

## Corpus Christi (Fr Gabriel Wilson 2023)

No one was upset when Jesus called himself the vine, the Shepherd or the gate; because he was obviously speaking symbolically. But when he claimed to be the bread from heaven many walked away, outraged; because they knew Jesus was now speaking literally, and they lacked faith. Many followers walked away.

St. Charles Borromeo once said to someone who said it was just a symbol: *you say it's not the body and blood of Christ, but Our Lord said "This is my Body, this is my Blood". So who do you think I'm going to believe?'*

One day a woman for whom the eucharist was much more than a mere symbol was sitting in front of the tabernacle in a Krakow church with her shopping. A clever young Jewish woman called Edith Stein used to visit Catholic churches and she happened that day to see the woman in front of the tabernacle. Edith was suddenly struck that between that woman and the tabernacle something real was going on. There were two people present to each other.

Vat II called the eucharist '*the source and summit of Christian life*' - so faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the eucharist is central to Catholic faith. In 2019, however, a US pew poll revealed that many Catholics don't believe in the Real presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. While we can question surveys, a truth here is that it's probably why many Catholics have walked away. But of all the scandals in the Church this the only one that no one gets upset about - probably because we're all responsible?

A couple of years ago I preached about a recent approved eucharistic miracle in Buenos Aires, and a parishioner criticised me for preaching Medieval nonsense. The atheist cardiologist and pathologist, Professor Frederick Zugibe, who investigated the alleged miracle in 2005, didn't believe it was nonsense when he was eventually told that his team had investigated a consecrated host from a Catholic mass – his team's findings were so stunning that he became a Catholic. Of course we're not required to believe in every eucharistic miracle - only in *the eucharistic miracle of every mass*.

If the eucharist is *the source and summit of our faith*, then the source of all evangelisation is also the mass; we struggle with the idea of evangelisation, but the mass is our evangelisation - our attendance and devotion to mass, and how prayerfully we receive the eucharist are witnesses that evangelise us all. I think this is an important witness of those who receive communion on the tongue, according to the unchanged universal law of the Church; they aren't peculiar or anti-Vatican II; the permission (indult) to receive in the hands has been given to

us by the Church, and that's fine, but I'll defend anyone who wants to show extra care and devotion by receiving according to the law of the Church. Perhaps even our non Catholics friends who approach for a blessing might sometimes be more respectful than some Catholics. Those who want to receive communion in the traditional way are welcome here because actually their particular devotion evangelises us and reminds us of the earliest teachings of the Fathers, such as St John Chrysostom who wrote that because we can *never show enough respect* for the Blessed Sacrament we ought to show *as much as possible*.

Last Sunday was about the Trinity's relationships. If our faith calls us to relationship with God, then the mass is surely the most privileged and intense way we relate to Him because we worship Him and we receive him, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the mass. But this can easily become a careless and perfunctory habit.

If a woman with her shopping and her unspoken eucharistic devotion was enough to evangelise a young jewish woman, we do well to remember that we never know who's watching. St Edith Stein, as we now know her, converted, became a Carmelite nun and died a martyr in Auschwitz and is now patron of Europe and Doctor of the Church.

*You never know who's watching.*

Fellow Christians, how do we evangelise? Start with the source and summit of Christian life – the eucharistic miracle of every mass.

The mass is evangelisation.

If anything is going to heal the Church and evangelise those who are walking away it's a eucharistic revival.

Amen

(To find out more about the miracle of Buenos Aires:)

[The Eucharistic Miracle of Buenos Aires - YouTube](#)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLfw2yUk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLfw2yUk)