



In the Eucharist we receive Christ hungering in the world

Pedro Arrupe SJ

FOOD FOR LIFE, FOOD JUSTICE, FOOD FOR ALL

A number of Vatican departments came together in the last week of May for a series of seminars to look at ways to rebuild sustainable food systems, particularly in the post Covid era. One of the aims of the seminars is to contribute to current global discussions about a just and sustainable post Covid recovery.

Cardinal Peter Tuckson said:

The lack of food is inextricably linked with other social struggles. Food insecurity is not simply a lack of food. Poverty, marginalisation, lack of democratic political processes, conflict, environmental destruction and biodiversity loss and the consequences of climate change all contribute to food insecurity, increase inequalities and worsen the conditions of vulnerable communities worldwide.

AN INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

The Vatican seminars see the way forward to responding to the crisis of food insecurity requires a three-pronged approach which draws from *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli tutti*.

1. To reimagine an agricultural system that produces food for all while preserving the land, responding to God's call to till and keep the garden of the world.
2. To share and distribute resources that meet the immediate need of millions of people for food.
3. To fashion a comprehensive, long-term, structural

solution in the spirit of integral ecology.

Solving systemic global hunger is not a technical process. It ultimately hinges on a fundamental structural change, from the 'unjust normal' of systemic violence - systems that destroy, dominate, dehumanise and diminish the earth and its inhabitants - to a culture of solidarity and caring that seeks the fulness of life for all.

As articulated in *Laudato Si'* (220), ecological conversion entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from other creatures, but joined in a wonderful universal communion, while 'the process of building fraternity, be it local or universal can only be undertaken by spirits that are free and open to authentic encounters.' *Fratelli tutti* 50.

THE EUCHARIST & WORLD HUNGER

Pedro Arrupe SJ was the Superior General of the Jesuits from 1965 to 1983. He wrote:

If there is hunger anywhere in the world, then our celebration of the Eucharist is somehow incomplete everywhere in the world In the Eucharist we receive Christ hungering in the world. He comes to us, not alone, but with the poor, the oppressed, the starving of the earth. Through him they are looking to us for help, for justice, for love expressed in action. Therefore we cannot properly receive the Bread of Life unless at the same time we give the bread of life to those in need wherever and whoever they may be.

THE EUCHARIST AS A CALL TO JUSTICE

Throughout the New Testament, the call to reach out to the poor and to work for justice is associated with gathering for Eucharist. In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes strongly against the abuse of the Eucharist by excluding the poor and self-indulgence. The Acts of the Apostles (2 & 4) records the care for the poor and the sharing of goods that flows from the early Christian communities.

Fr Ron Rolheiser writes:

To say that Eucharist calls us to justice and to social justice is not a statement that takes its origin in political correctness. It takes its origin in Jesus who, drawing upon the great prophets of old, assures us that the validity of all worship will ultimately be judged by how it affects 'widows, orphans and strangers.'

Pope Francis makes this connection between the Eucharist and the call to create a more just world in *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*):

The Eucharist demands that we be members of the one body of the Church. Those who approach the Body and Blood of Christ may not wound that same Body by creating scandalous distinctions and divisions among its members ... When those who receive it turn a blind eye to the poor and suffering, or consent to various forms of division, contempt and inequality, the Eucharist is received unworthily. On the other hand, families who are properly disposed and receive the Eucharist regularly, reinforce their desire for fraternity, their social consciousness and their commitment to those in need. Par 186

In a homily on Matthew 25:35-40 in the 5th century, St John Chrysostum proclaimed:

Do you wish to honour the body of Christ? Do not ignore him when he is naked. Do not pay him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect him outside where he is cold and ill-clad. He who said: "This is my body" is the same who said: "You saw me hungry and you gave me no food", and "Whatever you did to the least of my brothers you did also to me"... What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well.

The blessing received at Eucharist is intended to be a source of blessing for others who, for whatever reason, cannot be with us at Eucharist. The final blessing sends us out into the world to be the body of Christ in our homes, our workplaces, our schools and our wider community.

EUCHARISTIC ECOLOGY

In an inspiring book, *Laudato Si' An Integral Ecology and the Catholic Vision*, Anthony Kelly CSSR writes that the Eucharist inspires a genuinely integral ecology.

... the Eucharist brings together many gifts and many forms of giving. It offers to all who would receive it a holy communion within a universe of grace and giving.

From nature's giving we have the grain and the grapes.

From the giving expressed in human work and skill, we have the gifts of bread and wine.

From the generous giving of family and friends flow the gifts of good meals and festive celebrations.

From Jesus' self-giving at the Last Supper, the disciples were given his 'body and blood', the food and drink to nourish life in him. He will breathe into his disciples the gift of the Spirit.

And working in and through all these gifts and modes of giving is the gift of the Father who so loved the world.

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, all these gifts come together to nourish our lives in this world with the gift of communion with God.

BREAD BROKEN FOR OTHERS

Thanks to Jesus and to his Spirit, even our life becomes "bread broken" for our brothers and sisters. And living like this we discover true joy! The joy of making of oneself a gift, of reciprocating the great gift that we have first received, without merit of our own. This is beautiful: our life is made a gift!

This is to imitate Jesus. I wish to remind you of these two things. First: the measure of God's love is love without measure. Is this clear? And our life, with the love of Jesus, received in the Eucharist, is made a gift. As was the life of Jesus. Don't forget these two things: the measure of the love of God is love without measure. And following Jesus, we, with the Eucharist, make of our life a gift.

Pope Francis Angelus 22.6.2014

