



The Holy See

HOLY MASS, PROCESSION AND EUCHARISTIC BLESSING ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Saint John Lateran Square
Sunday, 18 June 2017

[Multimedia]

On this Solemnity of Corpus Domini, the idea of memory comes up again and again. Moses says to the people: “You shall *remember* all the way which the Lord your God has led you.... Lest... you *forget* the Lord your God, who fed you in the wilderness with manna” (*Dt* 8:2, 14, 16). Jesus will tell us: “Do this *in memory* of me” (*1 Cor* 11:24). Saint Paul will tell his disciple: “Remember Jesus Christ” (*2 Tim* 2:8). The “living bread, come down from heaven” (*Jn* 6:51) is the *sacrament of memory*, reminding us, in a real and tangible way, of the story of God’s love for us.

Today, to each of us, the word of God says, *Remember!* Remembrance of the Lord’s deeds guided and strengthened his people’s journey through the desert; remembering all that the Lord has done for us is the foundation of our own personal history of salvation. Remembrance is essential for faith, as water is for a plant. A plant without water cannot stay alive and bear fruit. Nor can faith, unless it drinks deeply of the memory of all that the Lord has done for us. “Remember Jesus Christ”.

Remember. Memory is important, because it allows us to dwell in love, to be *mind-ful*, never forgetting who it is who loves us and whom we are called to love in return. Yet nowadays, this singular ability that the Lord has given us is considerably weakened. Amid so much frantic activity, many people and events seem to pass in a whirl. We quickly turn the page, looking for novelty while unable to retain memories. Leaving our memories behind and living only for the moment, we risk remaining ever on the surface of things, constantly in flux, without going deeper, without the broader vision that reminds us who we are and where we are going. In this way, our

life grows fragmented, and dulled within.

Yet today's Solemnity reminds us that in our fragmented lives, the Lord comes to meet us with a loving "fragility", which is the Eucharist. In the Bread of Life, the Lord comes to us, making himself a humble meal that lovingly heals our memory, wounded by life's frantic pace of life. The Eucharist is the *memorial of God's love*. There, "[Christ's] sufferings are remembered" (*II Vespers, antiphon for the Magnificat*) and we recall God's love for us, which gives us strength and support on our journey. This is why the Eucharistic commemoration does us so much good: it is not an abstract, cold and superficial memory, but a living remembrance that comforts us with God's love. A memory that is both recollection and imitation. The Eucharist is flavoured with Jesus' words and deeds, the taste of his Passion, the fragrance of his Spirit. When we receive it, our hearts are overcome with the certainty of Jesus' love. In saying this, I think in particular of you boys and girls, who recently received First Holy Communion, and are here today in great numbers.

The Eucharist gives us a *grateful* memory, because it makes us see that we are the Father's children, whom he loves and nourishes. It gives us a *free* memory, because Jesus' love and forgiveness heal the wounds of the past, soothe our remembrance of wrongs experienced and inflicted. It gives us a *patient* memory, because amid all our troubles we know that the Spirit of Jesus remains in us. The Eucharist encourages us: even on the roughest road, we are not alone; the Lord does not forget us and whenever we turn to him, he restores us with his love.

The Eucharist also reminds us that we are not isolated individuals, but *one body*. As the people in the desert gathered the manna that fell from heaven and shared it in their families (cf. *Ex 16*), so Jesus, the Bread come down from Heaven, calls us together to receive him and to share him with one another. The Eucharist is not a sacrament "for me"; it is the sacrament of the many, who form one body, God's holy and faithful people. Saint Paul reminded us of this: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (*1 Cor 10:17*). The Eucharist is the *sacrament of unity*. Whoever receives it cannot fail to be a builder of unity, because building unity has become part of his or her "spiritual DNA". May this *Bread of unity* heal our ambition to lord it over others, to greedily hoard things for ourselves, to foment discord and criticism. May it awaken in us the joy of living in love, without rivalry, jealousy or mean-spirited gossip.

Now, in experiencing this Eucharist, let us adore and thank the Lord for this greatest of gifts: the living memorial of his love, that makes us one body and leads us to unity.