

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST
CORPUS CHRISTI
19 JUNE 2022

READINGS: Genesis 14: 18-20 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Luke 9:11-17

Do we really know how much God loves us? How special we are to him? The lengths he is prepared to go for us? Today we remember his generosity, the depth of his love for us as we celebrate the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord.

Today St Luke tells us how Jesus welcomes the crowds who follow him and he teaches them and lays his hands upon those who are sick and heals them. It is getting late and the disciples encourage Jesus to send the people away but he resists and suggests that they feed the people for their journey first. Taking what little they have he looks to heaven, blesses the food and breaks it and hands it to the disciples to distribute. Words and actions that will be mirrored at the Last Supper and at Emmaus after his resurrection. Not only is there enough for all but there is an abundance left over, revealing the generosity of God. Wonderful though this is it is merely a preparation for what is to come and which we celebrate today, the self-giving of the Lord on Calvary and which is made present to us in the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Real presence of the Lord in the form of Bread and Wine.

In writing to the Corinthians, St Paul gives us one of the earliest descriptions of the Eucharist when he reminds them of how Jesus on the night of the Last Supper, thanks God, blesses bread and wine and distributes them to his disciples making really present for them what is to happen on the Cross the following day when he gives his whole life, body and blood, soul and divinity to the Father in love as the sacrifice which sets us free from sin and opens for us the way into a new life in communion with God our Father.

As the documents of the Church put it, ‘At the last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did it in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until he should come again.’ (Sacrosanctum concilium 47) It is a memorial of his Passion not of the Last Supper. It is, as the Church tells us, the source and summit of the Christian life. The Mass is celebrated on an altar and altars are where sacrifices take place and so when we celebrate the Mass we are transported to Calvary and are made one with the loving Sacrifice of the Lord on the Cross. As has been said, ‘in a world gone wrong there is no communion without sacrifice.’ We recognise in faith the supreme act of love which makes present to us the very life of God.

How blessed are we as Catholics that at the heart of our Churches we so often celebrate the Holy Mass and in the Tabernacle we have the abiding Real Presence of the Lord. At the heart of our community we find the Lord always ready to greet us, silently present at the heart of the parish. How comforting it is to see the Sanctuary lamp burning as a reminder to us of the Lord’s presence, assuring us of the Lord’s undying love for us. How important it is that Churches are open as much as possible

so that we can visit the Lord. I well remember as a child how one was expected to take off one's hat or cap, if one was wearing one, and to make the sign of the cross when passing a catholic church acknowledging the Lord's presence.

It is important that we recognise that the worship at Mass is Christ's self-sacrificial offering of himself to the Father in which we are privileged to take part. It is his worship but he allows us to join in and make it our own so in the Second Eucharistic prayer we find the words, 'We offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you.' I do love the words from Julian of Norwich's Writings where she speaks of the Lord asking her, 'Are you pleased because I suffered for you?' To which she responds, 'Yes I am, Lord, thank you... And the Lord goes on to say to her,'If you are glad, then so am I. It gives me great joy and happiness, it is a perpetual delight to have suffered for you. If I could suffer more I would.' How amazing is that! It makes real those words of Jesus, 'God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life.' (Jn 3:16) and 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him.' (Jn 6:56). Such is the nature of the gift we receive in the Sacrament that St Augustine says of it, 'And you shall not change me into yourself as bodily food but into me you shall be changed.' The desire of the Lord is that in receiving him in Holy Communion we become Eucharist for others in our daily lives. May we always hunger for the Bread of Life so that we can become a loving, sacrificial presence in our world which is so often starved of both bodily food and the life-giving presence of the Lord and his love for all. The sacrifice of the Mass continues when we leave the Church.

I share with you these lovely words which bring home the reality of our sharing in the Mass and our making real the presence of the Lord day by day.

Father to you I raise my whole being, a vessel emptied of self. Accept lord this emptiness and so fill me with yourself, your light, love and life, that your precious gifts may radiate through me and overflow the chalice of my heart into the hearts of all with whom I come in contact this week revealing to them the beauty of your joy and the serenity of your peace which nothing can destroy.

(Prayer by Francis Nuttall).

God bless you,

Fr Hugh