

In the time before covid, when overseas travel was a thing. Janet and I found ourselves in Paris, with friends. It is a beautiful place, with all kinds of sights and wonders. The Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, the Arc de Triomphe. And then the art galleries and Museums. We spent one day at the Louvre and then another at the Musee d Orsay.

The art galleries in particular are quite overwhelming, especially the Louvre which is so vast. Corridors and corridors of grand masters, all grouped together in their respective periods and nationalities. And of course, no visit there is complete without a look at the most famous painting of all, the Mona Lisa, which if you can get close enough to it to have a look, it's not very big and always surrounded by tourists taking photos. Is beautiful.

But my favourite moment in these two days, after feeling like there simply wasn't any more room for another 18th century Spanish Master, or a depiction of the nearly dead St Sebastian, came at the Musee d Orsay at the end of our second day.

One of my mates and I had been looking for the works of Vincent Van Gogh, and no matter where we looked, simply couldn't find them. So, we came downstairs to meet up with everyone else and had a moan about not being able to see them. Someone said they were on the top floor, and we were off.

After all the beauty we had seen, the technical skill and absolute perfection, the size and scope of many of the most famous art works in the world ... when we came upon the offering of Vincent van Gogh, we were awestruck. They were so vibrant, full of colour and shimmering with life. They fair leapt from the canvas and welcomed you, surrounded you in bright light and gorgeousness, they simply lifted your heart with joy.

They were alive ...

It is this kind of life, this kind of alive, that Jesus is meaning when he says, "he is the bread of life."

That in his birth, death and resurrection, he is the one who has come from God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to quicken the universe with life. That kind of alive. It is found in him he says, and this life is what he means here.

As humans we make many mistakes with the things of God, one is, we take things too literally. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus is not talking about cutting bits off himself to hand around, he is not thinking he will put a line into a vein so everyone can have a drink of his blood.

This is often the way we understand the things Jesus says to us. He tells us to "Love one another." So, the church comes up with a list of people that it doesn't approve of, some appropriate scriptural verses as to why not, and then pronounces, not only the churches disdain for these people, but Jesus's too. I 'm not sure that's the kind of love Jesus meant.

Jesus tells us to "be holy", so we stop associating with non-believers, are discouraged from going to the pub, the movies, certainly not allowed to go dancing. We keep the "world" at bay. This, in spite of Jesus eating, drinking and partying with publicans and sinners.

We often miss the spirit of the law because we get bound up in the law of the law.

Loving one another is about welcome and kindness, not exclusion and anger.

Holiness is about how you love, not how you separate.

Eating Jesus flesh and drinking his blood is about life Not death.

It is not wandering to the altar, Sunday by Sunday to simply chew and swallow. It's not flour and salt, grape and water.

It is the promise, that, following the Spirit, we will live, have life ... be alive.

This eating and drinking is the real presence of all that has been said, all that has been done, promised, and delivered It is ...

Jesus the Christ, born, died and resurrected. Hallelujah! ...

Like the van Gogh paintings, Eucharist is full of colour, vibrant and shimmering with life. It, fair leaps from the liturgy and welcomes you, surrounds you in bright light and gorgeousness, and lifts your heart with joy.

It is the meeting place of God and people, where all of creation ... comes alive ...

and those one who eat "this bread" ... live forever.

Thanks be to God.