

CORPUS CHRISTI 2010
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
1 COR 11.23 ST. JOHN 6.55



Do this, Jesus tells us, in memory of him.

We do in this place every time we celebrate the Mass what Catholic Christians throughout the world have done week after week for over 2000 years.

Each time we receive Holy Communion, we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus himself. Every time we do this, Saint Paul tells us, we *PROCLAIM* the death of Jesus until he comes again.

On the first Maundy Thursday, Jesus and his disciples sat around a table for what they thought was going to be an ordinary Passover meal. But when Jesus took the bread and blessed it and gave it to them saying, "This IS my Body, which is for you", they knew something was different. When Jesus took a cup of wine and blessed it and gave it to them, saying, "This IS my Blood", they knew this was no ordinary meal. And he told them to do this in memory of him.

What we are getting ready to receive here today is the real Body and Blood of Jesus that gives us life and sustains us. Jesus is present in the Sacrament because he said he is. We receive the Body and Blood of the Jesus of the Incarnation, who lived, suffered, died, and rose again for our salvation.

The Feast of Corpus Christi falls on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. It is a special and joyful day on which we thank God for the institution and gift of the Holy Eucharist. But because Maundy Thursday is the day before Jesus died, our thoughts on that day are more toward the Passion and death of Jesus, and that tempers our joy a bit.

We can thank a 12th century Belgian nun, Juliana of Liege, for the Feast of Corpus Christi. She took what Saint Paul said about proclaiming Jesus to the world seriously. One day she had a vision which she believed was telling her there should be a special day of joy and celebration just to show our thanks to God for the Holy Eucharist, the gift Jesus himself gave us, the gift of his own Body and Blood. The people listened to Juliana.

Saint Paul tells us every time we come together as a parish family to celebrate the Mass we *PROCLAIM* the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. The word *TO PROCLAIM* means *TO PUBLICLY DECLARE* or *TO SHOW OPENLY*. We do

both during the Mass. We declare what we believe about Jesus in the prayers we say and the hymns we sing. We openly show our belief about Jesus by our actions during the Mass. *TO PROCLAIM* also means *TO PRAISE*. We come here every week to praise and give thanks to God for the once and for the whole world sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.

We often call the Holy Eucharist the Sacrifice of the Mass. The priest doesn't re-sacrifice Jesus on the Altar. That isn't possible. The sacrifice of Jesus was, as the Prayer Book puts it a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world". The Sacrifice of Jesus was once, for all people everywhere, for all time, never to be repeated.

What the priest does sacrifice on the Altar is bread and wine. He uses the same words Jesus used, "This IS my Body; this IS my Blood". Ordinary bread and wine is given back to us as the Body and Blood of Jesus. We receive the Body and Blood of Jesus with joy and gratitude. In the Gospel Jesus tells us that when we eat his flesh and drink his blood we live in him and he lives in us. We can now do our part and offer our selves, our souls, and our bodies to be the reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice for Jesus we ask for in the Mass.

Jesus promised us that he would always be with us until the time comes for him to return and take those who believe in him back to heaven with him. The Mass is the visible, real and tangible way we experience and act out the presence and awesome gift of love Jesus gave us in his own Body and Blood.

The Feast of Corpus Christi is about us thanking God for the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. It is also about us, because the Church is the Body of Christ brought together by his love.

Juliana of Liege loved Jesus. She knew the joy in receiving his Body and Blood and she wanted others to know the same joy. Let's spend some time today thanking God for the life and work of Juliana of Liege.

Do this, Jesus tells us, in memory of him. We do this today and always with joy and thanksgiving.

