

CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL OF ST PETER'S PARISH AND THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE EUCHARIST.

Maximose Dube.

Introduction

This chapter brings out views of the Christian faithful of St Peter's parish and their understanding of the Eucharist. It looks at how possible Christian families be helped to rediscover the effectiveness of the Eucharist in their live. Questionnaires that were distributed to guilds at St Peter's parish (Catholic Men's Association (C.M.A), St Anne and Hosi Yedenga guilds, and the Catholic Youth Association, which includes Sacred Heart of Jesus and St Mary guilds), and to non-Catholics brought out different responses. They responded on how they see the Eucharistic form of life in their own perspectives, challenges they are facing in trying to live a more Eucharistic life. Moreover, how they connect the Eucharist and their everyday life in their milieu. And also views no-Catholics around St Peter's community.

Catholic Families' views on Eucharist

Catholic Men's Association (C.M.A)

Mr. Karichi in responds to how possible Christian families or individual can be helped to rediscover the efficacy of the Eucharist said, "These days the faithful are not taking seriously the celebration of the Eucharist as compared to our time were we used to be taught and forced to follow the rubrics in Mass, where to kneel or stand. I remember when I was still young my parents used to force me to go to Mass and will be sitting in between them, where they stand or kneel, they were also forcing me to follow suit. They also loved to participate in Church choir. Mostly were going with me. At first, it was boring but at last, I started liking it, and could see a difference between myself and other young men around my area. Today it is different the faithful are not following gestures like kneeling or genuflecting during the celebration. Some will be dozing during Mass and by that, they are missing the steps that leads then to proper reverence of the Eucharist. This shows a lack of reverence to the Eucharist, if the faithful truly follow all the steps of Eucharistic celebration surely we are

amplified to raise our voices about the love of Christ.” He added on to say, “there is great need of proper catechesis to the Christian faithful so that we are able to know and understand the love of Christ which he is showing to us each and every time Mass is celebrated.”

Cementing on the chairperson’s points, Mr. Mudengezi said, “Some will be playing with their phones, some chatting or even commenting on the homily, at the end of Mass one goes out without gaining anything from the celebration.” He said, “The process of catechism today is lenient, catechists are too tolerant to catechumens, at the end of the process catechumens do not get anything, not even knowing why they kneel before the Blessed Sacrament.”

Mr. Dakwa pointed out that, “the faithful are not engaging themselves to practices like benediction.” He said, “These exercises can help the faithful to know and deepen their love for the Eucharist. Priests should teach the faithful on the doctrine of transubstantiation, especially on the feast day of Corpus Christi.” He added that during the procession of the feast of Corpus Christi day people will be talking, eating, and drinking, this shows lack of reverence to the Eucharist.”

Mr Kalenjeka pointed out the major challenge that encounters us men is, “we men are too relaxed thinking that everything has to be done by women and children. We leave everything to them – participating in choir, taking readings.” Mr. Wenzeri in support of Mr. Dakwa and Mr. Kalenjeka’s points he said, “Devotions like Benediction or Holy hour few of us devote to those practice.”

St Anne and HosiYedenga

In response to the questions, what the Eucharistic shape of Christian life look like in their own setting and how Eucharist and everyday life are connected? “I cannot say I really know the significance of the Eucharist, but what I am convinced is that it is important,” said Mrs Munetsi. She added that, “the act of communion makes me feel connected to God, I feel empowered when I receive the Body and Blood of Christ.” She went on to say, “I wonder if some feel the same.” Hosi Yedenda guild they emphasized most on the challenges they face when they try to live a Eucharistic life. Mrs Jimu said, “You try to come for Mass earlier to have private prayers,

you come for Mass each day during the week, adorations you attend, but you get negative strokes from other people.” Another said in the line of the immediate idea said above, “some will gossip on you, saying are these still devotions or she is after the priest, or want to buy favors from the priest.” Some said this attitude from other faithful draws them back from participating fully in the celebration.

Another challenge that came out is of helping the poor, visiting the sick and some charity works. Gogo Musoni, said those who utter negative things on those who try to live a Eucharistic life, a life of love and service, disturb her. She said, “some will be teasing you calling you Musande (Saint) some will be saying mutenderi wafata (priest’s faithful).” “These negative strokes pull down and is discouraging,” she added.

Mrs Sithole said, “Especially us young women as we try by all means to partake in Church activities negative comments come out.

Catholic Youth Association (C.Y.A)

Ideas that came from the youth are that they need proper knowledge of the Eucharist. Yes, they believe that during Mass the bread and wine are changed to Body and Blood of Christ, but what it does to them they do not know or understand it. Martha said, “We receive the Body and Blood of Christ during Mass, but after that we still behave the same way no change in us,” and she posed a question, “Then where is the power of the Eucharist, yet it is supposed to enrich us, what really are we missing?” In response to that question, some said, “As young people who are eyeing for a better tomorrow, looking forward to marry or to be get married so we just go for Mass to be noticed or to look for a partner. So our coming to Mass is searching for a partner and showing of our fashion and gadgets.”

A point that came out from the youth is that most of them are afraid to participate in Liturgy like taking Readings in Mass, serving Mass or partaking in Church choir. Levy said, “Some of us do not know if its phobia or simply we do not want to participate in Liturgy, personally if I do at least something during Liturgy I feel edified. I will know that I have added something in me which I can share with my friends.” Admire said, I quote, “yes we are taught that the Eucharist is the real Body of Christ but we do not really understand it, the knowledge we got during

catechism is not enough to explain it to someone who wants to know about the Eucharist.” He continued by saying, “that is when we stammer after being asked about our faith.

