

You are all looking wonderful and beautiful in your special clothes. It's all a bit strange, though, isn't it, being dressed up in all these funny outfits? In fact this whole coming-to-church thing, this whole religion thing is a bit peculiar.

Coming into this building with lots of people we don't really know. Turning off, hopefully, our mobile phones – can you cope with that? Being cut off from the net for a whole hour...Having to listen to other people talking.... And then all those strange readings, readings about blood – sprinkling blood on the altar and then sprinkling blood on other people....And then all these songs – it can be a bit embarrassing, can't it? Do we just stand there looking glum or do we try to join in? Or do we go for some rather unsatisfactory compromise somewhere between pretending and mumbling?

But the most peculiar thing of all, is for a man to stand up at the altar and to turn ordinary bread and wine into the Body and Blood of someone who loved and died 2,000 years ago.

A lot of people say that science has disproved religion. In science we do experiments. If we heat up water to a certain temperature we can prove that water will turn into steam.

This Mass is an experiment. The whole of the Catholic religion is an experiment. What we are trying to prove is that love conquers everything; that love is the very centre of our universe; that loving, the act of loving, is what makes us human. Love can go wrong. We sometimes hurt each other. We sometimes hurt ourselves. But the point is, Jesus makes that love better again. Jesus loves us completely. Jesus suffers and dies for us. Jesus is trying to show us that love is always victorious. However bad we are, we can never defeat love. Love just goes in loving.

We're all in this experiment together – the Pope in Rome, Moses on Mount Sinai, young people receiving Holy Communion for the first time, every single one of us. And it's an experiment we conduct every Sunday.

The problem with this experiment is that we won't get the final proof, one way or the other, until the end of the world. The experiment is still running and we are part of it.

The experiment **is** still running, but what I am absolutely certain about, is that every time I receive Holy Communion, I get my proof. Every time I receive Holy Communion, I receive love itself – love crucified and love raised up on the third day.

Coming to Mass is peculiar, but coming to Mass is also the most wonderful thing that I can ever do.