



St. Paul's RC Church  
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## The Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ (Corpus Christi) [19<sup>th</sup> June 2022]

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Genesis 14: 18 - 20  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 1 Corinthians 11: 23 - 26  
Gospel: Luke 9: 11 - 17

*They ate as much as they wanted.*

Today, we celebrate the solemn feast of Corpus Christi. It is three feasts in one: the feast of the Eucharistic Sacrifice; the feast of the Sacrament of the Eucharist; and the feast of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

This doctrinal feast has been established for three purposes:

- 1) to give God collective thanks for Christ's abiding presence with us in the Eucharist and to honour Him there.
- 2) to instruct the people in the Mystery, Faith, and devotion surrounding the Eucharist, and
- 3) to teach us to appreciate and make use of the great gift of the Holy Eucharist, both as a Sacrament and as a sacrifice.

The Council of Trent (1545 to 1563) declared that we must honour Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist publicly so that those who observe the Faith of Catholics in the Most Holy Eucharist may be attracted to our Eucharistic Lord and come to believe in the Divinity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, present in this great Sacrament.

"The Catholic Church teaches that in the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of the God-man are really, truly, substantially, and abidingly present together with his soul and divinity by reason of the Transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. This takes place in the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass" (Council of Trent, 1551; CCC # 1374, note 200)

Today's feast reminds us of the priority of the Word of God and the Eucharist in our lives. We need this Bread which is His Body, this Wine which is His Blood to be able, as a community (Church), and as individuals to grow in Faith, to increase and develop our strength and courage so that we can live this Christ-life, and to become more fully true members of the Body of Christ.

**Biblical foundation:** Our belief in this Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist derives from the literal interpretation of the promise of Christ to give us His Body and Blood for our spiritual food and drink, as found in gospels. Eucharistic theologians explain the Real Presence by a process called transubstantiation: the entire substance of bread and wine is changed into the entire substance of the risen, living, glorified Body and Blood of Christ, retaining only the "accidents" (taste, colour, shape) of bread and wine. Can there be a religion in which God is closer to man than our Catholic Christianity?

Jesus does not believe that He is humiliating Himself in coming to us and giving himself to us in His Flesh and Blood; rather, He is expressing His everlasting love for us.

**Scripture lessons:** Today's Scripture readings contain three themes:

the Eucharist as blessing or praise of God (action of Melchizedek in Genesis 14: 18-20);  
the Eucharist as memorial of what Jesus did at the Last Supper (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26) and;

the Eucharist as food for the multitudes (Luke 9: 11b-17).

The never-ending supply of bread with which Jesus fed the multitude prefigured His own Body, the consecrated Bread that sustains us until He comes again. The Eucharist is also a re-enactment of Christ's sacrificial Self-giving. The Corpus Christi readings remind us of Jesus' offering of His Body and Blood which serves in the Church as a lasting memorial of His saving death for us. We renew Jesus' Covenant by participating in the banquet of his Body and Blood, a banquet that, through His death, gives us life.

**1) We need to receive this message of unity and sacrificial love:** The Eucharist (the Body and Blood of Christ), teaches us the importance of community, the bond that results from this sacrifice. John Chrysostom says: "What is the Bread actually? The Body of Christ. What do communicants become? The Body of Christ. Just as the bread comes from many grains, which remain themselves and are not distinguished from one another because they are united, so we are united with Christ." Just as numerous grains of wheat are pounded together to make the host, and many grapes are crushed together to make the wine, so we become unified in this sacrifice.

Our Lord chose these elements in order to show us that we ought to seek union with one another, to allow the Holy Spirit to transform us into Our Lord Jesus Christ and to work with Him in the process. Christ is the Head and we are the Body. Together we are one. That which unites us is our willingness to sacrifice our time and talents to God in our fellow members in Christ's Mystical Body. This is symbolised by our sharing in the same Bread and the same Cup. Hence, Holy Communion should strengthen our sense of unity and love.

**2) We need to prepare properly to receive Holy Communion:** We have tarnished God's image within us through acts of impurity, injustice, disobedience, and the like. Hence, there is always need for repentance, and a need for the Sacramental confession of grave sins, before we receive Holy Communion. We should remember the warning given by St. Paul: "Whoever, therefore, eats the Bread or drinks the Cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the Body and Blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the Bread and drink of the Cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the Body, eat and drink judgment against themselves." (1 Corinthians. 11: 27-29). Hence, let us receive Holy Communion with fervent love and respect — not merely as a matter of routine. St. Paul is speaking also of the Mystical Body of Christ, i.e., the people of God gathered at the altar. Such a union, plainly, means that our outward piety towards the consecrated Bread and Wine cannot coexist

with rudeness, unkindness, slander, cruelty, gossiping or any other breach of charity toward our brothers and sisters.

**3) *We need to become Christ-bearers and conveyers:*** By receiving Holy Communion we become Christ-bearers as Mary was, with the duty of conveying Christ to others at home and in the workplace, as love, mercy, forgiveness, and humble and sacrificial service.

As we celebrate this great feast of Faith, let us worship what St. Thomas Aquinas did not hesitate to call, “the greatest miracle that Christ ever worked on earth.”..... My Body ..... My Blood“. Before the greatness of this mystery, let us exclaim with St. Augustine, “O Sacrament of devotion! O Sign of unity! O Bond of charity!”

Let us also repeat St. Thomas Aquinas’ prayer of devotion in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament:

“O Sacrament most holy! O Sacrament Divine! All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine!”