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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 160527d

Friday 27.05.2016

Corpus Christi: receive the broken bread of Jesus and distribute it to the hungry

Vatican City, 27 May 2016 – On Thursday 26 May, Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the Holy Father presided at the Eucharistic celebration in Piazza San Giovanni in Laterano, after which the traditional procession took place along Via Merulano to the Basilica of St. Mary Major, where the Pope imparted his solemn blessing with the Most Holy Sacrament.

In the homily he pronounced during the Mass, the Pope recalled Jesus' mandate to His disciples at the Last Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me", described in St. Paul's letter to the community of Corinth, and the oldest testimony to the words of Christ at the Last Supper.

"Do this'. That is, take bread, give thanks and break it; take the chalice, give thanks, and share it. Jesus gives the command to repeat this action by which He instituted the memorial of His own Pasch, and in so doing gives us His Body and His Blood. This action reaches us today: it is the "doing" of the Eucharist which always has Jesus as its subject, but which is made real through our poor hands anointed by the Holy Spirit."

"Do this'. Jesus on a previous occasion asked His disciples to 'do' what was so clear to Him, in obedience to the will of the Father. In the Gospel passage that we have just heard, Jesus says to the disciples in front of the tired and hungry crowds: 'Give them something to eat yourselves'. Indeed, it is Jesus Who blesses and breaks the loaves and provides sufficient food to satisfy the whole crowd, but it is the disciples who offer the five loaves and two fish. Jesus wanted it this way: that, instead of sending the crowd away, the disciples would put at His disposal what little they had. And there is another gesture: the pieces of bread, broken by the holy and venerable hands of Our Lord, pass into the poor hands of the disciples, who distribute these to the people. This too is the disciples 'doing' with Jesus; with Him they are able to 'give them something to eat'. Clearly this miracle was not intended merely to satisfy hunger for a day, but rather it signals what Christ wants to accomplish for the salvation of all mankind, giving His own flesh and blood. And yet this needs always to happen through those two small actions: offering the few loaves and fish which we have; receiving the bread broken by the hands of Jesus and giving it to all."

"Breaking: this is the other word explaining the meaning of those words: 'Do this in remembrance of me'", continued the Holy Father. "Jesus was broken; He is broken for us. And He asks us to give ourselves, to break ourselves, as it were, for others. This 'breaking bread' became the icon, the sign for recognising Christ and

Christians. We think of Emmaus: they knew Him 'in the breaking of the bread'. We recall the first community of Jerusalem: 'They held steadfastly... to the breaking of the bread'. From the outset it is the Eucharist which becomes the centre and pattern of the life of the Church. But we think also of all the saints – famous or anonymous – who have 'broken' themselves, their own life, in order to 'give something to eat' to their brothers and sisters. How many mothers, how many fathers, together with the slices of bread they provide each day on the tables of their homes, have broken their hearts to let their children grow, and grow well! How many Christians, as responsible citizens, have broken their own lives to defend the dignity of all, especially the poorest, the marginalised and those who are discriminated against! Where do they find the strength to do this? It is in the Eucharist: in the power of the love of the Risen Lord, Who today too breaks bread for us and repeats: 'Do this in remembrance of me.'"

"May this action of the Eucharistic procession, which we will carry out shortly, respond to Jesus' command", Pope Francis concluded. "An action to commemorate Him; an action to give food to the crowds of today; an act to break open our faith and our lives as a sign of Christ's love for this city and for the whole world."
