

ST PAUL'S CHURCH (RONDEBOSCH)

CORPUS CHRISTI

THURSDAY 11 JUNE 2020

READINGS: DEUTERONOMY 8:2-3// PSALM 147:12-20//

1 CORINTHIANS 10:16-17 // JOHN 6:51-58

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*God, you speak to us as a loving Father
Help us to take time to listen to your call
To take our place in your service
And to be open to what you are saying to us
We ask this through Christ our Lord AMEN*

Today we celebrate--- “The Feast of Corpus Christi” (also known as the feast of the Body of Christ) and it is celebrated on the eighth Thursday after Easter.

This celebration (this feast) commemorates the institution of the Holy Eucharist by Jesus Christ on Maundy Thursday during Holy Week. However Holy Week was often seen as a time of great sorrow and repentance, during which the minds of the Christian (faithful) are expected to be occupied with thoughts of Our Lord's Passion. Moreover, so many other mysteries relative to the Passion are commemorated on *this day* that the principal event, the *Institution of the Holy Eucharist*, was or is not emphasized enough. This is mentioned as the reason for introducing the feast of Corpus Christi.

Its inclusion in the Church Calendar of Holy Days was because of an Augustinian nun saint Juliana of France, who felt that the celebration of the Eucharist should be a time of rejoicing.

The Holy Eucharist (also called Holy Communion, the Lords Supper, The Great Thanksgiving) is at the centre of our Christian belief and life. We are also called the Eucharistic community.

So, how do we actually look at the Holy Eucharist in the Church? What meaning & significance has it for us today?

Before the lockdown we used to receive to receive Holy Communion every week. Why did we come to the altar rail week after week was it out of habit or ritual? What does it mean to you to me when we receive Holy Communion? (This is actually a very good question to reflect on since we haven't receive Communion for more than 2 months)-- And many people told me they miss it.

Let us turn to our Scripture readings and reflect on the meaning and significance of The Holy Eucharist for us today.

In our Gospel reading John 6 v 56-58 Jesus says ***“whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides (remains) in me and I in him “Just as the living father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me” This is the bread that came down from heaven, your forefathers ate manna and died but he who feeds on this bread will live forever”***

The language of eating flesh and drinking blood was enormously offensive to the Jews of Jesus' time. Drinking blood was an offense against Jewish laws in the Old Testament.(Genesis 9:4, “You shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.” Deuteronomy 15:23 “You shall not eat its blood.”)

However when Jesus used the (mystifying) words ***“eat my flesh and drinks my blood”*** he was referring to something that could not be understood until after his death, resurrection and ascension and the coming of the Spirit.

So at that point, the Jews and even Jesus' disciples could not even begin to understand that Jesus' was making reference to his sacrificial death on the cross. Only later, after they have seen the resurrected Christ, did his words begin to make sense to them.

But for us today the phrase, ***“eat my flesh and drink my blood,”*** are reference of the Holy Communion.

When we receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion we receive the “mutual indwelling where Christ lives in us and we live in Christ.

When we receive the bread and the wine, it's such an intimate act. We take the body and blood of Christ into our own bodies. In that moment, there is no greater closeness, no greater vulnerability to our God. We are touched by God and we are touching God.

Every time we receive Holy Communion it is a moment of fresh decision and fresh dedication of our lives to Jesus the Christ whom we have taken into our very innermost being sacramentally. The sacrament of Holy Communion is the means by which the strength of Jesus is brought from outside people to within them to give them inward anointing of the Spirit, to give us strength for our daily life and also gives us hope for eternal life. Through the Eucharist a spiritual bond is formed between us and Jesus

We are being transformed and we experience Jesus's love, forgiveness, peace and his compassion that lives in us through our attitudes and actions which are not simply our own but the presence of Christ living inside of us. --***We are connected to God***

Through our shared intimacy and connected with Jesus in communion we are also united with one another

It represents the union of all God's people; at the table of the Lord all human souls are one level.

It was related that once when the Duke of Wellington took Holy Communion at his parish Church, a very poor old man went up to the opposite aisle, and reaching the Communion table, knelt down close by the side of the Duke. Immediately, tension and commotion interrupted the silence of the Church. Someone came and touched the poor man on the shoulder, and whispered to him to move farther away, or to rise and wait until the Duke had received the Bread and the Wine.

But the eagle eye and the quick ear of the Duke caught the meaning of that touch and that whisper. He clasped the old man's hand and held him to prevent his rising; and in a reverential but distinct undertone, the Duke said, "Do not move; we are equal here."

COVID 19 has infected and affected everyone irrespective of race, nation, gender or class, it reminds us that all are one before Jesus Christ.

At the breaking of the Bread we say "***We who are many are one body for we all partake of the one bread***" (1 Cor :16-17)

Therefore it is very important denoting not only what God has done but what we are called to do in response to show in our life that we are the body the person

of Christ. We must try to live out in our daily lives through mutual love care and compassion for others irrespective of who the person is.

This means you and I are to love one another. How do we speak to one another, how do we care for one another, how do we reach out to the one another, how do we look out for the brother or sister who is hurting, physically or emotionally, or who is weighed down with depression or distress during this time of the COVID 19 pandemic? this is how love moves into action. Where is the brother or sister who is in need? What are his or her needs? How can I help? How can we help? This is what it means to love one another. Jesus once gave himself on the cross but also challenging us to be the body of Christ in the world, be the body of Christ in South Africa during this time of the COVID 19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

During this time of Lockdown let us commit ourselves to do Spiritual Communion at least once a week. And when the Church doors open again and we come to receive Holy Communion at the altar rail let us not come out of habit or ritual but let us come and be reminded of what we have missed and the true meaning of Holy Communion.

Holy Communion helps us to see ourselves at the foot of the cross, to remember the suffering of Jesus on our behalf. We remember all he had done for us, and give thanks for the forgiveness and renewal we can find in him. But we are also reminded that we are united with one another.