



Corpus Christi is a Latin term that means "the Body of Christ."

Each year the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church celebrates the feast of Corpus Christi. What does Corpus Christi mean?

Corpus Christi is a Latin term meaning "body" (corpus) of "Christ" (Christi). The feast by this name was introduced on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday, in accord with the requests of Juliana of Liege, a 13th-century religious woman who promoted this devotion.

Initially the feast was called simply, "Corpus Christi," and has retained that name in the local Catholic customs of many countries.

It is also called "Corpus Domini," which similarly means "Body of the Lord."

The official name in English is, "The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ." This name more accurately summarizes the entire mystery of the Eucharist, as it includes Jesus' body and blood.

Currently, the feast has been moved in many places to the Sunday following Trinity Sunday to make it possible for more of the faithful to participate in the Mass of Corpus Christi.

It's the feast of a unique and an everlasting event.

The Eucharist is not celebrated in Heaven: the Eucharist is a celebration for us here on Earth. Jesus instituted this sacrament so we can live with Him while we are here. When we finally see him face-to-face there will be no need for the Eucharist. The Eucharist is, in fact, a sacrament of the presence of Christ while He appears to be absent. It allows us to live our present time through Him, Who exists in eternity. In this way, we are able to unite our time with His eternal time. Through the Eucharist, we partake in eternity, while remaining connected to the past, present, and future. This is the great mystery we will briefly examine here.

The Eucharist unites the present with eternity

Being subjected to the flow of time can be very difficult for some of us. Isn't there any way for us to escape the impositions of time? Is there anything in this life stronger than time, or more powerful than destiny? Yes there is: the Eucharist. Jesus assures us: "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life" (*Jn 6:54*).

In a sense, all the sacraments give us eternal life, in that they communicate to us the grace of God. The Eucharist, however, is not just about divine grace—it's also about the one who brought it to us: Jesus Christ. It not only unites us with eternity, it also brings us to the one who is Eternal. In this way, every time we take communion in faith, we enter the "zone" that St. Paul called "the fullness of time." United to Christ through the sacraments, we are mystically connected to eternity, as we continue our journey here on Earth. Naturally we physically get older, but from that moment on, our present time is inhabited by a new light. No longer is it "vanity of vanities," it is a reflection of eternal life.

The Eucharist unites the past with eternity

The double facet of the past is just as unsettling as the evanescence of the present: it is irreversible (yesterday never returns) and cannot be undone (it is impossible to make what happened not happen). So is it possible to live this dimension of our life (our past history) without being crushed by remorse

for our faults (depending on each case) or becoming overly prideful of our achievements? Here as well, we find the answer in the Eucharist, because the Eucharist has the power to unite our past with the eternal mercy of God: “Do this in remembrance of me” (*Luke 22:19*).

During the celebration of the Eucharist through the liturgy of the Mass, both Christ’s sacrifice in Golgotha and his Resurrection become present. Over and above the two thousand years that separate us from Golgotha, the holy sacrifice of the Mass brings to the present the historical sacrifice of Christ. In light of this historic sacrifice, made present through the Eucharist, another relationship with the past is made possible: no longer based on remorse or self-aggrandizement, but instead on mercy and gratitude.

There is a lot of talk nowadays about healing memories. Isn’t it through the Eucharistic communion where that healing can take on its full meaning? Receiving communion is the grand moment of purifying memory! It shows us how to unite our past to that of Jesus, who suffered death on the cross for us so that we can rise with Him. In this way, the Eucharist teaches us how to live our past in a spiritual way.

The Eucharist unites the future with eternity

The future is not here yet. By its nature it is unpredictable and uncertain. But one thing is certain for everyone: death. Normally, we do not know how or when it will come, but we are sure that, sooner or later, we will be dislodged from ourselves. Our time will come to an end. Is there anything on Earth that can truthfully save us from that anguish?

Once again, the Eucharist—what the Church Fathers called “the medicine of immortality” gives us the answer. Taking communion with the glorious body of Christ brings us into the Presence of He who conquered death, He alone who can fully reconcile us with our mortal condition. Presence is reflected in the name of the longed-for second coming of Christ, “the *parousia*,” which derives from the Latin word for “presence.” It is also why the Eucharist is the last sacrament that is normally given to someone who is dying (called “viaticum,” from the Latin *via*, road, referring to the journey of the dying person), after confession and the anointing of the sick. The Eucharist is, indeed, the “viaticum” that helps us approach our future with tranquility and strength the Day of the Lord requires. The eternal Kingdom is found through the Eucharist wherever we may be and it is enough to pass through the veil of the visible to penetrate into it. This is what the Bible calls faith.

The Sunday Eucharist

An antiphon attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, *O sacrum convivium* (“O holy banquet”), sums up in a hymn what we have presented here: the Eucharist is a holy banquet during which “the memory of his Passion is celebrated, the soul is overcome with grace and we are granted proof of future glory.” This is what makes Sunday Mass so important.

Under persecution, the early Christians risked their lives to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist. Martyred, they declared that they could not live without the Eucharist, God’s nourishment:

Sine dominico non possumus (“Without Sunday, we cannot”). Commenting on this ancient formula, Pope Benedict XVI wrote in 2007 in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (The Sacrament of charity): “Nor can we live without participating in the Sacrament of our salvation and we wish to be *iuxta dominicam viventes*, that is, to bring into our lives what we celebrate on the day of the Lord. Indeed, this is the day of our true liberation.”