced to be ready to meet Christ at His Second Coming in an unprepared state. The choice is ours.