



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Thursday 14 June 2001

1. "*Ecce panis Angelorum, / factus cibus viatorum: / vere panis filiorum*" "*Behold the bread of angels, as pilgrims' food inherited, it is the bread of all true heirs*" (Sequence).

Today the Church shows the world the *Corpus Christi* - the Body of Christ. And she invites us to adore him: *Venite adoremus* - Come let us adore him.

The attention of believers is focused on the Sacrament in which Christ has left himself: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. It is the reason for considering it as the holiest reality: "the Blessed Sacrament", living memorial of the redeeming Sacrifice.

On the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, we return to that "Thursday" which we call "Holy", on which the Redeemer celebrated his last Passover with the disciples: it was the Last Supper, fulfilling the Jewish passover supper and inaugurating the Eucharistic rite.

For this reason, for centuries the Church has chosen Thursday for the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, feast of adoration, contemplation and exaltation. On the feast the People of God draw close to the most precious treasure left by Christ, the Sacrament of his own Presence, and they praise, celebrate and carry it in procession through the streets of our cities.

2. "*Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem!*" "*Praise, O Sion, your Redeemer*". (Sequence).

The new Sion, the spiritual Jerusalem in which God's children are gathered from every nation, language and culture, praises our Saviour with hymns and canticles. Indeed, wonder and gratitude for the gift received are inexhaustible. This gift "exceeds all praise, there is no hymn worthy of it"

(*ibid.*).

It is a sublime and ineffable mystery, a mystery before which we remain astonished and silent, in a state of deep and ecstatic contemplation.

3. "*Tantum ergo Sacramentum veneremur cernui*" "*Let us fall down in adoration of so great a sacrament*".

Christ who died and rose for us is really present in the Holy Eucharist.

In the consecrated *Bread and Wine*, the same Jesus of the Gospels remains with us whom the disciples met and followed, whom they saw crucified and risen, whose wounds Thomas touched, exclaiming prostrate in adoration: "My Lord and my God!" (Jn 20,28) (cf. *ibid.*, 17-20).

In the Sacrament of the altar, there are offered for our contemplation *the full depths of the mystery of Christ*, the Word and the flesh, the divine glory and his tent among men. Before this Sacrament, we are sure that God is "with us", that in Jesus Christ he assumed all the dimensions of our human nature, except sin, emptying himself of his glory to clothe us with it (cf. *ibid.*, 21-23).

The invisible face of Christ, the Son of God, is manifest in his Body and Blood in the simplest and, at the same time, the most exalted way possible in this world.

The ecclesial community responds to people in every age who ask perplexed: "We wish to see Jesus" (Jn 12,21), by repeating what the Lord did for the disciples of Emmaus: *He broke the bread*. In the breaking of the bread, the eyes of those who seek him with a sincere heart are opened. In the Eucharist, the intuition of the heart recognizes Jesus and his unmistakable love lived "to the end" (Jn 13,1). *And in him, in that gesture, it recognizes the Face of God!*

4. "*Ecce panis Angelorum ... vere panis filiorum*" "*The angel's food is given ... see the bread of the sons [of God]*".

We are nourished with this bread to become authentic witnesses of the Gospel. We need this bread to grow in love, the necessary means for us to recognize the face of Christ in the faces of our brothers and sisters.

Our diocesan community has need of the Eucharist in order to continue on the *path of missionary renewal* on which it has set out. In the last few days the diocesan convention was held, which examined "the perspectives of communion, formation and mission in the Diocese of Rome for the coming years". It is necessary to continue to "set out anew" from Christ, that is, from the Eucharist. Let us walk generously and courageously, seeking communion within our ecclesial community, and lovingly dedicated to humble and disinterested service to all, especially the neediest.

On this journey Jesus goes before us, with the gift of himself to the point of sacrifice and offers himself to us as nourishment and support. Indeed he does not cease to repeat to the Pastors of the People of God in all the ages: "*Give them something to eat*" (Lk 9,17); break this bread of eternal life for everyone. A demanding and exalting task. A mission that lasts until the end of time.

5. "*All ate and were satisfied*" (Lk 9,17). The echo of a feast that has gone on without interruption for 2,000 years reaches us through the words of the Gospel we have just heard. *A Feast of the people on their way in their exodus from the world*, nourished by Christ, the true Bread of salvation.

At the end of the Mass we will process in the heart of Rome, *carrying the Body of Christ hidden in our hearts and clearly visible in the monstrance*. We will accompany the Bread of immortal life through the city streets. We will adore him and around him will be gathered the Church, living monstrance of the Saviour of the world.

May Rome's Christians, revived by his Body and Blood, show Christ to everyone through their way of life: through their *unity*, their *joyful faith* and their *kindness*.

May our diocesan community courageously set out anew from Christ, the Bread of immortal life.

And you, Jesus, living Bread who gives life, bread of pilgrims, "may you feed us, may you guard us, may you let us see good things in our homeland eternally". Amen.