

Corpus Christi: Godhead here in hiding

Sometimes at Benediction we sing the hymn *Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore*. The words are attributed to Saint Thomas Aquinas and were translated into English by the C19th Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins.

*Godhead here in hiding, whom I do adore,
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more,
See, Lord, at thy service low lies here a heart
Lost all lost in wonder at the God Thou art.*

*Seeing, touching, tasting are in Thee deceived;
How says trusty hearing? That shall be believed;
What God's Son hath told me, take for truth I do;
Truth Himself speaks truly, or there's nothing true.*

We are in the presence of a mystery beyond our understanding, a mystery that lies at the core of our monastic life, at the core of each of our lives through our baptism and religious profession. Our Constitutions tell us that ¹*the Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life and of the sisters' communion in Christ... It is by sharing in the paschal mystery of the Lord that the sisters are united more closely with one another and with the whole Church.*

This section on the Eucharist is followed by others on the Work of God, Mindfulness of God, Lectio Divina, Heartfelt Prayer, Night Vigils and Silence.

¹ OCSO Constitutions C18

Together they give us a framework for our life, a *modus vivendi* so that we may truly be in Christ. Each section assists us in our search for the one thing necessary, hidden within the mystery of the Eucharist. Each assists our quest reminding us that ² *nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God, celebrated by the community, which, in union with the Church, fulfils Christ's priestly function, offering to God a sacrifice of praise and making intercession for the salvation of the whole world.*

The Eucharist and the Work of God are not just temporal actions in a busy day. They are the sum of our day and night and the way we approach the Eucharist and the Work of God will be influenced by how we live the rest of the monastic day. They are not separate entities. They make up a whole: our mindfulness of God, our *lectio*, our prayer, our inner quietness of mind, all preparing that still centre of being to be ever attentive to God's presence, to God's invitation to partnership with Christ.

The Constitutions continue: ³ *at all times, but especially during the hours of night, the sisters are to be zealous for silence, which is the guardian of both speech and thought.* If we are listening to the Beloved, then we have no time for listening to the grindstone of our own thoughts, nor for other diversions, which may entertain, but may also

² C19

³ C24

dull our ears to the one thing necessary. And hearing is important, Saint Thomas Aquinas thought it the most important of our bodily senses: *how says trusty hearing? That shall be believed.*

We need to keep our ears tuned to listening and like most of our contemporaries we are faced with multiple choices: either to glut our senses with all that is on offer, or to be a bit choosy and so learn to listen with the ear of our heart. Perhaps that is something else we can learn from Our Lord, whose human senses were no different from ours, except perhaps in the intensity of his focus on what mattered to Him. Even on the cross as he was dying, when his human senses would have begun to fail, he heard the unspoken distress of His Mother and the Beloved Disciple, and responded to it. Just as, on the altar in the form of bread, he speaks to us, each and every day if we have ears to hear.