

Corpus Christi Year A

Readings

Deuteronomy 8:2-3,14-16

Corinthians 10:16-17

John 6:51-58

For almost twelve weeks now we have as the People of God, the Body of Christ, been unable to receive the Eucharistic Body of the Lord and his Blood poured out for the sin of the world. The terrible effect of the Coronavirus has also made a deep impact on the practice of our faith. Now that we are going to be able (from this Tuesday) to come to church for private prayers and devotions, maybe to kneel before the Tabernacle and adore Jesus who is there present, we can in a very special way start to look forward to the day when we will be able to come and receive the Lord in Holy Communion.

This testing time for us has also seen the murder of George Floyd by a member of the police in the USA. This one evil event has triggered mass protests in many parts of the world and has called all of us to examine our collective and individual lives; to ask how we promote justice and equality because all are created in the image and likeness of God and are beloved sons and daughters of the Creator, redeemed by the Blood of Jesus the Son and enlivened by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We, all of us together, are the Body of Humanity and there can be no place for discrimination based on race. We are reminded by S. Paul that in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, slave nor free".

In the light of all this, it is fitting that on this Sunday's Solemnity of Corpus Christi we reflect on the nature of the Eucharist and that, as we start to take the first tentative steps towards the resumption of the public celebration of Mass, we ask ourselves what the Eucharist is and how in our celebrations and our reception of Holy Communion we show forth our understanding of this great gift of Christ's physical presence among us.

There has been, by some parts of the Catholic Church since the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, a tendency to place a great deal of emphasis on the Mass as a gathering of the local community and as a communal meal. While these are no doubt true and important aspects of our Eucharistic life, they are by no means the most important aspects, and this over-emphasis on the human and the communal is in no way a correct reflection of the perennial teaching of the Church or indeed of the documents of the Vatican Council.

Our faith teaches us, as it has always taught each and every generation of Christians, that the Mass is the calling into the present (anamnesis) of the one perfect sacrifice of the death and resurrection of the Lord. In other words, when we come to Mass, we are seated with the Lord in the Upper Room, we stand with Mary and the Beloved Disciple on Calvary, we are present with the Magdalen as she goes to the tomb early in the morning. We believe that Christ is truly and actually present in the species of the Mass, Body, Soul, Blood and Divinity. He is just as present to us, though veiled from our eyes under the forms of bread and wine, as he was to the

disciples who were called from being fishers on the lake.

In a recent American survey less than 50% of Catholics believed this teaching! Why? Because of deficient and faulty catechesis based on a total misreading of the Second Vatican Council and a complete ignorance of the content of the Catechism of the Catholic Church produced under the great pope St John Paul II.

If we simply believe that the Mass is a communal meal then:

- It does not matter if we do not attend every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation (unless prevented by a truly serious cause or dispensed by the Church).
- It does not matter if we arrive late and unprepared.
- It does not matter if we receive Holy Communion while not in a state of grace.
- It does not matter how we receive communion, standing, kneeling, on the tongue or in the hand.
- It does not matter what the liturgy is like as long as we sing our favourite song, meet our friends and have a good time. After all the priest is only there as an MC to facilitate the community.

But, if we hold fast to the teaching of the Church then:

- The mass will become the most important thing in our lives – as Vatican II teaches us “the source and summit of the Christian life”.
- We will arrive in good time and prepared as we have a meeting with The King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- When we are to meet Jesus at the Mass we should regularly and habitually make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession).
- When we take Jesus into ourselves in Holy Communion, we should remember the words of S. Paul: “At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow...”. We should (if we can) kneel and not ever dare to touch the most holy with our hands.

We should remember that Mass is not there to entertain us or make us feel good about ourselves but is there that we may have a foretaste here on earth of heaven and may partake here and now in the sacrifice that brought the salvation of the world.

All of this may sound quite harsh but I do believe that, as we take the first steps back to Eucharistic worship, it is a good opportunity for us to look at our beliefs, our practice of the faith, our devotion and to maybe try to recapture some of the fervour of our youth.

To end, could I remind you of some words by the poet John Betjeman that I often share with you at Christmas:

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare –
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

Fr Rob

Church Opening

I have written a pastoral letter, which has been posted on 11 June, to everyone for whom I have contact details. It gives instructions and directives for the opening of the church for private prayer and devotions. For now please note that SJV will from Tuesday 16 June be open at the following times:

Tuesday – Friday	9 -10am
Saturday and Sunday	9am – 12noon