



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 16 August 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

These Sundays the Liturgy is offering us, from the Gospel according to John, Jesus' discourse on the *Bread of Life*, which He himself is, just as the Sacrament of the Eucharist is. Today's passage (Jn 6:51-58) presents the final part of this discussion, and refers to several of those who were scandalized because Jesus said: "he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6:54). The listeners' astonishment is understandable; Jesus in fact uses the typical manner of the prophets to provoke *questions* in people — and also in us — and, ultimately, to provoke *a decision*. First of all, regarding the questions: what is meant by "eat the flesh and drink the blood" of Jesus? Is it just an image, a figure of speech, a symbol, or does it indicate something real? In order to answer, one must divine what is happening in Jesus' heart as he breaks the bread for the hungry crowd. Knowing that he will have to die on the cross for us, Jesus identifies himself with that bread broken and shared, and it becomes for him the "sign" of the Sacrifice that awaits him. This process culminates in the Last Supper, where the bread and wine *truly become his Body and his Blood*. It is the *Eucharist*, which Jesus leaves us with a specific purpose: that we may *become one with Him*. Indeed he says: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (v. 56). That "abiding": Jesus in us and we in Jesus. *Communion is assimilation*: partaking of Him, we become as He is. This *requires our "yes", our adherence of faith*.

Regarding the Holy Mass, one sometimes hears this objection: "Of what use is Mass? I go to Church when I feel like it, and I pray better in solitude". But the Eucharist is not a private prayer or a beautiful spiritual exercise, it is not a simple commemoration of what Jesus did at the Last Supper. We say, in order to fully understand, that the Eucharist is "a remembrance", that is, a

gesture which renders real and present the event of Jesus' death and resurrection: the bread really is his Body given up for us, the wine really is his Blood poured out for us.

The Eucharist is Jesus himself who gives himself entirely to us. *Nourishing ourselves* of Him and *abiding* in Him through Eucharistic Communion, if we do so with faith, *transforms our life*, transforms it into a gift to God and to our brothers and sisters. Nourishing ourselves of that "Bread of Life" means entering into harmony with the heart of Christ, assimilating his choices, his thoughts, his behaviour. It means entering into a dynamism of love and becoming people of peace, people of forgiveness, of reconciliation, of sharing in solidarity. The very things that Jesus did.

Jesus concludes his discourse with these words: "he who eats this bread will live for ever" (Jn 6:58). Yes, living in real communion with Jesus on this earth lets us pass from death to life. Heaven begins precisely in this communion with Jesus.

In Heaven Mary our Mother is already waiting for us — we celebrated this mystery yesterday. May she obtain for us the grace to nourish ourselves with faith in Jesus, Bread of Life.

After the Angelus:

Dear brothers and sisters, I greet you all with affection, People of Rome and pilgrims: families, parish groups, associations, young people.

I greet the folk group "Mexican Art and Culture Organization", the young people of Verona who are having a special experience in Rome, and the faithful of Beverare.

I address a special greeting to the many young people of the Salesian Youth Movement, gathered in Turin in the places of St John Bosco to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth; I encourage them to live the joy of the Gospel every day, so as to generate hope in the world.

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me! Enjoy your lunch!
Arrivederci!