

## EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The institution of the feast of Corpus Christi gave new momentum to the desire to behold the consecrated Host. We know that elevation of the Host at Mass was practiced long before the feast was established.

The devout longing of the faithful, to look upon the Sacred Host was not limited to the time of Mass. As early as the thirteenth century a person in mortal sin was allowed to look at the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Church authorities decided it was not only permissible, but, if done with a good intention, would be the source of special grace to the sinner.

St. Juliana Cornelion of Liege (1192-1258) was only one outstanding promoter of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass. Her zeal was instrumental in having her fellow countryman Pope Urban IV (also of Liege), institute the feast of Corpus Christi.

By the sixteenth century, it became a norm of Catholic orthodoxy to recognize the Real Presence in the Eucharist outside of Mass and Holy Communion. That is why the Council of Trent made, among others, two formal declarations on the subject. 1.. "The custom of reserving the Holy Eucharist in a sacred place, " said Trent, "is so ancient that it was recognized already in the century of the Council of Nicea." (325 AD) 2.. Then a historic condemnation of "anyone who says that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God is not to be adored in the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, with the worship of latria, including external worship... or that the Sacrament is not to be publicly exposed for the people's adoration" (October 11, 1551)

Trent was simply confirming what by then, had become a recognized form of Eucharistic piety. Thus the Order of the White Religious Body of Jesus Christ, a Benedictine men's community dating from the late fourteenth century, dedicated themselves to the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. But Trent inspired growing devotion to the Real Presence among the faithful in general. The specific form which this popular devotion took came to be called, "The Forty Hours."

Within two centuries, the Forty Hours devotion was so widely practiced that it became part of the Code of Canon Law (Canon 1275). Equally significant was the Church's distinction between public and private exposition of the holy Eucharist. "Private exposition," the Code stated, "that is in a pyx, can be had for any good reason, without permission of the Ordinary." "Public exposition," with a monstrance, could be held on the feast and during the octave of Corpus Christi. At other times, public exposition required the permission of the Ordinary, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament could be given only by a priest (Canon 1274).

### EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Eucharistic adoration is a practice in the Catholic church in which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed to and adored by the faithful. Adoration is a sign of devotion to and worship of Jesus Christ who is present Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, under the appearance of the consecrated host. As a devotion, adoration and meditation are more than merely looking at the Blessed host, but a continuation of what was celebrated in the Eucharist. Perpetual Adoration is when the exposure is constant (24 hours a day). Pope John Paul II prayed for this 24 hour adoration to take place in every parish in the world.

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## CORPUS CHRISTI



*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert,  
even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
that those who believe in Him may not perish,  
but may have life everlasting." John 3:14*

*"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,  
will draw all things to myself."  
John 12:32*

**CORPUS CHRISTI**  
**THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST**

Dedicated by the Marian Catechists to Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J.  
Compiled and written by Michael and Carole Breslin

The feast of Corpus Christi is one time when our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is exposed not just to faithful Catholics but to all the world. This is a time when Catholics can show their love for Christ in the Real Presence by honoring Him in a very public way. It is also a wonderful way in which we can show our love for our neighbors by bringing Our Lord and Savior closer to them. So many conversions are a result of Eucharistic Adoration experienced from inside the Church. How many more there would be if we could reach those who only drive by the church in worldly pursuits.

**ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI**

According to Canon Law (Can. 944 § 1,2) "Wherever in the judgment of the diocesan Bishop it can be done, a procession through the streets is to be held, especially on the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, as a public witness of veneration of the Blessed Eucharist. It is for the diocesan Bishop to establish such regulations about processions as will provide participation in them and for their being carried out in a dignified manner." Note that such processions can take place throughout the liturgical year but are "especially" encouraged on the feast of Corpus Christi. No other devotion has received such attention in the Code of Canon Law which shows the importance the Church attaches to this feast. It is one of the few feasts which is mentioned along with Holy Days of Obligation: "... the following holy days are to be observed: the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Epiphany, the Ascension of Christ, the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, the feast of Mary, the Mother of God, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, the feast of St. Joseph, the feast of the Apostles Saints Peter and Paul, and the feast of All Saints." (Can. 1246 § 1)

The full name of this feast is *Corpus et Sanguis Christi* or The Body and Blood of Christ. "The feast of the Blessed Sacrament was established in 1246 by Bishop Robert de Thorte of Liege at the suggestion of St. Juliana of Mont Carvillon. [It was] extended to the universal Church by Pope Urban in 1264. The office composed by St. Thomas Aquinas and customary procession was approved by Popes Martin V and Eugene IV. Celebrated in June, the first Sunday after the feast of the Trinity." (*Modern Catholic Dictionary*, by John A. Hardon, S.J.)

St. Juliana, a Belgian nun in Retinne, lived at the time of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Louis. She received this inspiration from Our Lord for the

following reasons:

- ◆ That the Catholic doctrine receive aid from the institution of this festival at a time when the faith of the world was growing cold and heresies were rife;
- ◆ That the faithful who love and seek truth and piety may be enabled to draw from this source of life new strength and vigor to walk continually in the way of virtue;
- ◆ That irreverence and sacrilegious behavior towards the Divine Majesty in this adorable Sacrament may, by sincere and profound adoration, be extirpated and repaired;
- ◆ To announce to the Christian world His will that the feast be observed.  
(*Full Brief of Pope Urban IV in The Blessed Eucharist*, Fr. Michael Muller, C.S.S.R., 1867; republished by TAN Publishers, Rockford, IL 1994.)

After the last Mass on this feast day Our Lord is placed in the monstrance. The priest then carries Him to four different altars representing the four corners of the earth. While processing, the congregation follows and sings. At each altar there are readings, prayers, and benediction.

**THE MASS**

The principal Mass of the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ is celebrated, according to local custom. In the homily, the theological and spiritual significance of the procession should be explained. Directions to assist the faithful to take part should be provided at the time of the homily or set out in the program with the hymns and acclamations to be sung during the procession, which should focus on the Lord.

The deacon or, lacking him, the celebrant, goes to the altar, places the Host in the monstrance, sets the monstrance on the corporal and genuflects. The celebrant goes to the chair, where he sings or says the Prayer after Communion. The blessing and dismissal are omitted. At the chair, the celebrant may remove the chasuble and put on a white cope. Directed by the Master of Ceremonies, the cross bearer and candle bearers take up a position in the aisle of the church, where they will lead the procession from the church. Concelebrants and other clergy follow them and line up in front of the altar, genuflect and then kneel.

**THE PROCESSION**

The public procession of the Eucharist should be promoted everywhere, especially in the light of the example of Pope John Paul II, who took the annual Corpus Christi procession from St. Peter's Square to the streets of Rome. The procession terminates with solemn Benediction.