



The Lord, your God ... fed you with manna,

(Deuteronomy 8:2)

These words of the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy refer to the history of Israel, that God lead the people out from Egypt, out from the condition of slavery, and guided them for forty years in the desert to the Promised Land. Once established in the land, the Chosen People attained a certain autonomy, a certain wellbeing, and ran the risk of forgetting the sad but formative events of the past, forgetting all about from where they had come, thanks to the intervention of God and his graciousness and goodness. Then the Scripture writers, inspired by God, often exhort the people to recall, to remember the whole journey in the desert, in a time of want and discomfort. The invitation from the prophets is to return to the essential, to the experience of their total dependence on God,

when their survival was entrusted to his hand, so that man (sic) would really understand that "he does not live by bread alone, but ... by everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8).

Beyond our physical hunger, we carry in ourselves, in our humanity, another hunger, a hunger that cannot be satisfied with ordinary food. It is hunger for life, hunger for love, and hunger for eternity. And the sign of the manna – as the whole experience of the Exodus – contained that dimension in itself as well: the manna was a symbol of a food that satisfies this profound hunger that humanity has. Jesus gives us this food that endures, indeed, he himself is the "living bread" that gives life to the world (John 6:51). His Body is real food under the species of bread; His Blood is real drink under the species of wine. It is not simple nourishment with which to satiate our bodies, as the manna was; the Body of Christ is the bread of the end times, capable of giving life, and eternal life, because the essence of this bread is Divine Love.

We reflected last Sunday on the mystery of the Trinity and life in the Trinity as our destiny. Communicated in the Eucharist is the Trinity's love for us: such a great love that God nourishes us with himself; a gratuitous love, always at the disposition of every hungry person and the needy one whose strength needs regenerated. To live the experience of faith means to really allow ourselves to be nourished by the Lord and to build our stronghold not simply on material goods, but on the reality that does not perish: the gifts of God, His Word and His Body.

If we look around us critically, we most probably realise that there are so many offers of food that do not come from the Lord and which seem to satisfy for a short time. Some nourish themselves with money, others with success and vanity, others with power and pride. However, the food that really nourishes us and satiates us is only that which the Lord gives us! The food the Lord offers us is different from the others; perhaps at times it does not seem as tasty as certain foods which the world offers us. Then we dream of other meals, just like the Jews did in the desert; remember how they mourned for the meat and the onions and garlic they ate in Egypt, but they were looking back through rose tinted glasses, forgetting that they ate these meals at the **table of slavery**. In that moment of temptation, they remembered, but their memory was flawed, it was a selective memory – a slave memory, not free.

Today, each one of us can ask him or herself: and I? Where do I want to eat? At what table do I want to nourish myself? At the Lord's table? Or do I dream of eating tasty foods, but in slavery? Moreover, each one of us can ask him or herself: what is my memory? That of the Lord who saves me, or that of the garlic and onions of slavery? With what memory do I wish to *satisfy my hungry heart*?

The Father says to us: "I fed you with manna." We must recover the memory. This is the task, to recover the memory, to learn to recognise the false bread that deludes and corrupts, because it is the fruit of self-centredness, of self-sufficiency and of sin. In our Mass today once more we eat the Bread of Life and (hopefully soon, once again) we will drink the sacred wine of the blood of Jesus. In the Blessed Sacrament Procession in the Cathedral in the afternoon, we will follow Jesus truly present in the Eucharist. The Host is our manna, through which the Lord gives us Himself. We turn to Him with trust:

Lord Jesus, defend us from the temptations of worldly goods that would render us slaves to food which does not endure; purify our memory, so that it will be a lively memory of your presence throughout the history of your people, a memory that becomes the true "memorial" of your gesture of redemptive love. Amen.