

# Why do we celebrate Corpus Christi?

## (Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ)

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Every day, faithful Catholics all over the world gather together around the altar to celebrate and adore our Risen Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. However, there is a **specific feast when the Eucharist is to be celebrated** throughout the Universal Church. Of course, on Holy Thursday we commemorate and remember the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper; and yet, that specific day is also a somber feast as it ushers us into Jesus' Passion and Death. The Church desired a solemnity where the Lord's Supper may be celebrated with exaltation and jubilation from all her faithful, and this solemnity is **Corpus Christi**.

This holy feast stems from humble origins. The celebration began in a single diocese in the 1200s after St. Julianna reported **a vision** to her local bishop. In her apparition, the Saint saw the Church under a beautiful full moon that had a single dark spot on its surface. She heard a voice explaining that the blemish indicated that a great feast was missing from the Liturgical Calendar to **honor the Blessed Sacrament**. She reported the miraculous encounter to her local bishop and a man named Jacques Pantaléon, who later became Pope Urban IV. Moved by what they heard, the diocese celebrated the feast the following year.

Almost 20 years later, there was a priest named Pietro da Praga who was struggling with his faith and had increasing doubts about the True Presence in the Eucharist. While celebrating mass, **Jesus' Precious Blood began to flow** from the Sacred Host, covering the altar cloth and corporal. Pope Urban IV ordered that the sacred clothes be sent to him in Orvieto, Italy, where he was residing at the time. There, in the Orvieto Cathedral, those sacred garments are still venerated today.

The **Eucharistic miracle**, experienced by Fr. Pietro, served as the catalyst needed for Urban IV to institute a Eucharistic Solemnity for the Universal Church. In 1264, the Pope published the papal bull, "Transiturus de hoc mundo" declaring the feast of Corpus Christi be celebrated annually on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday throughout the Latin Church (today, it is common for the solemnity to be transferred to following Sunday). Further, this decree also offered indulgences to the faithful who participated in the Liturgy and Office. It was during this time, St. Thomas Aquinas was commissioned to compose the Proper for a Mass and an Office honoring the Holy Eucharist as the Body of Christ. It is from this work that Aquinas composed the hymns O Salutaris Hostia and Tantum Ergo that we still recite during Eucharistic Exposition and Benediction today.

# Spirituality of Eucharistic Procession

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You've probably heard someone say, "I need to get my steps in, today."

The rise of smartwatches and fitness trackers has also given rise to this unique statement that, previous to 2015, was rarely heard. Overnight, the number of paces taken during the day became a point of pride and a target goal for many people looking to boost their overall fitness and health.

If you've found yourself "counting your steps," you know that this commitment requires some lifestyle changes. Meetings suddenly are taken on the go, walking and talking. Breaks at work become routine as we move from our desks to have a conversation with a co-worker, get some water, or even go for a stroll outside. Our mindset shifts from stationary to active and every choice for the next "step" brings us closer to a goal.

**This is the mentality of Eucharistic procession.** While we may not receive a notification that we've hit our daily step goal, the disruption of our daily routine that procession provides is profound. A Eucharistic procession is often a part of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, though many parishes, dioceses, and ministry organizations will have processions throughout the year. Just the way our "step count" shifts our mindset, a procession shifts our prayer posture.

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There is movement, action, and encounter.

The spirituality of Eucharistic procession is simple: Processing with the Blessed Sacrament **mirrors what Jesus' ministry looked like** when he walked among crowds 2,000 years ago. There were moments of encounters - a single person connected with Jesus and everyone else seemed to fade away. There were people who had their day disrupted by the procession of people following Jesus through the streets; some probably laughed, others ignored, but a few followed along. And those who followed experienced something incredible as their mindset shifted. Suddenly, every step brought them closer to the next miracle, healing, teaching, or prayer.

Walking with Jesus isn't limited to those who were alive when Jesus walked the earth. **We can make this same journey** in two ways:

1. Find a Eucharistic Procession and join. Many parishes and dioceses host Eucharistic processions throughout the year (especially around the Solemnity of Corpus Christi). Attend one of these beautiful events.
2. Make a walking pilgrimage to your Eucharistic chapel for some time with Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration. Just as many people walked to Jesus to hear him teach and spend time with him, we can also make a small pilgrimage to our local Eucharistic Adoration chapel. Make the journey prayerful by praying your favorite devotion on the way.

Regardless of how you **get your "steps in"** toward Jesus - whether a procession or a [mini-pilgrimage](#) - they always count. Make your prayer your walking and connect with Jesus in a new way that will change your mindset and leave you transformed along the way.