

The Gift of the Eucharist: A Catholic Appreciation for Today

Introduction:

To appreciate the richness and meaning of our belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist it is important to understand the foundation on which this belief rests.

Three aspects are foundational and essential.

- *The Gift of God's intimacy*
 - *The Gift of the Bread of Life*
 - *The Promise of future intimacy between God and God's faithful people.*
(The symbol of a Banquet)
-

OUTLINE OF FOUR TALKS

TALK 1: The Gift of God's Intimacy: Creation and Re-Creation (February 21)

The Creation: Old Testament Roots (Genesis 1-3)

The Power of God's Word

God's desire for intimacy with humanity

Choice of People of Israel

The Re-Creation: New Testament Fulfillment (John 1:1-18)

The Power of God's Word

God's desire for intimacy with humanity

Choice of People of Israel

TALK 1:
The Gift of God's Intimacy: Creation and Re-Creation (February 21)

1. The Creation: Old Testament Roots (Genesis 1:1-2:3)

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **2** The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse^[a] in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." **7** And God made^[a] the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. **8** And God called the expanse Heaven.^[a] And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. **10** God called the dry land Earth,^[a] and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

11 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants^[a] yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." And it was so. **12** The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. **13** And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons,^[a] and for days and years, **15** and let them be lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. **16** And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. **17** And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, **18** to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19** And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds^(a) fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens." ²¹ So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man^(b) in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

2. The Re-Creation: New Testament Fulfillment (John 1:1-18)

1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

⁶ *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*

⁹ *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own,^[b] and his own people^[c] did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son^[d] from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

¹⁵ *(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.^[e] ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God,^[f] who is at the Father's side,^[g] he has made him known.*

Reflection:

1. Power of God's Word (See Appendix)

2. God's Desire for Intimacy with Humanity

Before the sin: *Walk in Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8)*

After the Sin: *Choice of People of Israel (Abraham's Call: Genesis 12)*

God's Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15)

Fulfillment: *"The Word Becomes Flesh and Dwelt among us" (John 1:14)*

Appendix 1: Homily: The Power of God's Word

(4th Sunday of Year B 2024)

*"The people were astonished at his teaching,
for he taught them as one having authority"*

In my college Freshman year,
I studied under an extraordinary history professor.
From the moment he walked in,
the classroom became a stage
where the history of Western Civilization was enacted.
He engaged our imagination with scenes from the past,
making what happened in Rome 2,000 years ago come to life
without using a single note.
Until then, history was a series of dry events
that happened long ago:
dates, names, treaties,
battles contained in the pages of lifeless textbooks
to be memorized for a test and then quickly forgotten.
But my view of life was changed during that semester.
He taught like no one I had ever heard before.
He taught with authority.

The people who listened to Jesus
at the beginning of his ministry
must have had a similar experience.
Unlike the religious teachers with whom they were familiar –
the scribes and the rabbis – Jesus spoke with authority.
He did not quote the "experts"; he was the expert!
In today's Gospel, Mark comments that
"Jesus' fame spread everywhere."
Well, without looking at your Missals,
try to remember what Jesus said in today's Gospel
that prompted his reputation to spread so rapidly.
What did Jesus say to make such an impact?

Even, if you had a minute or two to think,
you would have a hard job remembering.
It is not a very memorable passage.

But the question is also slightly unfair.

For, in today's Gospel
Jesus says only five words:
"Quiet. Come out of him!"

They are not words
that could be interpreted
as new teachings.
The thing is that it was not **what** Jesus said
that had such an effect.
but **the way** in which he said it.

"He acted with authority!"

**When the evangelist Mark begins telling the story of Jesus' ministry,
he shows us how Jesus is given the power of the Spirit at his baptism
and acts with this power of the Spirit.**

**The power that moves Jesus has its source in God,
the authority of God's very self.
When Jesus begins teaching,
the people are deeply impressed.
They can see for themselves
the difference between how Jesus teaches,
and how other religious leaders teach.**

When Jesus teaches, something happens!

It is not a matter of words decorating the air.
People can experience for themselves
the transformation it effects
in those who are suffering in the world.
Remember what the prophet Isaiah taught in chapter 55:8-10:

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
My ways are not your ways, declares the Lord...
For as the rain and the snow
come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

**These words of the prophet Isaiah
find fulfillment today in the person of Jesus.
Jesus shows the power, the authority of his word:
His word is the word of God.
In fact, He is the Word of God.
He always accomplishes what he intends by his word.**

**In today's gospel Jesus' power is seen in action
In his first public work of his ministry.**
When Jesus is teaching in the synagogue
He is interrupted by the shouts of a man
who has no power over his own body,
 he is not in control of his own life.
At Jesus' command, the man is freed.
Jesus simply speaks a word, and the man is healed.

The people are astonished,
and marvel at Jesus' teaching:
 *"Here is a teaching that is new,
 and with power behind it."*
This is the power of the Word of God.

**So, when Jesus teaches,
he shares not only his wisdom,
but also his power.**
Jesus' actions are his principal teachings.

He uses his power to liberate people
from the evil forces.
that dominate their lives.
And when others see what he is doing with his teaching,
They begin to wonder who Jesus is.

At the beginning of his ministry
Jesus seems to meet with approval and success.
You can hear the applause.
But later, as we know, things will change.
and the applause will die down.
When people want to shelter
from his teachings and ignore his worth,
they begin to question his power,
criticize his values,
denounce his words, his teachings.

The important point is
that Jesus stays committed
to use his power for good.
He continues to exercise his power
to liberate those who are enslaved by others
and to confront those who lay burdens

on the poor and the oppressed.

Evil behavior is still very much evident in our world today.

On an individual level,

many people struggle with powerful addictions.

They are imprisoned by powers that enslave them.

Whole societies and institutions can at times seem

to be possessed by the urge to behave in ways that are inhuman,

Just think of the three wars in which we are involved

in the Ukraine and the Middle East.

There can seem to be powers at work

that are more than the sum of individual people's evil.

This does not lessen our responsibility

to recognize our own failure to speak out

and to prevent evil behavior taking place.

The good news of the Gospel is

that Christ's power has won the victory over evil

and we can share in his risen power.

Evil will never have the final word.

Jesus calls us to stand firm against evil and unjust behavior in this world.

We do not need to be afraid,

because he is with us

and has won the victory over Satan and all his works.

This week let's turn to Jesus

as the power and source

that should dominate our lives.

With Jesus' power transforming our lives,

all things are possible.

We are all in need of his power –

there are so many things in this world

that dominate our lives

from which we need to be free:

Christ promises us his help.
