

Let us begin with a question that should be on our minds frequently: when I take my last breath and step through the door to the next life, who will I see standing there – a stranger, someone I barely know who is going to act as an absolute and unwavering judge? Or, a beloved friend whom I have been burning to see face-to-face? If the latter, physical death will be a happy, fulfilling, and glorious moment, the beginning of eternal bliss, something I have longed for. If the former, it will be an unimaginably terrible end to a wasted life.

The person everyone will see is our Lord. What we experience in seeing Him – a condemning judge or a most beloved friend and companion – depends on what we do in this life and this world. It depends on whether or not we have forged friendship with Him, a relation of genuine love, in this life. This relation does not just happen, we have to choose it, seek it, build it up. He has left us many things to do exactly that, the supreme one being His very own self – the Holy Eucharist. Love of the Blessed Sacrament is love our Lord. A lack of love of the Blessed Sacrament is a lack of love of our Lord. What's my true level of love for the Eucharist?

This Sunday is Corpus Christi (Body of Christ) Sunday: The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. In some parts of the world (including Rome) this solemnity is celebrated on the *Thursday* after Trinity Sunday (Trinity Sunday was last Sunday). In our country the U.S. Bishop's conference has placed it on the *Sunday* after Trinity Sunday. Since the Holy Eucharist was created on Holy Thursday, there is, of course, great significance to having it on Thursday. At the same time, in the highly secularized condition of our world today, having it on the following Sunday probably allows more people to participate in it than would be able to on a Thursday, as well as providing the opportunity for a greater celebration, like a Corpus Christi procession.

Although the Magisterium of the Church was responsible for creating this great Solemnity and adding it to the Church's liturgical calendar, in a very real sense we can say that this solemnity was not of human origin. It was requested by our Lord Himself, through a very pious and humble Augustinian nun now known as St Juliana (our current Pope is also of the Augustinian order).

Juliana was born in Liege, Belgium in the late 1100's – around 1190. Her parents both died when she was only 5 years old and so she and her sister were placed in the care of nearby Augustinian nuns. Juliana had a keen intelligence (as Pope Benedict XVI put it), which she used to diligently study the Church Fathers (including St Augustine, of course) and other great teachers of the faith. Perhaps most of all, though, she had profound sense of our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Her desire to live a life of prayer and contemplation is what led her to seek admission with the Augustinian Sisters. She was absorbed in the mind of God.

Around the age of 16, Juliana was given a vision during Adoration in which she saw the moon with one dark spot on it. This occurred a number of times but she did not understand its meaning until our Lord explained it to her. He said that the moon represented the life of the Church here on earth (the Church Militant) and the dark spot was a missing Feast – a Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. Now recall that anything and everything that our Lord does towards us is for our good. So this should command our attention: if our Lord is calling for this, He's doing so because it is helpful for me in getting to Heaven. I should dive into this, bury myself in it, seek understanding. Yes, Lord, the Eucharist is premier, a faithful disciple will say, but is there something in particular to draw out of this Solemnity? Our Lord Himself told St Juliana the reason for this Solemnity:

- First, in order that Catholic doctrine might receive aid from the institution of this festival at a time when the faith of the world was growing cold and heresies were rife.
- Second, the faithful who love and seek truth and piety could draw from this source of life new strength and vigor to walk continually in the way of virtue.
- Third, irreverence and sacrilegious behavior toward the Divine Majesty in the Blessed Sacrament might, by sincere and profound adoration, be extirpated [wiped out] and repaired.

Anyone who cannot immediately see how relevant and pressing these reasons for our own times needs to take serious stock of their devotion to our Lord. Corpus Christi is a feast for our time.

What our Lord is saying with the first reason is that “love” cannot just be a word or a nice sentiment. It has to be lived out, acted on. Love of our Lord, precisely in the Blessed Sacrament, has to be acted on, lived out. This “festival” (a word commonly used for feasts in times past) is our Lord giving us one tangible thing to do in order to live that out. Without active, self-sacrificing love of the Blessed Sacrament – with a decided indifference or only lip service – the faith of the world grows cold and hardened, man turns his back on the Lord in favor of self-interest and self-glorification – complete with false, made-up beliefs (heresies) of his own. This is the rule today, not the exception. Corpus Christi Sunday, devotion to the Holy Eucharist, is held up by our Lord Himself – not some individual priest or laity or bishop or bishop’s conference, not even by the Pope but *by our Lord Himself* – as the remedy. How often does real Eucharistic devotion get met with wrath and bitterness even amongst so-called Catholics? How often is true devotion rebuffed with human pride? What everybody says, what everybody else is doing is the dogma of man all too often.

Volumes could be (and have been) written on the second reason our Lord gives for this feast: that those who sincerely seek truth and piety can find new life there – i.e., not just in this Feast but in the Holy Eucharist. Spend time with Him, outside of Mass, in the Blessed Sacrament and you will come to know this. Don’t and you won’t. It really is that simple. Everybody “knows” what should be done in the Church, in the parish, in the diocese, what the priest should do and on and on...and the less time spent with the Lord, the less time spent responding to His own requests, the greater this “knowledge” becomes and the louder the voices grow. This was the case in St Juliana’s time as well. She kept this message to herself for a long time but finally divulged it to others, including a priest in a position of some authority. Initially it was well received including, after some initial hesitation, by the local bishop. However, the next bishop, who was living an immoral life, persecuted Juliana severely, so badly that she eventually had to move out of her Augustinian house in spite of being the superior. She ended up exiled for the rest of her life, taken in by some Cistercians, living a life of solitude, prayer, and adoration – all with no complaint at all. Love of our Lord, of the Blessed Sacrament makes all burdens light. She died in 1258, without having seen this Feast established by Pope Urban IV for the whole Church. Pope Urban IV was the priest to whom these messages were initially given to by Juliana’s confessor. The question for us is this: would I be a persecutor of St Juliana or supporter? The question is easily answered: will I respond to our Lord’s call now for sincere Eucharistic devotion, or not? “Until we have a passionate love for our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament we shall accomplish *nothing*,” the words of St Peter Eymard.

The third reason that our Lord gives for implementing this feast is to make reparation for the irreverent and sacrilegious behavior towards Him in the Blessed Sacrament. This irreverent treatment of our Lord, acting as if He is little more than a bad tasting cookie, has now become epidemic. Will Catholics respond? The answer is no, unless a genuine love of our Lord is built up. In the words of St Philip Neri: Well brothers, when we will start to love the Lord? Is the cost really that great? Even if it is, can we not believe the Lord who promises a hundredfold greater reward above and beyond any cost? Is Jesus not God?

How does a person make repair for the grievous offenses committed against our Lord, in this case, specifically against the Holy Eucharist? First a word about reparation in general. Suppose you see someone who has been badly berated, belittled, ostracized and so on. What would you do? Well you’d probably go sit beside them and talk with them – basically be friendly, in the hope of, of...of doing what? Repairing the hurt (or damage) done to their interior, their hurt feelings. That’s a good analogy for making reparation to our Lord. Spending time with Him, building relation with Him, makes repair for the offenses committed against Him.

From very early on, however, a particular devotional practice arose as part of this feast, namely Corpus Christi processions where our Lord is enshrined in a Monstrance and carried in procession out in public, with the faithful following after Him. Our Lord is denied, treated irreverently, the repair is made by enthroning Him and publicly processing with Him, gladly and publicly expressing gratitude for such a good and gracious King. Hopefully we will get a pastorate-wide Corpus Christi procession started next year. In the meantime, remember that He sits in the Tabernacle day after day, night after night waiting for you to come and visit.

*God bless you, Fr Kuhn.*