



The Holy See

HOLY MASS ON THE SOLEMNITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

Saint John Lateran Square

Thursday, 19 June 2014

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“The Lord your God ... fed you with manna, which you did not know” (Dt 8:2-3).

These words from Deuteronomy make reference to the history of the Israelites, whom God led out of Egypt, out of slavery, and for 40 years led through the desert toward the promised land. Once established on the land, the Chosen People attain a certain autonomy, a certain wellbeing, and run *the risk of forgetting* the harrowing events of the past, overcome thanks to God’s intervention and to his infinite goodness. And so the Scriptures urge the people to recall, to remember, *to memorize*, the entire walk through the desert, in times of famine and desperation. The command of Moses is to return to the basics, to the experience of total dependence on God, when survival was placed in his hands, so the people would understand that “man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord” (Dt 8:3).

Besides physical hunger, man experiences another hunger, a hunger that cannot be satiated with ordinary food. It’s a hunger for life, a hunger for love, a hunger for eternity. And the sign of *manna* — like the entire experience of Exodus — also contains in itself this dimension: it was the symbol of a food that satisfies this deep human hunger. Jesus gives us this food, rather, *He himself is the living bread* that gives life to the world (cf. Jn 6:51). His Body is the true food in the form of bread; his Blood is the true drink in the form of wine. It isn’t simple nourishment to satisfy the body, like manna; the Body of Christ is the bread of the last times, capable of giving life, eternal life, because this bread is made of love.

The Eucharist communicates the Lord's love for us: a love so great that it nourishes us with Himself; a freely given love, always available to every person who hungers and needs to regenerate his own strength. To live the experience of faith means to allow oneself to be nourished by the Lord and to build one's own existence not with material goods but with the reality that does not perish: the gifts of God, his Word and his Body.

If we look around, we realize that there are *so many offers of food* which do not come from the Lord and which appear to be more satisfying. Some nourish themselves with money, others with success and vanity, others with power and pride. But the food that truly nourishes and satiates us is only that which the Lord gives us! The food the Lord offers us is different from other food, and perhaps it doesn't seem as flavourful to us as certain other dishes the world offers us. So we dream of other dishes, like the Hebrews in the desert, who longed for the meat and onions they ate in Egypt, but forgot that they had eaten those meals at the table of slavery. In those moments of temptation, they had a memory, but a sick memory, a selective memory. A slave memory, not a free one.

We, today, may ask ourselves: what about me? *Where do I want to eat?* At which table do I want to be nourished? At the Lord's table? Or do I dream about eating flavourful foods, but in slavery? Moreover, we may ask ourselves: what do I recall? The Lord who saves me, or the garlic and onions of slavery? Which recollection satiates my soul?

The Father tells us: "I fed you with manna, which you did not know". Let us recover this memory. This is the task, to recover that memory. And let us learn to recognize the false bread that deceives and corrupts, because it comes from selfishness, from self-reliance and from sin.

Soon, in the *procession*, we will follow Jesus truly present in the Eucharist. The Host is our manna, through which the Lord gives himself to us. We turn to Him with faith: Jesus, defend us from the temptation of worldly food which enslaves us, tainted food; purify our memory, so it isn't imprisoned in selfish and worldly selectivity, but that it may be a *living memory of your presence* throughout the history of your people, a memory that makes a "monument" of your gesture of redeeming love. Amen.