The youth also have a challenge facing the Hosi Yedenga, of receiving negative strokes when trying to live a Eucharistic life. Prilete said, “as the chair I try to implement some of the devotions to the group, I arrange Masses for the guild just to keep ourselves focused as youths. But at the end you hear someone calling you fata (a priest), teasing you.” Mildret added by saying, “The problem with us youths we are shy of being Christians – helping the poor, visiting the sick are some of the attributes of a true follower of Christ. As was said by the last speaker we start calling each other names. This drives away us youth from performing works of charity.

Non-Catholics

The researcher also had some interviews with non-Catholics. A lady known as Mai Finias who had been to several Catholic weddings and funerals and some of her relatives are Catholics said, “Catholics I have seen they sure not seem as though they believe in what they receive in their service. I have seen Catholics going forward to receive Chidyo (Communion), chewing gum, some waving at each other as they go forward. Even after receiving Chidyo, you see the person greeting people on the way to their place. Immediately they start talking, without even having a time of silent prayer. This shows that Catholics do not really take serious what they are receiving.” Mr Mukundwa uttered that “If I were a Catholic and truly believe that it is Christ present in the Eucharist I would really give reverence to the Eucharist. However, what surprises me is that, Catholic seem not to show respect to the Eucharist. I guess they do not really believe in it” he also added, “Catholics rarely speaks of their faith to non-Catholics.”

RECOMMENDATIONS AND EVALUATIONS

Having listened to the views of the faithful at St Peter’s during my research, I noticed that the faithful of St Peters community need proper catechesis for them to rediscover the effectiveness of the Eucharist in their lives. Of course, some they know what the Eucharist does when one participates fully in the celebration but are few. Most of them do not know how

to connect their everyday life and the Eucharist, what they are supposed to be doing after receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. This is due to lack of proper teaching of the Church. Some come to Church just to be recognized or to show off and some just to find a place of belonging that if he or she dies will be buried as a Catholic, as responded by respondents.

Another thing I noticed, after receiving the Eucharist some of the faithful do not take their time to sit down and meditate, listening to Christ whom they received. Some immediately after receiving the Eucharist they straight away leave the Church.

I also gave the parish priest the opportunity to evaluate the Eucharistic life of his faithful. He started by saying, “the faithful at St Peter’s parish have what I can call ‘Demon Religion’ – yes the Church will be fully packed but very few really concentrate when during the Celebration. I asked him on how the faithful can be helped to rediscover the effectiveness of the Eucharist? He responded saying, “It is a process that takes time since the knowledge they have about the Eucharist is not that ‘rich’ and needs to be empowered.” He added by saying, “Yes, we have practices like Adoration, Holy Hour and we encourage people to visit the Blessed Sacrament often, but what really needs to be done is to teach the faithful to have faith in the Sacrament.”

He continued saying, “If we really believe that Christ becomes present during consecration and always present in the tabernacle, the faithful becomes acquainted with what he or she is receiving – Christ Himself. We need to believe that the Eucharist can change our lives when we really take it seriously.

Therefore, as *Christus Dominus* 14 emphasizes on catechetical instructions’ endorsement to the faithful, I as their shepherd have to take pains that catechetical instructions aimed to make faith, as lightened by teaching, an important, clear, and effective force in the lives of the faithful be imparted carefully to everyone at the parish.” He ended saying, “Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration and poor celebration weakens and destroys the faith.” He also quoted the document of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 11: “In order that the liturgy [Eucharist] may possess its full effectiveness, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and

that they cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain.” He said, “Therefore, there is need for proper teaching and not getting tired of imparting that knowledge to the faithful.

CONCLUSION

What happens to us when we follow all the rites during the Eucharistic celebration? Mass has two main parts; Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist, there is also opening and closing rite. Opening rite ensures and prepares the faithful in the celebration. In the Liturgy of the Word, the faithful is nourished by the Word to go out and proclaim it to all. And at the table of Eucharist we gather together in remembrance of the love He showed to his friends when he washed their feet, giving them an example that they should be servants to others. At the table of Eucharist, we are invited to share together and also offer ourselves to others. This is in line with the Document of the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosantum Concillium* 10 that states; the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time, it is the font from which all her power flows.” All the powers and effects of the Eucharist to the faithful are endorsed during the celebration. It moves the faithful to make noise to all around them the love shared to them by Christ.

Benedict XVI in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis* 94, share the same point in *Sacrosantum Concilium* 10 he said; “the Eucharist is at the root of every form of holiness, and each of us is called to the fullness of life in the Holy Spirit. This most holy mystery thus needs to be firmly believed, devoutly celebrated and intensely lived in the Church.” This calls for the faithful of St Peter’s to offer themselves in the celebration to rediscover the efficacy of the Eucharist in their day to day life. From the research it seems some do not know and some do know what happens to them when they give themselves totally to the celebration. That is why some will be chatting or playing with phones during Mass.

He went on to say “Jesus’ gift of himself in the sacrament which is the memorial of his passion tells us that the success of our lives is found in our participation in the Trinitarian life offered to us truly and definitively in him” (94). The pope is emphasizing on participating in the celebration in communion – as one family around the table, regardless the dichotomies

of cultures, tribes and languages amongst St Peter's parish community. Gathering together gives life on the faithful, we share together the Word and the Body and Blood of Christ that nourishes and strengthens us to witness his love. "The celebration and worship of the Eucharist enable us to draw near to God's love and to persevere in that love until we are united with the Lord whom we love. The offering of our lives, our fellowship with the whole community of believers and our solidarity with all men and women are essential aspects of that, spiritual worship, holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1), which transforms every aspect of our human existence, to the glory of God," he said. This aspect of communion where we gather in memorial of his death and resurrection brings us together in anticipation of his Second Coming. It sends us to the whole nation to proclaim his coming so that all including non-Catholic may believe and be saved.