

When I was six I fell in love with my next door neighbor. She was as old a woman as I ever knew and she taught kindergarten at a nearby school. She loved kids, and I liked to give her gifts. When flowers bloomed in our yard, I'd cut some and bring them to her. What looked like a flower to me was usually something between a weed and a bush, but it always pleased her.

At age six I never thought much about why people give flowers; I just knew it felt right. I never thought much about the bright colors, the pleasing shapes, their unforgettable fragrance--about how all those things symbolized beauty--not just in the flower, but in the person I loved, and not just the beauty in her, but in our relationship. I never thought about how that flower died for one other person to enjoy its life. Nor did I think about the act of giving something I owned as a way of offering myself, a way of humbling myself to reverence someone I loved. I never thought much about that, but all those meanings were there. All those meanings are present in the gift.

I'm sure that's why it so perplexed me when at the age of twelve I received a gift from her. She gave me a bottle of deodorant. Like a flower, it too had a bright color, a pleasing shape, and an unforgettable fragrance. A gift says more than words.

Before Jesus died, he left a gift behind. He says: When you break the bread and pour the cup you will find me. When you take nourishment, you will find me. When you enjoy the company of family and friends you will find me. When you feed the hungry you will find me.

You see, the eucharist is not just about eating, it's about feeding. It's not just about receiving food, it's about giving food. The eucharist is about washing feet; it's about service. It's about reverencing Christ, not just in the meal, but in the people who share the meal.

I often hear people say, "We need more reverence for the eucharist." And they're right. The eucharist is the body of Christ. But to promote reverence for the eucharist, we must promote reverence for each other. Jesus is present in your neighbor, in that person sitting next to you right now. Revere that person, be ready to wash that person's feet, then we'll revere the bread and the cup.

Let me ask you this; I'm asking this of kids as well as adults. Do you realize how much difference you make in the life of someone who loves you? Do you know the power you have to bring peace to your family? Do you know the power of compliment? The power of admiration? The power of reverence for Christ in your family? It's awesome. It's awesome.

Jesus left us a gift. And the gift he left is you. You are bread, you are cup, you are Christ for the world. Give the gift of self and receive the gift of Christ.