

20th June 2021

Mystery

“I love to lose myself in a mystery.”

Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici (1643)

Last Sunday we celebrated the Sacrament of Holy Communion in my local church for the first time in many months. Given current regulations, we met in the church hall, were suitably socially distanced and sang in muffled fashion into our masks before we received the bread and wine of the Sacrament. It was unfamiliar, and, I would have to admit, quite strange.

The part that was most unusual was the dispensing of the Communion elements. These were in small, sealed containers, not unlike the little cartons of milk available at the local café or in a motorway service station. Peel off the top layer of plastic, and there is the Communion wafer. Remove the next layer of plastic, and there was the wine. The Body and Blood of Christ in sanitised containers. Who would have thought it?

It was the smallness of it that got me, and I might have expected this way of celebrating the Sacrament to fall short of “the best”. But though there was no choir, no uplifting rendition of “Ye gates lift up your heads on high”, no silver chalice, no processing of the elements, no sharing of the peace, the meaning of the Eucharist was still there in all its power. I was invited through a smaller door than usual, a more mundane, insignificant, plastic milk-container door, only to find the wonder, beauty and mystery of the Lord’s Supper still waiting for me on the other side.

In recent years I’ve had the privilege of entering the majesty of St Peter’s Basilica in Rome through the magnificent Holy Door that’s only opened in Jubilee years, as well as bowing low through the Lilliputian Door of Humility to enter the wonders of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. A grand door or a simple door, standing tall or bowing low, it made no difference. It was the wonder which awaited me that mattered.

Last Sunday we celebrated the Sacrament of Communion in my local church. The door through which I entered was small and insignificant, like a plastic milk container. But it wasn’t the door that mattered. It was the wonder, beauty and mystery waiting for me that was as amazing as ever.

A prayer for today

Lord, open a door for me, a door of your choosing, so that I might find your acceptance, love and healing waiting for me on the other side. Amen.