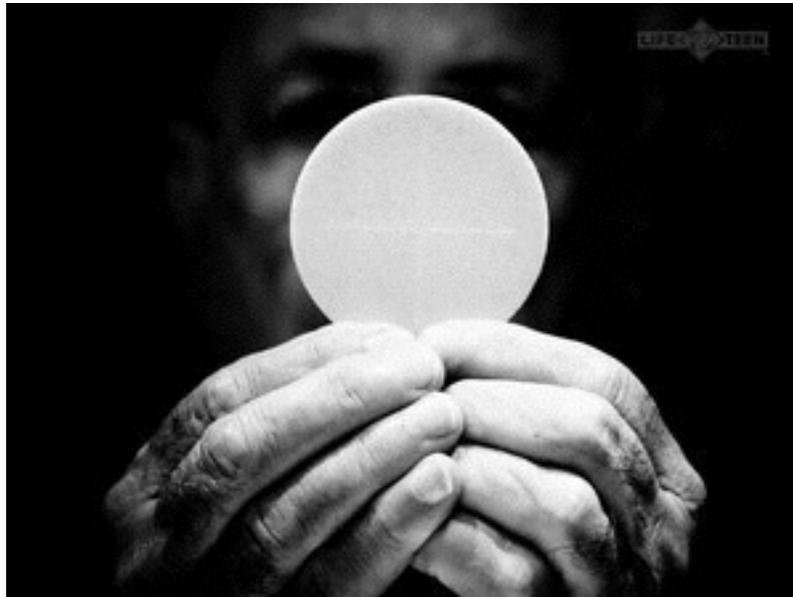


This is My Body

During the next number of weeks we are going to be talking about this theme.

Why this is my body?



What comes to mind when you think of this? If you go to church regularly probably the first thing that you will think of is the Eucharist. That is, where the priest, taking the bread in hand repeats Jesus words, “take eat, this is my body”.

And when the people are receiving communion are told as the consecrated host is given to them, “the body of Christ”.

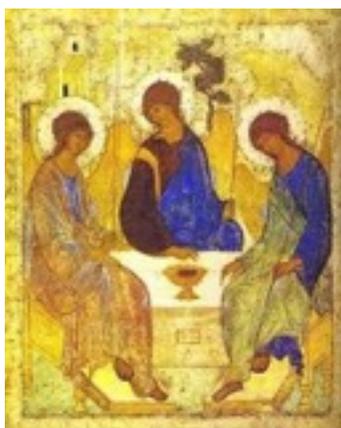


No doubt many of you have a similar experience to mine. When I first began to receive communion (as an adult) my understanding of what the eucharist is was just a little shaky. Despite my poor theology I began to notice that each time I received communion the Lord’s light entered in, changing me, melting away my inner defences and (like God seemed to say to C.S. Lewis) saying within “put down your gun” (so to speak) and welcome me.

The Anglican reformers never wanted to talk much about *how* exactly Jesus was present in bread and wine of the eucharist. They just wanted to emphasize that he *is* there *personally*. And that in the eucharist he meets us and joins himself to us *personally*. *Very* personally. They mostly wanted to talk about what happens to us when that meeting occurs.



The Book of Common Prayer tells us that Jesus is received in the bread and wine in a “spiritual manner”. When we think of the word “spiritual” we may think of something kind of vague and unearthly. Back in the day (when the prayer book of was written) “spiritual” did not mean anything like that. It meant “by the action of God the Holy Spirit”.



The Anglican reformers believed that when Christians receive holy communion they are, by God the Holy Spirit, lifted to heaven, to the presence of Christ, at the right hand of the Father-receiving into themselves his divine and human self, his body and blood. The way they put it is almost startling. “The body (or blood) of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve *thy body and soul* unto everlasting life” said the priest when giving communion. Through this eating and drinking not only is Christ’s soul joined to our soul, but his *body* is joined to ours. Completely

united.

This is my body. So this is *his* body in the eucharist and this becomes *our* bodies in the eucharist. We can imagine Jesus looking with delight and love at us, his people, and saying “this is my body”. And we, his people, are together the *Body of Christ*.

