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Holy Mass on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

At 17.30 this afternoon, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Domini) the Holy Father Francis celebrated Holy Mass at the Altar of the Cathedra, in Saint Peter's Basilica.

The following is the homily that the Pope delivered during the Eucharistic celebration, after the proclamation of the Gospel:

Homily of the Holy Father

Jesus sends his disciples to prepare the place where they will celebrate the Passover meal. They themselves had asked: "Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?" (*Mk 14:12*). As we contemplate and worship the Lord's presence in the Eucharistic Bread, we too should ask where, in what "place", we want to prepare the Lord's Passover. What are the "places" in our own lives that God is asking to be our guest? I would like to answer these questions by reflecting on three images from the Gospel we just heard (*Mk 14:12-16, 22-26*).

The first is that of the man *carrying a pitcher of water* (cf. v. 13). This might seem like a superfluous detail. Yet that nameless man became the guide who would bring the disciples to the place later known as the Upper Room. The pitcher of water is the sign by which they recognize him. It is a sign that makes us think of our human family, athirst, constantly seeking a source of water to slake its thirst and to bring refreshment. All of us walk through life with pitcher in hand: all of us thirst for love, for joy, for a fulfilling life in a more humane world. To sate this thirst, the water of worldly things is of no avail. For ours is a deeper thirst, a thirst that God alone can satisfy.

Let us briefly consider this image and what it symbolizes. Jesus tells his disciples that the Passover meal can be eaten wherever a man carrying a pitcher of water leads them. To celebrate the Eucharist, we need first to recognize our thirst for God, to sense our need for him, to long for his presence and love, to realize that we cannot go it alone, but need the Food and Drink of eternal life to sustain us on our journey. The tragedy of the present time – we can say – is that this thirst is felt less and less. Questions about God are no longer asked,

desire for God has faded, seekers of God have become increasingly rare. God no longer attracts us because we no longer acknowledge our deep thirst for him. Yet wherever there is a man or a woman with a pitcher for water – like the Samaritan woman (cf. *Jn* 4:5-30) – there the Lord can reveal himself as the One who bestows new life, nurtures our dreams and aspirations with sure hope, a loving presence to give meaning and direction to our earthly pilgrimage. The man carrying a pitcher of water led the disciples to the room where Jesus would institute the Eucharist. Our thirst for God brings us to the altar. Where that thirst is lacking, our celebrations *become dry and lifeless*. As Church, it is not enough that the usual little group meets to celebrate the Eucharist; we need to go out into the city, to encounter people and to learn how to recognize and revive their thirst for God and their desire for the Gospel.

The second image from the Gospel is that of the *Upper Room* (cf. v. 15). This room where Jesus and his disciples would celebrate the Passover meal was located in the house of someone who offered them hospitality. Father Primo Mazzolari said of that person: “Here is a nameless man, the owner of a house, who lent Jesus his finest room... He gave Jesus the best he had, because everything surrounding the great sacrament should be great: a great room and a great heart, great words and great deeds” (*La Pasqua*, La Locusta 1964, 46-48).

A large room for a tiny piece of Bread. God makes himself tiny, like a morsel of bread. That is precisely why we need a great heart to be able to recognize, adore and receive him. God’s presence is so humble, hidden and often unseen that, in order to recognize his presence, we need a heart that is ready, alert and welcoming. But if our heart, rather than a large room, is more like a closet where we wistfully keep things from the past, or an attic where we long ago stored our dreams and enthusiasm, or a dreary chamber filled only with us, our problems and our disappointments, then it will be impossible to recognize God’s silent and unassuming presence. We need a large room. We need to enlarge our hearts. We need to break out of our tiny self-enclosed space and enter the large room, the vast expanse of wonder and adoration. That is what we really need! It is what is missing in the many movements we create to meet and reflect together on our pastoral outreach. But if wonder and adoration are lacking, there is no road that leads to the Lord. Nor will there be the synod, nothing. Adoration: that is the attitude we need in the presence of the Eucharist. The Church too must be a large room. Not a small and closed circle, but a community with arms wide open, welcoming to all. Let us ask ourselves this question: when someone approaches who is hurting, who has made a mistake, who has gone astray in life, is the Church, this Church, a room large enough to welcome this person and lead him or her to the joy of an encounter with Christ? Let us not forget that the Eucharist is meant to nourish those who are weary and hungry along the way. A Church of the pure and perfect is a room with no place for anyone. On the other hand, a Church with open doors, that gathers and celebrates around Christ, is a large room where everyone – everyone, the righteous and sinners – can enter.

A third image from the Gospel is that of *Jesus breaking the bread*. This is the Eucharistic gesture *par excellence*. It is the distinctive sign of our faith and the place where we encounter the Lord who offers himself so that we can be reborn to new life. This gesture also challenges us. Up to that point, lambs were sacrificed and offered to God. Now Jesus becomes the lamb, offering himself in sacrifice in order to give us life. In the Eucharist, we contemplate and worship the God of love. The Lord who breaks no one, yet allows himself to be broken. The Lord who does not demand sacrifices, but sacrifices himself. The Lord who asks nothing but gives everything. In celebrating and experiencing the Eucharist, we too are called to share in this love. For we cannot break bread on Sunday if our hearts are closed to our brothers and sisters. We cannot partake of that Bread if we do not give bread to the hungry. We cannot share that Bread unless we share the sufferings of our brothers and sisters in need. In the end, and the end of our solemn Eucharistic liturgies as well, only love will remain. Even now, our Eucharistic celebrations are transforming the world to the extent that we are allowing ourselves to be transformed and to become bread broken for others.

Brothers and sisters, today where should we go “to prepare the Lord’s supper”? The procession with the Blessed Sacrament – a hallmark of the feast of *Corpus Domini*, yet one that for the moment we cannot celebrate – reminds us that we are called to go out and bring Jesus to others. To go out with enthusiasm, bringing Christ to those we meet in our daily lives. May we become a Church with pitcher in hand, a Church that reawakens thirst and brings water. Let us open wide our hearts in love, so that we can become be the large and welcoming room where everyone can enter and meet the Lord. Let us break the bread of our lives in compassion and solidarity, so that through us the world may see the grandeur of God’s love. Then the Lord will come, he will surprise us

once more, he will again become food for the life of the world. And he will satisfy us always, until the day when, at the heavenly banquet, we will contemplate his face and come to know the joy that has no end.
