

Sunday 14th June 2020 Corpus Christi St Wilfrid's for stream and video
R Deut 8:2-3,14-16; Ps 147:12-15,19-20; 1 Cor 10:16-17; John 6:51-58 Yr A
C/W Gen 14:18-20; Ps 109 (110):1-4; 1 Cor 11:23-26; John 6:51-58 ABC

Corpus Christi is all about being human! It is about US being human. It is about God being a human in Jesus Christ. Its about our loving, gentle, non-threatening friendship with Jesus.

We call it the Incarnation. God the creator of everything that is, became its Saviour and Redeemer by becoming part of what He created. Its like the watchmaker becoming part of the watch.

We celebrate the Incarnation at the Feast of the Annunciation in March, when Mary said YES to God – and God became a baby in her body. We celebrate the Nativity at the Feast of Christmas when God was born for us as the child Jesus. But that's only the beginning of it. Corpus Christi is the continuing of it.

We owe today's feast more specifically to one daughter of the Church, Juliana of Liege, a laywoman of holy life in thirteenth century Flanders, in the duchy of Burgundy, then the crossroads of the mediaeval West to which England also belonged.

But the reality of Corpus Christi, goes right back to Jesus Himself in the First century, His Apostles, and the Early Church Fathers. Some, like Ignatius of Antioch were friends and disciples of the Apostles. I could reel off a great list of them! They all knew exactly what Jesus meant, taught and HANDED DOWN about His Body and Blood!

Juliana with great feminine intuition, realised the need of the Church to have a special day of thanksgiving for the Eucharist, away from its actual day of Institution, Maundy Thursday which is so tied up with Jesus Passion and Crucifixion.

We almost seem to take it for granted that God localized Himself in Jesus Christ's human Incarnation and birth, without limiting, confining or constricting himself from remaining beyond time and space as the undividable Trinity.

God localized himself in Jesus Christ for our sake, but Jesus did not cease to be God as Trinity in Heaven and over all the entire cosmos. Corpus Christi continues to celebrate and experience that.

The Eucharist here on earth is not just a sign of this; it is the presence of the new heaven and new earth. It is and was the New Covenant, the New Testament, even before the New Testament Scriptures were put together. The Eucharist is simply, Jesus.

The Eucharist is not merely a 'symbol' even in its very deep sense, of investing objects or actions with an inner meaning expressing Christian realities. It goes far beyond that! It is Jesus Himself, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

St John Vianney, that great nineteenth-century priest and pastor also known as the Curé d'Ars, the patron Saint of Parish Priests, used to simply say over and over again, "He is there; he is there." That is all we need to know.

This is Jesus trying to answer the human need for Him in a very practical way. We can perceive the spiritual in a cerebral, mystical way, Jesus within our souls - but as humans, we often need something more concrete. Something we can touch and see. This is not a 'lesser' spirituality – it is a greater, deeper, even a 'tangible' spirituality.

I REPEAT, Jesus understood this, and so did His immediate successors, the Apostles – and their disciples, the Early Church Fathers. They were the immediate descendants of the Apostles and knew exactly what Jesus meant and handed down.

The Bible clearly shows that, as well as the ancient documents of the Fathers. All the Apostolic Fathers attested the continuing and abiding presence of Christ in the consecrated Eucharist, even after the Eucharistic celebration – in the Reserved Sacrament. Much as he disliked it, even Calvin had to acknowledge this!

The thrust of the Church of England's strategy on mission and evangelism, endeavouring to meet human need, and particularly in our own Diocese under Bishop Martin, is to take Jesus into the midst of our people so that they may behold the Good News of the Gospel. A very good reason for outdoor processions of the Eucharist!

Yes, Jesus is present spiritually in our social and community work; Yes in our concerts and events; Yes, in our schools and outreach work; Yes in every aspect of our Church life, corporate and individual.

Let's get people to hear and EXPERIENCE the Gospel, getting them into our beautiful Church, that Sacred Space, goes towards meeting human, more tangible, need for God and a fairer society by caring for their bodies as well as their souls.

Of course Jesus is 'omnipresent' – He is everywhere spiritually and in our hearts. But as he localised Himself when He became a human being, so he can localise Himself for us in His completeness in the Eucharist.

In another Pauline passage on the Eucharist, 1 Corinthians 10:16 – 17, St Paul says 'the cup and the bread is a sharing or communion in the body and blood of Christ'. The Greek word he uses, translated **sharing or communion**, is Koinonia which also means "participation" in other words the action of taking part in something.

So, let's ask Jesus fully into our hearts and meet Him in the reality of the Eucharist, in His gentle, loving way. Here He is in extra tangible form. Let's participate with him, act and take part with Him, to know Him better, and to take the gospel into the world.

Let us incorporate the undeniable real presence of Christ in our sacramental worship, fully and dynamically into our Diocesan Strategy of Mission and Evangelism, that all the people of our community may come, as our diocesan logo puts it, to **'KNOW, LOVE, and FOLLOW Jesus. 933**

Fr Ray Whelan