# Sunday 3 June – Corpus Christi

Scripture: Exodus 24: 3-8; Psalm 115(116); Hebrews 9: 11-15; Mark 14: 12-16, 22-26

*While Jesus and the disciples were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*

Today’s feast honours the centrality of the Eucharist in the lives of Catholics. The Gospel takes us back to a room somewhere in Jerusalem two thousand years ago but what happened there happens during Masses throughout the world to this day. During the Eucharistic Prayer, this moment is remembered – not in the sense of just looking back to a historical event but as something that we make real in our churches. Just as Jesus was present in that room all those centuries ago, so Christ is truly present in our midst under the forms of bread and wine.

* When have you had a strong sense of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist?
* What is the difference between looking back on a historical event and remembering it in the present day?

Choose one of the Eucharistic Prayers and use it as a form of lectio divina – a slow praying line by line, allowing the words and phrases seep deep into your heart. Allow them to give you new glimpses into the great mystery of what the Lord has done for us.

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# Monday 4 June (Week 9 in Ordinary Time)

Scripture: 2 Peter 1: 2-7; Psalm 90; Mark 12: 1-12

*The vineyard owner sent his son to the tenants, saying, “They will respect my son.” But those tenants said to one another, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do?’*

Jesus has described a saga of a group of tenants who have abused the trust of the vineyard owner – ill-treating and even killing those sent to collect the rent. The final scene is sending his son who suffers the same fate as those who went before him. It is very easy to see a parallel between the prophets, say, and Jesus – and Jesus prophesying what was going to happen to him. The question we might ask of both the vineyard owner and of God is why – if they had any suspicion that the son would be killed – did they send him?

* Why did the vineyard owner send his son to collect the rent?
* Why did God send his son into the world at all?

Reflect today on the risky behaviour of the vineyard owner – and of God. Why did they take such a risk? And would either of them think it was worth it?

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# Tuesday 5 June – (St Boniface)

Scripture: 2 Peter 3: 11-15. 17-18; Psalm 89(90); Mark 12: 13-17

*Some Pharisees and some Herodians came to Jesus and said to him, ‘Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?’*

Reading how the Pharisees and Herodians open their conversation with Jesus, we could suspect a certain amount of “soft soaping” going on. When people offer flattery before getting to their point, we can be pretty sure that there is something behind it – a hidden agenda. The Gospel goes on to show that Jesus also had his suspicions but, for today, we focus on the speakers – why they needed to waffle on before getting to the point – and what they might have been hoping to achieve.

* When have you experienced people “soft-soaping” you?
* When have you “soft soaped” others?

Think today about how easy you find it to be straightforward with others and when you are tempted to hide behind a lot of unnecessary words. Bring any thoughts or questions about how you deal with others into a time of prayer.

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# Wednesday 6 June (St Norbert)

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1: 1-3, 6-12; Psalm 122(123); Mark 12: 18-27

*Jesus reminded the Sadducees that God said to Moses, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is God not of the dead, but of the living...’*

By the time Moses encounters God in the burning bush, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were long dead. Jesus is reminding the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection that Moses had a puzzle to deal with. God does not say, “I *was* the God of Abraham” and the others – but “I *am*”. For God, the centuries simply do not exist – God *is* God. We are bound by time –and history – but God is not so limited. God is the God of these people from ancient history – but also the God of everyone we have known and lost to death. God is our God – and is so forever.

* How do you understand the lack of past and present for God?
* How does this mystery that causes our language such problems – no “was” or “will be” – teach us something about the amazing otherness of God?

This is not a mystery you are going to solve in a few moments of reflection – but give it a try! As simply as possible, imagine God present to ancient desert wanderers – to you – and to whoever takes up the story far into the future.

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# Thursday 7 June (St Robert of Newminster)

Scripture: 1 John 3: 14-18; Psalm 111; Matthew 25: 31-40

*The king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...”*

This is a very powerful image of the way people will be judged at the end of time – the king taking people to one side and opening up the kingdom prepared for them since the dawn of time. Where people are given such honours, we could reasonably expect them to have done mighty deeds – really made a difference to the world. When Jesus goes on to explain what they have done, we may find ourselves puzzled as to how such simple actions could be seen to change the world and justify such a reward.

* What does Jesus go on to tell people they have done to deserve such places of honour?
* What might you have expected people to have to do to earn a place in the Kingdom of God?

Spend some time today reflecting on this scene – and the apparently easy ways in which we can be rewarded with a place in heaven. Then think realistically about how often you do them. What might Jesus be telling you?

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# Friday 8 June – Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Scripture: Hosea 11: 1, 3-4, 8-9; Isaiah 12; Ephesians 3: 8-12, 14-19; John 19: 31-37

*One of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture … ‘They will look on the one whom they have pierced.’*

The image of the Sacred Heart is close to the hearts of many Catholics. Its presence in someone’s home – or on a television or theatre set – is a very strong clue that the characters are Catholics. To some, it can seem quite a puzzling – even gruesome – image… someone’s heart visible on the outside. But to many, it is one that offers great comfort and strength as Jesus shows us the depth of his love – a heart pierced and burning with love for every human being – indeed, with love for everything in Creation.

* How would you describe how you feel about images of the Sacred Heart?
* How would you explain its meaning to someone who did not understand why Catholics love it so much?

Find a picture or statue of the Sacred Heart. Simply spend some time with it – without too much analysing or theorising… Just imagine Jesus with you in this image of his love for you.

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# Saturday 9 June – The Immaculate Heart of Mary

 Scripture: 2 Timothy 4: 1-8; Psalm 70; Luke 2: 41-51

*Jesus’ mother treasured all these things in her heart.*

The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, ‘The heart is the place of decision, deeper than our psychic drives. It is the place of truth, where we choose life or death.’ This heart is not the anatomical one that beats and ensures our blood circulates through our bodies – though this gives us a good image for something at the core of our beings that ensures that life floods our bodies. In Mary, we have someone whose heart was utterly in tune with God – someone who took every life event and thought and emotion into this deep place. It is from this place that she was able to make all the decisions of her life – always choosing truth – always choosing life.

* What must it be like to have a heart fully in tune with the heart of God?
* How does Mary’s life show us what such a heart looks like? And what it can achieve?

Choose an image of Mary – perhaps of the Immaculate Heart – or a picture or statue that particularly appeals to you. Pray with her for a greatness of heart in which God can make a home and aid you with the decisions that lie ahead.

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