

22 June

When I visit my nephews Adam and Daniel, I watch the way they go to the pantry, open the door and solemnly proclaim, 'Mum, there's nothing to eat here!' My sister and I look at each other knowing full well that we did exactly the same thing at that age. In fact, there is plenty in the pantry to eat but unless we are really hungry, we don't appreciate what is before us. In a country of great abundance like Australia, I am often amazed at the statistics of how much food is thrown out per head of population, how much is simply wasted unnecessarily. And whenever I undertake a clean-out of the presbytery fridge, the words of Pope Francis ring in my ears, 'Whenever we throw out food, we are taking it from the mouths of the poor'.

Today is the feast of Corpus Christi, the body and blood of the Lord. It is a feast that reminds all the Church that the Eucharist is a sacrament of nourishment, it is food for the journey of life, it is celebrated and given in order to satisfy our hungry hearts. Sometimes the readings from the Old Testament are a little obscure but at other times they are clear as crystal! The chosen people of God in the Old Testament, walked around tired, hungry, struggling in faith, lacking courage and perseverance, hopelessly lost and dispirited, angry at Moses and God. They were physically and spiritually hungry. God heard their cry for help and gave them food and water in the desert. He responded with love and compassion; he set his people back on the path of faith, hope and life; he nourished them abundantly.

(St Brendan's)

What a great joy it is to gather together this morning to celebrate the First Eucharist of our children. This morning, they continue on the journey of faith which began for them on the day of their Baptism whether here at St Brendan's or another church. On that day, proud and loving parents and godparents spoke on behalf of these children the Church's baptismal promises of faith. This morning, the children speak for themselves and renew with their own hearts and voices the promises of faith made on their behalf. The children are welcomed to the table of the Lord, this table of unity, nourishment, faith, joy and peace. And we who gather to celebrate are reminded that this too is our table of unity,

nourishment, joy and peace. This is our table of belonging as members of God's family.

Today's feast reminds us that Jesus gives us the very gift of himself, real food for the journey, living bread that promises us the gift of eternal life. He gives us the gift of the Eucharist for the life of the world and Jesus calls us to be his witnesses and disciples, to bring nourishment, compassion, faith and joy to those who are in need. I am conscious that whenever we gather to celebrate the Eucharist as a parish family, there is a strong sense of unity. How sad it is to hear on the news the appalling violence in Iraq at the moment, the suffering, oppression and bloodshed that many are experiencing. It may seem on the other part of the world and yet those who suffer are our brothers and sisters in life. Here at the table of the Lord, there is always a place for those who suffer.

In the sacrament of the Eucharist, we touch the deepest mystery of the Church and of our own Christian lives. We become like Christ, bread broken and wine poured out for the life of the world. Gathered from the many grains to form one bread; that bread is blest, broken and given to nourish and feed us. Wine gathered from the grapes of the field blessed and poured out in imitation of Jesus who gave himself for the life of the world. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we recognise not only Jesus in the breaking of the bread; we recognise our deepest vocation as his disciples, we renew and strengthen that fundamental call that comes to us in Baptism. And just like the people of the Old Testament, when the journey is at times long, hard and tiring and we feel within us a deep hunger, Jesus gives us the bread of life, food for the journey, the sacrament that strengthens us and help us to grow in faith.

We come to the table of the Lord because Jesus calls us in love. We come to the table of the Lord to celebrate our unity and belonging. We come to the table of the Lord to be fed, nourished and strengthened and to celebrate the risen Lord who gives himself for the life of the world.