



From the Pastor  
June 2, 2024  
Solemnity of the  
Most Holy Body &  
Blood of Christ - B

**A BRIEF HISTORY.**

Today's Solemnity, once called 'Corpus Christi,' was only added to the Church's Universal Calendar in 1317, to address the lack of reverence for, and misunderstanding of, the Most Holy Eucharist. I believe the decline in our belief in Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist was at its worst in the early days of the Protestant Reformation, but these days, many Catholics seem unaware of the full meaning of the Blessed Sacrament. Anyway, the roots of 'Corpus Christi' date back much further than 1317. Saint Thomas Aquinas [†: 1274] wrote many of the orations that were eventually used for this day, and Saint Juliana had already called for a day honoring the Blessed Sacrament in 1246. And the Sainly Bishop we honor this week beat them; here is the Collect from the holy Mass offered in his honor:

**Collect - Saint Norbert, Bishop**

O God, who made the Bishop Saint Norbert a servant of your Church outstanding in his prayer and pastoral zeal, grant, we ask, that by the help of his intercession, the flock of the faithful may always find shepherds after your own heart and be fed in the pastures of salvation. Through our Lord Jesus ... for ever and ever. Amen.

**KEEP CHRIST'S REAL PRESENCE CENTRAL.**

Born around 1080 in the Rhineland or present Germany, Saint Norbert enjoyed the perks and privileges of nobility, seeking his own pleasure in all his endeavors. He even became a Lay Church Canon so he could live 'the good life!' However, like Saint Paul, he was literally knocked to the ground; in his case, during a storm, his horse threw him off its back - and back to his senses. In this, he heard God's call to change his life - which he did - and was Ordained a Priest in 1115.

After giving everything to the poor, Saint Norbert sought and received papal permission to be an itinerant preacher. At first, his strict rule of life [he walked barefoot, even in winter!] did not gain him many followers, but it did earn him the respect of others. So, a Bishop offered him land to form his own Community - the first [recorded] to have non-Ordained or Lay Affiliates - which enabled married men to don religious garb, the

scapular, and join in monastic-type prayers and ministries.

**REAWAKENING RESPECT FOR OUR LORD'S REAL PRESENCE IN THE EUCHARIST.** Knowing that his best efforts were futile with God's grace, he made the greatest source of Divine assistance: the Eucharist, the center of his Order's life.

Although not customary or required at the time, Saint Norbert celebrated holy Mass every day. He insisted that Altars, where the Consecration took place, and Sanctuaries, where the Blessed Sacrament was now being reserved, be immaculately clean as befits the Guest whose Real Presence was 'housed' in the Tabernacle.

The use of a Tabernacle to reserve the Blessed Sacrament began in the earliest centuries; some were in the form of doves or even pelicans which literally peck off their flesh to feed their young, as Christ feeds us with His Sacred Body. Until the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, a simple niche or cabinet in the Sanctuary was used; to encourage proper respect, more elaborate Tabernacles and Sacred Vessels evolved after that. Saint Norbert, as seen above, is often depicted holding a monstrance or a ciborium with the Blessed Sacrament within it.

**HE BECAME WHAT - OR WHO HE RECEIVED.**

When he was elected Archbishop, he headed to his new Residence in penitential garb; the porter tried to send him away, thinking he was a beggar. To calm the embarrassed porter, he said, "Fear not ... for you know me better than all those who have raised me to this high dignity." He chose a remote, obscure site for his first monastery, just as Jesus - for most of His earthly life - and in the Eucharist - is 'hidden' from our sight. Like Jesus, who bore the pain of our sins, Saint Norbert stood in the breach to prevent a potential schism between two rival Popes. He did not allow criticism to stop him from calling sinners to repent or proclaiming the truth, which he did with respect, even for those who violently opposed him. After a life truly lived in gratitude for God's countless gifts ['Eucharist' means 'thanksgiving'] he died on June 6, 1134, at the age of 53. He was not canonized until 1582, almost 450 years later, in response to the Protestant Reformer's denial of our Lord's Real Presence which he had defended and promoted! Through his intercession, may we better understand and celebrate the Eucharist!

Saint Norbert, pray for us.

In Christ,

*Father Mark*