

Feast of Corpus Christi

June 14, 2020

by

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This year, the traditional Corpus Christi procession in Jerusalem this year, which was held on Thursday, June 11th, was muted due to the situation with the coronavirus. It was unknown whether or not the procession was able to take place, yet, in God's providence, Jesus Christ was Eucharistically present and he was taken through the streets of the city held aloft by Archbishop Pizzaballa, the Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, together with a small amount of priests, nuns and members of the Equestrian Order. In his homily, the Archbishop spoke about the significance of the Eucharistic presence of Christ: "the natural life carries the meaning of death, as it is destined to end. Even Though, it needs to be nourished. On the contrary, Jesus' life does not know death. It requires to be nourished as well, yet Jesus' life is fed on the relationship with the Father. As a result, we must have a relationship with the Father to keep nourishing our lives." We trust the Father who sent the Son to feed us with His Body and Blood and to destroy death forever.

Traditionally, the Corpus Christi procession is a very significant event on the calendar of the Holy Land and thousands of the faithful from all over the world gather to participate in this ancient tradition. The Blessed Sacrament is taken from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, through the streets, and pious pilgrims line the route to be reminded that the same Jesus Christ who taught in the temple precincts, who walked the streets of Mt. Zion, who died on Calvary and rose from the dead and left the Sepulchre empty, is still with his people under the appearance of Bread and Wine.

This year, as we remain in our homes due to the situation with the Coronavirus pandemic, we are not in procession, rather, we are metaphorically in that beloved site of pilgrims to the Holy Land, the cenacle, also known as the Upper Room, the place of waiting and the great site of transformation of the followers of Christ. As this year is a little different in Jerusalem, and indeed the whole world, it is for us likewise difficult for us who cannot be part of a Corpus Christi Mass or procession, except perhaps on a live-stream or on television. We would do well to focus less on the beautiful processions which await us, we hope, next year, and instead recall the beloved site of the cenacle and the call we have to use this time well that our faith may grow, our hope continue and our love be shared. The traditional Feast of Corpus Christi is 61 days after Easter and so freshly in our minds we recall the moments commemorated on Holy Thursday and Pentecost. when the followers of Jesus were in the Upper Room, He was with them. First, with Our Lord at the institution of the Holy Eucharist, then on the occasions when Our Lord appeared to the Apostles, and ultimately, when he gave the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It was in 2014 that Pope Francis came to Jerusalem and offered Mass in the Upper Room. He stated, "The humanity of each apostle is vibrantly portrayed in the Upper Room, giving us a glimpse into our own hearts and nature, as well as into the unrelenting love of Jesus Christ for his followers. It was also in this room from which, filled with the Holy Spirit, the apostles would ultimately leave to change the world—your world and mine." While we cannot be present with Him this Corpus Christi, we know that His love endures for each one of us and His presence awaits the moment we can be with Him again. We also understand that we will be able to leave the cenacle of our homes soon, as the Pope encourages us, to change the world, with the Eucharist we receive and the Spirit that is poured out upon us.