



The Holy See

MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST HOLY MASS, PROCESSION AND EUCHARISTIC BLESSING

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Archbasilica of Saint John Lateran
Sunday, 2 June 2024

[Multimedia]

“He took bread and blessed it” (*Mk 14:22*). In this way, Saint Mark’s Gospel begins the account of the institution of the Eucharist. Starting, then, from this gesture of Jesus blessing bread, we can reflect on three aspects of the mystery we are celebrating: *thanksgiving*, *remembrance* and *presence*.

First, *thanksgiving*. Indeed, the word “Eucharist” means “thanks”: “giving thanks” to God for his gifts. Thus, the sign of bread is important, for it is the food of daily life, and with it we bring to the altar all that we are and all that we have: our lives, work, successes, and failures too. This is symbolized in some cultures by the beautiful custom of picking up and kissing bread if it falls to the ground, in order to remind us that it is too precious to be thrown away, even after it has fallen. The Eucharist, then, teaches us always to bless, welcome and cherish God’s gifts as an act of thanksgiving; not only in celebration, but also in daily life.

An example would be not squandering the possessions and talents the Lord has given us. Likewise, we should forgive and support those who make mistakes and fall because of weakness or lapses, acknowledging that everything is a gift and nothing should be lost, that no one should be left behind, and that everyone deserves a chance to get back on their feet. We can do this in daily life, performing our work with love, precision, and care, recognizing it as a gift and mission. And always helping those who have fallen: the only time we can look down on someone is when we help him or her to rise again. This is our mission.

To be sure, we could add many other things for which to *give thanks*. These are important “Eucharistic” attitudes since they teach us to appreciate the value of what we are doing and offering.

First, then, *thanksgiving*. Second, “to bless bread” means *to remember*. What do we remember? For ancient Israel, this meant recalling the liberation from slavery in Egypt and the beginning of the exodus to the Promised Land. For us, it means remembering Christ’s Passover, his Passion and Resurrection, by which he freed us from sin and death. It means remembering our lives, successes, mistakes, the outstretched hand of the Lord who always helps us get back on our feet, the Lord’s presence in our lives.

There are some who say that true freedom means thinking only about ourselves, enjoying life doing whatever we want without regard for others. This is not freedom, but a hidden form of slavery, a slavery that enslaves us still more.

Yet freedom is not found in the security vaults of those who hoard wealth for themselves, nor on the couches of those who lazily indulge in disengagement and individualism. Freedom is found in the Upper Room where, motivated solely by love, we bend down to serve others, offering our lives as “saved” people.

Finally, the Eucharistic bread is the real *presence*. This speaks to us of a God who is not distant, who is not jealous, but close and in solidarity with humanity; a God who does not abandon us but always seeks, waits for, and accompanies us, even to the point of placing himself, helpless, into our hands. And his real presence also invites us to be close to our brothers and sisters wherever love calls us.

Brothers and sisters, our world desperately needs this bread, with its fragrance and aroma, which knows about gratitude, freedom and closeness! Every day we see too many streets that were once filled with the smell of freshly baked bread, but are now reduced to rubble by war, selfishness and indifference! We urgently need to bring back to our world the good, fresh aroma of the bread of love, to continue tirelessly to hope and rebuild what hatred destroys.

This is also the meaning of the gesture we will soon make with the Eucharistic Procession. Beginning from the altar, we will carry the Lord among the homes of our city. We are not doing this to show off, or to flaunt our faith but to invite everyone to participate, in the Bread of the Eucharist, in the new life that Jesus has given us. Let us process in this spirit. Thank you.