

The Solemnity of Corpus Christi



The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ is also known as the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, which translates from Latin to "Body of Christ." This feast is celebrated on the Thursday following the Trinity Sunday or, as in the USA, on the Sunday following that feast.

The Feast of Corpus Christi originated in 1246 when Robert de Torote, bishop of Liège, ordered the festival celebrated in his diocese. He was persuaded to initiate the feast by St. Juliana, prioress of Mont Cornillon near Liège (1222–58), who had experienced a vision. It did not spread until 1261, when Jacques Pantaléon, formerly archdeacon of Liège, became pope as Urban IV. In 1264 he ordered the whole church to observe the feast. Urban's order was confirmed by Pope Clement V at the Council of Vienne in 1311–12. By the mid-14th century, the festival was generally accepted, and in the 15th century it became, in effect, one of the principal feasts of the church.

This feast calls us to focus on two manifestations of the Body of Christ, the Holy Eucharist and the Church. The primary purpose of this feast is to focus our attention on the Eucharist.

The opening prayer at Mass calls our attention to Jesus' suffering and death and our worship of Him, especially in the Eucharist.

At every Mass our attention is called to the Eucharist and the Real Presence of Christ in it. The secondary focus of this feast is upon the Body of Christ as it is present in the Church. The Church is called the Body of Christ because of the intimate communion which Jesus shares with his disciples. He expresses this in the gospels by using the metaphor of a body in which He is the head. This image helps keep in focus both the unity and the diversity of the Church.

The Feast of Corpus Christi is commonly used as an opportunity for public Eucharistic processions, which serves as a sign of common faith and adoration. Our worship of Jesus in His Body and Blood calls us to offer to God our Father a pledge of undivided love and an offering of ourselves to the service of others.

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READINGS

Lectionary: 169

Reading I

Gn 14:18-20

In those days, Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine, and being a priest of God Most High, he blessed Abram with these words: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 110:1, 2, 3, 4

R (4b) You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The LORD said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand till I make your enemies your footstool."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The scepter of your power the LORD will stretch forth from Zion:

"Rule in the midst of your enemies."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

"Yours is princely power in the day of your birth, in holy splendor; before the daystar, like the dew, I have begotten you."

R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

The LORD has sworn, and he will not repent:

"You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."
R You are a priest for ever, in the line of Melchizedek.

Reading II

1 Cor 11:23-26

Brothers and sisters:

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you,
that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over,
took bread, and, after he had given thanks,
broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Sequence

Lauda Sion

Laud, O Zion, your salvation,
Laud with hymns of exultation,
Christ, your king and shepherd true:

Bring him all the praise you know,
He is more than you bestow.
Never can you reach his due.

Special theme for glad thanksgiving
Is the quick'ning and the living
Bread today before you set:

From his hands of old partaken,
As we know, by faith unshaken,
Where the Twelve at supper met.

Full and clear ring out your chanting,
Joy nor sweetest grace be wanting,
From your heart let praises burst:

For today the feast is holden,
When the institution olden
Of that supper was rehearsed.

Here the new law's new oblation,
By the new king's revelation,
Ends the form of ancient rite:

Now the new the old effaces,
Truth away the shadow chases,
Light dispels the gloom of night.

What he did at supper seated,
Christ ordained to be repeated,
His memorial ne'er to cease:

And his rule for guidance taking,
Bread and wine we hallow, making
Thus our sacrifice of peace.

This the truth each Christian learns,
Bread into his flesh he turns,
To his precious blood the wine:

Sight has fail'd, nor thought conceives,
But a dauntless faith believes,
Resting on a pow'r divine.

Here beneath these signs are hidden
Priceless things to sense forbidden;
Signs, not things are all we see:

Blood is poured and flesh is broken,
Yet in either wondrous token
Christ entire we know to be.

Whoso of this food partakes,
Does not rend the Lord nor breaks;
Christ is whole to all that taste:

Thousands are, as one, receivers,
One, as thousands of believers,
Eats of him who cannot waste.

Bad and good the feast are sharing,
Of what divers dooms preparing,
Endless death, or endless life.

Life to these, to those damnation,
See how like participation
Is with unlike issues rife.

When the sacrament is broken,
Doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken,
That each sever'd outward token
doth the very whole contain.

Nought the precious gift divides,
Breaking but the sign betides
Jesus still the same abides,
still unbroken does remain.

The shorter form of the sequence begins here.

Lo! the angel's food is given
To the pilgrim who has striven;
see the children's bread from heaven,
which on dogs may not be spent.

Truth the ancient types fulfilling,
Isaac bound, a victim willing,
Paschal lamb, its lifeblood spilling,
manna to the fathers sent.

Very bread, good shepherd, tend us,
Jesu, of your love befriend us,
You refresh us, you defend us,
Your eternal goodness send us
In the land of life to see.

You who all things can and know,
Who on earth such food bestow,
Grant us with your saints, though lowest,
Where the heav'nly feast you show,
Fellow heirs and guests to be. Amen. Alleluia. Alleluia

Jn 6:51

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord;
whoever eats this bread will live forever.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Lk 9:11b-17

Jesus spoke to the crowds about the kingdom of God,
and he healed those who needed to be cured.

As the day was drawing to a close,
the Twelve approached him and said,

"Dismiss the crowd
so that they can go to the surrounding villages and farms
and find lodging and provisions;
for we are in a deserted place here."

He said to them, "Give them some food yourselves."

They replied, "Five loaves and two fish are all we have,
unless we ourselves go and buy food for all these people."

Now the men there numbered about five thousand.

Then he said to his disciples,

"Have them sit down in groups of about fifty."

They did so and made them all sit down.

Then taking the five loaves and the two fish,
and looking up to heaven,

he said the blessing over them, broke them,
and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

They all ate and were satisfied.

And when the leftover fragments were picked up,
they filled twelve wicker baskets.