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Body of Christ – Blessed and Broken

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We live in a broken world, divided by poverty and riches, by war and peace, religious strife, indifference and persecution... We are divided by barriers of race and culture, family problems, types of politics and numerous other things which make unity difficult. The times of Jesus had these divisions, although in a smaller world, and it was that in these circumstances that Jesus took bread and broke it and gave it to the Apostles, telling them that this bread was His Body and the wine His blood which He was to pour out so that there could be unity and peace among people. He sacrificed himself so that a people could be united and in harmony of love and compassion through His merciful love of all.

The Host, His Body and Blood, is not merely a reminder of the Last Supper but a real testimony of His great love for us. He died and His Body was truly broken but is alive in the Host. We can have eternal life when we share in His sacrificial meal. It is our food which sustains us in every trial. 'Unless you eat of this bread and drink of this cup you shall not have life within you' He said. This we must receive worthily. St Paul remind us that to receive unworthily will bring condemnation to ourselves (Cor.11.29). Clearly none of us are truly worthy but we are totally acceptable to the God who loves us, who wishes to heal and perfect us and unite Himself with us.

So what does it actually mean to receive worthily? We should always be humble before our God but there are other ways to receive Him. We should receive Him with gratitude for such an honour and gift. The word Eucharist means thanksgiving. We should receive with repentance and sorry for the times we have not fulfilled His call to love and serve and have sinned or failed in our duties to live Gospel led lives. We should be filled with awe for such an incredible miracle, hardly believable yet totally true and finally with reverence and respect. These are all challenges in

Compassion is the most beautiful of all God's names

our times when receiving anything is seen as a right and not as privilege and gift.

But another aspect of this *Holy Communion* is that we are not only united with Him at the helm but also with our brothers and sisters in Him. He enters into us and we enter into His Body, the Church, past and present. We belong to Him and become conjoined and at one with each other. Furthermore we are united in fraternal love with those He has made and to whom we have to reach out.

The feast of Corpus Christi or the Body and Blood of Christ is truly a celebration of that unity. When one part of that body is sick or poor or suffering this affects all of us, just as when even a small part of us ails we feel not quite ourselves.

At this time in our history we have our brothers and sisters in that body suffering terrible hardships and persecution. We have children killed and adults tortured and victimised simply for being Christian or refusing to change to another ideology. As they suffer should we not offer our prayers, petitions and aid to them. There are many countries where persecution is rife, India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Sudan to mention but a few. We have homeless and traumatised people who not very long ago led lives similar to ourselves with jobs, home and families.

It is for that reason that I present an extract from a speech from the heart made by one such, a Sister Diana Momeka on behalf of persecuted Christians....

On June 10, 2014, the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria or ISIS, invaded the Nineveh Plain, which is where Qaraqosh is located. Starting with the city of Mosul, ISIS overran one city and town after another, giving the Christians of the region three choices: 1.) convert to Islam, 2.) pay a tribute (Al-Jizya, tax) to ISIS or 3.) Leave their cities (like Mosul) with nothing more than the clothes on their back.

As this horror spread throughout the Nineveh Plain, by August 6, 2014, Nineveh was emptied of Christians, and sadly, for the first time since the seventh century



A.D., no church bells rang for Mass in the Plain of Nineveh. From June 2014 forward, more than a hundred and twenty thousand (120,000+) people found themselves displaced and homeless in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, leaving behind their heritage and all they had worked for over the centuries. Thankfully, the Church in the Kurdistan region stepped forward and cared for the displaced Christians, doing her very best to handle the disaster. Church buildings were opened to accommodate the people; food and non-food items were provided to meet the immediate needs. Presently, we are grateful for what has been done, with most people now sheltered in small prefabricated containers or some homes these small units are few in number and are crowded with three families, each with multiple people, often accommodated in one unit. This of course increases tensions and conflict, even within the same family. There are many who say “Why don’t the Christians just leave Iraq and move to another country and be done with it?” To this question we would respond, “Why should we leave our country – what have we done?”

Christians of Iraq are the first people of the land. You read about us in the Old Testament of the Bible. Christianity came to Iraq from the very earliest days through the preaching and witness of St Thomas and others of the Apostles and Church Elders. While our ancestors experienced all kinds of persecution, they stayed in their land, building a culture that has served humanity for the ages. We, as Christians, do not want, or deserve to leave or be forced out of our country any more than you would want to leave or be forced out of yours.

But the current persecution that our community is facing is the most brutal in our history. Not only have we been robbed of our homes, property and land, but our heritage is being destroyed as well. ISIS has and continues to demolish and bomb our churches, cultural artefacts and sacred places. Uprooted and forcefully displaced, we have realized that ISIS’ plan is to evacuate the land of Christians and wipe the earth clean of any evidence that we ever existed. This is cultural and human genocide. The only Christians that remain in the Plain of Nineveh are those who are held as hostages.

The loss of the Christian Community from the Plain of Nineveh has placed the whole region on the edge of a terrible catastrophe. Christians have for centuries been the bridge that connects Eastern and Western cultures. Destroying this bridge will leave an isolated, enculturated conflict zone emptied of cultural and religious diversity. Through our presence as Christians, we’re called to be a force for good, for peace, for connection between cultures.

To restore, repair and rebuild the Christian community in Iraq, the following needs are urgent:

1. *Liberating our homes from ISIS and helping us return.*
2. *A coordinated effort to rebuild what was destroyed – including our churches and monasteries.*
3. *Encouraging enterprises that contribute to the rebuilding of Iraq and inter-religious dialogue.*

I am but one, small person – a victim myself of ISIS and all of its brutality. Coming here has been difficult for me – as a religious sister I am not comfortable with the media and so much attention. But I am here and I am here to ask you, to implore you for the sake of our common humanity to help us. Stand with us as we, as Christians, have stood with all the people of the world and help us. We want nothing more than to go back to our lives; we want nothing more than to go home.

Thank you and God bless you ...

Sr. Diana, OP Speaks to the US House of Representatives on the Situation in Iraq May 13th 2015. (In Defence of Minorities)

When you next receive Holy Communion in thanksgiving please recall the purpose of the Gift. Remember our brothers and sisters who suffer and pray for them daily. Speak to Jesus about them and intercede for them. We have a relationship with each other. They often pray for us and beg for our prayers in unity. We should not merely say... how sad but be prepared to witness to their suffering and speak out against persecution. For who knows it could be our tomorrow.

Halina. Holman

Pope Francis said that there are "no religious, political or economic reasons" that justifies the "daily persecution" suffered by "hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children." Middle East 2015

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Feast of Corpus Christi outside the Basilica of St John Lateran, Pope Francis encouraged Catholics to ask if the Eucharist is a "moment of true communion with the Lord, but also with my many brothers and sisters who share at this same altar?" and if when "adoring Christ truly present in the Eucharist, do I allow myself to be transformed by him?" Rome 2013

Feast Days in June..

**Holy Days of Obligation Corpus Christi 7th
Saints Peter and Paul 28th (England and Wales
29th elsewhere...)**

St Charles Lwanga 3rd. St Banabas Apostle 11th.

Sacred Heart of Jesus 12th

**Saints John Fisher and Thomas More 22nd
Birth of St John the Baptist 24th**