



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

*Square in front of the Santa Monica parish in Ostia
Sunday, 3 June 2018*

[[Multimedia](#)]

The Gospel we just heard speaks of the Last Supper, but surprisingly, pays more attention to the preparations than to the dinner itself. We keep hearing the word “prepare”. For example, the disciples ask: “Where do you want us to go and *prepare* for you to eat the Passover?” (*Mk* 14:12). Jesus sends them off with clear instructions to make the necessary preparations and they find “a large room... furnished and ready” (v. 15). The disciples went off to prepare, but the Lord had already made his own preparations.

Something similar occurs after the resurrection, when Jesus appears to the disciples for the third time. While they are fishing, he waits for them on the shore, where he has already prepared bread and fish for them. Even so, he tells the disciples to bring some of the fish that they have just caught, which he had shown them how to catch (cf. *Jn* 21:6.9-10). Jesus has already made preparations and he asks his disciples to cooperate. Once again, just before the Passover meal, Jesus tells the disciples: “I go to *prepare* a place for you... so that where I am, there you may be also” (*Jn* 14:2.3). Jesus is the one who prepares, yet before his own Passover he also asks us urgently, with exhortations and parables, to be prepared, to remain ever ready (cf. *Mt* 24:44; *Lk* 12:40).

Jesus, then, prepares for us and asks us to be prepared. What does Jesus prepare for us? He prepares *a place and a meal*. A place much more worthy than the “large furnished room” of the

Gospel. It is our spacious and vast home here below, the Church, where there is, and must be, room for everyone. But he has also reserved a place for us on high, in heaven, so that we can be with him and with one another for ever. In addition to a place, he prepares a meal, the Bread in which he gives himself: "Take; this is my body" (Mk 14:22). These two gifts, a place and a meal, are what we need to live. They are our ultimate "room and board". Both are bestowed upon us in the Eucharist. A place and a meal.

Jesus prepares *a place* for us *here below*, because the Eucharist is the beating heart of the Church. It gives her birth and rebirth; it gathers her together and gives her strength. But the Eucharist also prepares for us *a place on high*, in eternity, for it is the *Bread of heaven*. It comes down from heaven – it is the only matter on earth that savours of eternity. It is the bread of things to come; even now, it grants us a foretaste of a future infinitely greater than all we can hope for or imagine. It is the bread that sates our greatest expectations and feeds our finest dreams. It is, in a word, the *pledge* of eternal life – not simply a promise but a pledge, a concrete anticipation of what awaits us there. The Eucharist is our "reservation" for the heavenly banquet; it is Jesus himself, as food for our journey towards eternal life and happiness.

In the consecrated host, together with a place, Jesus prepares for us *a meal*, food for our nourishment. In life, we constantly need to be fed: nourished not only with food, but also with plans and affection, hopes and desires. We hunger to be loved. But the most pleasing compliments, the finest gifts and the most advanced technologies are not enough; they never completely satisfy us. The Eucharist is simple food, like bread, yet it is the only food that satisfies, for *there is no greater love*. There we encounter Jesus really; we share his life and we feel his love. There you can realize that his death and resurrection are for you. And when you worship Jesus in the Eucharist, you receive from him the Holy Spirit and you find peace and joy. Dear brothers and sisters, let us choose this food of life! Let us make Mass our priority! Let us rediscover Eucharistic adoration in our communities! Let us implore the grace to *hunger for God*, with an insatiable desire to receive what he has prepared for us.

As he did with his disciples, so too today Jesus asks us, today, to *prepare*. Like the disciples, let us ask him: "Lord, where do you want us to go to prepare?" *Where*: Jesus does not prefer exclusive, selective places. He looks for places untouched by love, untouched by hope. Those uncomfortable places are where he wants to go and he asks us to prepare his way. How many persons lack dignified housing or food to eat! All of us know people who are lonely, troubled and in need: they are abandoned tabernacles. We, who receive from Jesus our own room and board, are here to prepare a place and a meal for these, our brothers and sisters in need. Jesus became bread broken for our sake; in turn, he asks us to give ourselves to others, to live no longer for ourselves but *for one another*. In this way, we live "eucharistically", pouring out upon the world the love we draw from the Lord's flesh. The Eucharist is translated into life when we pass *beyond ourselves to those all around us*.

The Gospel tells us that the disciples prepared for the meal after they “set out and went to the city” (v. 16). The Lord calls us also today to prepare for his coming not by keeping our distance but by entering our cities. That includes this city, whose very name – *Ostia* – means *entrance, doorway*. Lord, how many doors do you want us to open for you here? How many gates do you call us to unbar, how many walls must we tear down? Jesus wants the walls of indifference and silent collusion to be breached, iron bars of oppression and arrogance torn asunder, and paths cleared for justice, civility and legality. The vast beachfront of this city speaks to us of how beautiful it is to open our hearts and to set out in new directions in life. But this requires loosening the knots that keep us bound to the moorings of fear and depression. The Eucharist invites to let ourselves be carried along by the wave of Jesus, to not remain grounded on the beach in the hope that something may come along, but to cast into the deep, free, courageous and united.

The Gospel ends by telling us that the disciples, “after singing a hymn, went out” (v. 26). At the end of Mass, we too will go out; we will go forth with Jesus, who will pass through the streets of this city. Jesus wants to dwell among you. He wants to be part of your lives, to enter your houses and to offer his liberating mercy, his blessing and his consolation. You have experienced painful situations; the Lord wants to be close to you. Let us open our doors to him and say:

Come, Lord, and visit us.

We welcome you into our hearts,
our families and our city.

We thank you because you have prepared for us
the food of life and a place in your Kingdom.

Make us active in preparing your way,
joyous in bringing you, who are life, to others,
and thus to bring fraternity, justice and peace
to our streets. Amen.