

16. June 2022

## The Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist

1 Cor 11:23-26

*For the tradition I received from the Lord and also handed on to you is that on the night he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took some bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it, and he said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' And in the same way, with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this as a memorial of me.'*

We Catholics are very familiar with the words of the institution of the Eucharist, through which the transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ takes place. We kneel before the Lord, who manifests himself to us in this mystery, and we adore him. The priest - acting 'in persona Christi' and by His command - performs a great miracle, reserved exclusively for him. This event is enveloped in a holy silence; a silence of love and reverence. Not infrequently a deep emotion is felt, not only by the priest, but also by the acolytes and the faithful. In faith, we know that the holy angels are also present at Holy Mass, and we can assume that the poor souls in purgatory seek consolation there, while they still have to wait for full unification with God. In the celebration of the Holy Mass the essence of the priestly ministry is present; the Church fulfils the Lord's commission and accomplishes what is most important.

Consequently, the Eucharist is at the centre of the Church's life, and, with the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, she bears public witness to her faith. The real presence of Christ in the consecrated host is not a matter of private faith, important only to a few faithful. No! Faith bears witness to the Reign of Christ, to whom has been given "*all power in heaven and on earth*" (Mt 28:18), who has come to redeem us as the Lamb of God (cf. Jn 1:29), and who will return at the End of Time to judge the living and the dead....

Splendid temples have been built and solemn processions are held in honour of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar... On this day the Church adorns herself, to bear witness to the Eucharistic Lord, whom we contemplate with the eyes of faith in the Sacrament;

but who will manifest Himself to all in His glory when He returns at the End of Time (cf. Mt 24:30).

Now, for the Holy Mass not only worthy temples and consecrated priests are needed, but this extraordinary event must be actualised in a liturgy that corresponds to its dignity. Unfortunately, this sensitivity is increasingly being lost, and we find ourselves with Masses "made" by men; Masses "designed" by the faithful. This indicates a great misunderstanding, because it is not realised that the liturgy is a gift that has been given by the Holy Spirit, and that, over time, certain forms have developed which cannot simply be modified without causing enormous spiritual damage.

Therefore, if the Lord is to be venerated in the Eucharist as He deserves, special attention must be paid to the dignity of the Holy Mass, both in its outward forms and in its inner attitude. This implies, logically, the dignified reception of communion in a state of grace, adequate preparation, interior recollection, silence in the church, among many other things... One cannot lose appreciation for the Holy Mass! In this sublime event there is no room for trivialities of any kind, be it in terms of the music that is chosen, be it elements designed by human creativity, be it gestures that are alien to the liturgy....

The dignity of the Holy Mass must be restored where it has been lost! This applies both to the priests and to the faithful. In this context, the so-called "extraordinary rite" of the Holy Mass (commonly known as the "Tridentine Mass") should not be overlooked. This is normally not subject to liturgical experimentation of any kind, and is an expression of the liturgy as it has been celebrated for centuries throughout the Catholic world.

Pope Benedict XVI wanted this rite to be offered to the faithful on an equal footing with the "Novus Ordo", so that the Church might experience a kind of "inner reconciliation" with its own tradition. I would like to add that, not infrequently, the "Novus Ordo" has suffered an increasing deformation. Thus, the act of reconciliation made by Pope Benedict can even be seen as a "healing offering" for the "Novus Ordo", insofar as the influence of the Tridentine Mass may have helped to overcome those elements foreign to the liturgy.

But, in the meantime, this well-meaning and gentle process initiated by Benedict XVI can hardly continue, because a large part of the present hierarchy shows rather a rejection of the old rite.

May the Solemnity of Corpus Christi help to rediscover the holiness and beauty of Christ's Sacrifice, which is offered on the altars for our Redemption! May the Lord preserve the Sacrament of the Altar from all profanation and abuse!