

## CORPUS CHRISTI, 2026

Mysticism has its place in Catholic life, but it is third place. The first place goes to our Feast, and the second place goes to sharing good things and good deeds in the spirit of our Feast. When mysticism is rooted in our Feast, and is accompanied by sharing good things and good deeds in the spirit of our Feast, then, and only then, is it the real thing, an experience of the Divine Presence that sometimes carries a divine message. Apart from our Feast, in all its physicality, mysticism falls under the condemnation expressed by Cardinal Gasquet's famous quip that "the problem with mysticism is that it begins in mist and ends in schism." The Catholic Religion does not begin with anything misty. It begins with a physical Feast. Our Feast is formal, ritualized, and solemn, but it is nonetheless a Feast, centered upon eating and drinking, eating a morsel of Bread that is sacramentally the true Body of Jesus Christ, and drinking a sip of wine that is sacramentally the true Blood of Jesus Christ.

That our highest worship should be a physical, sacred meal, and not merely the thinking of deep thoughts, is deeply rooted in the Sacred Gospels. The Lord Jesus Christ did not begin His holy work with a lecture, but by saving a wedding feast by changing a vast amount of water into excellent wine, a miracle both physical and socially gracious. The Apostle Matthew was converted to the cause of Jesus of Nazareth while he hosted Jesus at a feast. At a feast the sinful woman washed the Lord's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, and then received His declaration of forgiveness before God. At a feast Mary of Bethany anointed the Lord's feet with perfumed oil, and then dried them with her hair. Physical feasting was so important to the Lord's ministry that the Pharisees, speaking for the primly sophisticated of every age, found Him too crude for their refined tastes - this Man is a drinker and a glutton, a friend to tax collectors and sinners!

Note, however, that the Lord's feasting was always in the context of prayer and thanksgiving to God the Father, and that it was often ritual in nature. Certainly the Lord partook of the ritual meal of the Passover, the roasted paschal lamb, unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs, being consumed according to precise rituals. The eating and drinking was physical, but packed with spiritual meaning. It was at His final Passover Supper that the Lord Jesus performed a new ritual, also physical and packed with even greater spiritual meaning. He took the bread, blessed it and broke it, and said "Take this and eat, This is My Body, given up for you." Then He took the wine, blessed it, gave it to the Apostles, and said "Drink from this, for this is the Chalice of My Blood, the Blood of the Covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins." The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, all describe this physical ritual. St. John's Gospel declares its spiritual meaning: "Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has Eternal Life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:54)

At His last celebration of the Jewish Passover, on the evening before His own terrible, wonderful, and eternally glorious Passover, the Lord Jesus, with the command "Do this in memory of Me" gave His Church her essential act of worship, the sacred Feast of His most Holy Body and most Sacred Blood. When He instituted this supreme worship of the New Testament, He did so on the basis of what was already proclaimed and foreseen in the Old Testament. The Prophets Hosea, Joel, Amos, Isaiah, and Zechariah, all declared and foretold that salvation from God would be manifested in a Feast. God's salvation, accomplished through the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is indeed manifested in a Feast, the Feast that Zechariah saw

from a distance when he said "How great is His goodness and how great is His bounty! Wheat shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." (Zechariah 9:17)

The Holy Spirit surely inspired King David and the other sacred poets who wrote the Psalms. That is why the Christian Church uses the Psalms as the core of her ordinary worship in the round of daily prayers centered on Lauds (Morning Prayer) and Vespers (Evening Prayer). The Psalms foretell and proclaim the Lord's gift to the Church of the Holy Eucharist. "You prepare a Table for me in front of my foes. You have anointed my head with oil, and my Chalice shall be full" (Psalm 23). "I will wash my hands in innocence, o Lord, and then will I go to Your Altar" (Psalm 26). "I will go up the Altar of God, the God my joy and gladness" (Psalm 36) In these Psalms and in others, the physical worship of the Old Testament foreshadows the perfect physical worship instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, to be continued until He manifests Himself in glory and the end of the ages.

The wonderful Feast of the Christian People is foreshadowed also in the Book of Proverbs, in which Wisdom extends the invitation, "Come, eat of My Bread, and drink of the Wine I have prepared." (Proverbs 9:5) Jesus Christ is Eternal Wisdom made Man and become Flesh, Wisdom truly personified. Every Lord's Day, and even every day, Jesus Christ invites us to come together physically to be nourished with His word, and then to be nourished with His very self, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. Today, at this moment, Jesus Christ Himself says to you "Come, eat of My Bread - which is My Body - and drink of the Wine I have prepared - which is My Blood. Come!"

And we have come.

God grant that we may never come to this most Blessed Sacrament except with warm hearts. May we fear our sins, but never fear our Eucharistic Lord, Who says to us "Come!" It may be, if we have genuinely grave sins, that first we have to renew our Baptism through the Sacrament of Penance, but we should never decline the Lord's invitation to His Feast - and ours - simply because we feel guilty. The Lord who says to us "Come!" also says to us "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." The Lord Jesus says to us sinners "Come!" Come and eat and drink Resurrection, for "Whoever eats this Bread shall live forever!"

There are those who call themselves Catholic but never come to the Lord's Feast. He will be their judge, not we; but may we never be like that! The Lord Jesus told a parable about people who were invited to Wedding Feast but who thought they had better things to do; but there is no better thing to do than coming to the Feast where the Lord Jesus Christ is both the Host and the Meal.

Some come to the Feast, complaining about how hard it is to come. Some come without any reverence or awe for so wonderful an expression of God's love. May God's Grace keep us too filled with Love to be like that! May God's Grace make us marvel at a Savior who loves us so much that He feeds us with Himself, not just spiritually but physically as well. May God's Grace enable us to show to all around us our reverent love for the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

It is time to finish, though there is so much more to say!

Let us go up to the Altar of God full of Faith and Hope. Let us partake of the sacred Feast that carries the wonderful promise, "Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has Eternal Life, and I will raise Him on the last day." (John 6: 54)