

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on Corpus Christi Sunday  
June 3, 2018  
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You know *Corpus Christi* means “**Body of Christ.**” Holy Church gives us a feast day outside of Holy Week when we can think about and give thanks for the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Today isn’t the only day when we can do this. But the Church *designates* today when we are encouraged to do so. Today is the special day to zero in on the magnificence of Our Lord’s great gift in keeping with His promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Suppose some Sunday in the parking lot after Mass you were stopped by a stranger who had watched the service from the back row but had absolutely no idea what it was about. What would you tell him? In one way or other you would begin your explanation with the Incarnation: God made man and dwelt among us. You would tell the story of Jesus: what He said and especially what He did for us in His saving death, and the victory of His Resurrection. Having established that, you would focus on the night before Jesus’ death. You would explain what happened in the Upper Room with the meal. And you would talk about the new words Jesus added to the old ritual prayers at supper: THIS IS MY BODY; THIS IS MY BLOOD.

That, or something like it, would be your explanation. And the stranger would respond in one of several ways: 1. “That is incredible; I don’t believe it. 2. That is too good to be true; I can’t believe it. 3. What evidence do you have for it; I want to learn more. 4. I accept what you say *except the last part*: you made that up about God, in His love for you, still gives Himself to you under the forms of bread and wine.” If he gives answer No. 4, the stranger has lots of company! Many Catholics who think they accept the Gospel do the same; 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, *kata holos*, “**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 they are 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 was 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, the very belief we affirmed on Trinity Sunday last week.

So the Eucharist and the Incarnation are inseparably linked. In fact the Eucharist is the *very extension* of the Incarnation. It is the means whereby what Christ did in one country and for one people at a certain time, He does for all people and countries and in all ages. And just as He was not always perceived to be Son of God in the days of His flesh, so too He is not always perceived today under the sacramental veil. Over the centuries there has been ingratitude, unbelief, blasphemy, sacrilege....and not just outside the Church. But none of it has ever made Jesus withdraw the perpetual Presence He has promised. That is why the Incarnation itself is not a story told out of our fading memory of past things. Christians are not a people of a Book but of a Person, a *Living* Person. And the Blessed Sacrament is the place where the Person of Christ dwells as He promised. It is the Divinely-appointed way the Lord Jesus keeps His promise “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Through our Eucharistic devotions and adoration, His nearness, though veiled, becomes increasingly apparent, vivid, and sense-able to us. It is the Presence of Christ. His Presence turns our hearts away from all else but to Him our only Lord. And we can say, “Whom having not seen, we love.” (1 Peter 1:8)