

St Mary's, Dorchester, Thursday 4th June 2026 i.e. the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Genesis 14:18-20

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 6:51-58

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

Today is the Feast of Corpus Christi, the Celebration of the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. It's one of several festivals that come up in our calendar which we celebrate on the day, rather than transferring them to the nearest Sunday (or just ignoring them). I enjoy making time for these feasts, and I'm glad that to be part of a community that makes time for them.

That said, however, having an evening Eucharist makes mealtimes at the Vicarage a little tricky. Lydia and I usually eat our main meal somewhere between six and seven o'clock, and we like to linger over it as we digest our food; as we do that, we're also digesting the events of the day. A service at seven interrupts our digestion. That's particularly ironic this evening, for reasons that I'd like to explore.

The authors of the New Testament use three Greek verbs to talk about eating; between them they come up more than a hundred and fifty times [*esthio*, 65 occurrences; *phago*, 93 occurrences]. The third of these verbs, *trogo*, is much rarer than the other two: it only comes up six times in the whole New Testament, and four of those uses are in the Gospel we just heard. You might be able to guess this from the fact that it's only used six times, but *trogo* isn't a word you would normally use to describe humans eating things: *trogo* is more like the way that livestock eat, taking a lot of time, chewing something over, ruminating on it.

It's used four times in the reading we just heard. Interestingly, the other two times it's used, this eating word has a bitter aftertaste. In Matthew chapter twenty-four, Jesus is teaching his friends about what we call the End Times. He imagines how surprised people were by the great Flood, when only Noah's family were saved. While Noah was preparing the ark, Jesus says, everyone else was "eating and drinking" as usual until they were suddenly swept away [Matthew 24:38]. They were of course eating "livestock fashion": the implication is that they were complacently indulging themselves. The other time the word is used is in John chapter thirteen. The meal in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday was probably quite tense anyway, and Jesus makes it worse by saying that "the one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me" [John 13:18, quoting Psalm 41:9]. Judas' betrayal feels worse because he and Jesus have shared so many long meals together – it's *trogo* again.

In both of these cases, we're talking about eating in a way that takes time. It's a habit that you develop over long hours eating with a particular group – for good or ill. There's a clear contrast here with another famous biblical meal: the Passover meal, which – God tells Moses – should be eaten hurriedly, as if you might need to walk out of the door at any moment [Exodus 12:11].

But Jesus wants people to take time over this meal:

This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate [ephagon], and they died. But the one who eats [trogon] this bread will live forever. [John 6:58]

In a few minutes we will celebrate the Eucharist together as we normally do on a Sunday. But tonight, just before I begin distributing the Blessed Sacrament, we will observe a few minutes of devotion. I'm going to place the consecrated bread in a special device called a monstrance (which comes from the Latin word for "showing"), and then we will simply abide for a while with the Sacrament in silence before we eat. You may wish to let your eyes rest on the monstrance; or perhaps read the words of a favourite Eucharistic hymn. I really like *Sweet Sacrament Divine*, number three-oh-seven in our green books.

Christians have always believed that there are different ways of receiving the Sacrament. This adoration is our spiritual Communion, and as we adore him, we are making time for the Sacrament to do its work in us: not just in our guts, but in our hearts and our minds. Jesus Christ always makes himself available to us in this way; so let us take time with him, receiving our true life, with thanksgiving.

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