

Weekly Message from Fr William for Corpus Christi 2022

Dear People of St Mary's, it's the great feast of *Corpus et Sanguinis Christi*, known almost universally as just 'Corpus Christi'. '*The Body and Blood of Christ*'. This great feast was established in 1264 by Pope Urban IV and stands as a proclamation of, and as a celebration of, Christ's presence in the consecrated bread and wine at Mass. The Church defines this presence as the 'Real' Presence of Christ, and when it comes to Christian theology precision of words is important to preserve and safeguard the transmission of the faith, without error, from generation to generation in the Church. The word 'Real' here makes sure we don't slip into thinking Christ's presence is merely symbolic, or that his presence is less than 100%. His presence in the consecrated bread and wine is 100% - The Risen Christ in his fullness – fully human, fully divine.

The Church has known this from its infancy, a community of disciples gathered around Jesus at the Last Supper, when he gave it to them and said 'This is my body' and 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood' as you'll hear in the second reading this Sunday.

Eucharistic Adoration seems to have begun around the turn of the second millennium during the papacy of Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), as a grass roots expression across Christendom of devotion to the Real Presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine. Ever since then Eucharistic Adoration has been one of the Church's most treasured devotions. It involves spending time in the presence of the consecrated host exposed on the altar and could include prayer, praise, silent adoration, inner silence. At the end of all three masses this Sunday I'll be giving the parish, for those who would like, the opportunity to stay in church some quiet time in Eucharistic Adoration.

Devotions are different to Liturgy. Liturgy is the celebration of the Sacraments instituted by Christ and therefore core to our Christian spirituality. Devotions are acts of love that have sprung up since then over the centuries from among the people of God. They are, you could say, optional extras that can enrich our Christian spirituality.

By contrast, Christ's presence in the Liturgy is dynamic. This is Christ offering himself in sacrifice to the Father in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. And when we eat his body and drink his blood, in accordance with his words and in accordance with his invitation, we become part of the sacrifice.

I might use this opportunity of Corpus Christi to give some practical reminders or guidance at Mass about administering and receiving communion. One small change I'm making from this Sunday: Since the beginning of Covid I've been wearing a face covering to administer communion to keep the hosts safe. I've been advised by our H&S officer this is no longer necessary. And in line with this I'll also no longer wear a face covering when transferring the hosts from airtight container to pyx/ciborium in setting up for mass. Meticulous sanitisation will continue. Happy Corpus Christi!



Corpus et Sanguinis Christi, Sunday, 19 June 2022