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The Feast of Corpus Christi in Rome

At 7 p.m. today, Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Benedict XVI celebrated Mass on the square in front of the basilica of St. John Lateran, then led a Eucharistic procession to the basilica of St. Mary Major.

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In his homily, the Pope affirmed that in today's feast "the Church relives the mystery of Easter Thursday in the light of the Resurrection. Easter Thursday also has its own

Eucharistic procession with which the Church recreates Jesus' exodus from the Cenacle to the Mount of Olives. ... Jesus truly gives His body and His blood. Crossing the threshold of death, He became living Bread, true manna, inexhaustible nourishment for all time. The flesh became bread of life."

"In the feast of Corpus Christi," the Pope went on, "we repeat the procession (of Holy Thursday), but in the joy of the Resurrection. The Lord is risen and He goes before us. ... Jesus goes before us to the Father, He ascends to the heights of God and invites us to follow Him. ... The true goal of our journey is communion with God."

The Holy Father pointed out how in the Sacrament of the Eucharist "the Lord is always moving towards the world. This universal aspect of the Eucharistic presence is apparent in

the procession of our feast today. We bring Christ, present in the form of the bread, along the streets of our city. We entrust these streets, these houses, our daily lives, to His goodness. May our streets be Jesus' streets! May our houses be for Him and with Him! May our daily lives be penetrated by His presence. With this gesture we place the suffering of the sick, the solitude of the young and the old, temptations and fears, all our lives, under His gaze. This procession seeks to be a great and public blessing for our city. Christ in person is the divine blessing for the world - may the rays of His blessing extend over us all."

Referring to Christ's call to "take, eat, ... drink of it, all of you," Benedict XVI emphasized that "one cannot 'eat' the Risen One, present in form of bread, as a simple piece of bread. To eat this bread is to communicate, it is to enter into communion with the

person of the living Lord. This communion, this act of 'eating,' truly represents an encounter between two people, it means allowing oneself to be penetrated by the life of the One Who is Lord, the One Who is my Creator and Redeemer. The aim of this communion is to assimilate my life to His, my transformation and conformity to the One Who is living Love. Thus, communion implies adoration, it implies the will to follow Christ, to follow the One Who goes before. Adoration and procession thus make up part of a single gesture of communion, a response to His call to 'take and eat'."

The Pope concluded by underlining the fact that "our procession finishes before the basilica of St. Mary Major, in the encounter with the Virgin, called by dear Pope John Paul II 'Eucharistic woman.' Mary, Mother of the Lord, truly teaches us what it means to enter into communion with

Christ. ... Let us ask her to help us open our being ever more to the presence of Christ, that she may help us follow Him faithfully day after day along the paths of our lives. Amen."

After Mass, the Pope presided at a Eucharistic procession along Rome's Via Merulana to the basilica of St. Mary Major. Along the route, thousands of faithful prayed and sang accompanying the Most Holy Sacrament. A covered vehicle transported the Sacrament in a monstrance, before which the Holy Father prayed.

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