

CORPUS CHRISTI

Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ

The life of our faith finds a focus in the reception of Holy Communion

In the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ

The life of our faith is celebrated in many ways

Actions of justice and kindness and integrity

Lessons of scripture and meditation

Rituals which reinforce the teaching in the sacraments

Baptism

Confirmation

Confession or reconciliation

Marriage

Ordination to priesthood

The sacrament of the sick, or last rights

But central to all of these expressions of life is holy communion- The Eucharist.

Twenty years before I was born my Father went to mass in St Aiden's Catholic Church Magilligan Co. Derry, Northern Ireland. No doubt he will have stood at the back with all the other young men. No doubt he would have been chased from his bed by my Grandmother. But he was there and was called to live a life of goodness. He was reminded of things other than the cattle or the plough. He celebrated the fact that he was no different from a prince or a landless peasant, before this altar. He received the Body of Christ, worthy of such an honour, in the plan of salvation.

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I once had the honour of celebrating mass with a group of pilgrims on the Normandy beach. There was a monument to the thousands of men who had been killed there, so that we could live free of fascism. We made this monument our altar, and spread out cloths, chalice, pattern and books. All were surprised at how normal this place of horror looked. All prayed for those who ran up this short sandy ridge facing bullets and fear.

I consecrated the bread and wine. Then a breeze picked up a number of the sacred hosts that fell upon the place where so many of those men had fallen.

Christ crucified and risen.

The crucifixion so clear to understand, surrounded as we were by the dead.

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When I die there will almost certainly be a mass. I have considered writing the sermon for this occasion in advance. There no doubt will be people saying nice things about me. Perhaps even a dispute as to who will get my Des O'Conner record collection.

The climax of that celebration will not be when they take my body out to bury it. No, the most important part will be the celebration of faith, in the resurrection, when the people there will receive the body of Christ.

The very same sacrament that I daily celebrated in the different churches I served in.

The very same reality that I will then be celebrating in eternity,

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On this feast of the body and blood of Christ

Have faith

Thank God for those who gave this life to you

Thank God for those you have shared this life with you.

Thank God

that in time to come this taste of heaven will be fulfilled in all its wonder.