

Fr Paul's reflection for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

We've had four fantastic feast days in a row. We started, you'll remember, with the celebration of Jesus' **Ascension** into Heaven. He left his disciples with the important task of being witnesses of his love to the world. 'Proclaim the good news' he told them. But to do that they needed help. They needed Jesus' promise of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to empower them, to give them the courage and strength to be good and effective witnesses. That gift of the Spirit we celebrated on **Pentecost** Sunday, and then last weekend we brought the Father, Son and Spirit together in our Solemnity of **The Most Holy Trinity** – the one God revealing himself in the three different aspects of his being, yet all equal in majesty and wonder. This weekend, another important Solemnity, '**Corpus Christi**' is its Latin name. In English, we call it, 'The Body and Blood of Jesus'.

By now, in 'normal' times we would have celebrated with our First Holy Communion children their receiving Jesus for the first time in the Eucharist. It was planned for last weekend. Looking smart, scrubbing up nicely for the day and full of excitement, they would have come forward carefully and with great reverence, to receive communion. Obviously, things are different this year, and the First Holy Communion celebration has been put on hold because of Covid-19, but we will be able to celebrate with the children hopefully later in the year.

Our 'Corpus Christi' Feast is another one of those great mysteries of our faith, but what makes it important and special is that we are reminding ourselves of the life-giving love and real presence of Jesus we receive in the Eucharist. Look back at the Last Supper Jesus had with his friends. Remember what happened? Jesus took some bread; he blessed it and broke it and gave it to his friends; 'Take it and eat it. This is my body' he said. And he did the same with the cup, he handed it to them to share amongst themselves; 'Drink this all of you, for this is my blood'. At Mass, the priest uses almost the exact same words.

Jesus used bread and wine, simple everyday food and drink, and he blessed it in love so that it could become a way of sharing his life, being truly present every time people would do the same in his name. So every time we come to Mass (and let's hope it won't be too long before we can do that again), we are reminding ourselves that this life of Jesus, this great gift of his life that he shares with us in a unique way, is given to us in the sacredness of Communion. It's not just bread and wine we receive. Through the command of Jesus and the blessing of God's Spirit it becomes the Divine and sacred gift of Jesus himself. It is absolute mystery to us, but not to God! The power of love and the glory of his presence is at work and real in a simple but sacred way. It goes against logic but is totally real and clear through faith.

'Do this in memory of me'. The words of Jesus to his friends at the last supper. These are the same words used at Mass. Never forget I am with you Jesus is telling us. Whenever you remember me in this way, I'll be with you, really with you! So, when we receive the Lord in Communion, we are receiving all we need – his life, his love, God himself for our journey of faith.

Last year when we celebrated our parish First Holy Communion, I was totally impressed by the answer a little girl gave to this question I asked; 'What's happening at communion' I asked, 'what is Jesus asking us to do?' And the answer the little girl gave; 'We receive the love of Jesus in Communion, so that we can share it with others.' Perfect! And this, coming from an 8-year-old, who very simply understood the concept of a complicated mystery.

We are given Jesus so that we can share him with others!

Some of you will remember the old days of the Blessed Sacrament Processions. We used to be so proud walking around the streets with the Blessed Sacrament in the Monstrance under a big canopy with candles and incense. It was a sign to the world of what we believed. We were so proud of Christ's presence with us in the Eucharist, that we wanted everyone to know it. We don't do these things so much nowadays, but we can still have pride in Jesus with us, we can still believe in the power of his presence in Communion. So, when we eventually get back to Mass, and we will someday, when we come forward to receive that Sacred presence of Jesus in communion, let's be mindful of what we receive. Bow reverently before receiving communion, let's show the utmost respect and honour for the Lord who gives his love to us in abundance. It is through the Eucharist that Jesus will always remain at the centre of our lives and at the heart of our community.

