

HUNGRY HANDS AND HEARTS

In the past two weeks I have shared meals with two of our parish families. On each occasion at the start of the meal, the eldest son was asked to pray a blessing on our meal. One is a Year 12 student and the other studies at University.

On each occasion, the young men prayed with thoughtful eloquence, with ease and with tender hearts. Their prayers spoke of families for whom faith and prayer are as natural as breathing.

Sharing in each of those moments was a privilege, a joy and refreshed a sense of hope that our world and our church are indeed in good hands.

I know that in each of these families prayer is not a stranger, a cause of embarrassment or an additive that is occasionally taken out of the pantry! It was clear that God and God's love have a living breathing place in the hearts of each of these families.

Over the past three weekends we have celebrated the Sacrament of First Communion with nearly ninety of our parish families. The celebrations have been gentle, joyful and reverent. Families and children have participated with great care and love, and the signs of careful preparation were well in evidence, from the prayerful presence of the families, to the care with which people and children were dressed, and to the simple reverence that the children brought to the occasion.

Children have come forward with their parents following on, and so enthusiastic were many of the children we had to wait for the parents to catch up so they could witness their child's First Communion at close quarters!

An enduring memory for me as the celebrant was the eagerness with which little innocent hands were raised and opened to receive the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist for the first time.

Some were more solemn, some were relaxed, some were very careful and some were in a bit of a hurry to receive! In every case it was clear that each child in her or his own way was ready for this moment and in some sense had begun to hunger for an encounter with Jesus the bread of life.

Thanks to the faith of their families, and thanks to the time we have all taken with them in preparing especially over these past weeks, that sense of this sacred moment seemed to be something real for our children.

How wonderful it will be if the Mums and Dads who have brought their children to this point, can continue to nurture this hunger for love, this hunger to meet with Jesus in the Eucharist by continuing to share each time we gather as a parish family.

How wonderful it will be if the parents and the children continue to share the spirit of the Eucharist in their meals at home each day by calling to mind God's wonderful gifts each time they gather together.

How wonderful it will be if each of these ninety families continues to bless their children with a hunger for the things of God so that their prayer, like the prayers of those young men I mentioned above, becomes as natural to our children as breathing.

On the other hand, how sad it would be if the excitement, the build-up, the celebration we've generated through this Holy Communion season was allowed to become just another photo opportunity, a special memory of a family gathering, never to be repeated, and that taste for the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist were to fade from our children's consciousness.

Let's all pray for one another that through these celebrations and beyond we support all our children so that their hands and hearts remain hungry to meet with Jesus as often as they can and that they learn to find in him the one who alone is our hope and our life, our deepest joy and gladness.

Father Kevin