

**I invite you to listen to the beautiful settings of
O Sacrum Convivium, and the words of today's Gospel, by
Thomas Tallis**

Trinity 2

A Corpus Christi Celebration

Good morning, and welcome most warmly to our worship today. Last Sunday was of course Trinity Sunday, and the Thursday after Trinity is traditionally celebrated as the *Feast of Corpus Christi*, where outside the solemnity of Lent, in the joy of Easter, and in the joy of Pentecost, we give thanks for God's gift to us of the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ.

I thought we might make our worship this morning, with our Collect, Epistle, and Gospel readings a *Corpus Christi* celebration, to give thanks and praise for God's most wonderful gift of the Holy Communion, the Eucharist the central and cardinal act of our Christian worship.

So sadly we were unable to celebrate together the Last Supper, and to receive Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday: and again we are unable physically to receive the Body and Blood of Christ today. But it is my hope and trust and prayer that what we are unable to do physically, today, we may receive spiritually, in stillness and prayer, a Holy Communion, a oneness with God, and a oneness with one another, in the bond of God's forgiveness, love, joy and peace, through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.

I invite you to do this by joining with me in a Celebration of the Holy Communion in the beautiful and much loved words of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

I shall not preach, but I invite you to read the text of a Sermon for Corpus Christi. It comes with my love, and my hope and prayer that you will find it a source of light, and strength

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Let us be still to remember Our Lord's Loving and Living Presence as we meet together to worship Him.....

And this we do in the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit,

Amen

O Sacrum Convivium

The beautiful Hymn of Praise and Thanksgiving
of St Thomas Aquinas for God's gift, through Christ,
of the Holy Communion

*O Sacred Banquet
In which Christ is received
The memory of his Passion is renewed
The soul is filled with Grace
And a pledge of future glory to us is given
Alleluia Amen*

The Corpus Christi Collect

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank Thee that in this wonderful sacrament
Thou hast given us the memorial of thy passion:
grant us so to venerate the sacred mysteries
of thy Body and Blood
that we may ever perceive within ourselves
and show forth in our lives
the fruits of thy redemption;
for Thou livest and reignest with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen

Epistle

1 Corinthians 11:23-29

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the living bread that came down from heaven, says the Lord. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever.

John 6.51

Alleluia Alleluia.

Gospel Reading

John 6

Jesus said to them,
‘Truly, truly, I say to you,
unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood,
you do not have life within you.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him on the last day.
For my flesh is true food,
and my blood is true drink.
Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood
dwells in me
and I dwell in him.

Corpus Christi Address

May the words of my lips, and the thoughts and meditations of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our strength and Redeemer Amen.

Man, it has been said, *is a worshipping animal*. To avoid any possible, totally unintentional, political incorrectness and offence that sentence may cause, I shall rephrase it:

We, the human race, are beings who worship.

We, the human race, are beings who worship

That, as we look around around any Church or Cathedral on a Sunday, even outside Lockdown, obviously doesn't mean that everybody goes to Church. But the relatively few people who worship normally in Church, or now Online, give substance to, rather than disproves the statement. We are here this morning to worship God, because we *choose* to come: and a God of love, by His very nature, and the nature of love itself, must leave us totally *free*, to worship Him, *or not*.

And there are plenty of other choices available for us to make on a Sunday morning.

I asked generations of young gentlemen at King's College School in Wimbledon, where I was Chaplain and Head of Religious Studies, that given the binary choice between being given, *free gratis and for nothing*, a brand new, top of the range, gleaming red Ferrari on a Sunday morning: or getting up and coming to Church at 8 o'clock, to receive Holy Communion, which would we choose?

Most people answered predictably: although quite a number of us did come up with a surprising answer.

Worship, *worth-ship*, is about the value, the *worth*, we as human beings place on things, people, activities, experiences, lifestyles, God. It's an inescapable reality of our human condition. Therein lies the truth of the phrase *Man is a worshipping animal*. *We, the human race, are beings who worship.*

God has so ordered the universe, and so created us, that it is impossible *not* to choose what we hold to be important, of value, of worth, of ultimate value, ultimate worth: and what we are going to spend our lives trying to obtain. It is impossible, consciously, or unconsciously, not to arrange people, things experiences, into a scale of values and live our lives accordingly. And the choices open to us are myriad, some good, some bad, some possibly evil.

We can spend our lives opting for success, or status, or power, or wealth, or pleasure, good food and drink, exotic holidays, clothes, fast cars, family and friends, an easy time, or becoming a workaholic,
And then of course there are all those things we are not able to talk about before the 9 o'clock watershed.

We are totally free to leave God out of the equation. We don't *have* to believe in or worship *Him*. But we cannot escape making decisions, either consciously or unconsciously, about what we believe to be of greater or lesser value, and living accordingly.

Sometimes, perhaps more often than not, we get it wrong: sometimes disastrously, tragically wrong: and History reveals how humankind have lived, and also lied, cheated, stolen and even, and so often killed, to get what we feel to be of great value, and what we thought would make us truly satisfied and happy.

So often we are mistaken, or blind to the things of real value, real worth. Consider this very important parable.

Often in our childish naïvety, we mistakenly thought that that gleaming new bike we wanted as a child was more valuable, of greater worth, than the unseen, patient, loving care we received from our parents: that love within a family which satisfied our much deeper needs and longings as children.

And the New Year's Honours list can reveal what we as a society really worship, the scale of values we hold in our lives and culture: where a sportsman or football manager, excellent as they may be in their respective fields receive knighthoods: whereas Henry Marsh, one of the preeminent neurosurgeons of our generation, who has saved thousands of lives in this country and beyond, is made a CBE.

