

*'It's impossible to speak without the possibility of being misunderstood '*

To start with a quote from the philosopher Karl Popper, but here goes – duty and love demand it. We celebrated several eucharists yesterday – two Masses, one here, one next door, and a most marvellous meal with a number of those who attended our synod groups earlier in the year. It was a chance to meet 'in the flesh' for there had been two synod groups with the majority meeting on Zoom and a smaller group able to meet here in the monk's guesthouse. It was not so much a need or desire even to further the synod process as to simply meet and have a good meal together or should I say a mass and a meal together or does it matter because it seemed to me that the one informed the other, they were both eucharists of a sort, both an expression of human thanksgiving - the freshly dug potatoes with butter on top being especially memorable, the way to a Christians heart maybe through the stomach after all; memories of Babette's feast there. And there were lots of words in both eucharists with the possibility of being misunderstood in both also, but the dynamic - the underlying work of the spirit - was. I venture to say the same - the hunger for food and for good company significant of our hunger for God. Have I reduced the mass to a meal only? By no means, as Paul would say, because the Cross was present in both also, and our need for grace, for Christ, also. But what may have been going on was expressed well by one participant who recalled her own confirmation as a child or young teenager, when she found on her journey home that everyone was smiling at her only to later realise that they were smiling because she in her joy had been unconsciously smiling at all of them. Blessed Angela of Foligno had a similar experience in the 13th century, so much so that her companion said to her ' *Why don't you at least try to cover your face? Your eyes seem to shine like candles*' so shy was she of attracting other people's attention. Well, what has that got to do with today's readings? The disciples are sent out in the power of Jesus' name, and dare one say the Spirit yet, and find that they have a power which surprises them – not all react well but many do. What is it that is happening here that wasn't happening before – what is this 'new creation' as Paul might also say? The clue perhaps is in the 'Peace' that the disciples are first commanded to bring to each household they visit – for it has to be a 'Peace' not only in words but in action, in who they are, and how they feel, consciously or unconsciously, themselves – the latter perhaps being the better – for then there is no room for personal pride in this, but only room for grace, for the work of the Spirit, and for the surprise that this should be so. And this is where the two meals come together – the one in a sense a ritualised form of the other, but not without the cross. We meet in all our woundedness but something else is going on which transforms us, and we don't need to use any language for it, for others will see the joy even if we don't, and feel the peace which necessarily accompanies it. Freshly buttered new potatoes are as much a sign of this as any, so stay, enjoy the meal and resist the temptation to move from house to house. For what the eucharist is perhaps most significant of is Christ's presence now everywhere.

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