



The Holy See

HOLY MASS, PROCESSION TO SAINT MARY MAJOR AND EUCHARISTIC BLESSING ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Saint John Lateran Square

Thursday, 4 June 2015

[Multimedia]

We heard: how at the [Last] Supper Jesus gives his Body and his Blood through the bread and wine, to leave us the memorial of his sacrifice of infinite love. And with this “Viaticum” filled with grace, the disciples had everything necessary for their journey through history, to extend to all the Kingdom of God. The gift that Jesus made of himself, by his voluntary immolation on the Cross, will be light and strength for them. And this Bread of Life has come down to us! The Church’s amazement at this reality is unending. An astonishment which always feeds contemplation, adoration, and memory. This is shown to us by a really beautiful text from today’s Liturgy, the Responsory to the Second Reading from the Office of Readings, which reads: “*See in this bread the body of Christ which hung upon the cross, and in this cup the blood which flowed from his side. Take his body, then, and eat it; take his blood and drink it, and you will become his members. The body of Christ is the bond which unites you to him: eat it, or you will have no part in him. The blood is the price he paid for your redemption: drink it, lest you despair of your sinfulness*”.

There is a danger, there is a threat: to have no part in him, to despair. What does it mean today, this “*to have no part in him*” and “*to despair*”?

We *have no part in him* when we are not docile to the Word of the Lord, when we do not live in fraternity among ourselves, when we compete for first place — climbers — when we do not find the courage to witness to charity, when we are incapable of offering hope. This is when we have no part in him. The Eucharist enables us to abide in him, for it is the bond which unites us to him, it is the fulfillment of the Covenant, the living sign of the love of Christ who humbled and lowered himself in order that we remain united. Participating in the Eucharist and being nourished of him,

we are included in a journey which admits no division. Christ present in our midst, in the sign of the bread and wine, demands that the power of love overcome every laceration, and at the same time that it also become communion with the poorest, support for the weak, fraternal attention to those who have difficulty in bearing the weight of daily life, and are in danger of losing their faith.

And then the other phrase: what does it mean for us today to “*despair*”, or to water down our Christian dignity? It means allowing ourselves to be undermined by the idolatries of our time: appearances, consumerism, egocentrism; but also competitiveness, arrogance as a winning attitude, never admitting to mistakes or to being in need. All this leads us to despair, making us mediocre Christians, lukewarm, bland, pagans.

Jesus poured out his Blood as the price and the laver, so that we might be purified of all sin: not to lose hope, let us look to Him, drink at his font, to be shielded from the risk of corruption. Then we will feel the grace of transformation: we will always be poor sinners, but the Blood of Christ will free us from our sins and restore our dignity. It will free us from corruption. Not by our merit, with sincere humility, we will be able to bring our brothers the love of our Lord and Saviour. We will be his eyes which go in search of Zacchaeus and Mary Magdalene; we will be his hand which soothes those who are sick in body and spirit; we will be his heart which loves those in need of reconciliation, mercy and understanding.

Thus the Eucharist fulfills the Covenant which sanctifies us, purifies us and unites us in worthy communion with God. Thus we learn that the Eucharist is not a prize for the good, but is strength for the weak, for sinners. It is forgiveness, it is the Viaticum that helps us to move forward, to walk.

Today, the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, we have the joy not only to celebrate this mystery, but also to praise it and sing it through the streets of our City. May the procession we will make at the end of Mass express our gratitude for the whole journey that God has made us travel through the desert of our poverty, to deliver us from servitude, nourishing us with his Love through the Sacrament of his Body and his Blood.

Soon, while we walk along the street, we will feel we are in communion with so many of our brothers and sisters who do not have the freedom to express their faith in the Lord Jesus. Let us feel united with them: let us sing with them, praise with them, adore with them. And let us venerate in our heart those brothers and sisters of whom the supreme sacrifice was demanded for faithfulness to Christ: may their blood united with the Lord's be a pledge of peace and reconciliation for the entire world.

And let us not forget: “The body of Christ is the bond which unites you to him: eat it, or you will have no part in him. The blood is the price he paid for your redemption: drink it, lest you despair of your sinfulness”.

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