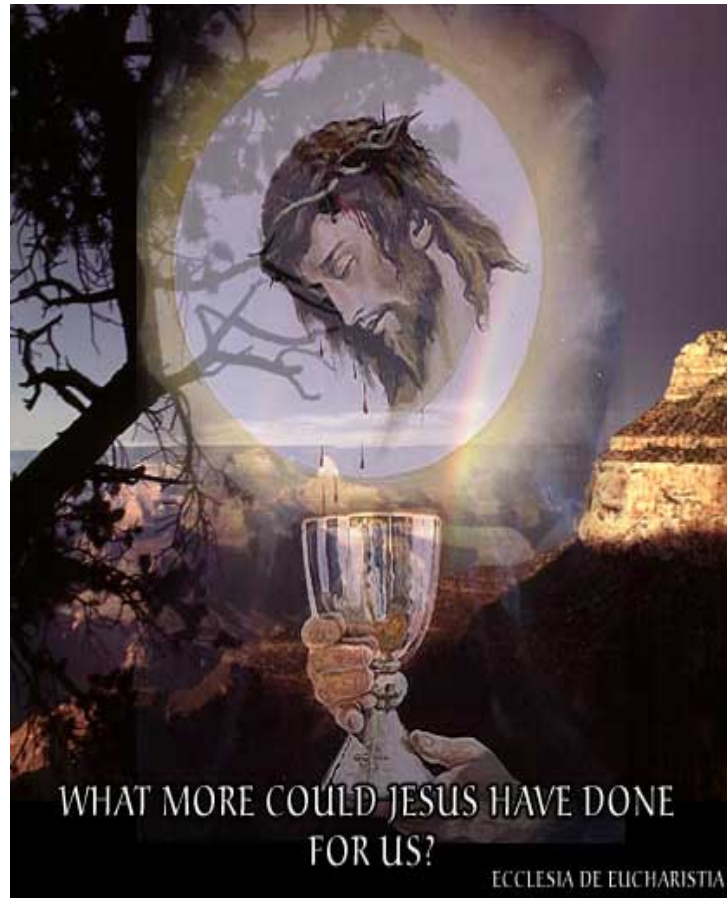


Beyond the Year of the Eucharist



Diocese of Peterborough
2nd Diocesan Day of Renewal
November 5th, 2005

ON “CORPUS CHRISTI”

“Heaven and earth work together”

*By Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
(Now Pope Benedict XVI)*

It does not only bring the liturgy to mind; for me, it is a day on which heaven and earth work together. In my mind's eye it is the time when spring is turning into summer; the sun is high in the sky, and crops are ripening in field and meadow.

The Church's feasts make present the mystery of Christ, but Jesus Christ was immersed in the faith of the people of Israel and so, arising from this background in Israel's life, the Christian feasts are also involved with the rhythm of the year, the rhythm of seedtime and harvest. How could it be otherwise in a liturgy which has at its center the sign of bread, fruit of earth and heaven? Here this fruit of the earth, bread, is privileged to be the bearer of him in whom heaven and earth, God and man have become one.

The way the Church's feasts fit in with the seasons of the year is therefore not an accident. Consequently we must go on to discover the inner rhythm of the Church's year and see the place *Corpus Christi* has within it.

First of all, clearly, it grows out of the mystery of Easter and Pentecost: it presupposes the Resurrection and the sending of the Spirit. But it is also in close proximity to the Feast of the Trinity, which reveals the inner logic in the connection between Easter and Pentecost.

It is only because God himself is the eternal dialogue of love that he can speak and be spoken to. Only because he himself is relationship can we relate to him; only because he is love can he love and be loved in return. Only because he is threefold can he be the grain of wheat which dies and the bread of eternal life.

Ultimately, then, *Corpus Christi* is an expression of faith in God, in love, in the fact that God is love. All that is said and done on *Corpus Christi* is in fact a single variation on the theme of love, what it is and what it does.

