



ST AGNES  
LONGSIGHT

## Before the service...

### CORPUS CHRISTI

#### What is the Eucharist?

The Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion, Lord's Supper, or Mass, is the central act of Christian worship, as the Incarnation, which it commemorates and to which it responds, is the central Christian belief.

The Eucharist was **instituted by our Lord** and is one of the two principal Sacraments ordained by him. Sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual graces. In the Eucharist the outward sign is bread and wine. The thing signified is the Body and Blood of Christ who himself has said, 'This is My Body: this is My Blood'. The benefits (or graces) are the strengthening and refreshing of our souls.

The **Church of England** has always taught (Article 28) that the bread and wine are changed in some way by the act of consecration. The result of the change effected by the consecration is commonly called the Real Presence. This Real Presence of Christ is implied by Scripture, and taught by the great teachers of the early Church, (saints like Cyprian, Gregory, and Augustine - known as The Fathers). They teach us that the living Christ is personally present, and that we receive him when we receive the consecrated bread and wine.

The **Anglican churches** traditionally reject the theory of Transubstantiation (the theory that the *substance* of bread and wine changes) as well as rejecting the theory that the Eucharist is only a sign of a person's Christian profession. The Anglican position is simply that the Eucharist is a mystery which cannot be fully understood.

From Article 28:

'The **Supper of the Lord** is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with

faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.'

#### Why Adoration, Procession & Benediction?

It has always been the custom of the Church to spend a time of prayer and adoration after receiving the Sacrament. The **Procession and Adoration** which form part of this service are an extension of that prayerful reflection. We remain in the sacramental presence of Christ with thankfulness for the graces received at this Eucharist, in communion with Christ and with one another, and, in the words of the hymn, 'lost in wonder, love and praise'.

The procession becomes a **public witness** to this presence of Christ in his Church and it is done with reverence, awe and solemnity so as not to profane the Sacrament. (St Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 11 and the Church of England guards against this in Article 25 where we are reminded that the Sacrament is for our use, our life and our salvation, and not for spectacle or show.)

The act of **Benediction** at the end of the service is, as every act of Blessing is, an act of Christ himself. Ordinarily at the end of each Eucharist the words of Blessing are given by the priest as a bestowing of God's blessing and peace on to the faithful who, having received the Body and Blood of our Lord, now leave the church to carry on Christ's saving work. In the silent act of Benediction, where the sign of the Cross is made over the faithful, we receive a reminder of the healing, saving and blessing power of Christ - the gifts of the Eucharist itself.

All this is not just a re-creation or a remembering of past events. It is certainly not mere ritual, neither is it theatre. The Eucharist is a liturgy; a **work of the whole people of God**. It is a drama alive with reality and transforming power, for it is an act of worship where Christ himself comes to us in Word and Sacrament in order to transform us into his Body in the world.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,  
In the name of Christ. Amen!