

## Homily for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi June 2021

What is your most precious possession? What do you cherish more than anything else in the world? What would make you completely distraught if you lost it or it was stolen? Maybe a photo of a loved one who is no longer with us. Perhaps a piece of jewellery you were given as a gift for a birthday or wedding present. Could it be the teddy bear you had when you were a child?

The chances are that it's something which reminds you of a person you love or loved very much.

This weekend/Today we celebrate the greatest gift ever given to the Church by Our Lord himself. The gift of his body, blood, soul and divinity, the gift of the Holy Eucharist. The gift of himself in the form of bread and wine. A gift so precious and holy that we keep it locked up in the tabernacle and only take it out for Holy Communion or exposition and adoration. A gift so precious that priests must be prepared to guard it with their lives against any threat of sacrilege or blasphemy. Priests have rescued the Blessed Sacrament from churches which have been on fire, or under attack in war time situations or from any threat to the safety of the sacred hosts without any regard for their own safety. A gift Jesus gave to the 12 apostles at the Last Supper on the night before he died when he said, 'Take and eat, this is my body, and when supper had ended he gave the chalice saying, take and drink, this is my blood poured out for you.' He then instructed them, do this in memory of me.

To give an indication of how vital it is to receive the body and blood of Jesus in Holy Communion he told them, 'Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you cannot have life within you'. 'He who eats my body and drinks my blood will have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day'. These teachings seem to suggest that receiving Holy Communion is not an optional extra but an integral part of our religious practice and spiritual life.

And do you remember what some of the crowd did when they heard Jesus say this? They walked away and left him saying this is intolerable language, how could anyone accept this? And there are still plenty of people who say this today. In a recent survey it was discovered that three quarters of Catholics who attend Mass do not believe in the real presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. They think it is only a sign or symbol not really and truly the presence of Jesus in the consecrated species. Some have suggested that this has happened over the years because we do not show enough reverence for the Mass and the Holy Eucharist. Is this true?

Many people no longer acknowledge the presence of Jesus when they arrive and leave the church. Some people receive Holy Communion in a very casual way, coming forward out of habit not really understanding or conscious of what they are doing. Have they lost faith in the true presence of Jesus?

When Jesus gave this gift to us, he taught us some very important and serious lessons. St Paul writing to the Corinthians says that anyone who eats or drinks the body and blood unworthily will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord and bringing down condemnation.

Just before the priest receives Holy Communion at mass you might hear him say a prayer which echoes these words of St Paul,

*May the receiving of your body and blood, Lord Jesus Christ, not bring me to judgement and condemnation, but through your loving mercy be for me protection in mind and body and a healing remedy.*

This implies that to receive Holy Communion worthily we should be in a state of grace.

So, the question is, who is worthy to receive Holy Communion. The answer is no-one. Who is entitled to receive Holy Communion? No-one. It is a gift from Our Lord offered to us not as a reward for leading a good life, or for that matter for leading a bad life, but it's for those who are repentant and are trying to change their life, for those who are genuinely looking for a change of heart to lead a life in conformity with the Lord's teaching. We are children of the resurrection and because of this we are called to live contrite, repentant and holy lives, we are called to walk humbly with our God. A true Christian is always marked with a repentant heart which allows the grace of the Holy Spirit to work in their life.

Our faith demands that we approach the altar fully aware that we are approaching Christ Himself. We allow Him to permeate our entire being, body and soul in the deepest way possible, we pray to Him and we lay our lives before Him.

May the Lord bless us with his Eucharistic presence and Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament protect us.

Deacon Kevin