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Holy Mass and Eucharistic Procession on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ in Casal Bertone, Rome

At 17.00 today, the Holy Father Francis left the Vatican by car, headed for the Roman quarter of Casal Bertone, where he presided at the rites of *Corpus Domini*, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, according to the liturgical calendar of the Italian Church.

At 17.45, the Pope celebrated Holy Mass outside the parish church of Santa Maria Consolatrice.

At the end of the Eucharistic Celebration, there took place the procession with the Blessed Sacrament, led by His Eminence Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, vicar of His Holiness for the diocese of Rome, through various streets of the Roman quarter of Casal Bertone. The procession terminated in the "Roma 6" Sports field, adjacent to the *Casa Serena*, a reception centre for those without fixed abode managed by the Missionaries of Charity, where the Holy Father imparted the Eucharistic blessing. He then returned to the Vatican.

The following is the homily pronounced by the Holy Father during the Eucharistic Celebration:

Homily of the Holy Father

Today, God's word helps us to appreciate more deeply two verbs that are simple, yet essential for daily life: *to speak* and *to give*.

To speak. In the first reading, Melchizedek says: "*Blessed* be Abram by God Most High... and *blessed* be God Most High" (*Gen* 14:19-20). For Melchizedek, *to speak* is *to bless*. He blesses Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed (cf. *Gen* 12:3; *Gal* 3:8). Everything begins with blessing: words of goodness create a history of goodness. The same thing happens in the Gospel: before multiplying the loaves, Jesus blesses them: "Taking the five loaves, he looked up to heaven and *blessed* and broke them, and gave them to the disciples" (*Lk* 9:16). A blessing turns five loaves into food enough for a great crowd: the blessing releases a cascade of goodness.

Why is it good to bless? Because it turns a word into a gift. When we bless, we are not doing something for ourselves, but for others. Blessing is not about saying nice words or trite phrases. No, it is about speaking goodness, speaking with love. That is what Melchizedek did, when he spontaneously blessed Abram, who had not said or done anything for him. Jesus did the same thing, and he showed what the blessing meant by freely distributing the loaves. How many times too, have we been blessed, in church or in our homes? How many times have we received words of encouragement, or a sign of the cross on our forehead? We were blessed on the day of our baptism, and we are blessed at the end of every Mass. The Eucharist is itself a school of blessing. God blesses us, his beloved children, and thus encourages us to keep going. And we, in turn, bless God in our assemblies (cf. *Ps 68:26*), rediscovering the joy of praise that liberates and heals the heart. We come to Mass, certain that we will be blessed by the Lord, and we leave in order to bless others in turn, to be channels of goodness in the world.

This is also true for us: it is important for us pastors to keep blessing God's people. Dear priests, do not be afraid to give a blessing, to bless the People of God. Dear priests, continue to bless: the Lord wants to bless his people; he is happy to make us feel his affection for us. Only as those who are themselves blessed, can we in turn bless others with that same anointing of love. It is sad to think of how easily people today do the opposite: they curse, despise and insult others. In the general frenzy, we lose control and vent our rage on everything and everyone. Sadly, those who shout most and loudest, those angriest, often appeal to others and persuade them. Let us avoid being infected by that arrogance; let us not let ourselves be overcome by bitterness, for we eat the Bread that *contains all sweetness within it*. God's people love to praise, not complain; we were created to bless, not grumble. In the presence of the Eucharist, Jesus who becomes bread, this simple bread that contains *the entire reality of the Church*, let us learn to bless all that we have, to praise God, to bless and not curse all that has led us to this moment, and to speak words of encouragement to others.

The second verb is *to give*. "Speaking" is thus followed by "giving". This was the case with Abraham who, after being blessed by Melchizedek, "*gave him a tenth of everything*" (*Gen 14:20*). It was the case, too, with Jesus who after reciting the blessing, *gave* the loaves to be distributed among the crowd. This tells us something very beautiful. Bread is not only something to be consumed; it is a means of sharing. Surprisingly, the account of the multiplication of the loaves does not mention the multiplication itself. On the contrary, the words that stand out are: "break", "give" and "distribute" (cf. *Lk 9:16*). In effect, the emphasis is not on the multiplication but the act of sharing. This is important. Jesus does not perform a magic trick; he does not change five loaves into five thousand and then to announce: "There! Distribute them!" No. Jesus first prays, then blesses the five loaves and begins to break them, trusting in the Father. And those five loaves never run out. This is no magic trick; it is an act of trust in God and his providence.

In the world, we are always trying to increase our profits, to raise our income. But why? Is it to give, or to have? To share or to accumulate? The "economy" of the Gospel multiplies through sharing, nourishes through distributing. It does not sate the greed of a few, but gives life to the world (cf. *Jn 6:33*). The verb Jesus uses is not *to have* but *to give*.

He tells his disciples straight out: "You *give* them something to eat" (*Lk 9:13*). We can imagine the thoughts that went through their minds: "We don't have enough bread for ourselves, and now we are supposed to think about others? Why do we have to give them something to eat, if they came to hear our Teacher? If they didn't bring their own food, let them go back home, it's their problem; or else give us some money to buy food". This way of thinking is not wrong, but it isn't the way Jesus thinks. He will have none of it: "*You give them something to eat*". Whatever we have can bear fruit if we give it away – that is what Jesus wants to tell us – and it does not matter whether it is great or small. The Lord does great things with our littleness, as he did with the five loaves. He does not work spectacular miracles or wave a magic wand; he works with simple things. God's omnipotence is lowly, made up of love alone. And love can accomplish great things with little. The Eucharist teaches us this: for there we find God himself contained in a piece of bread. Simple, essential, bread broken and shared, the Eucharist we receive allows us to see things as God does. It inspires us to give ourselves to others. It is the antidote to the mindset that says: "Sorry, that is not my problem", or: "I have no time, I can't help you, it's none of my business". Or that looks the other way...

In our city that hungers for love and care, that suffers from decay and neglect, that contains so many elderly

people living alone, families in difficulty, young people struggling to earn their bread and to realize their dreams, the Lord says to each one of you: "You yourself give them something to eat". You may answer: "But I have so little; I am not up to such things". That is not true; your "little" has great value in the eyes of Jesus, provided that you don't keep it to yourself, but put it in play. Put yourself in play! You are not alone, for you have the Eucharist, bread for the journey, the bread of Jesus. Tonight too, we will be nourished by his body given up for us. If we receive it into our hearts, this bread will release in us the power of love. We will feel blessed and loved, and we will want to bless and love in turn, beginning here, in our city, in the streets where we will process this evening. The Lord comes to our streets in order to *spea*k a blessing for us and to *give us* courage. And he asks that we too be blessing and gift for others.
