



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



SS Timothy and Titus

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Christian life grows. It's not something that you get once and it's over. It was given to you at baptism as a free gift; you didn't have to deserve it, God gave it to you because he loved you. And since it's a life, it grows. Can you think of anything that has life that doesn't grow? So our Christian life has to grow.

But so does our ordinary life grow. How are these two connected? Does Christian life float on top of ordinary human life like oil on water? Is it only for when we are in church? Clearly not, because it is the life of the Son of God, the Word of God *made flesh*, which has been shared with you. The life of Christ given us at baptism mixes with our earthly life to change it, to transform it, to make it more than it could be on our own. First it heals places in us that are sick or weak or hurt and makes them whole. Second it fortifies us with courage to do the things we have to do in life. Thirdly because it is a share in God's own life, it empowers us to become like God, to show others the love with which he has loved us, something we could never do on our own, without his life in us.

So what do we have to do for this life to mingle with ours and change it? We have at some point in our growing up to accept it, to let God's love touch the deepest part of us, even feelings we don't think acceptable, and to express thanks for that love and the gift of his life. It's a simple Yes, Lord, I believe that you love the whole of me, that you live in me and can make me like yourself.

Then we accept the Lord's particular way of coming to us in the sacraments. He comes to us through material things because he became flesh to sanctify material things, especially our bodies. Baptism gave us this new life, Confirmation, which most of you have received and others are preparing for, activates the power of Christ's Spirit in you to undertake the fight against sin in yourself and in the world. It's a very important sacrament because it empowers you to put the Christ life within you to work in overcoming any weaknesses in your natural life, for example, laziness or sluggishness in doing the right thing, preoccupation with your own pleasure and comfort, fears or feelings of inadequacy that you have, any looking down on others or meanness. Confirmation enables you to undertake what is called the Christian warfare.

But the greatest sacrament of all is the Eucharist, where Christ comes among us once more to offer himself to the Father as he did on the Cross. That same offering on the cross is repeated in every Mass so that we can be there with him as he offers it. Pope Benedict likes to say, the Eucharist makes us contemporaries with Calvary—we are there at the foot of the cross as this greatest event of human history, the act that saved mankind from death, is performed. We



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surround the event in reverent silence, letting Jesus offer himself to the Father for us, thanking him, offering ourselves with him, asking him to purify and cleanse us through the eating of his body and blood. As the priest prays silently after communion: “Lord, may I receive these gifts in purity of heart. May they bring me healing and strength, now and for ever.” And for the rest of the day or week we begin to experience the kind of strength Paul wrote about to Timothy: “God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control...Bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God.”

But you have to keep coming back to the Eucharist, because life needs to be continually nourished, whether natural or supernatural. And don't stop coming to the Eucharist when you're away from home or Priory and have no one to prod you. Be proactive in your faith, seek out the nourishment the Lord offers. You won't regret it as you slowly—it certainly doesn't happen overnight—find yourself becoming your real self, a tree in which the birds of the air can find shade, someone who builds up the lives of others, or as the Holy Father said at the end of his encyclical published two days ago, “fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world.”