



The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ - Corpus Christi

With great reverence and deep faith Catholics celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord. The procession of Corpus Christi expresses our deepest gratitude for the act of saving and sanctifying humanity, which takes place in each and every celebration of the Holy Eucharist. During the procession people of God manifest in a public way their faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. We deepen our faith in this truth by listening to all four Gospels, by reciting various prayers and by singing Eucharistic hymns to the Lord.

The Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ was established in Europe by Pope Urban IV in 1264 as a doctrinal and prayerful response to heretical teaching about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. At the beginning of the 16th century, these ceremonies were accompanied by Eucharistic processions.

In the Catholic liturgical calendar, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ is observed on Thursday following the Holy Trinity Sunday. On this day, which is also a national holiday, all of Poland celebrates the procession of the Corpus Christi. As a remembrance of the day, the people would take home some of the branches which decorated the altars. Some of them would keep the branches for a whole year until the next procession. In Canada and other nations, due to the Corpus Christi Solemnity falling on a weekday, this Feast is moved to the following Sunday.

In Canadian dioceses only a few parishes hold a public eucharistic procession. The Hamilton Diocese is the second largest diocese after the Archdiocese of Toronto. In its structure there are 118 parishes and 28 mission churches. For 146 parishes in our dioceses, only 6 practice the Corpus Christi procession. High praise and appreciation should go to Fr. Chester Chmurzynski, C.R., who in 1983 started the tradition of the Corpus Christi procession in our church and which has continued until this day. Four Eucharistic Altars were created by the two Polish halls, the Hungarian hall and the SPK- the Polish Combatants' Association. We must not forget that St. Joseph's Parish also welcomed a big Hungarian Community. Once a month a priest from Toronto came to celebrate Mass for them. This Hungarian community was quite involved in the Corpus Christi procession. They prepared their own Eucharistic Altar and sung and prayed in their mother tongue. In the last decades of the 20th century, Hungarian immigration to Canada drastically fell, which resulted in the cancellation of the of the liturgical celebration in Hungarian in Brantford. With that, the celebration of the Corpus Christi was celebrated only in Polish.

In 2008, Corpus Christi was celebrated differently. One day, the two priests from neighbouring churches, Fr. Donald Sanvido from St. Basil's and Fr. Adam Wroblewicz from St. Joseph's met and decided to hold the Corpus Christi procession for all parishioners in Brantford, Burford and Paris. This joint pastoral initiative was a response to the 49th International Eucharistic Congress that took place in Quebec from June 15-22 that year. The new idea was approved by the dean and priests of Brant. It was established that the procession would start at St. Joseph's church, go through the streets where there would be Eucharistic Altars and end at St. Basil's Church where there would be a solemn blessing for all participants.

In the procession of Corpus Christi members of St. Joseph's Church and members of various church organizations of the Brant deanery take part in the celebration. In a long-formed procession, parishioners dressed in folk costumes carry banners, first-communion boys carry lilies, and girls proudly walk throwing flowers petals. Under the canopy, supported by four men, follow the priest, who in his hands holds the monstrance with the Eucharist. Behind him, with a loud chant on their lips, the faithful of our city and its surroundings follow. The procession of the Corpus Christi is celebrated in English and Polish. Participants receive a program of prayers and songs in two languages.

Every few years, an article with a photo of the procession appears in the local newspaper, always underestimating the turnout of up to 200 people. The fact is that almost a thousand participants are involved in the procession; and they arrive year after year. Some may wonder why for such a large city - so little participate in the procession? There can be many answers to this question. We do not take into account the weather conditions, because we have no influence on it; the procession takes place despite the weather conditions. The Lord God is very gracious, because year after year he blesses us with beautiful sunny weather. In the 15 years – that I served this parish , we have never seen rain along the route of the procession, nor have we ever encountered a cloud.

The main "success" of the procession depends indirectly on local pastors - whether and how they will encourage their parishioners to participate. Secondly, it depends on each of us – will I personally accept and respond positively to Christ's invitation? Or maybe I have more important matters on my mind – beautiful weather for a beer and barbecue, a meeting with friends, a soccer game, fishing, a trip to the lakes or to the park ... The procession of Corpus Christi is still a "young" form of devotion in Brant deanery. It takes time (maybe



many more years) to be understood and loved - which would result in more participation of the faithful.

No one is fully able to adequately express their individual spiritual experiences associated with this journey of Jesus, under the cover of the bread (true bread from Heaven), who leaves the church building and walks the streets in order to visit our homes and offer us his blessing. I deeply believe that the procession of the Corpus Christi is also a form of evangelization, or sharing of the faith with others. Walking along the streets of Brantford with the Eucharistic Jesus, we remain in prayerful meditation. We pass by people who come out of their homes to gaze upon this long procession of Catholic people. I do not know what these people are thinking or feeling. What I do know, is that the grace of God can do miracles; God's grace can soften hardened hearts that have been desensitized to sacred things. Many of them probably do not go to any church, but they gaze at us in a friendly way with smiles. Not even once have we experience any signs of disapproval from the bystanders. They don't seem to be bothered by the ringing of the church bell at this unusual hour of the day, or the hymns sung in Polish by those in procession. They don't protest that the streets have been closed to regular traffic for the duration of this procession. As I return to the rectory, I often hear: "those children looked so beautifully as they were throwing rose petals. I can't wait for to see this procession again next year".

Unfortunately, this year due to the pandemic, we are unable to have the Corpus Christi procession. **However; to honour Christ in His Body and Blood, we will have an Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.** Please join us in the church parking lot **on Sunday, June 14, 2020, any time between 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.** The Blessed Sacrament will be located in front of the entrance to Sacristy. You can quietly adore Jesus from the comfort of your vehicle. Please be mindful to turn off your engine and keep social distance from other parishioners, by remaining inside your vehicle during your entire adoration time, with windows closed.

Fr. Adam

