



On Either Side of Easter

The Church's liturgy bookends the Easter Mystery with two great feasts of the Holy Eucharist. Holy Thursday foreshadows the Resurrection; Corpus Christi follows in its afterglow. The night of the Lord's Supper takes us back to *what Jesus does*; on Corpus Christi we contemplate *Who Jesus is*.

What Jesus *did* the night before He died was offer the *Sacrifice* of the Mass that would be "finished" the next day on the Cross. In the Upper Room at table with His Apostles, the Scriptures present Jesus as the *Giver* of the Gift of His Body and Blood. "This is Mine. Take and eat. Take and drink. Do this in memory of Me."

Corpus Christi reverses the focus as we gaze in grateful adoration upon the *Gift* Jesus *is* for us in the *Sacrament* of the Altar.

The Sacrament comes from the Sacrifice and brings us the Real Presence of Christ. "I am *really here* for you," He assures us. "This *is* My Body. This *is* My Blood. My loving presence is My Gift to you."

Real Presence brings real change—we call it Transubstantiation. In the beginning the Creator had only to say the word ("Let there be light"); and out of nothing things that didn't exist suddenly came to be. At the Mass of the New Creation the God-Man speaks the words of consecration, and something that already exists (bread) becomes something it wasn't before (His Body).

From the liturgical placement of these two feasts on either side of Easter we learn an essential life-lesson of Christian faith: Don't separate the Sacrament from the Sacrifice and don't separate the Sacrifice from the Sacrament. Live Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi together. Like the Breaker of the Bread in the Upper Room, live in sacrificial love; give your life away that others may live. Like the Bread of Life, be a visible sign of the real presence of invisible grace that brings about real change in the soul and invites others to "take and eat" too.