



GOD'S WORD THIS MONTH

JUNE

07

THE BODY AND
BLOOD OF CHRIST

BREAD FOR THE JOURNEY

The feast of Corpus Christi originated in the thirteenth century in Liege, present day Belgium, thanks to the devotion of a holy woman called Juliana.

The Blessed Sacrament had long been reserved for the communion of the sick, but quietly and with little display. By the twelfth century, the place where it was reserved received the attention of artists. Often it was in the form of a little tower in the sanctuary of the church called 'the Sacrament Tower.' When it was brought to the sick, people wanted to accompany Jesus as he passed through the streets of their town on his way to the sick bed. These were the first 'Eucharistic Processions.' Sometimes, confraternities were founded to ensure there

were enough volunteers to accompany the priest and to buy candles for the procession. Juliana wanted a special day set apart to honour the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament since Holy Thursday, the day on which the Eucharist was instituted, was at the end of Lent and was overshadowed by the sorrow of Good Friday. It was first celebrated in Liege in 1246. It would be another twenty years before it became a feast for the whole church. The greatest theologian of the time, St Thomas Aquinas, composed the Mass and Office for the feast.

The gospel describes the preparations for the Passover meal, then it gives a description of the meal itself, during which Jesus gives the disciples the gift of his body and blood. Preparations for Passover were elaborate. Special foods had to be purchased, a lamb had to be bought and taken to the temple to

be sacrificed during the afternoon, and the house where the meal was eaten had to be thoroughly cleansed to remove every trace of leaven. The place Jesus chooses for the meal was probably a dining room belonging to a friend whose servant the disciples would meet while he was fetching water: this was the job either of a slave or of the women of the household.

Jesus adds something new to this traditional holy meal. It is to be celebrated by his disciples in the future, but they will do it in his memory, recalling his death, for his body and blood are now made truly present in the bread and wine.

TODAY'S READINGS

EX 24:3-8; HEB 9:11-15
MARK 14: 12-16, 22,26



JUNE
14

11TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

THE MIRACLE OF GROWTH

Today's Gospel has two short parables and a brief explanation of why Jesus uses parables. It comes at the end of St Mark's 'parable chapter,' which

contains five parables in all. Parables are attractive and easily remembered stories or examples that will stick in the mind of the hearer but which will also force them to think more deeply about what they have heard. The deeper meaning of a parable might not always be obvious. Today's first parable of how the seed grows of its own accord would have been fairly obvious to the people of a farming background who formed Jesus' audience. The farmer prepares the soil and scatters the seed. He cannot make the rains fall or the sun shine. These are responsible for the miracle of growth, so all he can do is wait patiently until harvest time. The kingdom of God is like seed. Jesus has sown the word and must now wait for it to bear fruit.

The second parable about a mustard seed is making the same point. The size of the seed bears no resemblance to what it will cause to grow. The mustard plant is more of a shrub than a tree so this may have been



embellished. The early church would have been familiar with a parable of the prophet Ezekiel (today's first reading). In this the cedar tree stands as an image for Israel, just as the mustard plant stands as an image of the church. After small beginnings in the lifetime of Jesus, by the time the Gospel of Mark is being written, it is now growing into a larger

community. Just as a tree provides a home for nesting birds of all kinds, so the Church gives a home to people of many nations.

TODAY'S READINGS

EZ 17:22-24; 2 COR 5:6-10
MARK 4:26-34

JUNE
21

12TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME

WHO IS THIS THAT THE WIND AND THE SEA OBEY HIM?

The Lake of Galilee is set in a deep bowl-like depression. Storms can sometimes break over it with little warning but

with much force. As fishermen, the disciples would have been well used to such squalls. This one seems to have been particularly violent, as the boat begins to take in water and is threatening to capsize. Through it all, Jesus remains asleep, so the disciples wake him to do something. They may simply have

expected him to lend a hand with the oars or the sails. Instead, he rebukes the wind and waves as though they were rowdy children or little animals out of control. In the folk-lore of the time, monsters lurked in deep water. They were the agents of death and chaos causing waves and drowning humans. In response to Jesus' words, the wind immediately dropped and all is calm again.

Jesus confronts his terrified disciples with two questions: "Why the fear? Where is your faith?" They have not recognised that, as Son of God, he has power not only to cure or to provide food but to take on the dark forces of death and destruction. They are left with

a question: who really is this Jesus 'that the wind and sea obey him?'

Fear can paralyse us, if we let it. Pope St John XXIII once wrote: 'Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Do not think about your frustrations, but instead think about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do.'

TODAY'S READINGS

JOB 3:1,8-11; 2 COR 5:14-17
MARK 4:35-41

GOD'S WORD THIS MONTH

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**JUNE
28**

13TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME



“IF I CAN JUST TOUCH HIS CLOTHES, I SHALL BE SAVED”

Telling one story within another is a common technique of St Mark. He is not a careless writer or easily distracted but he uses one story to shed light on another. A synagogue leader, a man of influence in the local community, asks Jesus to come and cure his twelve-year old daughter. While they are on their way to his house, an older woman who has been suffering from an embarrassing disease secretly touches Jesus' cloak, hoping it will convey his healing power to her.

The woman's illness is described as a haemorrhage that has lasted for twelve years. According to Jewish law, she would have been ritually unclean for all that time and there were certain things forbidden to her, such as sharing a meal with her husband or sitting on the same couch with him. She has spent a fortune in search of a cure but to no avail. She probably felt her condition was too embarrassing even to describe to a holy man like Jesus. Despite the crowd, Jesus realises that someone was trying to touch him. Healing is always a moment of personal encounter and so Jesus needs to meet her face to face, to reassure her that her faith has saved her.

The delay in reaching the girl means her condition has worsened. When news comes that she is dead Jesus insists on continuing to the house. Allowing only his three closest disciples and the girl's parents to accompany him, he goes to her death-bed, takes her by the hand and speaks a few words to her. She wakes as if from sleep and Jesus confides her to her parents. The Gospel has preserved the original words of Jesus spoken in his native language, Aramaic: Taltitha koum. Talitha is an affectionate term for a child that really means something like 'little lamb.' It is a lovely instance of Jesus' gentleness in dealing with children, like the homely reminder to get her something to eat.

TODAY'S READINGS

WIS 1:13-15, 2:23-24; 2 COR 8: 7,9,13-15; MARK 5:21-43