

## **CORPUS CHRISTI – BE PRESENT HERE & NOW©**

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We have come a long way from the biggest problem on our First Communion Day being the utter horror of the possibility that the communion wafer would stick to the roof of our mouth. That couldn't have only been me, right? A long way from reciting catechism on sacrament being "outward sign of inward grace" (though that formula still has a certain ring to it). And a way, long way from thinking that only a certain gender and class of people make Christ present by the mere pronunciation of words (with the correct intention, of course).

On this Feast of the Body & Blood of Christ (aka, Corpus Christi) I would like to focus on what the presence of Christ is all about for us these days. Don't get put off, please, or nod off at the length of the title, but recently I read an article on this issue of Christ present entitled, "Ghislain Lafont and Contemporary Sacramental Theology." The author is intent on taking a look at the condition of presence in the understanding of sacrament, in particular when we ask, "Who is this Christ and how does Christ manifest in this world?"

You and I participate in a heritage that includes ritual and practice that connects us to those first followers of Jesus. In this connection, as I read in this article, two bases exist in our confidence to say that we celebrate this same Christ. The two are the connection to these Original Followers and the second is our connection across time – as though 2000 years is an instant.

For folks who want to preserve institutional structures at the cost of dimming the vitality of one's relationship with Christ it's all about preservation of rituals and procedures. This is how we know Christ is present when the approved liturgical form is produced. Last week I read an article by a representative of this view who was reminding the Roman Catholic faithful that they could attend all the teleconferencing worship they wanted, but they should not forget that the Real Presence of Jesus still only happens at a Mass physically attended at which the priest says the words of consecration. This is what preserves the truth of sacramental practice, according to this writer, that connects us to the original witnesses.

Really? I guess if your concern is to preserve the practices of what Jesus' original followers did – then ritual and procedure may give you that idea. But, if what is most important is the experience of the original witnesses and not what they did then we have a fresh appreciation of the presence of Christ. After all, we believe Jesus became present to his followers even though the doors were locked and the windows were shut. It is up to us to treasure the experience of Christ present which is not dependent on this world's reality.

A second basis of sacramental reality that is true to its origins is the connection across time to what we celebrate. The Presence of Christ treats 2000 years as a moment just as the openness to the illimited future shows us the Presence of the Cosmic Christ. How easily we accept this transcending of time in our experience of sacrament. That being so, it seems to me we can also connect across space as physical reality. These days it is the Presence of Christ over a Zoom screen. It gives us the freedom to celebrate Eucharist with Christ present in the eating and drinking of sacramental elements each in our own homes as we connect by technology across space. I'm not thinking of space as the final frontier, rather the space of presence. The beauty of the word "present" is its ability to encompass both time and space, as in "I am present now," and "I am present here.

The theologians of sacrament (in this article the author also brings in Louis-Marie Chauvet, David Power, along with Lafont) are very clear about our postmodern predicament of putting aside former ideas of presence, as in somehow seeing that we control God who becomes present on command. What we are engaging with nowadays is making connections with Christ who is present with a much wider, even universal, sense of Real Presence. On this Feast of Corpus Christi, then, to ask the question, "How, or Where, or even Why is Christ present?" challenges our former catechism answers.

With the benefit of our Shared Homily today others contributed to this theology of Christ present:

One person asked, "Aren't the protestors in the streets these days who demand that Black Lives Matter, aren't they being Christ Present?"

Another pointed to those who care for the covid patients, aren't they being Christ Present?

Another celebrated all the signs of hope around us of culture change, aren't these signs evidence of Christ Present?

And so many other offerings in our sharing this morning were evidence that the narrative of our lives of faith is what connects us to the experience of the original witnesses of Jesus and connects us across time and space to the reality of Real Presences. After all, it is the Spirit and the freedom the Spirit brings that inspires, challenged, and encourages us to experience Christ alive among us.

How Christ is present is not a matter of making differences between real life and liturgical ritual. It's really only a matter of degree. So, let us eat the bread and drink the wine that symbolizes the Easter event that is present here and now.

## **A Prayer**

Our unity expresses itself in the Spirit who prays in, with, and for us. This same Spirit gifts us with communion in Christ. It is this unity and this gift that realizes your presence in sacrament, O Christ. When we eat this bread and drink this cup – each in our own homes – we are the Body of Christ for all creation.

While we long to be in the same place at the same time – we also give thanks that Eucharist is our food for the journey – wherever that journey leads. Christ, Bread of Life, be present among us. Amen.

## **Litany of Corpus Christi**

- O. You are Word made flesh, One with us and like us.
- A. We serve as You, the Servant.
  
- O. We are your hands and arms, Love is your command.
- A. Your body and spirit is God's gift of more value than all others.
  
- O. We freely choose to act as witnesses of your care.
- A. All creation sings your praise.
  
- P. May the thoughts of our minds, the love of our hearts, and the actions of our bodies be Christ in all the world.
- A. Amen