



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

June 2023

Dear Friends,

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
God's Great Gift of Love

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh" (John 6. 51-52). On Sunday, June the 11th, the Church celebrates the *Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ*, also known as the *Solemnity of Corpus Christi*. This Feast that originated in France in the mid-thirteenth century and extended to the whole Church by Pope Urban IV in 1264, is associated with the commemoration of Jesus' Last Supper with his Apostles before his crucifixion, and highlights two manifestations of the Body of Christ: the Holy Eucharist and the Church.

We begin with the primary focus: the Eucharist. The opening prayer at Mass calls our attention to Jesus' suffering and death and our worship of Him, but this prayer is not unique to the *Feast of Corpus Christi*. Our attention is called to the Eucharist and the Real Presence of Christ at every Mass where we receive God's great gift of love. In the quote from the Gospel of John, Jesus describes himself as 'the living bread', revealing how profoundly he nourishes us. In his body and blood, we are nourished beyond our physical selves; we are nourished into a life-giving relationship with God.

The secondary focus is on the 'Body of Christ' as it is present in the Church. Like a physical body, the Body of Christ is a living entity. When Christ entered our world, he took on a physical body and through his physical body, Jesus demonstrated the love of God clearly and boldly. Yet, the love of God did not end with Jesus' death on the cross. The Church continues to reveal the love of God, clearly and boldly, through its many good works and deeds.

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As we approach summer, when the sun will spread its burning and illuminating light and heat over the earth, we remember that God is always with us, calling us to relationship with him through prayer and most especially, through the Eucharist; God's great gift of love.

May God continue to bless you. Have a rest-filled summer.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard W. Smith", with a stylized flourish at the end.

✠Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton