

Body and Blood of Christ (A)

Gospel text (Jn 6,51-58): Jesus said to Jews: «I am the living bread which has come from heaven; whoever eats of this bread will live forever. The bread I shall give is my flesh and I will give it for the life of the world».

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».

«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 we have to listen to and to live with is contained in “the bread”. Chapter 6th of St. John's Gospel refers to the miracle of the multiplication of the breads, which is followed by a great talk of Jesus, a fragment of which we are today listening to. We are keenly interested in understanding it, not only to properly live the festivity of the “Corpus Christi” and the sacrament of the Eucharist, but also to fully grasp one of the central messages of John's Gospel.

There are crowds craving for bread. There is an entire mankind, without any hope

whatsoever, facing death and a bottomless void, in desperate need for Jesus Christ. And God's People, believer and devotee, that needs to find His real presence to go on living in Him to attain life. Three kinds of hunger and three experiences of fullness, for three kinds of bread: 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: «Apart from me you can do nothing» (Jn 15:5). But, Jesus Christ also wanted to appease the crowd's hunger and, furthermore, He made of it a fundamental evangelic must. Most surely He thought it was a good way to reveal and verify God's salvific love. But He likewise wanted to become accessible to us, in the form of bread, so that, those of us that are still marching on in history, may remain in that love and, thus, attain life.

But, over everything else, He wanted to show us that we have to seek Him and to live in Him; He wanted to prove his love by satiating the hungry, by assiduously offering himself in the Eucharist: «Whoever eats of this bread will live forever» (Jn 6:58). St. Augustine commented this Gospel with plastic and daring words: «When you eat Christ, you eat life (...). If, then, you separate to the point of eating the Body and Blood of Christ no more, it is to be feared you die».