

Corpus Christi – 2022

Though summer will begin in a few days and it is the feast of Corpus Christi, back up with me for a moment to Christmas. These two feasts are deeply connected, because both are about the Word of God taking flesh and coming to be with us. At Christmas, we remember the Birth of Jesus, the Son of God Who becomes the Son of Mary. *Jesus comes to be with those He loves*, taking on the whole of our humanity, even its vulnerability to suffering and death. At Bethlehem, because Mary said “Let it be done as you say” to the angel, our Savior is revealed, and part of created nature is united to God in a new way.

Some thirty years later, at Calvary, Jesus completes this Christmas gift, handing His life back to the Father in trust and in love, even amid His pain, saying “Let it be done as you say” to reveal the Father’s merciful love. The divine and the human, the Creator and creation, are reunited and reconciled. On Corpus Christi, we reflect on the Eucharist, the living fruit of that sacrifice, *the continued Real Presence of Jesus Who comes to be with those He loves*. At every Mass, the Word is again made flesh, as Jesus continues to say, “This is my Body, this is my Blood” ... and like the Words of creation, “Let there be light,” so this Word brings about what it speaks. A small part of the created world—bread and wine – is taken back into God, and as we receive the Eucharist, we too are drawn into Communion with God, that we may one day share in divine, eternal life.

I imagine the crowds thought the same thing as the Apostles on that hillside – if we’re going to get something to eat, we’d better be on our way. It must have taken some persuading to have them sit down again in anticipation – what was Jesus going to give them? They could see nothing that would satisfy their hunger. And for the Apostles, too, it must have been a remarkable experience, delivering armloads of bread to dozens of people at a time, and then coming back and always finding more. They perhaps expected that eventually, Jesus would run out of food to give them; but there was always more than enough.

The Eucharist is always an anticipation: a share now in the life of Jesus, but in anticipation of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb mentioned in the Book of Revelation. That is what the liturgy means when we proclaim: “Blessed are those who are called to the Supper of the Lamb.” John tells us that Jesus fed the Apostles breakfast after their long night fishing – breakfast, because it was the beginning of a new day, when Jesus had made all things new. But we look forward to Supper with the Lord when our work here is complete and we enter that fullness of life. And in the meantime, like the Manna in the desert, Jesus feeds us along the way.

By definition, Communion is a two-way exchange. Not only does Christ give His Body and Blood to us, but we also give Christ another point of entry into this world. We give Him a place in OUR bodies and our lives. It is not only the Bread and Wine that are changed during Mass ... WE TOO are changed by entering more fully into the very life of Jesus. The community of the Church is born of this Eucharistic Communion – more than a simple human allegiance or common interests, the Eucharist ensures that because we are united with Jesus, we are inherently also joined with one another. To *receive the Eucharist is to say to Christ – NOT “You are now mine,” but rather – “I am now Yours.”* Our “Amen” echoes Mary’s words, “Let it be done as You say.” Like her, we open our lives to *the communion of love that is both recalled and made effective in this Sacrament, not only as a act of prayer, but in service to the members of the Body of Christ we encounter in our daily living.*

So back to Christmas. Each year, we listen to Joseph’s search in Bethlehem for a place for Mary to give birth, to bring the Body of Christ visibly into the world. *Each time we come to Communion, across the ages, we are part of this same search: to open the doors of our lives and provide Jesus a place to dwell in our world in His merciful love.* As we begin the national three-year Eucharistic Revival today, we ask anew that we may never turn the Lord away, even when His presence is hidden as it was in Mary’s womb. For every time we make that space for the Lord in our souls and families and

relationships, we hand on what we ourselves first received, and we fulfill the meaning of the most profound and enduring commandment Jesus gives to the Church: ***“Do this in memory of Me.”***