

Cycle A - Corpus Christi – June 14, 2020

Corpus Christi - The first three things we do as we come into the Church:

Let me give you a little trivia about today's celebration - Corpus Christi.

It was established in 1246, in France and then extended to the whole church in 1264.

Processions, which some of the older generation might remember, began back in 1275.

These dates are a reminder that this solemnity has a long history, over 750 years.

However, in the last 25 years of priesthood, I only remember one procession on Corpus Christi, and that was at the Eucharistic congress, we had in Prince Albert, when we celebrated the new millennium.

Does this mean that the celebration of Corpus Christi is losing its significance.

I hope not, but what we may be losing is our understanding of the Body of Christ.

Let me give you a little theology lesson.

When we gather together as a community, the Body of Christ is manifested in different ways:

In the person of the priest, in the Word of God that is proclaimed,

In the assembled people, and in the bread and wine that is shared.

In the scriptures we proclaim

And in the consecrated host we receive

Knowing how the Body of Christ is manifest is only half the story.

The other half is our response to the Body of Christ.

Let me begin by asking you.

What are the first three things you do when you come into the Church?

Hopefully the first thing you do is greet one of the members of hospitality.

This is not just a formality.

A warm welcome is essential to drawing the community together.

It is a reminder that Christ resides in each one of us, and together,

when we come together as a community, we form the Body of Christ.

This is why it is so important to have a warm welcoming hospitality ministry.

Every person who walks through the doors, has the presence of Christ within them, and together we make up the Body of Christ.

When one, or more people, come into the Church, and do not feel welcome, it has an effect on the whole community.

Communion means "In-union-with"

When we gather together for communion, we must be in union with one another; otherwise what we are doing is hypocritical.

We saying one thing and meaning another.

But making one feel welcome is not just a matter of a warm handshake, and friendly smile.

Let me push the point a little further,

if I were to come to your home and the only thing you did was give me a warm handshake and a friendly smile, and then for the rest of the evening, we each did our own thing,

it would be a pretty cold evening.

Hospitality, and welcoming extends into our lives,
taking an interest in the lives of those around you.
How are the kids doing at school.
Did the new grandchild arrive safely in the world.
The state of crops and gardens.
It's even okay to talk about the big fish you caught,
or how you did at the recital,
because we are bringing every aspect of our lives into the Church,
and giving thanks to God for everything that he has given us.
So that when we come together on Sunday morning.
It is not 200 people gathered together in the same room,
each doing their own thing,
but 200 people gathered together as one body, one Body of Christ.

What is the second thing that you do when you come into the Church.
We exchange greetings at the doors of the Church,
and we pass by the baptismal font, and we bless ourselves.
A reminder of the grace we received at our baptism.
But it is more than just a reminder, because we are also asking God to bless us anew.
It is as if we know that we are coming into the presence of God,
and we need his help to put us in the right frame of mind.
The power of Christ, helping us become the Body of Christ.

Do you remember the third thing we do when we come into the Church.
We are welcomed at the doors of the church.
We bless ourselves,
we walk to our pews . . . and we genuflect as we step into our pews.
Do you every wonder why we do that?
And more importantly do you know what our attention should be focused on at that moment?
Genuflect is from the Latin GENU (knee) and FLECTERE (to bend).
It is not just the way you enter into the pew.
It is the way in which you acknowledge that you are in the presence of Christ.
This is why when we genuflect our attention should be on the tabernacle,
and more precisely, on the presence of Christ in the tabernacle.
When we come together on Sunday morning.
We celebrate the Eucharist, where the Bread and Wine, we offer,
are transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ.
The hosts which are left over are placed in the tabernacle, not because there are too many.
Because properly speaking we should be consecrating only as much as we need.
But there is a real need for the hosts in the tabernacle.
They are stored there and brought to those who are sick, or shut in their homes.
So that those who are not able to be a part of our celebration,
can become a part of our celebration.
For the Christian community it is not just those who are able to make it to church.
The Christian community is comprised of every person in our community of faith,

and if they are not able to make it because of sickness, then we need to go to them.
But the hosts in the tabernacle are not just for the sick.

The presence of the consecrated hosts is an indication of the Presence of the Body of Christ,
which we adore, and therefore we genuflect.

It is an indication that we are acknowledging that we are in the presence of the Body of Christ.

We bend the knee, in conjunction to the Philippian hymn where St. Paul says,
*"God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend."*

When we enter the church, along with all the saints and angels,
we bend our knee as a reminder that Jesus is Lord of all.

Teaching our children to genuflect is not just a matter of passing on another tradition.

It is a way in which we teach them, that we when come into church,
we must first and foremost acknowledge his presence in the tabernacle,
and acknowledge our relationship to him.

I might add that in churches where the Tabernacle is in a room all to itself,
or on Good Friday, when the Body of Christ is removed from the tabernacle;
no genuflection is necessary, as the Body of Christ is not present.
Instead it is proper to reverence the altar, with a slight bow,
as an acknowledgement of the table where the sacrifice of Christ will take place.

So these are the three things that one does when they come into the church.

But they are exactly the same three things that one does when they leave the church.

Genuflect, as a way of reverencing the presence of Christ in the tabernacle,
as we begin to disperse.

Bless ourselves with water from the baptismal font, as a reminder of our baptism,
and our need to totally rely on God.

And finally to bid farewell to those who first greeted us when we came into the Church.

In this way, we carry with us the Body of Christ, that we received at the table of the Lord.

We carry with us the Word of God that has been renewed in your heart,
and as a member of the gathered assembly
we bring with us the Body of Christ into our world.

All of us who are present are part of the Body of Christ.

Throughout our lives we will greet and will be greeted by many people.

I pray that we will remember to greet all people as we would greet Christ.

Be sincere, and have a genuine desire to share their lives.

If we do we will be rewarded with many friends,
and one of those will probably turn out to be your spouse.

Remember to bless yourself, not just at the baptismal font.

But to remember to pray and deepen your relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is his grace, the same grace that you received at your baptism,
and renewed every time you ask for his blessing,
that will give you the strength to continue in times of difficulty,
and enable you to celebrate those moments of joy.

And lastly, to remember to genuflect.

To remember that you are first and foremost a servant of God.
Jesus was once asked, "What is the greatest commandment?"
His reply was that you should love the Lord your God, with all your heart,
with all your strength and with all your heart,
and to love your neighbour as yourself.
When you genuflect, you are showing your love for God.
When you greet others, you are showing your love for your neighbour,
and when you bless yourself, and when you pray,
you are deepening your relationship with the one who can give you eternal life.
If you do these; you will be rewarded, not just in this life, but in the life to come.
If we all do these actions, we will be richly rewarded, in this life, and in the life to come.