

A Reflection by Bernard Traynor on the Feast of The Body and Blood of Christ

We have a Pilates Studio in Northumberland which, like lots of other places was forced to close at the beginning of lockdown. One look at me will convince you that I am not a good advert for the discipline – but Adrian is - and he has been providing online classes for those who wish to keep up with their practice. We use the ZOOM platform and how I wish I had shares in this company. I am, if you like, the warm-up act - welcoming everyone to the class as they log on. Some seem to want to be present a good half-hour before the class begins and we chat about everything and nothing with varying degrees of intensity, wisdom and knowledge. Sherry, one of the regulars, has been using her lockdown time to tidy her wardrobe and is discovering outfits and garments long since forgotten. The other day she was sporting a rather nice knitted top (it has been really cold up of late) and, tongue in cheek, I asked if she had knitted it herself. Before long there was a discussion involving five or six of us about knitting and I recounted how as a six or seven year old I would be transfixed watching my mother knit yet another school jumper without seeming to ever take her eyes from the Black and White television set that flickered in the corner of the room. Clickety-clack clackety-click, her needles beat a metronomic rhythm while the ball of wool by her side was miraculously transformed into a jumper quicker than Matt Hancock can source PPE.

The memory left me with a warm glow that remained for most of the day. I'll be honest with you - I'm not enjoying lock-down – and I'm sure the same could well be true for you. I need things to hold on to, comforting things to keep me grounded, to keep my anger at bay and under control, my frustrations are calling for a channel, some worthwhile and fulfilling project. What better project than time spent reflecting on the beauty of this weekend's feast? *The blessing-cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ.* Today we're denied the chance to be together in the same space, we are denied our comm-union but despite our physical separation we can reflect on the beautiful simplicity of The Feast. It may be simple, but its implications are as complex and as numerous as the stars of Heaven. Bread is made when the grain of wheat is crushed and ground, mixed with water or oil and wine starts as grapes that are squashed and mashed and trodden on. This is beautiful imagery particularly when we reflect on the racial tension of these last few days. As Christians we come together as a worshipping community, each of us broken and crushed in one way or another, each searching for wholeness and healing, desperately seeking relief, if only for a brief moment, from the trials and the worries, the distress and the pain, the anguish and the hurt. Our churches though presently closed, will soon be opened again, gatherings once more permitted, embraces and the sign of peace exchanged - one day soon. Until that day dawns anew, we reflect on the simplicity of the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. *The blessing-cup that we bless....and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ...*

When we come to take communion once more, we will do so by opening our mouths. The symbolism behind the opening of the mouth is not inconsequential, involving as it does an opening of the heart. You may have experience of trying to persuade a toddler to opening his mouth to take his medicine – or some food that he is not particularly keen on. Jaw are clamped shut and you need to call upon all of your powers of persuasion. Until he trusts you, he will not open his mouth. But once he does trust you, he will accept in his heart that you have his best interests in your heart – no matter how foul the taste. Do you remember your first date evening? Perhaps you went out for a meal together. You shared food and each other's company, but that date was destined to remain at the level of a first date until there was an opening of hearts. Once you each opened up your heart then the relationship had a chance to blossom. So, too, in our dealings with God. We can open our mouths to receive Holy Communion, but the personal miracle only happens when we open our hearts and consequently our minds. Sometimes the opening of a heart involves a change of heart. I like the phrase 'change of heart' for it implies growth and development. A change of heart is essential if we are to become as God wants us to be and I would like to finish by sharing something I read this week. *Those who hid Anne Frank were breaking the law; those who arranged her death were following the law.* COVID-19 has afforded us all time to think and reflect, to pray and to consider opening our hearts, even if that process of opening involves a complete change of heart. Please God, the opportunities that present themselves this coming week will allow us to open our hearts anew.