And our cultural and moral values, and our sense of worth are perhaps reflected in salary scales, where an NHS nurse may receive £23,000 a year, a Premier League Soccer Player £15million: and a Formula 1 Racing Driving is said to be worth nearly 200 million pounds.

But today, as we reflect upon *Corpus Christi* and its meaning, I suspect if we are really honest with ourselves, honest to one another and honest to God, we would say that here in *our* worship, in this Blessed Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood we are touched by what we know to be of ultimate value, ultimate worth, in our lives, in existence, and what brings us ultimate joy, peace and fulfilment.

Certainly for me, the worth and value I placed upon this Blessed Sacrament, and to be able, not only to receive it, but to celebrate it, and bring it to others, was an important part in my response to God's call to become a priest.

Holy Communion, as its name implies, brings to us a deep loving relationship with God: and as our Lord promises in our Gospel reading: a deep indwelling of God in us, and we in Him.

*Verily, verily I say unto you,
he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,
dwelleth in me: and I in him.*

Holy Communion: a deep indwelling of God in us, a deep indwelling of us in Him: and of course a deep Communion of love with one another in the bond of God's peace. Bliss, Heaven here on earth, the most perfect gift imaginable.

But in worship, as in everything else, God, and our Lord, turn everything upside down. Just as the love God has for us precedes our love for Him, so our *worship* of God is preceded by God *worshipping us*.

It sounds like *Blasphemy* but Christian worship begins with God actually *worshipping us*.

Yes, God does *worship us*. Christ's self-offering death on the Cross for us shows the *infinite worth*, the *infinite value*, the *worth-ship* God places on you and me and each and every member of his creation.

This, if we are spiritually aware, we realise is *despite* ourselves, rather than *by virtue* of ourselves. And our falling short in terms of love, and the choices we make, is, of course where the parables of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Cross of Christ come in: where God goes out to seek us and save us and bring us back to Himself.

In this Blessed Sacrament we have the lasting memorial, the re-enactment, the ultimate token of the worth, the value, that God in Christ places upon each one of us. And note that token is not the Cross: it is Our Lord Himself, giving *Himself*, totally:

This is my *Body*: given for you.
This is my *Blood*: shed for you.

He, *Christ Himself* is the perfect sacrificial Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

And so worship, is not primarily something that *we* do. Rather it is a deep recognition of, a *response* to what Christ, what God in Christ has done for us.

God in Christ has given Himself: we give back to Him in worship, praise and thanksgiving

That is why Holy Communion, the Mass, the Lord's Supper, or whatever name it may go under, is called the Eucharist. '*Eucharistein* is the Greek word *to give thanks*.

And the Eucharist, Holy Communion is not just a token, and a sign. It is an effective sign: it bestows what it signifies

Faith isn't blind. In worship and prayer, and especially in this Blessed Sacrament, in this sacred meal, our souls are nourished and fed

- As we eat Christ's flesh, and drink his blood, He fulfils his promise and bestows upon us, the gift of eternal life.
- As we do this thankfully in remembrance of his Passion we receive his Grace, and our souls are flooded with his love, joy, pardon and peace
- In the Eucharist we experience a deep sense of our oneness with God, our oneness with Our Lord, and our Heavenly Father's and our Lords's oneness with us: and our oneness with one another: a true Holy Communion

- In this Blessed Sacrament we receive within the love of God, a rich satisfying foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet: from which nothing in life or death can ever separate us.

Alleluia, Amen

Intercessions

O Sacrum Convivium

St Thomas Aquinas's beautiful hymn of praise and thanksgiving for Holy Communion

*O Sacred Banquet
In which Christ is received
The memory of his Passion is renewed
The soul is filled with Grace
And a pledge of future glory to us is given*

Loving Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your gift to us, through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ of this Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood. We thank you for all the benefits we receive as we do this in remembrance of Him.

We pray for your Church and for our witness, that all may come to know your saving love and life-giving presence

At this time we give you thanks and praise for your love in Creation and for the beauty of the countryside at this time

In silence we pray earnestly for the people and leaders of the nations as together we combat the Coronavirus

We bring before you in a few moments of stillness our own needs: and any we know to be in especial need

We hold in you love all those who suffer from the Coronavirus

And we remember before you all those who have died, rejoicing in your promise and gift through your Son of Eternal Life.

Merciful Father,

**Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ
Amen**

Introduction to the Peace

We are the body of Christ.

In the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.

Let us then pursue all that makes for peace
and builds up our common life.

Extended Preface

It is indeed right and good,
our duty and our salvation
always and everywhere to give you thanks and praise
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ our great high priest.

He offered himself to you as the Lamb without blemish,
the acceptable gift that gives you perfect praise.
At the Last Supper, seated with his apostles,
he left this memorial of his passion
to bring us its saving power until the end of time.
In this great sacrament you feed your people
and strengthen them in holiness,
so that throughout the world the human family
may be enlightened by one faith
and drawn together in one communion of love.
We come to this foretaste of your heavenly banquet
to be transformed by your grace
and restored in the image and likeness of the risen Christ.
Therefore earth unites with heaven
to sing a new song of praise;
we too join with angels and archangels
as they proclaim your glory without end:

Holy, Holy Holy Lord.....

Post Communion

All praise to you, our God and Father,
for you have fed us with the bread of heaven
and quenched our thirst from the true vine:
hear our prayer that, being grafted into Christ,
we may grow together in unity
and feast with him in his kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing

Christ, who nourishes us with Himself the living bread,
make us one in praise and love,
and raise us up at the last day;

And the Blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be amongst us, and upon all those for whom we pray
This day and evermore. **Amen**