

The Gospel for All Ages



Future Seasonal Events

Fall 2009
A Harvest Celebration
Available Aug. 1

Advent/Christmas
**Filling Valleys –
Getting Ready for
Christmas**

Available Nov. 1, 2009

Lent/Easter
Peace Be With You
Available Feb. 1, 2010



I Am the Bread of Life

A Corpus Christi Parish Party—Outline and Tips

Little Blanche Carlson came home from her last catechism class for the year. She tucked her textbook into the catchall shelf in the family room and announced to everyone in earshot. “Mrs. Reilly said that we have no religion all summer!” Blanche’s mother smiled at the choice of words. She knew what Mrs. Reilly had said, but she was also keenly aware of what her daughter had heard.

The lazy days of summer certainly do provide a special challenge for those who are part of a parish-wide catechetical program. Except for *Sunday by Sunday*, there are no weekly booklets to pass out. There are no scheduled classes. In fact, in most parishes activity winds down during the summer. Sometimes the choir gets the summer off. Attendance at Mass tapers off. The pastoral team slips off one by one for some well-deserved vacation. You may have a vacation church school, but that usually is scheduled right after regular school lets out.

This inactivity can give the impression that somehow sharing faith and announcing the Gospel are just a little less important during June, July, and August. And yet, summertime is filled with hope – especially for the children. The long days lend themselves to relaxation – even for grown-ups.

For parishes involved in parish-wide catechesis, the summer can be a great time for family sharing. The extra daylight and slower pace provide a chance for families to discover the glories of creation and the great saving love of Jesus Christ. The activities of the summer can be sacramental moments. Each activity can be done with joy and with the realization that for people of faith life is holy, and life’s activities are all opportunities to grow in faith and love – even activities that don’t particularly have a religious ring to them:

- Picnics and barbecues
- Evening walks
- Family chores
- Day trips and outings
- Listening to music
- Hanging out
- Sunday outings
- Sports and games
- Afternoons at the beach
- And many, many more

A SUMMER GATHERING

Even though parish life slows down during the summer, *The Gospel for All Ages* recommends planning an intergenerational event early in the summer. One of the summer feasts that provides an ideal opportunity is the feast of *Corpus Christi – The Body of Christ!* This year Corpus Christi falls on Thursday, June 11. In most places it will be celebrated on Sunday, June 14.

The form of this summer gathering can be a summer picnic or a day at the beach or an imaginary cruise. It can be held on a Sunday afternoon or on an evening. What is important is that your gathering be as much fun as humanly possible. Open up the party to everyone in the parish – not just the folks using the *Pflaum Gospel*



Weeklies, Spirit, or Sunday by Sunday. (Hint: This party is just the thing to get more families involved in *The Gospel for All Ages* come the fall.)

This gathering will take place after the last issues of most of our periodicals have been used and discussed, but that doesn't mean that you won't be able use activities from them or to attest to their value for sharing faith throughout the whole community.

Note: If your gathering is not held on *Corpus Christi* Sunday, you may want to include the celebration of the Mass before the gathering. If it is held on Sunday, the participants will already have been to Mass. One suggestion – to underline the Eucharistic theme – would be to conclude with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the parish church.

The theme, "I Am the Bread of Life," is taken from The Gospel of John:

I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 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 6:48-51

You can use the theme in all the promotional activities for your party. It is a reminder that the Eucharist is the very center of Catholic life. It also will serve to ensure that you get good attendance at your summer event. Even so, the purpose of this gathering is not to fill the hall or the parking lot or the parish church. The purpose is to provide an intergenerational event that demonstrates that parish-wide catechesis lasts the whole year long.

PLANNING TIPS

The following tips will help you get ready for your *Corpus Christi* parish party.

Start now. It might be difficult for you to start planning a summer party while it is still Lent or Easter. Nonetheless, by the time your catechetical program begins folding its tent, you need to have everything ready for your party.

Set the date. Once summer begins to set in, people's calendars start to fill up with family events. Make sure that everyone knows about the date and is starting to get excited about this wonderful party to celebrate the gift of the Eucharist.

Create a team. It is important that there is a team in place. You may already have people who form an event team for your parish. If you have been planning intergenerational events as part of *The Gospel for All Ages* all year long, then you no doubt have quite a list of volunteers. It is critical that nobody carry too much of a burden for this party. Be sure to delegate, delegate, delegate.

Shout from the housetops. No person in the parish should be ignorant of this wonderful event you are planning. It is up to you and your team to communicate the "be there or be square" importance of this celebration.

Set up an exhibit. One important element of this summer party might be to set up some tables (in a ministry-fair atmosphere) that showcase all the ministries of the parish – catechetical, liturgical, social, and service to the community as a whole. If you do set up exhibits, be sure to budget time into the event for people to wander around to view the exhibits.

Food. It is hard to fathom an event such as this without food. You may want to do more about the food than you have at other intergenerational events. First of all, you might want to have an actual picnic or potluck lunch.

