

Notes on Zooming Celebration By Soline Vatinel Humbert



Participants are sent the text of the liturgy in advance by the person who has compiled it and who will lead the celebration. We follow the church liturgical calendar and the general Eucharistic format, but with room for creative adaptations. The readings from Scripture and the prayers are shared, so that there is much diverse active vocal participation. Instead of a set homily there is an open space where people can share their personal reflections and insights. There is also time for playing instrumental music, singing hymns and / or showing videos.

For the Offertory and Consecration of the bread and wine each person or couple has some bread and wine on a table in front of them before their screen. These gifts are offered and consecrated through a communal prayer and then we receive communion - the Body and Blood of Christ. The extended hands over the elements are those of the people of God, separated by often huge physical distances, sometimes across continents. And yet the belief which sustains us and gives us the necessary daring is our belief in the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit, so that there is truly an epiclesis at the heart of our celebrations. We are gathered as the Body of Christ, and we receive the Body of Christ. Though many and scattered across the face of the earth, we are one.

We believe that the action of the Holy Spirit transcends space. As each one of us, indwelt by the Spirit, pray together and invoke the Spirit, we believe we are truly giving praise and thanks in memory of Jesus, as He asked his followers to remember Him. And we believe Christ is truly present when we gather, even if this gathering takes place, by necessity, online rather than physically.

There is a whole ecclesiastical world which is increasingly disappearing. While this pandemic will, in time, be over, it will have contributed to some lasting changes which were already under way. For some Christians the experience of these eucharistic celebrations will have effected a breakthrough and empowered them as a priestly people.

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