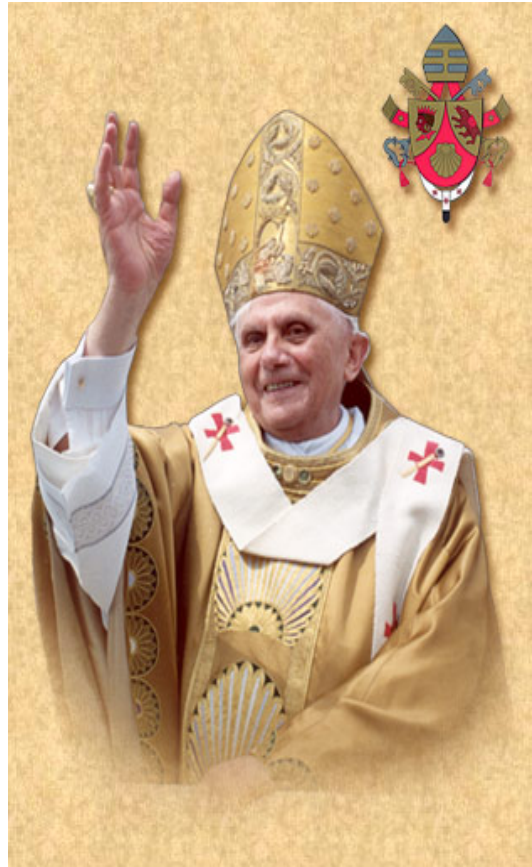
In one of his *Corpus Christi* hymns Thomas Aquinas puts it beautifully: *nec sumptus consumitur* - love does not consume: it gives and, in giving, receives. And in giving it is not used up but renews itself.

Since *Corpus Christi* is a confession of faith in love, it is totally appropriate that the day should focus on the mystery of transubstantiation.

Love is transubstantiation, transformation. *Corpus Christi* tells us: Yes, there is such a thing as love, and therefore there is transformation, therefore there is hope. And hope gives us the strength to live and face the world.

Perhaps it was good to have experienced doubts about the meaning of celebrating *Corpus Christi*, for it has led us to the rediscovery of a feast which, today, we need more than ever.

(Pope Benedict XVI)



Pope Benedict XVI

This booklet has been prepared by volunteers at the Diocesan Office of Evangelization as part of the resources for the Year of the Eucharist in the Diocese of Peterborough. The booklet was first sent out to parishes in preparation for the Feast of "Corpus Christi", but has since been slightly revised to include some more reflections and suggestions. The late Pope John Paul II asked the Church to observe the Year of the Eucharist from October 2004 to October 2005, and his successor, Pope Benedict XVI, has been urging the faithful to renew their faith in and their devotion to the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Christian life. As our Diocese celebrates the conclusion of the Year of the Eucharist on this 2nd annual Day of Renewal, it is hoped that the present booklet will encourage pastors and parishioners to continue to center their lives and the life of their communities, even beyond the Year of the Eucharist, around this greatest mystery of our faith.

History of 'Corpus Christi'

The Feast of "Corpus Christi", which is Latin for "Body of Christ", is always celebrated in the Roman Church on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday. Here in Canada special permission was granted for pastoral reasons to observe the feast on the following Sunday which is now the proper place in the liturgical calendar. The full name of this feast is "*Corpus et Sanguis Christi*" or "The Body and Blood of Christ" referring to the real presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. This Sacrament of Sacraments comes about once the bread and wine on the altar have been consecrated at Mass through the power of the Holy Spirit and the words of the priest.

The feast of the Blessed Sacrament was established in 1246 by Bishop Robert de Thorte of Liege, Belgium at the suggestion of St. Juliana of Mont Carvillon (1193-1258). St. Juliana, a nun in Retinne, received this inspiration from Our Lord for the following reasons: that the Catholic teaching be better understood through the celebration of this feast at a time when the faith was growing cold; that the faithful be enabled to draw from this source of life new strength and vigor to walk continually in the way of virtue and truth; that any offensive and irreverent behavior be overcome by sincere and profound adoration, love and worship.

In addition, the idea of the feast was further advanced by a miracle which occurred to a German priest, Peter of Prague, near Bolsena in 1263. During a pilgrimage to Rome, he stopped there at the Church of St. Christina to offer Mass. While he was a devout man, he harbored doubts about the real presence, doubts which were completely resolved when the Host he had consecrated during that Mass began to bleed. He rushed to meet Pope Urban IV in Orvieto, bringing the Host with him. The miracle was declared authentic, and the Host is still on display at the Cathedral of Orvieto today.

