

## Sermon for Corpus Christi 2023 (First Communions)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

Today's sermon will be short, not because kids can't listen for as long as adults, but because we have lots to do. Today is very special: Beatrice, Edward, Roger, and Rose will be admitted to Holy Communion for the first time.

It's also a special day because it's the feast of Corpus Christi. "Corpus Christi" means "body of Christ" in Latin. It's one of my very favourite feast days, because we give thanks for the gift of the eucharist, which is another name for Holy Communion, and also because we get to do Benediction at the end. I'll talk about that a bit later.

So what do we do to prepare to take communion, for the first time or the hundredth time or the thousandth time? First, we read and think about the story of Jesus: his life, his death, and his resurrection.

The four of you have been going through this story with your parents at home over the last few weeks, and I hope you have been asking them very hard questions.

Beatrice said to me on Saturday that she was sad we were done preparing for her first communion, because she thought that meant we would have to stop talking about the Bible. But of course we don't have to stop. Like all the best stories, the story of God's love in the world is worth reading and thinking about again and again. And being Christians means we all have the chance to keep exploring it as long as we live. We will discover new things every time we read it.

The very last passage we looked at as we prepared was the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, in Luke's gospel. Some of the big questions that come out of this story are about what it means to be a disciple, and what holy communion means for each of us. Being a disciple means receiving communion often, once a week or maybe even more, because breaking bread with Jesus was very important for the first disciples. After he had risen from the dead, Jesus walked and talked with them for a while, but they only realised who he really was when he shared a meal with them.

At holy communion, we are reminded of his last meal before he died, and the way in which he took bread, and blessed it, and shared it with his friends. He said, "This is my body" about the bread, and "This is my blood" about the wine, so we recognise him in those things when they are consecrated by a priest. And in taking that bread and wine, we are very close to him indeed. We actually hold his body in our hands for a moment. We should feel very special and very happy when we receive

communion, especially the very first time, because we are close to Jesus, who was not only a very important person, but also God.

He set a perfect example of what being human should be like. We can't live without him, which is why we not only meet him at communion, but we can also spend time with him at Benediction. That is when a consecrated host, a piece of bread that has been made holy with his presence, is put in a big spiky object called a monstrance. We kneel in front of it, and we talk quietly to God in our hearts as we think about the mystery of the presence of God.

Some of us are just starting out on our Christian journeys and some of us have been walking with Jesus for a long time. But no matter how long we've known him, he is always there for us whenever we need him, and even when we forget. Beatrice, Edmund, Roger, and Rose: God bless you as you begin this new phase of your journey as disciples of Jesus Christ.