



## Trinity 12

# THE NEW SHOFAR

The bread I give for the life of the world is my flesh

Proverbs 9:1-6 - John 6:51-58

### *The Eucharist – the source of life, the greatest of God’s gifts*

The centre of all Christian life is Jesus who is the Christ, the Messiah of God, the Saviour of all humankind. It is in this same Christ we are healed and brought into a new way of living. This transformation of the fundamental realities of what it means to be fully human is called *redemption* in the Bible. We are taken from a life so easily dominated by darkness and hopelessness, into a new life characterised by light and hope. This common life is shared among all believers and is nothing less than a full participation in the life of the Trinity- Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For this reason, the Eucharist is the centre and the crown of Christian life. In it, Christ gives himself to us and we take him up into ourselves. Our Eucharist is therefore much more than just an act of worship (though it is that), more than a mere symbolic action. It is a *sacrament* in which all of the saving works of Jesus and the fullness of the graces of God are made available to us.

### *Why is the Eucharist of such significance for our Church?*

**No Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and centre in the celebration of the**

In the Eucharist we encounter the fullness of the spiritual wealth open to the Church – Christ himself, the *living bread* from heaven. We are at one with our *Passover*, with the One bringing us from death to life, from darkness to light, from hopelessness to a life looking forward to the future with a confidence transforming the present. In the eating of the *flesh of the Son of Man* we are made alive, refreshed and vitalized, through the Holy Spirit. This is something God does for us as we eat and as we drink, as

people who hunger and thirst for the life God alone can give. It is, as **Ignatius of Antioch** observed, *the medicine of immortality*. It brings life not only to our present existence but leads us into life eternal.

### *In the Eucharist the life shared is God’s own life*

The Eucharist is celebrated in and with Christ and in so celebrating, the faithful are offered a share in the life of the Blessed Trinity, the life shared between Father, Son and Spirit. They are, at the same time, invited to offer themselves, all they do, think and say, back to the Father as a sacrifice of love and service. This self-sacrifice takes place through their union in and with the Jesus the Son of God. Thus, the Eucharist is a great deal more than simply a Holy Communion. It begins before the service itself opens and continues long after we have left the church building and returned “to the world”.

***Instructed in these matters and certain in faith that what seems to be bread is not bread – though it tastes like it – but rather the Body of Christ, and that what seems to be wine is not wine – though it seems so to the taste - but the Blood of Christ...strengthen your heart by receiving this Bread as spiritual food and gladdens the countenance of your soul (St Cyril of Jerusalem).***

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***Behold the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with my people***

Long before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, God had invited his people Israel to long for a new life, a new way of being in the world, of living with each other and with God. This *new life* could not be written on tablets of stone, in books of the Law. It would be *written in your hearts* (Jeremiah 31:31). In this new covenant, God promises *I will never draw back from doing good for them*. This promise of *life* is fulfilled in Jesus the *Word of Life*. The *life* offered to us in Christ is a *life* won for us in his cross and resurrection. In his life, death and resurrection this new way of being human and fully alive is mediated for us, a “new way” fulfilling the promises of God made to Jeremiah the prophet. It is the New Covenant, a covenant formed in the Blood of Christ.

***The eucharist is a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal feast in which Christ is received, the mind filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us.***

***The Eucharist is a symbol and source of unity in the Church***

During the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus prayed for the unity of his faith community. This was symbolized in the use of the bread and the wine – many grains of wheat are brought together to make the one bread, so in Christ, many are made one through faith. In the ancient liturgy found in the *Didache* the prayer said...*as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and then, when gathered, has become one mass, so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom*. St Paul spoke too of a similar unity...*because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:17)*.

***Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me***

Thus, in the Eucharist, the unity of the Church is both signified (through the symbols of the one bread and one cup) and made a reality (we actually come together for the service, we physically receive a common communion). That is, during the Sunday Eucharist, we are truly made one people, even though we come as a wide array of differing individuals.

***The Eucharist – Mystery of Faith***

When Jesus declared to the people *I am the bread of life...the living bread come down from heaven...whoever eats my body will live forever...* some found this promise too much to accept and walked away. Others, including the Twelve, accepted his words in faith. They did not understand it. They knew he was not speaking literally, asking them to be cannibals. At the same time, they also understood they were not to change his words into something easier to comprehend. They were left with the reality and that reality remained for them a mystery, a challenge to faith. They were to *eat my body and drink my blood*. Note how in John’s account of this saying of Jesus, those who left were not called back. He did not seek to convince them by arguments, logic or reason. He was offering to them a gift, one they could not rationalize or express in human constructs. It was (and remains) a mystery.

We can follow the advice of **St John Chrysostom** when he invites us: *Let us submit to God in all things and not contradict him, even if what he says seems to contradict our reason and intellect...Let us act in this way with regard to the mysteries, not limiting our attention to those things which can be perceived by the senses, but instead holding fast what he says*. Thus, what we truly, fully and mysteriously do when we receive Holy Communion is *eat the body of Christ and partake of the blood of Christ*. This is the promise and guarantee of Jesus himself.