

Corpus Christi

A lovely memory of my childhood was a Sunday mass I attended in Donegal Ireland. Where my parents had returned for the Summer Break.

The Church was packed but arranged in what to me seemed a very novel manner. There were near the front children and old ladies. These black clad women chanted in whispers the rosary. Behind them came the respectable families. In benches which seemed to have been ascribed to them generations ago. Towards the back it became much more democratic, with big and small, male and female, old and young. Then at the very back were the men who seemed to be neither in nor out. Paying little attention, and smelling of cigarettes and porter.

This event sticks in my mind as a result of the speed with which the priest celebrated the mass. The North of Ireland people tend to speak quickly, but this chap had taken the prattle to a new level. Alter boys seemed to run across the sanctuary and the whole ritual, including the collection was over in no time at all.

Then groups visited family graves and cousins chatted buying papers outside the church yard gates as we made our way home.

The Holy Communion that I received that day as a boy, is the same Holy Communion that I receive today as a man. Thus I still share my life with those people, as a result of the love of God.

A lovely memory of my life as a priest was lying on the grass outside a simple chapel in the highlands of Kenya. It was this community's turn for the Sunday celebration. But wonderfully they had little concept of dates, or Sundays, or definitely time. They knew I was due to arrive soon, but when was only determined by the sight of my white hiluk truck driving over the fields.

Thus they would begin to gather for the service. But there was never any rush. There was never any rush. So I lay down to rest and wait.

Slowly bunches of Christians would gather. Chatting, laughing, and even singing. Some would then move off for some reason or other. The best way I visualise this congregation is as a flock of birds preparing to roost or fly.

But we celebrated mass

Kwa gina la Baba, na mywana, na roho takatifuu AMENA

That was a long time ago

And still the Holy Communion that I received that day as a young man, is the same Holy Communion that I receive today as an old fool. Thus I still share my life with those good people, as a result of the love of God.

And here we are in a building that has witnessed two world wars, and social change which must be considered revolutionary. We are the people of God.

You are the ones maintaining the tradition. Teaching by your presence, dignity, beauty, and community. Within this large building are different lives, different possibilities and crisis. No doubt in

England the average catholic congregation is a good representation of nations of the world that have settled in this country.

You are beautiful. Fascinating and beautiful.

And the Holy Communion that each shares today, is the very same Holy Communion that is shared by all. Shared with equal dignity and status. Thus still we share and still we proclaim, as a result of divine love.

Miracles are rarely recognised

Wonder rarely experienced

However as you receive communion today on the feast of Corpus Christi open your heart to the whole church

The Past

The universal

The present

And the promise.