

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 13th century to counteract these views.

We believe that the consecrated Bread we receive is not just a symbol of Christ's Presence - it is Christ Himself. Here we fundamentally differ from 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 they 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 and no one should judge a person if they refrain from receiving. There could be host of reasons for doing so. The Church only requires you to receive the Eucharist once a year during the Easter Season.

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 together or are divorced and remarried outside the church. Well, it hasn't. What Pope Francis wanted is that clergy listen with more compassion and sensitivity to each person's situation and 'leave no stone unturned' to help them return to the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. He's dead against priests acting in a cavalier way, just laying down the law without being pastorally sensitive. But it doesn't mean that the Church gone soft on her teaching about the permanence of marriage and our eligibility to receive the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist.

If someone has fallen away from the practice of their faith and no longer goes to Sunday Mass but wishes to return, the Sacrament of Penance is normally the first port of call before

returning to Holy Communion. That stands to reason. The situation changes if there are mitigating circumstances such as illness or during the Pandemic 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 or a teenager and there is no one to go with you. 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 share our teaching on the Eucharist, the Priesthood and some major 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, for instance, who feel ill at ease giving Holy Communion to politicians or even the general population who condone abortion. The same could apply to sins of the mind such as our stubbornness to forgive, envy or pride.

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*