



**Homily for the Ordination to the priesthood of**

**Rev. Laurence Bryce**

**Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019, the Vigil of Corpus Christi**

**Cardiff Cathedral: St. David's Cathedral, Cardiff**

**Archbishop George Stack**

On 17 June 2012 the 50th Eucharistic Congress which held in Dublin concluded with the celebration of an open-air Mass at the famous Croke Park Stadium. Despite the negative predictions both of the media and the weather forecast, the Mass was attended by over 80,000 people, together with bishops and priests from all over the world. Above the altar and sanctuary area which dominated the park were written the words of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) from his sermon on the Eucharist: *“Become what you receive”*.

That whole sermon is a wonderful exposition of the Eucharist. Another short sentence prefaces *“Become what you receive”*. It reads *“Behold who you are”*. Together, they provide a perfect meditation for the ordination to the priesthood of Laurence Bryce on this feast of Corpus Christi, the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, the feast of the Holy Eucharist. ***“Behold who you are. Become what you receive”***.

Is not this one meaning of that dramatic gesture at Holy Communion when the priest raises the host before the eyes of the approaching communicant. *“The Body of Christ”* he asks. *“Amen”* the communicant replies. In the Church, *“Amen”* is shorthand language for *“So be it”*. *“I believe”*.

In traditional Catholic language, we speak of “Receiving Holy Communion”. And even more painfully for me, we talk about children “Making their First Communion”. Much better to be specific about what really happens. We receive Jesus in Communion truly. But we are also received by him into Communion. It is he who “makes” the communion, changing us into His own body so that the divine love and forgiveness that makes us his presence in the world may be fully expressed, notwithstanding our poor faith or other limitations even our sinfulness. *“Become what you receive”*. No wonder the members of the Church are called the Mystical Body of Christ.

The priest is recognised and defined by the four actions of the Eucharist. When Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave to his disciples, He sweeps them, and us, up into the saving action of his sacrificial love through His life, death and resurrection. In offering true worship to God, Jesus empowers those who are baptised to worship God in His way, *“Through him and with Him and in Him”*. The priest is ordained, ordered, directed to proclaim this truth, to remember these saving acts and re-present them whenever the People of God come together to worship God not in their personal, different, individual ways but in union with Christ Himself. The priest is ordained not for his own fulfilment alone, but in order to empower God’s people to become

what they have been made through Baptism. Members of the Body of Christ here on earth, a Priestly People. St. Teresa of Avila put it well in the 16th century when she wrote “Christ has no body but yours, No hands, no feet on earth, but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks in compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Christ has no body here on earth but yours”.

The sermon of St. Augustine again: *“If you, therefore, are Christ’s members, it is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord’s table. It is your own mystery you are placing upon the altar. You are saying “Amen” to who you are. Your response is a personal signature affirming your faith. When you hear “The Body of Christ” and reply “Amen” be a true member of that body so that your “Amen” may ring true”.*

In offering himself for service as a priest, Laurence is placing his life on the altar of the Lord for the Glory of God and for the sanctification of God’s people. He has already said “Amen” so often in his life as he has listened to the living Word of God, responded to it in the silence of his heart, conformed himself to Christ in prayer and adoration. He has expressed this in the ministry which he has beautifully

offered so generously and humbly in the parishes where he has already worked.

All this is summed up in the final question asked of the candidate before Ordination:

*“Are you resolved to consecrate your life to God for the salvation of his people, and to unite yourself more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a perfect sacrifice?”*. *“I am, with the help of God”* is the reply of the one to be ordained. But he is not alone. With the help of God. Through the Prayer of the Church. By the affirmation and support of the people who know Laurence and see in him one who knows who he is and has said “Amen” to the will of God unfolding in his life, he can make his own these words of the Bishop:

*“May God who has begun the good work in you bring it to fulfilment”*.

***“Behold who you are. Become what you receive”***.

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