In response to both of the above, Pope Urban IV published a Papal Bull "Transiturus" in 1264, which made this Feast a part of the liturgical calendar of the Universal Church. When establishing the feast, the Pope stressed the love of Christ who wished to remain physically with us until the end of time. In the Eucharist, said the Pope, "Christ is with us in His own substance." For "when telling the apostles that he was ascending into heaven, he said, 'Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world,' thus comforting them with the gracious promise that he would remain and be with them even by his bodily presence" (August 11, 1264).

Urban IV commissioned St. Thomas Aquinas to compose the Liturgy of the Hours for the new feast of "Corpus Christi". In addition to the Divine Office, St. Thomas wrote some of the most beautiful and moving hymns for the Catholic liturgy honoring the Blessed Sacrament such as *Lauda Sion*, *Adoro Te Devote* and *Verbum Supernum*. Three hymns in particular, composed for the feast, express the unchangeable faith of the Church in the abiding presence of her founder on earth. They also explain why the faithful adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. They are best known by each of their last two verses, which have become part of the treasury of Catholic hymnology:

O Salutaris Hostia is an act of adoration of Christ the Saving Victim who opened wide the gates of heaven to us below.

Tantum Ergo Sacramentum is an act of adoration of the Word-made-flesh, where faith supplies for what the senses cannot perceive.

Panis Angelicus is an act of adoration of that Wondrous Thing where the lowly and poor are fed, banqueting on their Incarnate Lord and King.

Aquinas, like the Church, never separated the Eucharist as Sacrifice, Communion and Presence. But, with the Church, he also realized that without the real presence there would be neither real sacrifice nor real communion. Aquinas assumed that God became man, so he might offer himself on Calvary and continue to offer himself in the Mass. He became man that he might give himself to the disciples at the Last Supper and continue to give himself to us in Holy Communion. He became man to live in flesh and blood in Palestine and continue to live now on earth as the same Jesus, who died and rose from the dead and is seated at the right hand of his heavenly Father.

Through the centuries the Church has celebrated this feast as one of the great Solemnities of the liturgical year. Even Canon Law (Can. 944 §1,2) makes reference to the feast and the devotions, especially processions, which should accompany it. No other devotion has received such attention in the Code which shows the importance the Church attaches to the faithful observance of this feast. It is one of the few feasts which is mentioned along with Holy Days of Obligation (Can. 1246 §1).

Among the many forms of Eucharistic devotions, processions stand out as a very public way to honor Our Lord and his presence among us. In becoming man, God made himself our traveling companion on our journey through life. Through Eucharistic processions his intention to journey with us still is being proclaimed aloud in the streets of our cities and communities. Christ is being taken out into the world as an expression of our grateful love and as a fount of inexhaustible blessings.

Even today processions, though rare, are being held in many countries on the occasion of the feast of “Corpus Christi”. After the last Mass on this feast day Our Lord is placed in the monstrance and carried through the streets stopping at four places representing the four corners of the earth. There, four altars are set up where benediction services are being held. While processing, the congregation follows the Blessed Sacrament singing hymns and reciting prayers. Those who live along the procession route decorate their homes with greenery, floral wreaths, and banners, and put candles and statutes in their windows or in their doors. Rose petals are strewn in the path of the Sacrament.

The history of the feast of “Corpus Christi” shows how divine providence responds to the needs of the Church throughout the generations. The same providence is still at work today, giving us during the Year of the Eucharist this unique opportunity to renew our faith in the real presence of our Savior in the Blessed Sacrament. The feast of “Corpus Christi”, this year in particular, invites us to show ourselves grateful, through public worship, private prayer and active charity, for his abiding presence among us.

Suggestions for the Celebration of The Year of the Eucharist

- Special Votive Masses of the Eucharist;
- Special times / days of Eucharistic Adoration;
- Adoration in all parishes of the Diocese simultaneously;
- A novena of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament led by different parish groups;
- Forty-Hours Devotion;
- Special Eucharistic Processions indoors and outdoors;
- Individual or communal visits to the Blessed Sacrament: brief encounters with Christ inspired by faith in the real presence and characterized by silent prayer or communal worship and songs;
- Solemn adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed for a period of time in the monstrance;
- Parish retreats and missions focused on the Eucharist;
- Prayers for priestly vocations before the Blessed Sacrament;
- Homilies to assist the congregation in developing a better understanding of the Eucharistic mystery;
- The Divine Office recited during exposition;
- Explaining the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy of the Church, its rituals and rubrics, its different parts, practices and refurbishing;
- Beginning parish meetings and gatherings with the celebration of Holy Mass;
- Commissioning new Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion or re-commissioning of existing ministers on Corpus Christi Sunday;
- Special adult faith formation classes or lectures focused on the Eucharist, especially on the Mass;
- Evenings devoted to audio-visual presentations on the Eucharist;
- Continuing instructions for all Extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist for administering holy communion during and outside of Mass;
- Making available resources such as books, pamphlets, videos and internet sites related to the Eucharist;
- Making reference to the various instances of Eucharistic Miracles through the centuries.

