

A transforming presence.

Our house is like 'revision city' at the moment. My two eldest daughters are studying hard for their fast approaching GCSE and A level examinations. The house is unusually quiet as they spend their time hidden away revising and practising past questions. Hard work of this sort does pay off but it also brings its difficulties. There's the worry, stress, tiredness and the inevitable meltdowns. On such occasions I can hear myself repeating the wise words that my mum used to say to me in such times.....to stop, take a break, to get outside into the fresh air to blow the cobwebs away and get a glimpse of the bigger picture.



One of my daughters did just this last week. She left the house for a walk looking pale and burdened and came back with colour in her cheeks. She has been for a walk in the park where the May blossom was out in full bloom. She took her camera and took pictures of the blossom. 'I loved it,' she said. 'It was as if the trees were bowing down before me.'

And they were.

Their presence was so beautiful that they helped to change how she felt about her day, about herself. Just being near the dancing boughs restored her spirits. They had offered their transforming presence and she had accepted their generous invitation. In doing so they brought out the best in her and touched something deep within. Without her being able to name or explain it, they had revealed to her the beauty of the transforming presence of the Divine Artist.

Today, on the feast of Corpus Christi, we too are reminded of this invitation - to be touched by the transforming presence of God's word made flesh and blood in Jesus. And Jesus is present to us in so many ways:

- in the silence of our hearts
- in the bits and pieces of our day
- in the hearts and faces of our fellow humans
- In the dancing boughs of pink May blossom
- In the difficulty and challenges of our children's lives
- and in the bread and cup offered, broken blessed and returned in the gift of the Eucharist.

This gift is a real presence that, when received in openness and trust, brings out the real presence and true beauty of who we are. This should not be an ideal or perfect version of ourselves, but our own real, human, lovely, disordered and vulnerable selves. When the bread and the cup are offered up, our lives are offered too. Jesus came to 'bring us life...life to the full.' In his book, 'Can you drink the cup?' Henri Nouwen offers us a glimpse of how we can receive this fullness of life, this transforming presence that is being constantly offered to us.

We lift the cup of life, to affirm our life together and celebrate it as a gift from God. When each of us can hold firm our own cup, with its many sorrows and joys, claiming it as our unique life, then too, can we lift it up for others to see and encourage them to lift up their lives as well. Thus as we lift up our cup in a fearless gesture, proclaiming that we will support each other in our common journey, we create community.

The fullness of life that we are invited to is to be found in the heart of our own unique lives. We will not find this fullness if, like my daughters during this revision time, we hide away and try to perfect ourselves and our lives. No. We will find it by being really and truly present to each other in mind and body in whatever situations our lives bring. By taking the cup of our lives and acknowledging all that they hold - - joys and sorrows alike - and accepting this as the gift. When we open our hearts and start to trust this more deeply, then we will begin to notice how our lives are bursting with the transforming presence of God. Moments when trees bow down before us, our cups overflow and our hearts are restored and renewed.