A procession is in order. One of the great traditions of the feast of the Body of Christ is a procession through the parish to witness in a most public way to the Catholic belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. If your parish is not accustomed to having such a procession, you might consider having one in association with this event. If your parish does have such a procession, you might want to link your event to the procession.





Event Materials. You will need some materials for your parish party.

- Name tags and pens
- Simple programs containing the schedule of events
- A sound system
- Music—both sacred and “good ole summertime” music
- Art supplies for the dancing, singing, or activity time
- Decorations—remember just how important atmosphere is for any of these intergenerational events.

Appoint a leader for the celebration. Remember that you need somebody who will provide more than just instructions. He or she will have to be the people wrangler for this event and should have the requisite personality and crowd control skills.

Create the space. Weather permitting; it would be just grand if as much as possible of this event could be held outside.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR THE *CORPUS CHRISTI* PARTY

You need to plan some flexibility into this event. If you are going to include a procession with the Blessed Sacrament, that should take place before the sharing, games, and party. Normally such a procession would take an hour or so. The parish team needs to be involved because there are liturgical norms that need to be followed in the celebration of this procession. If you are not having the procession, then the event should take no more than two hours—including the meal and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the end.

The following schedule outline covers the party and the sharing to be held after the procession or before benediction. The schedule also assumes that the event will take place on the afternoon of June 18. *Note:* If there is to be a procession, everybody goes to the party venue immediately after the procession is finished.

- 2:30 Welcome and gathering
- 2:40 A brief presentation that focuses on faith in the Eucharist
- 3:00 A time for responses, comments, or questions
- 3:15 Dancing, singing, games, or activities
- 4:00 Meal and dessert
- 4:30 Closing prayer or Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

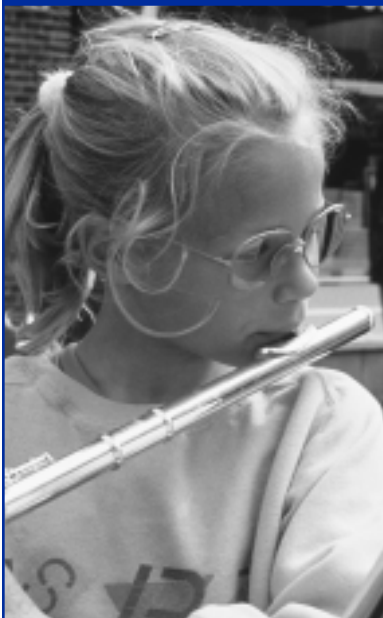
IDEAS FOR THE AFTERNOON'S EVENTS

Welcome and Gathering. Be sure to have clear directions to where the party is taking place. Have bright and cheery music playing. Greeters can help with getting the participants signed in. It is okay for people to stay in their family groups. When everyone has arrived, have the pastor, the deacon, or the catechetical leader greet everyone in the name of the parish. He or she can then briefly describe the purpose of the gathering

A Brief Presentation. You are only limited by your imagination as to just what format this presentation can take. It can be a brief homily, a slide show, even a film. The presentation should center on the great gift of the Eucharist. It should serve to inspire young and old alike. It can recall all the events of the past catechetical year – from autumn through Advent and Christmas to Lent and Easter and Pentecost. Now, at the onset of summer, the Catholic community takes time out to publicly profess faith in Christ present in the Eucharist – Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. The presentation should include the proclamation of the Gospel and two gospel questions. Here is the Gospel from the Feast of the Body of Christ (Cycle B):

Gospel – Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the paschal lamb, the disciples said to Jesus, “Where do you wish us to go





to prepare the Passover supper for you?" He sent two of his disciples with these instructions: "Go into the city and you will come upon a man carrying a water jar. Follow him. Whatever house he enters, say to the owner, 'The Teacher asks, where is your guestroom where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' Then he will show you an upstairs room, spacious, furnished, and all in order. That is the place you are to get ready for us." The disciples went off. When they reached the city they found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover supper.

During the meal, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. "Take this," he said, "this is my body." He likewise took a cup, and gave thanks and passed to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them: "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant to be poured out on behalf of many. I solemnly assure you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the reign of God."

After singing songs of praise, they walked out to the Mount of Olives.

Then spend a few minutes of sharing about the Gospel – about what it must have been like for the disciples to hear those words from Jesus the very first time. Share, too, about how all the people of the parish can show their love and devotion to the Eucharist.

Then move on to the questions:

What does Jesus' gift of his Body and Blood mean to you?

How does your faith in the Eucharist help you announce the Good News about God's reign to others?

Allow some time for family sharing on the questions and for some public testimony or questions.

