

Grace Notes in Miniature,

Friday June 12th, 2020

Dear Friends:

I'm starting to be a bit shocked each Friday that the week has gone by so fast. On Sunday we celebrate the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, often called Corpus Christi, and then we move into Sundays in Ordinary Time, June 21st being the Twelfth Sunday in OT. That we are coming to the end of the period of high festivity may be a relief for some and a disappointment for others.

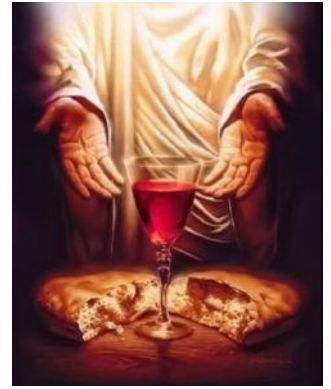
The Church Year is an intentional way of remembering the history of our faith – and 'remember' is an interesting word, one which has a stronger meaning than some of the suggested synonyms: recall, recollect, reminisce, think back to, look back on...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzmLi3nndjI> To remember is not just to call to mind but can be also interpreted as to put the limbs or parts back on, i.e. to bring back to life. The Jewish people may have a better sense of this as I was told in connection with the Passover Seder that it is celebrated as if the event was happening right then and not a memory of something which occurred almost three thousand years ago.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3R98uechsQ> (fun version at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZgDNPGZ9Sg> where it may be easier to follow the words.)

It is now two months since we remembered Jesus instituting the Eucharist at the Last Supper and this is an opportunity for us to focus on purely that action. St Thomas Aquinas proposed the feast of Corpus Christi to the Pope of his time in order to focus on the Eucharist as the real Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ; Pope Urban IV then established the Feast in 1264 for the whole Church. In parts of the world it is celebrated on the Thursday after the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity and is a holy day of obligation – even a public holiday in some; for many others it is observed on the Sunday following. There may be a procession with the Eucharist in a monstrance carried around the community with song. This hymn is named as a favourite of St Thomas Aquinas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3H5f7oePQE>



Tradition is very important to us as Catholic Christians, as is our history. Both Catholics and other members of the larger Christian community have had to struggle at various times in our history for the right to believe and practice and educate in our faith. Public celebrations such as the one in Spain pictured above would have got participants arrested, thrown to the lions – or worse. The saying of George Santayana that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it is just as applicable to faith practice as to any other aspect of our lives. So we remember the life of Jesus and of the Church which was born out of his coming among us.



Sometimes we treat prayer time as something to complete and get out of the way so that we can get to the “real” or “important” things. Almost fifty years ago, as a fairly new Catholic I was puzzled by people referring to their Sunday “duty” or “Easter duty” as I was so excited to be able to attend Mass and receive the Eucharist that I couldn’t imagine seeing it in that context (I still feel that way). A subject for discussion or reflection might be: Is prayer time time wasted or time invested? I confess to being tempted on occasion to resort to the prayer of Sir Jacob Astley which he prayed prior to the Battle of Edgehill in 1642: “O Lord, Thou knowest how busy I must be this day. If I forget Thee, do not thou forget me”; however, I am also very familiar with Psalm 137 (in some Bible translations #136) for which one of the responses, reflecting verse 6, is: O let my tongue cleave to my mouth if I do not remember you. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVDfMzg1F54> That this psalm reflects the emotions of the Jewish People in exile in Babylon is a reminder that sometimes we do not realise how much we value something until it is taken away from us. The Jews saw the Exile as punishment for idolatry and turning away from obedience to God. Many of Ezekiel’s writings were focused on a vision of God shepherding his people back to Israel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYK9iCRb7S4> Hosea used the metaphor of an adulterous wife being begged to return to her husband. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB0TWvag_1c We Christians understand Jesus to be the fulfilment of the Covenant begun with Abraham in Genesis, bringing all of creation into reconciliation with God. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtOdH8T44J8> May you enjoy, even from a distance, this Feast of Corpus Christi!

With every blessing,
Gillian