

THOUGHTS FOR CORPUS CHRISTI 2020

I have never celebrated Mass ironically, I don't know how you would. But I do know that to mark Corpus Christi with a mass via a virtual platform like Zoom is a great irony. The holy day that we mark today is a feast of embodiment. We rejoice that Jesus Christ, metaphorically at the right hand of God, became a human being in flesh and blood, graced and valued human existence enough to share it, and by his death and resurrection offered hope of new life, now and in a world to come. We summarise all this in the phrase from St John's Gospel: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We represent this in our Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ shared among us.

Jesus as the embodiment of God says something really important about our physical bodies, how we can embody God too; that we are all beloved sons and daughters. Our physicality is significant, not least when we come together to pray, as together we become the Body of Christ. We receive real gifts which are blessed – bread and wine – and in doing so grow into Christ's body here and now.

So what happens when we cannot come together in person and when we cannot share the bread and wine which together we have made holy? What happens when it is our individual bodies and our corporate body which risk infection with disease? I think firstly we mourn, then we take a step back and reflect, and we might ask: how do I keep and grow my relationship with God and with Christ's body the Church? Those sort of questions are healthy, with a multitude of answers. One response is the care we give to others and the love we share with strangers: from phone calls, zoom conversations to food donated. The Eucharist as a thank you to God is therefore made real and celebrated in different ways in the whole local community, and our imagination is extended and our vision enhanced.

So mass today rests on a paradox: embodiment marked virtually, physicality celebrated somewhere in the ether. It may be strange, it may discomfort us, but if we can rest there a while, it may produce a rich harvest.

Fr David