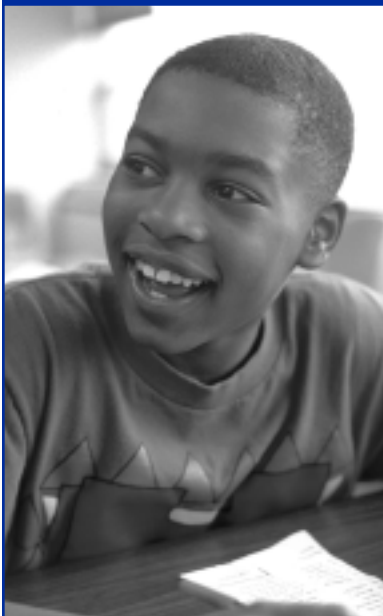
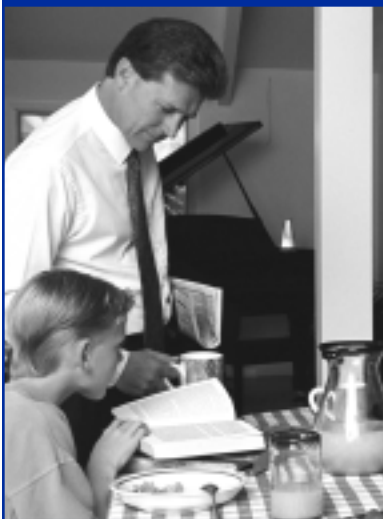
Dancing, Singing, Games, or Activities. Right after the time for sharing the questions, move into the time for play. One of the best ways to get things started would be with some large group dance. This is not the sock-hop or ballroom type of dancing. Try some form of movement or dance that reflects the ethnic character of your parish. Polish, Irish, Hispanic, African-American, and most cultures have "called" dances. You might even borrow a page from the Jewish community. If all else fails, you can make up simple square dance calls to get people moving and swaying to the music. Just don't make it too complex. Your dancing may not meet the standards for international Texas Two-Step competition, but it will be fun, friendly, and joyous. Be sure to involve everybody in the dance. People in wheel chairs or otherwise disabled can participate, too. Be creative.

After the dancing move quickly to an old-fashioned sing-along. You might even mix a few summer camp favorites with some of the parish's most beloved hymns. Finally, have some different area where children and adults can join in some simple games – Frisbee, yard games, musical chairs, and the like. The purpose here is to have 45 minutes of good clean fun prior to the meal.

The Meal. By now the folks will all be hungry. Conclude the fun time with a simple meal prayer that focuses the attention on just how wonderful it is to belong to the Body of Christ. Be sure to serve the food cafeteria style because that allows people to mix and mingle. Encourage folks to make new friends during the meal. Have music playing during the feasting time. It is also a good idea for the catechetical team and the parish team to "work the room" during the meal. They can talk to the families about their experience of *The Gospel for All Ages* during the year, what they thought about the intergenerational events, and so forth.

When dessert has been shared, encourage everyone to help with a quick clean up. When that clean up has been accomplished, gather everyone in a group.

Closing Prayer or Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. If there will be no Benediction, end with a short prayer and a familiar Eucharistic hymn. If there is to





be Benediction, get everyone singing the hymn as the entire group moves into the parish church for the celebration of Benediction. Just before the service begins, the leader can point out the wonderful Catholic tradition of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Then celebrate Benediction according to your parish's tradition.

CONCLUSION

Remember that this is only an outline and a few tips. Use your own genius to make this party the talk of the parish. The bonding, play, eating, and praying will all reap great benefits for the parish. It is also a great way to make sure that your fellow parishioners don't make the same mistake Blanche Carlson made. They will know that there **is** religion all summer long.

PROMOTIONAL PLAN

If you experienced nothing else during this year with *The Gospel for All Ages*, you have learned about the need to promote the program to the parish. The *Corpus Christi* party is no exception. Make sure that every person in the parish is aware of this celebration and wants to be part of it.

Posters and Signs. People need visual reminders. Get some signs posted all around the parish to announce the *Corpus Christi* event. If the merchants are willing, post signs in stores frequented by parish members.

Parish Bulletin. It is important to get publicity about this event in the bulletin as soon as possible. You may want to wait with the bulletin announcements until after Easter Sunday – but not much later than that.

The Mail. If your parish does mailings, be sure to get announcements about the summer event in as soon as you can so families will reserve the date. It would be ideal if some creative soul creates an attractive flyer that can be displayed on every refrigerator in the parish.

Telephone Tree. People love to receive a personal invitation. Get some volunteers to call the households in the parish and personally invite them to your *Corpus Christi* event.

The Bully Pulpit. Make invitations to the party part of the Sunday announcements running up to the event.

The Grapevine. Every parish has its ways of getting the word out. Make sure that *The Gospel for All Ages* summer event is buzzed throughout the neighborhoods.

Parish Staff. Make sure that it is not just the catechetical team that is promoting the *Corpus Christi* party. The pastor, the deacon, and (most assuredly) the parish secretary can all take it upon themselves to promote the event at every opportunity.

