

# Friday of the Third Week of Easter

**Gospel text (Jn 6,52-59):** The Jews were arguing among themselves, «How can this man give us flesh to eat?». So Jesus replied, «Truly, I say to you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood live with eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is really food and my blood is drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood, live in me and I in them. Just as the Father, who is life, sent me and I have life from the Father, so whoever eats me will have life from me. This is the bread which came from heaven; unlike that of your ancestors, who ate and later died. Those who eat this bread will live forever». Jesus spoke in this way in Capernaum when he taught them in the synagogue.

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Today, Jesus makes three key avowals, such as: that we are to eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood; that if we do not take the Holy Communion we cannot have life; and that this life is the eternal life and the condition for resurrection (cf. Jn 6:53-58). There is nothing in the Gospel so clear, so emphatic and so definite as these statements of Jesus.

We Catholics are not always up to the level the Eucharist requires: at times, we try “to live” without the living conditions set up by Jesus and, yet, as John Paul II has written «Eucharist is too big a gift to admit any ambiguities and reductions».

“Eat to live”: to eat the flesh of the Son of Man is to live as the Son of Man. This food is called “communion”. It is “food”, and we say “food” so that there is no doubt with respect to its assimilation, to its identification with Jesus. We receive Holy Communion to remain united: to think like him, to speak like him, to love like

him. We Christians were missing John Paul II's Eucharistic Encyclical, *The Church lives from the Eucharist*. It is a passionate encyclical: it is “fire” because the Eucharist is ardent.

«How I have longed to eat this Passover with you before my death!» (Lk 22:15), Jesus was saying that evening of the Holy Thursday. We have to recuperate the Eucharistic fervor. No other religion has a similar initiative. It is God himself who descends to man's heart to establish a mysterious love relationship. And as of that point the Church is built and participates in the Eucharist apostolic dynamism and eclesial mission.

We are actually digging into the mystery, as Thomas did when he was touching the wounds of Christ resurrected. We Christians should revise our fidelity to the Eucharistic fact just as Jesus Christ has revealed it and the Church proposes it to us. And we should live once more the “tenderness” towards the Eucharist: well made and slow genuflexions, increase the number of spiritual communions... And, starting from the Eucharist, men will look sacred, as they just are. And we shall serve them with renewed tenderness.