

Corpus Christi (A B C)

The Feast of Corpus Christi was instituted by Pope Urban 1V in 1264. Around this time unorthodox opinions were circulating and the feast was instituted in the 13th century to counteract these views.

We believe that the consecrated Bread is not just a symbol of Christ's Presence - it is Christ Himself as the Bible teaches. Here we fundamentally differ from our evangelical friends.

Catholics proclaim their faith in Jesus by coming to Mass every Sunday and receiving him worthily in Holy Communion. It presupposes they are living Christian lives in line with the commandments of God and Church teaching. No one is obliged to receive Holy Communion at every Mass and no one should judge a person if they refrain from receiving. There could be host of reasons for doing so. The Church only obliges every catholic to receive the Eucharist once a year during the Easter Season.

Recently some Catholics have mistakenly got the impression that the Church has changed its teaching on the admission to Holy Communion of people who have not being married in Church or are living together or are divorced and remarried outside the church. Well, it hasn't. What Pope Francis wanted is that clergy listen with more compassion and sensitivity to each person's situation and 'leave no stone unturned' to help them return to the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. He's dead against priests acting in a cavalier way, just laying down the law without being pastorally accommodating and sensitive to their situation. But despite what we read in the papers, it doesn't mean that the Church has gone soft on her teaching about the prohibition of divorce, the permanence of marriage or our worthiness to receive the sacraments, chiefly the Eucharist.

If someone is away from the church for a long time the Sacrament of Penance is normally the first port of call before returning to Holy Communion. Receiving Holy Communion unworthily is that last thing you want to do. The situation changes if there are justifying circumstances such as illness or if one is dependent on others to take them to Mass, or if the weather is atrocious, or if you can't find a church or if you're a child or a teenager and there is no one to go with you. The church is an understanding mother, not a slave driver.

We know there are stumbling blocks to sharing Holy Communion with other Christian bodies who don't share our teaching on the Mass or the Priesthood and a host of major moral issues like abortion or contraception. But Catholics too need to examine their consciences on where they stand on these issues before receiving Holy Communion. I know some bishops, for instance, feel ill at ease allowing Holy Communion to be given to politicians or even the general population whose views on important moral subjects are at variance with the Church.

If it weren't for the fact that we are weak human beings, we wouldn't need Holy Communion in the first place. At Mass we draw on His strength which enables us live as he taught and reach Heaven. *He is the 'living Bread come down from Heaven' who brings life to our souls in the here and now in anticipation of the Eternal banquet.*

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