



Approaching the Holy Chalice

Every time we approach the holy chalice to receive Communion to the Body and Blood of Christ we say a prayer that contains words that must become true on our lips, otherwise they are a lie before God. We say to God that we are the worst sinner, we are the chief sinner that there is.

And isn't it natural that so often we say these words thinking, 'This was true of the saints, who could feel that way, but I can't feel that I am the worst of sinners'. When we look around, when we look at the state of the world in which we live, we can see a number of people who in our eyes are worse than we are. And regarding this I would like to remind you of a passage in the diary of Saint John of Kronstadt, who also asked himself the same question, and in the end answered it in the affirmative: 'Yes, I am the worst of all the sinners I know'.

And the reason he gave for this judgement of his was that he was aware of how much God had given him, and how little he had given to God in response.

I think we must all of us begin in this frame of mind, ask ourselves: What are the gifts which God has bestowed upon us? What is it that makes us so happy in ourselves, or makes others so happy in us, rightly or wrongly? And when we have come to understand how much we have received, then we can ask ourselves: what are the fruits which we have borne of these gifts?

And we will see that, according to the first Beatitude, there is nothing in us, in our life, which is our own, of our own making. God gave us life. He gave us a body, a soul, a mind. He gave us all that fills our lives with richness. All that we are and all that we possess are gifts of his. Do we give Him gratitude for it, or do we appropriate these gifts, thinking no, they are our own really? And even when we are aware of the fact that they are not of our making, that it is God who has given us all that we are and all that we have, do we know how to be grateful and also to ask ourselves the question which I have already mentioned: what have I done with all the gifts of God? And if we go ever more deeply within ourselves and in our lives, can we begin to be able to say: yes, I really am the worst of all the sinners around me because I am so richly endowed by God and look how little, how very little, I have brought to God and to my neighbour as a result of it?

Let us all reflect on this. And when we come next time to Communion and we think or say these words, let us say them with at least a beginning of understanding that yes, it is true, and I know why. But come with an incipient understanding, because it takes a very long time for us to see how richly God has endowed us and how poorly we have responded to Him. But gradually, step by step, these words will become true and we will receive Communion with a new depth of broken-heartedness and with gratitude. Amen.