

CORPUS CHRISTI/I TRINITY 2016
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
1 COR. 11.23 HYMNS 199 & 200



THIS IS MY BODY...GIVEN FOR YOU...THIS IS MY BLOOD...SHED FOR YOU...what we believe by Faith and what we PROCLAIM to be true...not mere dead symbols...but Flesh and Blood.

Corpus Christi...the Feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus...takes place on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. Corpus Christi...while not found in the *Book of Common Prayer*...is closely linked to the Institution of the Eucharist we celebrate on Maundy Thursday.

The celebration of Corpus Christi traces its history to the vision of the 13th century Norbertine nun, Juliana of Liege. Norbertines are a branch of the Augustinians and have a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. They celebrate the Mass with great reverence and dignity. Norbertine priests staff parish churches and teach...Norbertine nuns live cloistered lives.

Corpus Christi College is the name of one of the colleges of the University of Cambridge, England. The City of Corpus Christi, Texas, was founded in 1839 and gets its name from Corpus Christi Bay, named by Spanish explorer Alonso Alvarez de Pineda, after its discovery on the Feast of Corpus Christi in 1519.

Juliana was born in the part of the Holy Roman Empire we know today as Belgium. It was a time of great internal struggle in the Church and much political strife...much like current times. Juliana had to flee her native country for her life. She spent her later years in a cloistered convent under the protection of the local bishop.

Juliana had a lifelong mystical devotion to the Holy Eucharist. She believed the vision was telling her there should be a special day of celebration and thanksgiving for the Holy Eucharist. In 1264, twelve years after Juliana's death, the observance of Corpus Christi on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday became universal in the Western Church.

The Feast of Corpus Christi gives us a special opportunity...apart from but connected to Maundy Thursday...to thank God for the good gift and most perfect present Jesus has

given us in the Holy Eucharist...his own Flesh and Blood.

If we stop to think about it for a moment, every Mass is a celebration in thanksgiving for the gift of Jesus' Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. The word *Eucharist* is Greek for *Thanksgiving*...and the Mass is the Great Thanksgiving.

We celebrate the Holy Eucharist every Sunday because Jesus gave us specific instructions this was to be the standard for our corporate worship. Saint Paul writes, "For I received from the Lord the teaching that I passed on to you...Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to us...THIS IS MY BODY, GIVEN FOR YOU. He took the cup, which he called God's New Covenant, sealed with HIS BLOOD...and GAVE IT FOR US."

Each time we receive Holy Communion, we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus himself. Saint Paul tells us in so doing we PROCLAIM the death of Jesus until he comes again. TO PROCLAIM means TO SHOW OPENLY; it also means TO PRAISE. We do both every time we receive the Blessed Sacrament.

In England and many European and South American countries, Corpus Christi is celebrated with elaborate processions around the city and singing of hymns. Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is not a superstitious practice cooked up during the Middle Ages. Corpus Christi calls us to PROCLAIM what we know to be true by Faith...we believe we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar.

Just after we receive Holy Communion today we will reverence the Blessed Sacrament shown in a Monstrance...while we sing Hymns 199 and 200. Juliana of Liege loved Jesus. She knew the joy and strength one gets in receiving his Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist and she wanted others to know the same joy.

THIS IS MY BODY...GIVEN FOR YOU...THIS IS MY BLOOD...SHED FOR YOU...what we believe by Faith and what we PROCLAIM to be true...not mere dead symbols...but Flesh and Blood...given for us once and for all.

