Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (A)

Gospel text (*Jn* 6,51-58): Jesus said to the Jewish crowds: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world."

The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever."

"For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink"

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Today, the celebration of Corpus Christi gives us the opportunity, on the one hand, to appreciate and give thanks for the great gift offered to us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In it, the Lord's promise is fulfilled: "I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). This Sacramental presence began at the Last Supper, when Jesus "broke and gave" His Body and Blood, a gift that would continue thanks to the fact that at that same Supper He also empowered them to perpetuate His presence: "Do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19).

Saint John, in his Gospel, tells us that each of the signs Jesus performed was intended to awaken and strengthen faith in Him (cf. Jn 20:31). Saint Paul, for his part, emphasizes the great importance of the Resurrection: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain" (1 Cor 15:17). But this faith must be nourished, and the best way to do so is by eating the very Body of the Lord: "My flesh is true food" (Jn 6:55). Therefore, this feast also reminds us of our responsibility, not only to be well prepared to receive Him, but also to "truly eat Him."

Indeed, His Body will give us life to the extent that we assimilate it. Just as any food we give our bodies must be assimilated in order to be of use to us, so too the Body of the Lord will be a source of strength

and life to the extent that we allow it to become a part of ourselves. That is why, according to Pope Leo XIV, “participation in the liturgy does not end in the church, but transforms daily life.”

In other words, our Communion with the Lord, the Holy Eucharist, Corpus Christi, will be truly effective in us to the extent that our lives are a true sign leading others to believe. The Lord himself suggested it to us with these words: “Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (Mt 5:16).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “How tenderly Jesus speaks when He gives Himself to His own in Holy Communion. What could my Jesus do more than give me His Flesh for my food? No, not even God could do more nor show greater love for me.” (Saint Teresa of Calcutta)

- “Jesus, Bread of eternal life, came down from heaven and was made flesh thanks to the faith of Mary Most Holy. Let us ask Our Lady to help us rediscover the beauty of the Eucharist, to make it the centre of our life.” (Francis)

- “Holy Communion augments our union with Christ. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: ‘He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him’ (Jn 6:56). Life in Christ has its foundation in the Eucharistic banquet.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 1391)

Other comments

“I am the living bread which has come from heaven; whoever eats of this bread will live forever”

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Today the one and only message that we must listen to and live is contained in “the bread”. Chapter 6 of St. John's Gospel refers to the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, which is followed by a Jesus’ great “bread of life” discourse, a fragment of which we hear today. It is of great interest to us to understand it, not only to properly live the festivity of “Corpus Christi” and the sacrament of the Eucharist, but also to comprehend one of the central messages of John's Gospel.

There are hungry multitudes in need of bread —people without any hope whatsoever, facing death and a bottomless void, in desperate need of Jesus Christ. And God's People, believer and devotee, needs to find His real presence to go on living in Him and to attain eternal life. There are three kinds of bread,

necessary to satisfy three kinds of hunger, and to obtain three experiences of fullness: the material bread, the bread represented by the person of Jesus Christ, and the Eucharistic bread.

We know Jesus Christ is the “bread of life”. Without Him we cannot possibly live: “because without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). But He Himself wanted to feed the hungry and, He made of it a fundamental evangelic must. Most surely, He thought it was a good way to reveal and affirm God's salvific love for each of us. But Jesus also wanted to become accessible to us, in the form of bread, so that we may remain in that love and thus attain life.

Above all, Jesus wanted to show us that we must seek Him and live from Him; He wanted to prove his love by feeding the hungry, offering Himself regularly in the Eucharist: “Whoever eats of this bread will live forever” (Jn 6:58). St. Augustine commented on this Gospel with daring and vivid words: "When Christ is eaten, life is eaten… If, then, you separate yourselves to the point of not taking the Body and Blood of the Lord, it is to be feared that you may die."