

Reflection for Thursday 11th June Feast of Corpus Christi

Today is the feast of Corpus Christi, the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, although in this country it will be celebrated externally on Sunday. In the last few months as we haven't been able to attend Sunday Mass, it has been inevitable that many feast days have passed us by almost unnoticed. Since the lockdown started we have been unable to celebrate many important celebrations such as Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday and there are more to come in the next few weeks. We have also been unable to celebrate First Holy Communions and Confirmations.

On a diocesan level we have been unable to ordain out two new Bishops and there is uncertainty about the forthcoming priestly and diaconate ordinations which normally take place in June. Various pilgrimages have also been cancelled such as Lourdes and Medjagorje. So the lockdown has meant much more to us than not being able to visit the church or attend mass.

On a more positive note it looks as if we might be able to start opening the church for private prayer on a limited basis so that people can come into the church and pray. This is something which the government has failed to appreciate about Catholic churches in particular. We can pray anywhere of course but Catholics prefer to pray before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle given the choice. Other churches do not have the Eucharistic presence of Christ and do not have a tradition of popping into church to pray. Many people say they can sense the presence of Our Lord in a Catholic church in a way that they cannot elsewhere. This is why opening the church for prayer is so important for us even if we cannot have Mass at the present time. No-one in the government seemed to have any appreciation of this aspect of our faith.

So today we celebrate the precious gift of the real presence of Christ on our altars during mass and in the tabernacle. The Eucharist is there principally to enable us to receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Our Lord as a source of grace. There is no better way of drawing close to Jesus and nourishing our relationship with him than by receiving Holy Communion. We should receive him as often as we can, daily if possible, to deepen our love for Jesus and for the grace to live a good and holy life.

Some people say that Holy Communion should not be seen as a reward for being good and I totally agree. However neither should it be seen as a reward for being bad and living a life incompatible with the teachings of our faith. Holy Communion is not for the good it's for the repentant, for those who repent of their sins and are sincerely trying to live a better life. St Paul warns against those who eat and drink the Body and Blood of Our Lord unworthily, far from leading them to eternal life it could lead to eternal damnation. The best way to ensure that we are in a state of grace and worthy to receive Holy Communion is to make a good act of contrition or even go to confession and be reconciled with God before receiving Our Lord.

In chapter 6 of St John's gospel Jesus explains that his followers must eat and drink his Body and Blood, in fact he quite emphatically states, '*... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day.*' Many of his followers found this teaching intolerable and decided to walk away. But Jesus did not chase after them, he let them walk away, he knew it would be difficult for many people to accept. Even today many Catholics have stopped believing in the real presence or do not fully realise what a great gift it is and do not acknowledge Jesus' presence in the church.

Let us pray today on this wonderful feast for an increase in faith, a strong desire to Our Lord in Holy Communion and a deeper appreciation of what Our Lord went through in order to leave us this

memorial of his passion and death, beautifully described by St Thomas Aquinas in the Magnificat antiphon for today's feast;

O Sacrum convivium in quo Christus sumitur: recolitur memoria passionis ejus; mens impletur gratia; et futurae gloriae nobis pignus datur, Alleluia.

O Sacred Banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of his passion renewed, the mind filled with grace, and a pldge of future glory given to us, Alleluia.

You can listen to it sung on Youtube, there more than 30 versions eg, Luigi Molfino is particularly good, <https://youtu.be/poyKFaG9kcU>

Deacon Kevin

If you have any comments to make about any of my reflections please email me on kevinconnor7451@gmail.com