

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Corpus Christi  
June 7, 2015

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All of you know *Corpus Christi* means **Body of Christ**. Today we give thanks for the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We do it *outside* Holy Week. On Maundy Thursday we have the shadow of Good Friday on the horizon. But on Corpus Christi we can zero in on the magnificence of Our Lord's great gift. His gift of the Blessed Sacrament delivers on His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Suppose some Sunday after Mass you were stopped by a stranger who had watched the service from the back row, and had absolutely no idea what it was all about. What would you tell him? One way or another in your own words you would tell "*the story*". You would begin with the Incarnation, when God became man and dwelt among us. You'd tell the story of Jesus, what He said and especially what He did for us in His saving death. You would talk about His victory over death. Having established all that, you would then tell of the night before Jesus' death. You would explain what happened in the Upper Room at the Last Supper, and how the Son of God changed and added words to the old ritual. He said, THIS IS MY BODY, THIS IS MY BLOOD. That, or something very nearly like it, would be your explanation.

The stranger would respond in one of a number of ways. He could say: "That is incredible; I don't believe it." Or, "It's too good to be true." Or, "What evidence do you have for it?" Or "I want to learn more of this." What the stranger would most likely NOT say is, "I believe all of it *except the last part*. I reject the idea that God in His love for you still gives Himself to you under the forms of bread and wine." Yet that is what many professing Catholics do, who think they are accepting the Gospel. They accept *part* of the story and make up the rest to suit themselves. But if you accept the *whole* gospel (and that is what *Catholic* means, *κατα ὅλως*, "according to wholeness") then you also accept that part of it which is the Eucharist. The mystery of the Incarnation and the mystery of the Eucharist rise or fall together. They are inseparably linked, and equally outside the range of scientific proof or disproof.

If Jesus was just a man, how can He feed us with His Body and Blood 2000 years later? And if He is just a man, *who needs it?* We have our own body and blood.

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But the gospel assertion is that Jesus is *both God and man*. And so if the Real Presence of Jesus Christ is denied or neglected in the Mass, something else is happening. There is a drift away from belief in the Godhead of the Son, a belief which is at the core of the very definition of Christianity.

So the Eucharist and the Incarnation are inseparably linked. In fact, the Eucharist is *the extension* of the Incarnation. It is the means whereby what Christ did for one country and people at a certain time He can do for all people and countries and ages. And just as He was not always perceived to be Son of God in the days of His flesh, so too His Presence is not always perceived today under the sacramental veil. Over the years there has been ingratitude, unbelief, blasphemy, sacrilege, and not just in the secular world. But none of it has ever made Jesus withdraw the perpetual Presence He has promised! That is why the Incarnation is not the story of a fading memory of things past but rather a fact of *present experience*. Christians are people not of a Book but of a Person, a *Living Person*, and the Body of Christ is the place where the Person of Christ dwells as He promised.

Kneeling before His Altar Throne we can offer our praises, tell Him our needs, sympathize with His sufferings past and present in the Church, confess our sins, and assure Him of our love. We can do this because of the way Jesus kept His promise. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Through Eucharistic devotion and adoration Christ’s presence, though veiled, becomes increasingly apparent, vivid, and sensible. *We were made for this*. The Presence of Christ turns our hearts away from all else but to Him, our only Lord, so that we can say, “Whom having not seen, we love.” (1 Peter 1:8)