"Communion and Contemplation are inseparable"

June 2012 (VIS) -
On the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the pope celebrated Mass in the basilica of St. John Lateran, then led a Eucharistic procession along Via Merulana to the basilica of St. Mary Major. During the liturgical celebration, the Pope pronounced a homily in which he focused on the sacredness of the Eucharist, and in particular on the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

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"A unilateral interpretation of Vatican Council II has penalised this dimension", the Holy Father explained, "effectively limiting the Eucharist to the moment of celebrating Mass. It is, of course, very important to recognise the importance of celebration, in which the Lord calls His people, bringing them together around the table of the Word and Bread of life, nourishing them and uniting them to Himself in the sacrificial offering. This interpretation of the liturgical gathering, in which the Lord works and achieves His mystery of communion, naturally retains all its validity, but a rightful balance must be restored. ... By concentrating our relationship with the Eucharistic Christ only on Mass we run the risk that the rest of time and space is emptied of His presence. Thus our perception of Jesus' constant, real and close presence among us and with us is diminished".

"It is a mistake to establish a contrast between celebration and adoration, as if they were in competition with one another. The opposite is true. The cult of the Blessed Sacrament represents the spiritual 'environment' within which the community can celebrate the Eucharist correctly and truthfully. Only if preceded, accompanied and followed by this interior attitude of faith and adoration, can liturgical activity express its full meaning and value", the Pope said.

He then went on to explain that, at the moment of adoration, we are all at the same level, "on our knees before the Sacrament of Love. The common and ministerial priesthood come together in the cult of the Eucharist. ... By remaining together in silence before the Lord, present in His Sacrament, we have one of the most authentic experiences of being Church, one that is complementary to our celebration of the Eucharist. ... Communion and contemplation cannot be separated, they go together", and if contemplation is lacking "even sacramental communion can become a superficial gesture on our part".