

11. Juni 2020

**“The dignity of the Holy Mass”
Solemnity of Corpus Christi**

Jn 6,51-58

I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.' Then the Jews started arguing among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' Jesus replied to them: In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Anyone who does eat my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person. As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will also draw life from me. This is the bread which has come down from heaven; it is not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.

What a grace for us human beings that this word should be realized in the celebration of Holy Mass, where we are fed by both tables of the Lord: The table of the Word and the Eucharist.

On the Church's journey this has unfolded in wonderful different liturgies which have always been celebrated with great reverence. This reverence, together with great love and gratitude, should also convey to man the greatness of what is happening, because no one less than God himself meets us in the holy Communion and wants to unite with us. It is therefore not simply a bread that we take in memory of the Lord, it is not an agape in which we share our bread with others in love - it is the mystery of how God wants to come and dwell with us in a recognizable way. Certainly God has other ways, but this way is especially emphasized by the Lord: *"He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him"*.

To share in this mystery in the Catholic Church, certain conditions are necessary. We must be Catholics and believe in the real presence of Christ in Holy Communion, and be in a state of grace. From this it can be seen that participation

in Holy Mass is the exercise of faith for the members of the Body of Christ, and not primarily a missionary matter to lead unbelievers to faith.

In earlier times this was very conscious. Catechumens were only admitted to the worship of the Word and then led out. They could receive from the table of the Word, but not yet the sacrifice, until full integration into the Catholic Church was completed and the conditions for receiving Holy Communion were in place.

Having arrived at this point of reflection, I would like to offer a personal testimony.

In 1977 I had the grace of conversion to Jesus Christ and was then later led into the Catholic Church. An unforgettable moment!

I took the first steps of being a Catholic in a good spiritual community where the Novus Ordo was devoutly celebrated. There I got to know also Eucharistic adoration and many things that are still important in my way of following Christ today.

In the decades that followed, I participated in Holy Mass almost daily. But I always began to suffer when the priests deviated from the intended course of the form, added subjective elements and when the music was banal. This was a real suffering and I could only save myself by internalizing the words above in the Gospel and waiting to receive Holy Communion. It was different when I participated in the Holy Mass of our spiritual community, and here the music also corresponded to the dignity of the event.

Later in Jerusalem, when I had the choice to participate in the liturgy, I chose either a silent Mass on Golgotha or the official Mass of the Franciscans, celebrated in Latin and accompanied by Gregorian chant.

But my spirit and my heart had not yet properly arrived in the liturgy of the Catholic Church. Something was missing, although I certainly took part in very worthy ways of celebrating the Novus Ordo.

In the meantime I had got to know the very attractive Byzantine liturgies, which moved me deeply, especially in Russia and on Mount Athos. But I became Catholic with conviction, so that a conversion into the Orthodox Church was out of the question for me. Sometimes I had the opportunity to participate in the rite of the United Churches.

Then in the last years I discovered the Tridentine Mass and began to love it more and more. It was not love at first sight, but then it grew. When I experienced the "Missa cantata", I knew that I was finally discovering the rite of the Roman Catholic Church in which I felt at home. This is a great gift from God for me! I would like to share this treasure and on this high day. In the last decades this treasure was almost completely hidden, even suspected, and led a similar shadowy existence as the Gregorian chant.

Without devaluing other forms of rite, I would like to testify that there exists in the Tridentine Mass an extremely dignified and authentic form of Holy Mass in the womb of the Holy Church, in which these words of the Lord in the Gospel above have found an uplifting expression in the celebration of the holy mysteries.