



The Holy See

HOLY MASS ON THE SOLEMNITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI

HOMILY OF HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

Basilica of St John Lateran

Thursday, 30 May 2013

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Gospel we have listened to, Jesus says something that I always find striking: “you give them something to eat” (Lk 9:13). Starting with this sentence I am letting myself be guided by three words; following [*seque-la*], communion, sharing.

1. First of all: who are those who must be given something to eat? We find the answer at the beginning of the Gospel passage: it is the crowd, the multitude. Jesus is in the midst of the people, he welcomes them, he speaks to them, he heals them, he shows them God’s mercy; it is from among them that he chooses the Twelve Apostles to be with him and, like him, to immerse themselves in the practical situations of the world. Furthermore the people follow him and listen to him, because Jesus is speaking and behaving in a new way, with the authority of someone who is authentic and consistent, someone who speaks and acts with truth, someone who gives the hope that comes from God, someone who is a revelation of the Face of a God who is love. And the people joyfully bless God.

This evening we are the crowd of the Gospel, we too seek to follow Jesus in order to listen to him, to enter into communion with him in the Eucharist, to accompany him and in order that he accompany us. Let us ask ourselves: how do I follow Jesus? Jesus speaks in silence in the Mystery of the Eucharist. He reminds us every time that following him means going out of ourselves and not making our life a possession of our own, but rather a gift to him and to others.

2. Let us take another step. What does Jesus' request to the disciples, that they themselves give food to the multitude, come from? It comes from two things: first of all from the crowd, who in following Jesus find themselves in the open air, far from any inhabited areas, while evening is falling; and then from the concern of the disciples who ask Jesus to send the crowd away so that they can go to the neighbouring villages to find provisions and somewhere to stay (cf. Lk 9:12).

Faced with the needs of the crowd the disciples' solution was this: let each one think of himself — send the crowd away! How often do we Christians have this temptation! We do not take upon ourselves the needs of others, but dismiss them with a pious: "God help you", or with a not so pious "good luck", and if I never see you again.... But Jesus' solution goes in another direction, a direction that astonishes the disciples: "You give them something to eat". Yet how could we be the ones to give a multitude something to eat? "We have no more than five loaves and two fish — unless we are to go and buy food for all these people" (Lk 9:13). However Jesus does not despair. He asks the disciples to have the people sit down in groups of 50 people. He looks up to heaven, recites the blessing, breaks the bread and fish into pieces and gives them to the disciples to distribute (cf. Lk 9:16). It is a moment of deep *communion*: the crowd is satisfied by the word of the Lord and is now nourished by his bread of life. And they were all satisfied, the Evangelist notes (cf. Lk 9:17).

This evening we too are gathered round the table of the Lord, the table of the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which he once again gives us his Body and makes present the one sacrifice of the Cross. It is in listening to his word, in nourishing ourselves with his Body and his Blood that he moves us on from being a multitude to being a community, from anonymity to communion. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion that brings us out of individualism so that we may follow him together, living out our faith in him. Therefore we should all ask ourselves before the Lord: how do I live the Eucharist? Do I live it anonymously or as a moment of true communion with the Lord, and also with all the brothers and sisters who share this same banquet? What are our Eucharistic celebrations like?

3. A final element: where does the multiplication of the loaves come from? The answer lies in Jesus' request to the disciples: "You give them...", "to give", to share. What do the disciples share? The little they have: five loaves and two fish. However it is those very loaves and fish in the Lord's hands that feed the entire crowd. And it is the disciples themselves, bewildered as they face the insufficiency of their means, the poverty of what they are able to make available, who get the people to sit down and who — trusting in Jesus' words — distribute the loaves and fish that satisfy the crowd. And this tells us that in the Church, but also in society, a key word of which we must not be frightened is "solidarity", that is, the ability to make what we have, our humble capacities, available to God, for only in sharing, in giving, will our life be fruitful. Solidarity is a word seen badly by the spirit of the world!

This evening, once again, the Lord distributes for us the bread that is his Body, he makes himself

a gift; and we too experience “God’s solidarity” with man, a solidarity that is never depleted, a solidarity that never ceases to amaze us: God makes himself close to us, in the sacrifice of the Cross he humbles himself, entering the darkness of death to give us his life which overcomes evil, selfishness and death. Jesus, this evening too, gives himself to us in the Eucharist, shares in our journey, indeed he makes himself food, the true food that sustains our life also in moments when the road becomes hard-going and obstacles slow our steps. And in the Eucharist the Lord makes us walk on his road, that of service, of sharing, of giving; and if it is shared, that little we have, that little we are, becomes riches, for the power of God — which is the power of love — comes down into our poverty to transform it.

So let us ask ourselves this evening, in adoring Christ who is really present in the Eucharist: do I let myself be transformed by him? Do I let the Lord who gives himself to me, guide me to going out ever more from my little enclosure, in order to give, to share, to love him and others?

Brothers and sisters, following, communion, sharing. Let us pray that participation in the Eucharist may always be an incentive: to follow the Lord every day, to be instruments of communion and to share what we are with him and with our neighbour. Our life will then be truly fruitful. Amen.