

First Communion (3)

At one time or another, all of us have been ignored or passed over. This can be very painful. We feel that our work is not recognised, and we ourselves are treated as if we didn't really count.

But something worse can happen to us than to be ignored. We could be forgotten. This is even more painful. It is to be treated not just of little account, but of no account at all. It is as if we didn't exist.

We all want to be remembered. It is said that people do not fear death so much as the possibility of being forgotten. To be forgotten is to be treated as if you were of no significance, that you didn't matter to anyone. It's as if you never existed. I reckon that one of the good things we do is to name at Mass each week those whose anniversaries happen – those who have gone before us “marked with the sign of faith”. We do not forget them !

Jesus too wanted to be remembered. The night before he died, as he sat at table with his friends, he took bread and said, “This is my body given for you”. Then he took the cup filled with wine and said, “This is the cup of my blood.... Do this in memory of me”.

Of course Jesus was not just thinking about his own need to be remembered. He was thinking also about his disciples. They too needed to remember him. In his love for them he left them a special way of remembering him, namely, the Eucharist.

Every time we celebrate the Eucharist we recall some of the wonderful things he said and did. We reflect on them and try to apply them to our lives. But the Eucharist is more wonderful still.

When we remember him in this way, he becomes present to us.. Not physically present, but nevertheless really present.

Through the Eucharist a spiritual bond is forged between us, with the result that we are able to enter into a deeper intimacy with him than if he were physically present. We are not merely in communication with him, but in communion with him, a holy communion.

Memory is a precious faculty. It connects us with people and events that are no longer present to us. If we cherish the memory of our loved ones, they become present to us. They are not just a memory but a real presence, a presence we feel rather than see. By remembering them we continue to reap a harvest from what they sowed while among us.

How much more fruitful it is to remember Jesus, especially in the way he asked to be remembered.

To our young people who are receiving Holy Communion for the first time this weekend and to your parents and families who have helped you prepare for this day – congratulations. May you welcome Jesus into your hearts and return regularly to be strengthened by his word and sacrament in your lives.