

**CORPUS CHRISTI 2018**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**1 COR. 11.23 ST. JOHN 6.55**



A young girl had a vision...in it she saw the full moon...crossed diametrically by a dark stripe. What could this vision mean?

The young girl was Juliana of Mont-Cornillon...known today as Saint Juliana of Liège. She and her sister Agnes were orphaned at a young age and placed in a convent, where they took care of people suffering from leprosy.

Juliana entered the Augustinian Order in 1196 at the age of 13...a not uncommon practice for orphans in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Her life as a nun was filled with turmoil...much of it brought on by political unrest in Liège...and sectarian battles within the church.

Juliana first experienced her vision when she was 16 and it recurred several times. She and many women of the time held great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Although she originally kept the vision to herself, she later shared it with her confessor. Julian came to believe the moon in her vision represented the Church on Earth and the dark stripe represented the absence of a special feast celebrating the Body and Blood of Jesus.

One of her greatest supporters was Jacques Pantaleon...the Bishop of Verdun. Juliana died in 1258 and seven years later Jacques...now Pope Urban IV...instituted the Feast of Corpus Christi...a special day honoring the Body and Blood of Jesus throughout the Western Church...on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday. Juliana of Liège was canonized by Pope Pius IX in 1869.

The Book of Common Prayer does contain a feast day honoring the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion and the gift of Jesus' real Body and Blood on Maundy Thursday. The Maundy Thursday Liturgy begins on a high note...white vestments are worn and the Gloria in excelsis is sung. But the Maundy Thursday Liturgy ends with the Altar stripped bare...the Sacrament carried to our version of Gethsemane...and silence and darkness.

Juliana believed in her heart as we all should believe in our own hearts...the most perfect gift Jesus has given us is his Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist...not mere symbols...Jesus said this IS his Body and Blood. Because Maundy Thursday ends on a somber note and leads us to Good Friday...Juliana wanted a special celebratory feast in honor of the Body and Blood of Jesus.

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 to us."

Each time we receive Holy Communion, we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus himself...this is no memorial or symbolic action. This is Jesus giving everything of himself to us. 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*.

As part of our Liturgical observance of Corpus Christi...we will venerate the Sacrament displayed in the Monstrance...from the Latin verb *monstrare*...TO OPENLY SHOW FOR ALL TO SEE. We will sing Thomas Aquinas' great hymn *Now, my tongue the mystery telling*...and we will remind ourselves to always give thanks for this great gift which we are about to receive.

Today we celebrate the life and work of Saint Juliana of Liège and the gift Jesus gives us in the Sacrament of the Altar. Juliana knew the joy and strength we get in receiving Jesus' Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist and she wanted others to experience the same joy...so should we!

On this Feast of Corpus Christi, let us thank God for the life and work of Juliana of Liège and *PROCLAIM* Jesus' life, death and Resurrection until he comes again.

And let us prepare our hearts, minds and souls to receive his most perfect gift of himself...his Body and Blood.

