

## **Sermon Evensong Feast of Corpus Christi 2021**

This peculiar time we find ourselves in yet again, we are urged to stay home, to stay indoors, to remain, if possible, apart from each other, to stay away from others, to not touch, to isolate ourselves, to distance ourselves. Now, we know, there are some very good health reasons to respect these demands made on us. But at a deeper *human* level, we know it comes at a cost. And now, many of the demands imposed on us are layered with a mood of fear. Indeed, fear has emerged as strategy to motivate whole populations into compliance. A fear of contamination, a fear of death, a fear that our life would spin out of control, a fear that we will never return to normal. Now fear is a basic human response in time of danger. And demagogues, agitators, revolutionaries all know the power of fear to motivate people.

The social constraints we are living with, together with this layer of fear, can lead to an unhealthy introspection, a turning in on oneself. Left unchecked, all those seething shadows that linger in the hidden places of our hearts and minds wait to claw themselves to the surface. Depression and other mental health issues is one of great silent side effects of this pandemic. More people have died of suicide in Japan this past year than from Covid. But more basically cutting ourselves off from others and from the wider horizon our lives ought to play out on, comes at a cost.

Now, a full, healthy spiritual life of course requires a level of introspection. We need to look inward to know where we stand before God and what in us need healing and redeeming. But left to our own devices, slip into an unformed and unguided introspection, we will fall into our shadows, we become distracted, or worse. Without the presence of Christ, look within and we might not like what we find...

The mystery of the Incarnation is that God comes to us, he steps towards us, he reveals himself to us, to show us way of light and life. In the sublime mystery we celebrate today – of the body and blood of Christ – we recall how comes to us, into our very selves. In God’s work of salvation, there is no sphere, no hidden corner of our lives left untouched. As the perfect sign of this, Christ comes to us - at his own word, according to his own promise - as food. *“I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.”*

Here the old adage - *you are what you eat* - rings so true for the Christian. We partake of Christ, we commune with Christ, so that we become as Christ. We invite him into our very selves as food – *living bread* - so that our very nature may be transformed. Christ feeds us. In a culture which urges us to be self-sufficient and independent, to rely on our own strength and our abilities, which values the lone ranger, the self-made man and all the rest, what a powerful sign of contradiction it is that we be fed, and like children, be dependent. Pride, the sin of Adam, resists this. But we will never understand how sublime the food offered us if we do not acknowledge how hungry we really are.

Christ comes to us. He visits us. He feeds us, to draw us past ourselves, to direct us to the hope and promise of glory. In a strange paradox we take Christ into ourselves to be drawn out of ourselves. But the instinct of catholic spirituality, the wisdom of the faith – the genius of the faith - is always to tend to both the inner and outer dimensions of our faith, the physical and the spiritual, the body and the soul, the heart and the mind, the inward and the outward. And on this feast these dimensions converge most perfectly. We are given a concrete *visual* reminder of the Christ who comes to us in the lowly form of bread, to both feed the inner man, but *also* to draw us out and past ourselves.

And so, to reinforce this profound truth, in a few moments the consecrated Host is placed in the monstrance and on the altar here. Even remotely, even from a distance, we can gaze upon him. Christ is visibly placed before us. And there he invites us to look out, to look past our fears and shadows. We gaze at Christ in silent adoration, and so a remedy to so much of our self-indulgent introspection. The invitation literally, *quite literally*, to look past ourselves, out of ourselves, and to him, toward *him*. To *the bread of God ... which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world.*” With the crowd on the lakeshore let us say, “*Lord, give us this bread always.*” Amen.