

Dear Friends in Christ,

Since it is the feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ I would like to share a Poem written by Terry Anderson. You might remember hearing about Mr. Anderson; he was one of the hostages held for several years in Beirut during the 1980's. He was an AP journalist in Beirut when he was taken hostage and was kept hidden away in several different places with several other people, one of them a priest from this area, Fr. Jenko. During his time of captivity Terry Anderson, who was a lapsed Roman Catholic, rediscovered his faith, and in it, he found consolation and peace. He wrote a collection of poems he called Poems From Captivity.

EUCCHARIST

Five men huddled close
against the night and our oppressors,
around a bit of stale bread
hoarded from a scanty meal,
and a candle, lit not only as
a symbol, but to read the text by.
The priest's as poorly clad,
as drawn with strain as any,
but his voice is calm, his face serene.
This is the core of his existence,
the reason he was born.
behind him I can see
his predecessors in their generations,
back to the Catacombs,
heads nodding in approval,
hands with his tracing
out the stately ritual,
adding the power of their suffering
and faith to his, and ours.
The ancient words shake off
their dust and come alive.
The voices of their authors
echo clearly from the damp, bare walls.
The familiar prayers come
straight out of our hearts.
Once again Christ's promise
is fulfilled; his presence fills us.
The miracle is real.

When I hear people say that they do not get anything out of the Mass, that it just doesn't mean anything to them, or that they just are not able to find the time to go I think of Terry Anderson's poem. I think about how he came to value the Eucharist when it was possible for them to celebrate the Mass huddled in a dark room. I think about Fr. Jenko who was greatly

traumatized by the ordeal of being kidnapped and held month after month and yet was able to find the serenity to remember the words of the Mass without the books who gave his life to bringing the Body of Christ, the bread of life to a hungry world.

Here we are in semi-rural, semi-suburban Northern Illinois in a time of prosperity, a time when we can buy almost anything we want, and if we don't have the money now we can charge it, a time when so many people do not know what it means to be hungry. Yet, we are hungry. We hunger for peace in a world torn apart by war. We hunger for salvation in a world mired in sin. We hunger for joy in a time of great sadness and anxiety.

This time is not unique in the history of the Church. It is a time of persecution, a time of apathy, a time of profound confusion. The Church is persecuted, not by governments, but by people who hate it for what it teaches about morality, justice, holiness; this is not new. There is tremendous apathy in the world today. So many people would much rather work to afford a lifestyle far beyond what is needed and, at the same time put their faith on a shelf in a long forgotten room in their souls. We know there is great confusion and anger about what is happening in the Church today. Yes, we are hungry.

At the risk of breaking every copyright law in the books, I share this poem with you because it so beautifully and simply expresses the value of the Eucharist for us. What risks are we willing to take in order to participate in this sacred meal? To what lengths will we go to pass on to our children the tradition of this miraculous meal we call the Eucharist? How much trouble are we willing to go to in order to fulfill a profound starvation which emaciates our collective souls?

On this beautiful feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ we share a meal that includes Terry Anderson, Fr. Martin Jenko, Fr. Maximilian Kolbe, Mother Theresa, Archbishop Oscar Romero, the North American Martyrs, St. Francis of Assisi, all the saints, the Apostles, the Desert Fathers, and all the holy women and men who dedicated their lives to living their faith. They join us in this Sacred Meal along with all our loved ones who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. They join in our prayers, they nod their heads in approval, and when we take and eat our souls are filled with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. The miracle is real.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel,
Pastor