



Vox Populi - The Voice of the People

15 June 2022

The feast of Corpus Christi, also called the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, celebrates the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, or Holy Communion, and proclaims the truth of the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the actual body of Christ during Mass or the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

Traditionally Corpus Christi has been celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday which this year would be Thursday 16 June. However not being a holy day of obligation it has been assigned to Sunday after the Most Holy Trinity, and so will be celebrated this Sunday 19 June.

The feast of Corpus Christi originated in 1246 when the Bishop of Liège (in present day Belgium) ordered the festival be celebrated in his Diocese after being persuaded by a young prioress who had experienced a vision. This woman, Juliana of Mount Cornillon, was officially recognised as a saint by Pope Pius IX in 1869.

The festival did not spread until Pope Urban IV ordered the whole Church to observe the feast. Shortly before Pope Urban issued his 1264 bull, St Thomas Aquinas had undertaken and completed the task of composing both the office, or official set of prayers for the Church, and the Mass for the feast. In some parts of the liturgy today Aquinas' work remains, in others it has been replaced. One hymn that has been excised but still remains well known, and performed, begins with the words *Panis angelicus*.

Pope Clement V proclaimed the feast universal and by the 15th century it had become one of the principal feasts in the Church.

Corpus Christi processions also became widespread and continue today where the consecrated host or Blessed Sacrament is displayed in a monstrance held aloft by a priest under a canopy, and followed by the faithful to the Church or Cathedral where there will be Benediction.

This Sunday everyone is invited to join the Walk With Christ Eucharistic Procession through the Sydney CBD. It begins at 2.30pm on the corner of Martin Place and Pitt Street, finishing at St Mary's Cathedral.