

“YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST” - “CORPUS CHRISTI” - Fr. Steve Lape



Our diocese’s “Year of the Eucharist” comes to a close on this the solemn feast day which is now officially known as “the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.” On this special day, we celebrate the joy of Jesus’ real presence in the Eucharist. It was formerly

called “Corpus Christi,” which is Latin for “Body of Christ”. (You may recall that there is a city in Texas, south of Houston & San Antonio, on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, called Corpus Christi, named by a Spanish explorer who discovered that area on the feast of Corpus Christi in 1519.)

This feast came into being, thanks to 13th century visions which St. Juliana of Liège (now part of Belgium) received, asking her to promote the institution of such a feast day. The bishop in her diocese was the first to celebrate it in 1246, and it spread soon after to other dioceses, finally being declared by Pope Urban IV as a solemn feast for the whole Latin Church in 1264.

In many parts of the world, this solemnity is still celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. (It’s also a national holiday in many countries with a large Catholic population.) However, in much of the U.S. and Italy, this feast has been moved to the Sunday after Trinity Sunday. In 2017, Pope Francis even moved the Vatican’s celebrating this feast to the Sunday following Trinity Sunday from the traditional Thursday spot on the calendar, trying to encourage more participation for this solemnity, realizing that many people work on Thursdays.

First Communions often occur in parishes (including ours this year) on this feast day, as we take time to rejoice in the extraor-

dinary way that our Lord chooses to come to us—through ordinary bread and wine at Mass being transformed by His Holy Spirit into the Body and Blood of Christ. As Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, we continue to “do this in remembrance of” our Lord as He commanded, so that we may continue to grow closer to Him in the spiritual nourishment He provides us through His Body & Blood. Recall what Jesus said in John 6:53---“Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you do not have life within you.”

In many parishes around the world, in honor of this feast day, there are often processions with the Blessed Sacrament of Christ’s Body, contained in a monstrance (a very decorative, metallic receptacle which holds the round, consecrated Host—Christ’s Body—in the center of it.) Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is also promoted as part of this feast day.

This feast’s name was changed in recent times from “Corpus Christi” (Body of Christ) to “the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ” to better represent the more full experience of receiving Jesus’ Real Presence in both His Body and His Blood at Mass. When we receive such a priceless gift from Christ, we are strengthened to become more like Him in thought, word and deed, especially as we go about our daily business and interact with others. Thus, this feast day reminds us that we are all part of Christ’s Body as individual, baptized members of His Church, and that our main life’s mission is to be the living, loving, and faithful presence of Jesus in all we say and do with everyone we come in contact with.

