



The Holy See

MASS AND EUCHARISTIC PROCESSION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Thursday, 30 May 2002

1. *"Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem, lauda ducem et pastorem in hymnis et canticis": "Praise your Saviour, Zion, praise with hymns and canticles, Christ, your king and shepherd".*

With faith and devotion we have sung these words of the traditional Sequence that forms part of the liturgy of Corpus Christi.

Today is a solemn feast, a feast on which we relive the first Sacred Supper. With a public and solemn act, we glorify and adore the Bread and the Wine become the true Body and true Blood of the Redeemer. *"Signs not things are all we see"*, the Sequence stresses, but *"here beneath these signs lie hidden priceless things"*.

2. *"Special theme for glad thanksgiving is the lifegiving Bread set before you today".*

Today we are celebrating a solemn feast that expresses the *awesome wonder of the People of God*: a wonder filled with gratitude for the gift of the Eucharist. In the Sacrament of the Altar, Jesus wanted to perpetuate his living presence in our midst in the same form in which he gave himself to the Apostles in the Upper Room. He left to us what he did at the Last Supper and we faithfully renew his action.

According to established custom, the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi* consists of two moments: the Mass, in which the offering of the Sacrifice takes place and the procession, that manifests the public adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

3. "*Obedient to his command, we consecrate the Bread and wine, our sacrifice of salvation*". Above all, we renew the *memorial* of Christ's Passover.

Days, years and centuries go by, but this most holy act in which Jesus condensed his entire Gospel of love does not pass away. He never ceases to offer himself, the Lamb immolated and risen, for the salvation of the world. With this memorial *the Church responds to the command* of God's Word, which we heard in the First Reading: "*Remember ... Do not forget*" (Dt 8,2.14).

The Eucharist is our living Memorial. In the Eucharist, as the Council recalls, "is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself our Pasch and the living bread which gives life to men through his flesh - that flesh which is given life and gives life through the Holy Spirit. Thus men are invited and led to offer themselves, their works and all creation with Christ ..." (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 5).

From the Eucharist, "the source and the summit of all preaching of the Gospel" (*ibid.*), even our Church of Rome must daily draw the strength and enthusiasm for her missionary action and for every form of Christian witness in the world.

4. "*Good shepherd, True Bread, have mercy on us, nourish and defend us*".

Good Shepherd, you will shortly pass through the streets of our city. On this feast, *every city*, metropolis or small village, *becomes spiritually Zion, the Jerusalem* who praises the Saviour: they are the new People of God, gathered from every nation and nourished with the one Bread of life.

This People has need of the Eucharist. Indeed, it is the Eucharist that makes the People a missionary Church. But *is it possible without priests*, who renew the Eucharistic mystery? This is why, on this solemn day, I invite you to pray for the success of the *diocesan ecclesial convocation* to be held in the Basilica of St John starting on Monday (June 3), that will give special attention to the theme of vocations to the priesthood and to consecrated life.

Young Romans! I repeat to you the words I addressed to the young people gathered at Tor Vergata during the World Youth Day 2000. "If any of you, dear young men and women hear the Lord's inner call to give yourselves completely to him in order to love him "with an undivided heart" (cf. I Cor 7,34) do not be held back by doubts or fears. Say "yes' with courage and without reserve, trusting him who is faithful to his promises" (cf. *Homily*, n. 6).

5. "*Ave verum Corpus, natum de Maria Virgine*" ("*Hail true Body, born of the Virgin Mary*"). *We adore you, our Redeemer who became incarnate in the pure womb of the Virgin Mary. To the most important Marian church of the West, the Basilica of St Mary Major, we will move in solemn procession.*

We give you thanks, Lord, for your Eucharistic presence in the world. For us you accepted suffering and on the cross you manifested your love for all humanity to the very end. We adore you, daily viaticum for us, all pilgrims on earth.

"You who know and can do all things, who nourish us on earth, lead your brothers and sisters to the table of heaven to be fellow heirs and guests with your saints forever". Amen.

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