

## WHY THE HOLY EUCHARIST?

### **Gradual Change**

Those accustomed to sacramental forms of worship will be aware that one leaves the Church recharged – purified, redirected, vitalised, and ready to make a better job of their duties and responsibilities in the world. Often worshippers depart, also, with a strong sense of having been drawn close, for a while, to a deeper reality, nearer to the heart of things. This sense can grow to the point where one's whole life or orientation undergoes a gradual change, so that one comes to feel differently towards one's fellows, in fact, towards all living things. Then nourishing of the deeply interior Self, the Soul, is taking place, with strengthening of all its qualities, and especially of fellow-feeling, deepening into compassion. Ideally, that is – the opportunity is there.

### **Elevation of Consciousness**

What is it about the Holy Eucharist that enables this to occur? As the ritual unfolds the participant is carried along by its momentum, the music, grand language and stately ritual, the interaction between people and Celebrant all conducing to elevation of consciousness. A brief confiteor, or statement of confession, directs our attention momentarily to our faults and failings, so that when, immediately afterwards, the Celebrant pronounces the Absolution in the name of the Holy Trinity, cleansing power flows through him to the congregation, sweeping clean the thought and feeling nature of each one, especially those concentrations of undesirable thought and emotion to which attention had just been turned.

Thus prepared, the focussed participant follows the ritual to its climax in the consecration of the elements, the pouring of Christ's life into the bread and wine upon the altar. Receiving these elements at the Holy Communion may not immediately transform the feeling nature or the whole character of the individual, but reverent persistence over a period can have this effect – if a kind and helpful life be lived. We become aware of this in stillness, if we are able to sustain it.

### **Unseen Helpers**

While the human participants have thus been borne along by the sacred ritual, other participants have been very active, for the most part, quite unseen. These we believe, are the angel helpers, who respond to the invocation in the liturgy, and gather and focus the thought and feeling forms released by the aspirations and devotion of the people. To these energies they add their own, building a powerful force field, an unseen edifice which is greatly strengthened and beautified when at the consecration, the power of Christ Himself floods the elements, the altar and the church. Then, as the service closes, the angels accept their release and spread abroad the accumulated spiritual energies, pouring them out in every direction. So those physically present are not the only ones to benefit; all in the vicinity do so too. Indeed some of our Bishops have believed this to be the primary purpose for the Holy Eucharist.

*“It is indeed a marvellous and glorious sight for the clairvoyant to see these celestial visitors flash into their appointed positions in response to the traditional words of power. While the Angel of the Eucharist stands usually beside the celebrant or floats just above his head, the illustrious ambassadors of the nine orders always range themselves behind the altar facing the celebrant. Behind them in turn stand numbers*

*of angels, who come to bathe themselves in the magnetism at once so exhilarating and so ennobling”.*

*“From the moment of the consecration His Presence descends closer and closer into the church. A marvellous change takes place in the Host, which is visible to any who have even the slightest extension of vision. The Host becomes glowing and wonderful, and the matter of which it is composed seems but the finest of films, enclosing the radiant, golden splendour of the Christ-life which is manifest within. And then, at the act of communion, it seems as if, in a way that is indescribable down here, the Christ and His devotee become one. Transubstantiation seems to occur in the communicant himself as the spiritual body and blood of Christ is received. Sometimes a marvellous change occurs in their appearance in the inner worlds, so that they seem to take on His likeness, and shine with a measure of His beauty and His light. (Leadbeater, C.W., *The Sacraments*, 1993, pp 135-136)*

*We are able to receive Him in this way according to the degree in which He is awake in us. Whatever that measure may be, the response is equal to it. So that the cup of every worshipper is absolutely full. There is nothing lacking in the boundless beneficence with which He gives Himself to all who approach Him at His altar. (Hodson, G. *The Inner Side of Church Worship*, 1930, pp 81-82)*

### **Sacred Space**

It follows that the atmosphere within a building used regularly for this work will be charged and potent. Noticeable, for example, in such a church, is an intense stillness, in which one is drawn to be silent, to attune. This atmosphere is the more powerful where there is the presence in the tabernacle, usually standing upon the altar of the consecrated Host. From the writings of those with the inner vision, we learn that the Reserved Host is always surrounded by angelic protectors, who blaze with devotion in its radiance.

A further reason for the unmistakable potency of the stillness of such churches, is the way in which they have been ritually consecrated. This is always done by a Bishop, one of those successors to the Apostles entrusted with the power to enact all of the sacramental rites of the church. The Liberal Catholic rite of Consecration of a church includes the ceremonial cleansing of its interior and the invoking of the presence and assistance of angel representatives of “the Primordial Seven”, the “seven mighty spirits before the throne.” It is in this sacred space, this prepared force-field that the Holy Eucharist, and the other sacred rites, are regularly celebrated.

### **A Great Opportunity**

Participation in the Holy Eucharist is thus a privilege of the highest order, in which we have the opportunity, through language, music and ritual, to take part actively in the spiritualising of the whole neighbourhood, as well as deriving great benefit ourselves. In The Liberal Catholic Church all present are invited to receive Holy Communion. Visitors are always made welcome.