

## CORPUS CHRISTI/I TRINITY 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

1 COR. 11.23 ST. JOHN 6.55



Juliana had a vision...she saw the Church under the appearance of a full moon...the moon had one dark spot. For twenty years she had the same vision...she kept it to herself.

When Juliana told her confessor about the vision and what she thought it meant...that there should be a special feast of Corpus Christi...celebrating the Institution of the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist...they went to the bishop...and he ordered the feast celebrated every year on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. Saint Joseph Parish follows the practice of most parishes today in celebrating the Feast on the following Sunday.

Juliana was born in Liege in 1191 or 1192 in what we know today as Belgium. Her world was much like our world...internal struggles in the Church...political unrest. She and her sister Agnes were orphaned at an early age and taken under the protection of Augustinian nuns.

Juliana spent the rest of her life in a cloistered convent...where she developed her special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. She encouraged others to do the same. She died in 1252 and in 1264 Pope Urban IV declared the Feast of Corpus Christi a universal festival in the Western Church.

The *Book of Common Prayer* already contains a feast day celebrating the Institution of the Eucharist...Maundy Thursday. We might ask ourselves why have another? Isn't one such festival enough?

Maundy Thursday begins on a high note...white vestments are worn by the Celebrant...and the Gloria in excelsis is sung...not heard since the Last Sunday after Epiphany. But the Maundy Thursday Liturgy concludes with the Blessed Sacrament carried to the Altar of Repose...the Altar stripped bare...the Tabernacle emptied...lights are turned off...and all leave in silence. The Celebration of Maundy Thursday becomes a somber preparation for Jesus' ultimate sacrifice on Good Friday.

The Feast of Corpus Christi gives us a special opportunity...connected to Maundy Thursday but not with the same Lenten overtones...to thank God for the most perfect gift Jesus has given us...his Body and Blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The word **Eucharist** is Greek for **Thanksgiving**...and the Mass is the Great Thanksgiving.

The Eucharist is the outward and visible sign that Jesus is present with us and we are present with him, now and until he comes again. At every Mass the Celebrant prays that we may be filled with God's grace (help) and heavenly blessing (more help), and "*made one Body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him.*"

We celebrate the Holy Eucharist every Sunday because Jesus gave us specific instructions to DO THIS. 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 to us."

At every Mass, we celebrate the reality of the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. Saint Paul tells when we do this we **PROCLAIM** the death of Jesus until he comes again. **TO PROCLAIM** means **TO SHOW OPENLY**; and it means **TO GIVE PRAISE**.

As part of our Liturgy today...after everyone has received Holy Communion...we will have a short Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and sing the great hymn we also sing on Maundy Thursday:

*Therefore we, before him bending,  
This great Sacrament revere;  
Types and shadows have their ending,  
For the newer rite is here;  
Faith, our outward sense befriending,  
Makes our inward vision clear.*

Corpus Christi is celebrated today...in this place...thanks to the vision of a young nun named Juliana...and the people who listened to her.

