



## **The Eucharist never changes** **By Eric Leahy**

Therese, our daughter, only lived for 5 minutes. That's all, not long. We only know that because the nurse who attended the birth knew to time her life.

For my wife Annette and me, it felt like Therese lived longer and, naturally, she is alive in our hearts. In other respects of course, Therese's passing was but a flicker in time, an instant. It was an instant, yet what's the value of a life, whether it be for 5 minutes or 90 years?

It's hard to know what impact we have on others and may continue to have, long after our interactions with them are over. I tend to think of what my impact will be over my lifetime, but I need to focus more on the impact I have on others now, the decisions that I make today. My actions in one moment can impact others, and be remembered for a lifetime, for good or bad.

In Sunday's Gospel, Jesus has his final dinner, the Last Supper, with the Apostles and institutes the Eucharist. I wonder what the Apostles thought as they ate, sang psalms and celebrated Passover. WOW - we re-enact, relive and still celebrate that event today. The Eucharist has a meaning and impact that presumably could not possibly have been known or imagined by the Apostles.

While we can celebrate the event, sometimes perhaps with more meaning than others, the Eucharist never changes. Yet, the Eucharist can change us, and only for the better. We know when we feel this change, something becomes alive in us. When we eat the body and blood of Christ, we can think of the words of Augustine, "*see what you believe, believe what you see, eat what you already are, the body of Christ.*"

We can make resolutions to change and become better but, as the saying goes, only time will tell. The resolutions the Israelites made in the first reading on Sunday are emphatic in response to God's covenant. Yet, over time those resolutions wavered. If only our resolutions could hold firm, perhaps life would be easier, but it doesn't work that way.

The affirmation of the Israelites "*we will obey*" didn't stick - they ended up being just words in a moment in time. When we make our resolutions, we need to make them over, and over, and over again.

That's what so amazing about the Eucharist - it wasn't just a moment in time. It's an unending moment, an eternal present in which Christ reveals himself to us again, and again, and again, and by doing so reveals us to ourselves.

Therese's death, along with other significant events that life threw at me around that time, including my mother's death and a subsequent miscarriage that coincided with Therese's

first anniversary, was enough to dampen my faith for a long time. On reflection, I'm not sure what sort of faith I used to have, but I wouldn't be where I am if it wasn't for that and other experiences. Perhaps my faith was stuck in my head (as it still can be from time to time), and it wasn't yet ready to move to my heart.

Therese died almost 20 years ago. Annette, myself and our three children Patrick, Elliot and Alana, celebrate her birthday each year. We all still talk about her from time to time. The memories of Therese fade, but the impressions and feelings haven't. My memories of her have shaped me and my family, and now help me to connect with others.

The impact of Therese, and every other moment of my life, have one way or another, led me to where I am. Now, I'm an aspirant for the Diaconate in the Diocese of Broken Bay. It's a journey, where I make resolutions today, and I will again tomorrow, and again the next day.