

## **Prayer for a Eucharistic People**

**By**

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Perhaps you, like many, will be evaluating your life and making some resolutions as we begin this New Year. This then may be a good time to evaluate your spiritual life to see where you are in that area of your life. But there is a danger. I have found that most people tend to be very harsh and negative of their spiritual practice of prayer, scripture reading and participation in the sacraments. Such an approach can be very destructive and it only serves to discourage and build a destructive sense of guilt.

So always start with gratitude for your life just as it is now, for the good that is in it that comes as pure gift from God. The very fact that we are alive and breathing should inspire a profound act of thanks.. Look carefully than in a positive and self-affirming way at your practice over the last year. It is best to just assess what is actually happening without any judgement. Next ask yourself whether your present practice helps you to live a wholesome life that is life-giving in all your relationships. Our prayer and our participation at Mass are not ends in themselves but aids to living fully as a human person .Remember in John's gospel Jesus is the one who came to give us the fullness of life,

Now all this may seem to be very private and individual but our Eucharist tells us otherwise. The Eucharist reminds us most forcibly that we are a community of love united intimately with Christ and therefore to one another. There is no such thing as "private" prayer only personal prayer which is part of the prayer life of the whole community. It is true to say therefore that that which seems the most interior and personal is that which most unites us together as the one Body of Christ.

Our weekly celebration of Sunday Eucharist certainly has a very central place in our life. In a recent article from Bishop Declan our attention is drawn to the writings of the late Pope John Paul II. We read of the importance of the local community of faith or parish. It certainly points out the importance of not flitting from parish to parish to catch the most convenient mass that causes the least disruption to all our other activities. That way the Eucharist and the community of which we are part are no longer at the centre or hub of our life but are relegated to just another activity on the wheel-rim of our life. In the words of Pope John Paul II, "The ecclesial community, ... finds its most immediate and visible expression in the parish... it is the church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters" then he goes on to say that "the parish is not principally a structure, a territory, or a building but rather the family of God, a fellowship afire with a unifying spirit".

It is true that we belong to a universal church but this is given expression by our being located in our parish community. It is here that our prayer is supportive to and supported by the community. It is important that this is perceived in a legalistic way but in the organic reality of being the Body of Christ. We all know that if a family member is missing from a family meal there is a gap which cannot be filled by anyone else.

This is a good time for you to look honestly at the whole of your spirituality and see how our personal devotions fit into the context of our membership of the family of God located in a particular parish. This is a time to check whether your life as a whole is being nourished by your spiritual practice and that you are becoming more authentically human, living from your true nature, sharing in the creative and liberating action of God in the world. If you feel that changes are to be made then this must be done realistically. So many resolution and promises fail because of our over-zealous desire to do well. It may help if you have a friend who you can trust to go over things with you and help you get the right integration of your life.

May God bless you abundantly this year as you continue to live a life of relationships held together by love?

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