Please note: All of the above suggestions can easily be adapted to various groups such as families with children, youth groups and students of all ages. Children and young people have a spontaneous openness to the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as past World Youth Days and similar events have shown. As a matter of fact, young people at the Diocesan Youth Office have been inviting their peers in the Diocese to all-night adoration vigils on more than one occasion.

Additional ideas for Homilies

In addition to your personal reflections the following points might be helpful in composing a homily on the Eucharist. The ideas were raised by volunteers at the Evangelization Office in response to the question of what people might want to hear from the pulpit on the Feast of “Corpus Christi”.

- Explain the Church’s teachings on the Blessed Sacrament using documents from Vatican Council II to the late Pope John Paul’s writings, especially “Ecclesia de Eucharistia”;
- Make clear the different forms of Christ’s presence in this world and in the Church.
- Clarify the unique presence of Christ in his body, blood, soul and divinity in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar,
- Describe what happens at Mass, especially at the time of the consecration, and why, according to Vat. II, the Mass is the source and summit of the Christian life;
- Show how the Eucharist is foreshadowed in the books of the Old Testament, such as in the Manna in the desert;
- Encourage Eucharistic adoration and explain what it is, how it is celebrated and what it can do for our faith;
- Make mention of the various Eucharistic miracles and how they responded to personal doubts or communal misgivings regarding the Blessed Sacrament;
- Make the connection between Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist and the community of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ;
- Relate how the effects of receiving the Eucharist builds up the kingdom of God in this world;
- Talk about Holy Communion as a privileged moment of union with Christ and explain the requirements for receiving Holy Communion worthily;
- Describe the history and significance of the feast of “Corpus Christi”.

Litany of the Blessed Sacrament

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

R. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.

R. Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of Heaven,

R. Have mercy on us.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

R. Have mercy on us.

God the Holy Spirit,

R. Have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God,

R. Have mercy on us.

Jesus, Eternal High Priest of the Eucharistic Sacrifice,

R. Have mercy on us. (After each invocation)

Jesus, Divine Victim on the Altar for our salvation,

Jesus, hidden under the appearance of bread,

Jesus, dwelling in the tabernacles of the world,

Jesus, really, truly and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament,

Jesus, abiding in Your fullness, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity,

Jesus, Bread of Life,

Jesus, Bread of Angels,

Jesus, with us always until the end of the world.

Sacred Host, summit and source of all worship and Christian life,

Sacred Host, sign and cause of the unity of the Church,

Sacred Host, adored by countless angels,

Sacred Host, spiritual food,

Sacred Host, Sacrament of love,

Sacred Host, bond of charity,

Sacred Host, greatest aid to holiness,

Sacred Host, gift and glory of the priesthood,

Sacred Host, in which we partake of Christ,

Sacred Host, in which the soul is filled with grace,

Sacred Host, in which we are given a pledge of future glory,

For those who do not believe in Your Eucharistic presence,

R. Have mercy, O Lord.

For those who are indifferent to the Sacrament of Your love,

For those who have offended You in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar,

That we may show fitting reverence when entering Your holy temple,

R We beseech You, hear us (after each invocation)

That we may make suitable preparation before approaching the Altar,

That we may receive You frequently in Holy Communion with real devotion and true humility,

That we may never neglect to thank You for so wonderful a blessing

That we may cherish time spent in silent prayer before You,

That we may grow in knowledge of this Sacrament of sacraments,

That all priests may have a profound love of the Holy Eucharist,

That they may celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in its sublime dignity,

That we may be comforted and sanctified with Holy Viaticum at the hour of our death,

That we may see You one day face to face in Heaven,

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world,

R. Spare us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world,

R. Graciously hear us, O Lord.

Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world

R. Have mercy on us, O Lord.

O Sacrament Most Holy, O Sacrament Divine,

R. All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine.

Let us pray,

Most Merciful Father, You continue to draw us to Yourself through the Eucharistic Mystery.

