

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Today is Corpus Christi, or more properly, Corporis Christi. It is a Feast dating to the thirteenth century, making it fairly recent among the observances of the liturgical year. Soon after its first celebration, in 1264 A. ✕ D. Urban IV decreed that it be observed annually on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. It was quickly infected with medieval abuses.

Luther wrote that the Pope was worse than the Jew or the Turk because “he instituted the Corpus Christi festival in the devil’s name, to topple Christ to the ground. The Gospel of John, wrote Luther, was the Book God wrote to combat such heresy. In 1524 Luther discontinued the observance of Corpus Christi at Wittenberg.

Luther liked the Propers for Corpus Christi, which extoll God's grace shown us in the Holy Eucharist, enough to adapt them and use them on other days. What he disliked, what any Christian must dislike, was the worship of the Consecrated elements, the locking up and praying to the consecrated Host in a reliquary, and the parading of the Sacrament back and forth - Abuses that can be found to this day in Romish churches.

There is no Sacrament apart from the use for which our Lord instituted them. The Sacrament of the Altar is the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the Bread and the Wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and drink. To parade the Sacrament about, to worship the

elements, is an abuse. So Luther discontinued the observance of the feast.

The Pope wasn't the first to abuse God's gifts. Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, that Israel look on it in faith and live. It was a God-given type of Christ – with a visible element, a command of God, and a certain promise of God, it can be viewed sacramentally. But afterwards, sinful Israelites took that serpent and worshipped it, calling it Nehushtan, and burning incense to it. So although God gave it for good, faithful Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent to stop the idolatry of the people.

But there is a little Pope in all of us. It is in all of us to abuse God's good gifts. Consider our misuse of those people that God puts in our lives. Consider how wasteful we are of the things He gives. In times of want, we grumble against God. In times of plenty, we are not careful with what He gives. We confuse what we want with what we need. We take what God gives us and we make idols from it, allowing His material gifts and our pursuit of wealth to keep us away from Him, making mammon from blessing. And the greatest of His Gifts, His saving Gifts, receive the least of our attention.

And yet, unworthy as we are, sinful as we are, God, in His great mercy, bestows His gifts upon us. He forgives the sins we commit against Him. He does it by giving the Gift of His Son, who was lifted up as the bronze serpent, the lowest of all creatures raised up on a pole, that those who look upon Him in faith might receive life by the forgiveness of their sins. And

the faith that the Gospel requires, God freely gives. By water and Spirit He works forgiveness and faith in you.

But more, this day, the day of the week on which the Sacrament of the Altar was instituted, He gives you to eat of the precious Body of Jesus Christ. By Sacramental Union He adds what is heavenly to what is earthly. He places His true Body with the Bread. The Body crucified, risen and ascended He makes your food. Believing, you eat, and the eternal benefits of His death and resurrection are made yours.

He places His true Blood with the wine. Believing, you drink, and His precious Blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins, flows from the Chalice into your mouth and soul. The life is in the Blood. So by this Holy Mystery you drink forgiveness and life, as God intimately places Himself in your mouth, you who are filled with His Spirit, and you have Communion with God.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.