



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Basilica of Saint John Lateran

Sunday, 17 June 1979

Beloved Brothers and Sisters!

1. Let my words be brief today. Let the feast itself, the Eucharist itself, speak to us, instead, in the fullness of its liturgical expression.

We are about to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of Mass on the parvis of the Basilica of St John Lateran, cathedral of the Bishop of Rome. After this we will proceed in procession to the Basilica of St Mary Major on the Esquiline.

In this way we wish to put together, in one liturgical act, the worship of the Sacrifice and the worship of adoration, as today's solemnity and the centuries-old tradition of the Church demand of us.

2. We wish to *proclaim* to Rome and the world the Eucharist, that is, Gratitude. This Sacrament is the sign of the gratitude of the whole of creation for the Creator's visit. This Sacrament is the sign of man's gratitude because the Creator became a creature; because God became man; because he took a human body from his Mother Mary Immaculate" to raise us men again to the Father; to make us Sons of God.

We wish, therefore, to proclaim and sing with our mouths, and still more avow with our human hearts, gratitude for the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of God, with which he nourishes our souls and renews our human hearts.

3. We wish furthermore to proclaim the Eucharist to Rome and the world as the sign of the covenant that God concluded irreversibly with man by means of the Body and Blood of his Son.

This Body was exposed to the Passion and death. It shared the earthly fate of man after original sin. This Blood was shed to seal God's New Covenant with man: the covenant of grace and love, the covenant of holiness and truth. We are participants in this covenant even more than the People of God of the Old Law. Today, therefore, we wish to bear witness before all men.

Yet God became man for all men. Christ died and rose again for everyone. Everyone, finally, has been called to the Banquet of eternity. And here on earth the Lord God invites each one saying: "Take and eat... Take and drink!... in order not to stop on the way!"

4. Finally, we wish to proclaim the Eucharist to Rome and the world as a Sign of the worship due to God alone. How admirable is our God! He whom no intellect is able to embrace and worship in accordance with his holiness. He whom no heart is able to love in accordance with his love.

How wondrous he is when he wishes us to embrace him, love him and worship him, according to the human dimension of our faith, under the *species of Bread and Wine!*

5. Christ in the Eucharist, accept this expression of adoration and love which the Church renders to you *by means of the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, Peter's successor*. Be worshipped through the memory of all my Predecessors who worshipped you before the eyes of Rome and the world.

At the end of today's liturgy, let your Holy Mother who gave you, Eternal Son of the Father, a human body receive you from our hands on the parvis of her temple:

- "Ave, verum corpus, / natum ex / Maria Virgine, / Vere passum immolatum / in cruce pro homine; / esto nobis praegustatum / mortis in examine!"

Hail, oh true Body, / born of the Virgin Mary, / which really suffered and was sacrificed / on the Cross for Mankind; / may you be foretasted by us / when the test of death arrives!

Amen.

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