Grant us fervent faith in this Sacrament of love, in which Christ our Lord Himself is contained,

offered and received. We make this prayer through the same Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.



Prayer for Vocations

(by the Late John Paul II)

Oh Jesus, our Good Shepherd, bless all our parishes with numerous priests, deacons, men and women in religious life, consecrated laity and missionaries, according to the needs of the entire world, which You love and wish to save.

We especially entrust our community to You; grant us the spirit of the first Christians, so that we may be a cenacle of prayer, in loving acceptance of the Holy Spirit and His gifts. Assist our pastors and all who live a consecrated life. Guide the steps of those who have responded generously to Your call and are preparing to receive holy orders or to profess the evangelical counsels.

Look with love on so many well-disposed young people and call them to follow You. Help them to understand that in You alone can they attain to complete fulfillment. To this end we call on the powerful intercession of Mary, Mother and Model of all vocations. We beseech You to sustain our faith with the certainty that the Father will grant what You have commanded us to ask. Amen

From the Saints

"There is nothing so great as the Eucharist. If God had something more precious, He would have given it to us."

St. John Vianney
Patron Saint of Parish Priests

"The celebration of Holy Mass is as valuable as the death of Jesus on the cross."

St. Thomas Aquinas
Universal Doctor to the Church

"Put your sins in the chalice for the precious blood to wash away. One drop is capable of washing away the sins of the world. "The Eucharist is connected with the Passion. If Jesus had not established the Eucharist, we would have forgotten the crucifixion. It would have faded into the past and we would have forgotten that Jesus loved us. There is a saying that to be far away from the eyes is to be far away from the heart. To make sure that we do not forget, Jesus gave us the Eucharist as a memorial of his love."

- Blessed Mother Teresa

SOLEMN BLESSING FOR THE YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST

Christ the high priest has handed down to the priests of the Church the sacrifice offered sacramentally through their hands. May you be sanctified by your participation in that sacrifice and give glory to God.

Amen.

Christ the perfect sacrifice has given us the Eucharist as the memorial of his suffering and death. Through your worship of the sacrament of his body and blood may you experience the salvation he has won for all people.

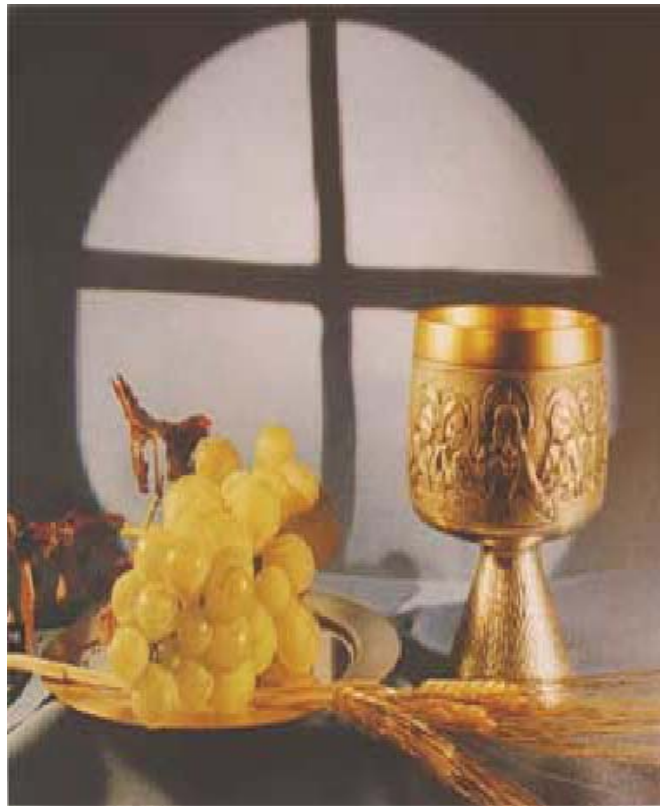
Amen.

Christ the servant has given us the perfect example of undivided love. Through your observance of this Year of the Eucharist may you offer to your Father in heaven a solemn pledge of undivided love and to your brothers and sisters a life poured out in loving service of the Kingdom.

Amen.

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, † and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.





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