

## Corpus Christi (A)

*The Feast of Corpus Christi was instituted by Pope Urban 1V in 1264. Around this time unorthodox opinions were circulating and the feast was instituted in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to counteract these views and boost the people's faith.*

We believe that the consecrated Bread you receive is not just a symbol of Christ's Presence - it is Christ Himself. Here we differ from many of our separated Christian brethren.

Catholics proclaim their faith in Jesus by coming to Mass every Sunday and receiving him worthily in Holy Communion. It presupposes that we have confessed all major sins of the past to a priest and are living Christian lives in line with the commandments of God and Church teaching. No one is obliged to receive Holy Communion at every Mass especially if your conscience is telling you otherwise. The Church only requires you to go once a year.

Recently some Catholics have mistakenly got the impression that the Church has changed its teaching on the admission to Holy Communion of people who have not being married in Church or are living as a wedded couple whilst not being married or are divorced and remarried outside the church. Well, it hasn't. What Pope Francis wanted is that church leaders listen with compassion to each person's unique marital situation and do their very best to help them return to the sacraments rather than making sweeping judgements on everyone in this position and doing precious little to help them. But it doesn't mean that the Church has changed her teaching on the indissolubility of marriage and our eligibility to receive the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. I think it's better to err on the side of caution here.

If someone has fallen away from the practice of your faith and no longer go to Sunday Mass but wish to return, the Sacrament

of Penance is normally the first step on that journey back before reception of Holy Communion takes place. That stands to reason. The situation changes if there are mitigating circumstances such as illness or if you are dependent on others to take you to Mass, or if the weather is atrocious, or if you can't find a church or if you're a child and there is no one to take you to Mass. The church is an understanding mother, not a slave driver.

We know there are stumbling blocks to sharing Holy Communion with other Christian bodies who don't agree with our understanding of the Eucharist or Priesthood and also differ from us on many crucial moral issues. But Catholics too need to examine their consciences on where they stand on these issues before receiving Holy Communion. I know some bishops feel ill at ease giving Holy Communion to politicians who share a platform with those who publicly endorse abortion, for instance.

Forgiveness of others is also a prerequisite for receiving Holy Communion but can so easily wiggle our way out of it by calmly offloading the entire blame for the situation onto our adversary.

If it weren't for the fact that we are weak human beings, we wouldn't need Holy Communion in the first place. At Mass we draw on His strength which enables us live as he taught and reach Heaven. Jesus said: 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will draw life from me'. *He is the 'living Bread come down from Heaven' who brings life to our souls*

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