

Corpus Christi

He was an old man suffering the ravage of Alzheimers. He no longer knew who I was. My last visits to him had resulted only in blatherings from him.

Earlier in life he had been ordained a Franciscan priest. He then became a Latin scholar, and then 16 years into his priesthood he fell in love with one of his students-young, vivacious, and alluring. He married her and was of course forced to leave the active priesthood.

Now in his last days he was alone in a rest home, his only daughter far away in Washington D.C.

On Holy Saturday I received a call from the rest home telling me he was dying. When I arrived, he was conscious but he had no idea who I was or what i was about to do.

"I want to give you Holy Communion."

No response. No awareness.

I paused and considered this, and then I decided to try another ploy.

I held out the host before him and said:

"Corpus Christi!"

And then "Ecce Agnus Dei!"

He immediately folded his hands and replied:

"Domini non sum dignus!

And he reverently received the host.

So in the midst of the fog of forgetfulness that had enveloped his life, he was for a few moments of awareness able to reach out and receive Hly Viaticum--food for his last journey.

One way or another, we all experience some type of fog in our lives. It is easy to become numbed by repetition and forget who it is we really receive in Holy Communion.

And also that "communion" means being joined in special fellowship with the other faithful joining us at the banquet table.

and so we pray:

Laud O Sion, your salvation

Laud with hymns of exaltation,

☐ Christ your King and shepherd true

Bring him all the praise you know,

he is more than you bestow,

☐ Never can you reach his due.

Special theme for your thanksgiving

is the quickening and the living,☐ ☐

Bread today before you set.

From his hands of old partaken,

As we know by faith unshaken,

☐ Where the 12 at supper met.

Full and clear ring out your chanting,

Joy nor sweetest grace be wanting,☐ ☐

From your heart let praises burst...

What he did at supper seated,

Christ ordained to be repeated,

His memorial, ne'er to cease...

This the truth each Christian learns,

Bread into his flesh he turns,

To his precious blood the wine...

Very bread Good Shepherd , tend us.

Jesu of your love befriend us.

You refresh us. You defend us.

Your eternal goodness send us.

In the land of life...

You who all things can and know,

Who on earth such food bestow,

Grant us with your saints, though lowest,

Where the heavenly feast you show,

Fellow heirs and guests to be.

Amen

Alleuia! ☩

[Lauda Sion, Sequence translated from the Latin.]

Author: Saint Thomas Aquinas, 12th Century]

