

## Corpus Christi – Cycle A

---

There is beauty, simplicity, difficulty and salvation all wrapped up into one with these readings today. We reenter Ordinary Time this week - that time of reminding, that time of being fed, that time of working out what we believe in during our everyday living. And yet we are still called back in a very real way to the wondrous passion, death and resurrection of our Lord we have just finished celebrating. That time when Jesus made it all “come together” for our salvation. Today as we stand between two different times in our liturgical calendar, we need to be focused so we can understand and believe.

The reading from the Book of Deuteronomy, gives us a glimpse into Mose’s view of how we as physical and spiritual beings need to live in relationship to the Lord God Almighty. The Chosen People were tested as to their “intentions”. The test took place in relative danger – it was hot and cold, it had little resources, it had little food and water especially for a nation of more than a million men, and their were the poisonous snakes of course. The test takes place in relative safety – the desert. Other tribes were not going to venture out into the desert thinking it was a place that would do in this recent nation in exile from the Egyptians. The test took place with a level of hardship to see what these people were made of. This test took place along with a cleansing of mind and spirit - not everyone who started on the journey would make it to the end. In fact none of them would. In retrospect the most they could hope for was to teach the next generation to praise and rely on God so they could move on. The test was not random – though there was little food or water available, food, water, and even a cure from snake bite miraculously appeared – every day for forty years or so! The test was not to be endured alone or on their own devices – they had the real presence of the Lord in the Meeting Tent, in the column of smoke and fire and through their emissary, Moses. I would think the average person had times of comfort and of hardship and in both the Lord wanted to be acknowledged. They were asked to be the faithful just like us. They were being asked to come from a secular, essentially pagan, environment and keep God always in their lives.

Psalm 147 echoes the words of Moses in another time and another place – God is real and He is with us even down to the very physical needs of safety. Just as the place they rested after the Exodus, was safe so too does God provide for the safety of His city of worship – Jerusalem. God the Almighty provides in times of uncertainty. It may not seem obvious sometimes, but in the end it is always true. Today’s Sequence – Praise Zion, after much work is attributed to St Thomas Aquinas specifically for this feast of Corpus Christi somewhere around 1264. It takes the Psalm and amplifies it, it teases it out but remains true to the fact the Lord provides for His children when we need Him most. With more modern language we should be able to see the connections of how the Father provides for his Chosen Ones through His Son Jesus. We are fed, we are given innumerable reasons to praise God. The language of being fed further emphasizes the fact the Father operates in our lives even down to the most basic of physical needs.

In the first letter to the Corinthians we quite simply are told of the effect this greatest of gifts works in our lives. If we partake, if we pursue being believers, if we say yes to the guidance Jesus has left with us we will be one in this physical world with all the other believers. It is simple and it is inescapable. To be fed by Christ is to be joined to the Body of Christ the Church and therefore we are joined together with one another. The implications of this simple fact, surely changes our hearts, mind, and actions with one another. The very thing Jesus came to preach – love God and love one another. There we will find our path to salvation.

In the reading from the Gospel of John we need to take a step out of the mystical realm we normally are drawn into by John and be shaken awake just like the Jews of Jesus’ time. Many times this gospel includes the next twelve lines. But two verses later we hear <sup>60</sup>“When many of his disciples heard it, they

## Corpus Christi – Cycle A

---

said, “This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?” I know I tend to say the same thing. We want to be civilized people and cannibalism is definitely not on the agenda. But in being civilized do we miss the visceral reality of how God operates in the world. Is it similar to the agenda of various factions that don’t want to be told they are not living consistent lives with God’s word and they go about accusing all who preach the Word as engaging in “hate speech”? Do we lose the essence Jesus wanted to tell us in the language. Is this why John makes sure the language reflects what Jesus really wanted to say. We have both a physical and spiritual nature. One needs to be a whole human being on the road to salvation. We need to make one nature inform the other. We need to love the Father in His spiritual nature but only through loving each other in our physical natures. Jesus elsewhere leaves us many prompts for spiritual growth and purity, but simultaneously he addresses that we learn, live and love in our physical natures. This is one of the clearest. Jesus ensures we realize he lived as a human person with a physical nature to truly be one of us. He did not make it a tourist destination. Rather it was here and now in our reality and to remain with us forever. What simpler way to connect with all succeeding generations than in the gift of the Eucharist. It is simple and it is profound. It is physical and it is spirit. It is for then and for now. It is the gift of salvation always. It is Jesus himself. Yes, unless we engage both our natures with the eyes of faith, it is not only difficult but may in fact be ultimately impossible to accept as some disciples said.

Even though the readings were rather short for this great feast acknowledging Jesus remaining with us always and offering the gift of life and salvation, it truly is a good way to restart our journey in this new Ordinary Time. We are given much to chew on, to contemplate, to focus on in our living the life of a believing Christian. We are again and again offered comfort, security, food, drink, for the journey. We are once again called to the profound gift of self, Jesus offers us. Let us say yes and that yes can only pour back out of us as praise for the Father and His gift of Jesus to us.