



## The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

### Homily for Corpus Christi (16<sup>th</sup> June) 2022

In the wake of Father Churchyard's sudden and unexpected death, it was announced *that the Sacrifice of the Mass* would be offered for his soul. To many informed Anglican ears, this will have been a little startling - or provocative - since they would have associated such notions with Roman Catholicism.

Indeed, a few years earlier, Pope Leo XIII in his document, *Apostolicae Curae*, declaring Anglican Orders null and void, had adverted to the supposed Anglican refusal to acknowledge the sacrificial character of the Mass as one of a number of reasons - many quite specious as later pronouncements of Pope Pius XII would demonstrate - as to why he had come to his view. In their response to the Papal document - *Saepius Officio*, the Archbishops of York and Canterbury rebutted the suggestion that Anglican theology denied the sacrificial character of the Mass whilst stopping short of endorsing the Roman formulation of such a theology.

There are two aspects to this sacrificial character of the Eucharist.

First, there is the integral connexion between the Eucharistic celebration and the once-and-for-all, all-sufficient Sacrifice of Christ. A valid celebration of the Mass interweaves with that Paschal event. One of the Eucharistic Prayers we use speaks of our pleading Christ's Sacrifice; and, in so doing, we are drawn into the eternal reality of that Self-Offering.

Secondly - and, of course, inextricably interrelated with the first - is the sacrificial character of our own participation. This is betokened by the Offertory when in the media of the bread and wine presented at the Altar, as the prayer puts it, "We offer our souls and bodies to be a living sacrifice;" by taking our place in the Eucharistic assembly, we make our own self-offering.

As well as being a channel of divine Grace by which we are sanctified, this interweaving of our sacrifice and that of Christ makes the point that our self-offering on its own is not sufficient to achieve God's Purpose for our lives and that we rely on His Grace to perfect what we present of ourselves.

In part, of course, this is because our self-offering is tainted by partiality - aspects of ourselves - whatever we may say - that we hold back from God: perspectives on which we will not yield, things we are not prepared to say, deeds we are unwilling to undertake.

Equally, even if our self-offering were as whole-hearted as the words we utter suggest it should be, we would be unable to reach the heights to which God calls us without His helping hand.

If we reflect on all this, we will begin to appreciate how momentous it is to answer God's call to join the Eucharistic assembly. In the melee of participation with its various demands on our skills and attentions, it is easy to forget the greatness of the Mystery unfolding around and within us; and even easier to forget it once we leave the Liturgical assembly.

It is one thing intellectually to assent to the sacrificial theology of the Mass, it is quite another to live it; but it is to that which we are called, not as an addendum to the Faith, but as a central quality of our discipleship, which takes us into the heart of the Paschal Sacrifice of Christ.