

Reflection for the Feast of Corpus Christi

This Sunday we celebrate the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. This Feast day in the Roman Catholic Church is in honor of the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This Feast is celebrated on the Sunday or Thursday after Trinity Sunday.

The Feast of Corpus Christi originated in 1246 when Bishop Robert de Torote of Liege ordered the Feast be celebrated in his diocese. It was St. Juliana, Prioress of Mont Cornillon, who has prevailed on the Bishop of Liege to initiate the Feast. St. Juliana had visions since she was 16 that convinced her to work towards a celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi. Her efforts came to fruition in the year 1246. In 1264 Pope Urban IV instituted the Solemnity of Corpus Christi as a Universal Feast for the Church. Pope Urban was formerly the Archdeacon of Liege. The Feast of Corpus Christi was the first Papally sanctioned universal Feast in the history of the Latin Rite.

For this Feast there is an option of two prefaces that can be used before the Eucharistic Prayer. The preface in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the introduction to the Eucharistic Prayer it sets the tone for the Eucharistic Prayer based of the Feast or Season that we are celebrating. All Prefaces have a beginning, middle and an end. The beginning of the prefaces is a dialogue with the Celebrant of the Mass and the congregation and the same words are used in every preface. The end of the Preface is the congregation and the Celebrant of the mass joining together to sing the Sanctus or the Holy, Holy.

It is in the middle of the Preface that the focus of the Feast or Season will be found. This Sunday the Feast of Corpus Christi the middle part of the second option for this Feasts states in part:

For at the Supper with his Apostles, establishing for the ages to come the saving memorial of the Cross, he offered himself to you as the unblemished Lamb, the acceptable gift of perfect praise. Nourishing your faithful be this sacred mystery, you make them holy, so that the human race, bounded by one world, may be enlightened by one faith and united by one bond of charity.

This Preface reminds us of the importance of the Eucharist in our daily lives, it is the presence of Christ that enlightens each one of us. Reflecting on this Preface for the Feast of Corpus Christi, I am reminded of what my Mother would tell my Sisters and I to do before a big test when we were all in High School, we were to study from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM the night before the test, get a good night's sleep, then go to 6:30 AM Mass before going to School. My three Sisters to this day still follow this advice, when they have somethings important or challenging in their lives. One of my sisters will drive to another Parish to attend the 6:30 AM Mass because her Parish only has a 7:00 AM Mass. I am not sure why the Mass attended could not be the night before, or at 7:00 AM and not 6:30 AM. The wonderful thing about my Mothers advice to her children is that she invited us to have a deep relationship with Christ through the Eucharist.

In closing this Feast of Corpus Christi invites us to have a deep relationship with Christ through the Eucharist. We as a faith filled people are blessed to have a faith that is Eucharistic Centric. As we go forth from the celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, may we keep the Eucharist central to our lives. May we embrace the opportunity for frequent reception of the Eucharist and may we pray before the Eucharist the real presence of Jesus Christ.