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THE EUCHARIST: SOURCE AND
SUMMIT OF LIFE AND MISSION
OF THE CHURCH

Synod of Bishops

EUCCHARIST: SACRIFICE AND
SACRAMENT OF LOVE

Anscar Chupungco, OSB

ASIAN FACES OF JESUS:
WITHIN THE ISLAMIC
CONTEXT OF ASIA

Theotonius Gomes, DD, CSC

WE WANT TO SEE JESUS

Vicente Cajilig, OP

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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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We Want to See Jesus

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Vogliamo vedere Gesù. What a beautiful wish of the youth gathered in early spring this year in the piazza of the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome! The wish is symbolic of the dream of youth in the world today. To see the face of Jesus means also to see the person of Jesus. To know him. To love him too. To be familiar with his way. For his way is life. And life means living in his plan for every person on this earth.

There in the piazza was a good representation of youth, about 300 of them, coming from some 80 countries. Some of them came from countries where the practice of faith is rendered difficult due to unfriendly social situation and fundamentalist atmosphere, showing rare courage and commitment. They gathered in a meeting called by the Vatican to reflect upon the role of the youth in the university environment today. So many reflections were done on the situation of young people in the different parts of the world.

The meeting in Rome was to celebrate the 8th world youth forum. In his message to the delegates, Pope John Paul

II challenged those present: *Try by every means to make this encounter possible, and look towards Jesus who is passionately seeking you. Seek him with the eyes of the flesh through the events of life and in the faces of others; but seek him too with the eyes of the soul through prayer and meditation on the Word of God, because "The contemplation of Christ's face cannot fail to be inspired by all that we are told about him in the sacred scripture."*

The Holy Father also encouraged the youth "to discover Jesus in the Eucharist." This in fact is a preparation for the coming Eucharistic congress in Mexico this October and anticipation for the coming Eucharistic year.

In Asia, the face of Jesus is also the object of theological endeavors. In May this year the Office of Theological Concerns of FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences) dealt on the Asian Faces of Jesus. Two questions, among others, were asked: Are there Asian Faces of Christ? If so, how are they understood?

The term "face" is of course a metaphor to stand for the faces of Jesus as shepherd, suffering servant, lord, etc. But this may also refer to approaches embodied in knowing the person of Jesus:

Jesus the poor: portraying the poverty of Asia.

Jesus as related to the Father: portraying the link of man with God in the multi-forms of Asian religions.

Suffering Jesus: portrayed in the common experience injustice and violence caused by negative consequences of colonialism, castism, sexism, fundamentals among others.

Jesus the Jewish person in Lukan tradition: portraying Asian as embodied in different local cultures, which have positive aspects, but also in need of further purification.

Jesus is not only for the Christians. He is also a model of Asians who may have different religious persuasion. For one, Gandhi recognized his teaching and the power of his teaching.

We, Filipinos, we Asians, we the people of the world, young and old are privileged for we have one Divine Face to behold: *We wish to see Jesus!*

PASTORAL WORDS

The Essential Jesus*

CARLOS ABESAMIS, SJ.

THE TWO ESSENTIALS

In talking about Jesus, we should talk first and last about the "essentials" about Jesus. It is obvious that focusing on these "essentials" is a good and necessary thing for us in the Church. It may also make us more conscious of the peripherals/incidentals with which we content ourselves in the Church today.

If one consults the average Christian consciousness, one would encounter responses such as these: God-and-man, Messiah-Savior-Redeemer, Savior and Lawgiver, Friend and Lover, Teacher of Love and Forgiveness, Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, Model for Human Living, etc.

I would make a different proposal. I would propose two "essentials" that we glean from the biblical data? Jesus was a person (1) Connected with the Source, his Abba. (2) Totally

Talk delivered last May 11-14, 2004 for the OTC-FABC'S Colloquium on "Asian Faces of Christ", Samphran, Thailand.

poured out in mission. And, I hasten to add; His mission was for total salvation, human and cosmic.

THE FIRST ESSENTIAL: CONNECTED WITH THE SOURCE

Jesus was intimately *connected to the Source*. The Source was *His Father*. Being thus connected, he was fully charged with Divine Energy.

He was like a *mountain stream directly in touch with the Original Spring*, {and thus is alive and healthy*}

Like an *artesian well*, he was *connected with the Water Source*.

He was like a *tree whose roots drink from the Water Veins beneath the earth*, {and thus bursting with life.}

Like a cloud fully seeded, he was pregnant with Divine vapor* He was like a *cloud fully seeded, pregnant, heavy with rain*.

He was like a *sponge, drenched and soaking wet*.

Connected* with the Power Source, he was battery fully charged. Or He was like a *battery connected with the Power Source*.

He was like a *piece of paper, wet with the signature of God*.

Having made contact* with His Father, he was a Torch ablaze with a Divine Flame. He was a *torch ablaze, ablaze with the Divine Flame*.

Why do I use these kindergarten metaphors for Jesus? Because these images can be telling more than our bland

"union/communion with God". Hopefully too these unwonted metaphors help to stir up our consciousness to this first essential of Jesus.

Jesus was in touch with the Source. And that all of us were born with a physical umbilical cord which was cut at birth. We may also speak of a *spiritual* cord that connects us to the God. Some of us decide to keep a thin, sickly connection with God. A few might even cut it altogether. With Jesus, it was a different connection - the kind that rendered his total being fully charged with the Divine, and his outer aura, luminous with the Divine. This is what is being said implicitly or explicitly by the biblical data.

It was through silent communion that Jesus was in touch with the Source:

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he *prayed*. (*Mk 1:35*)

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, to Bethsaida, while *he dismissed the crowd. After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray*. (*Mk 6: 45-46*)

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he *spent the night in prayer* to God. (*Lk 6:12*)

Because he connected, he was one with his *Abba*. With unerring intuition, John the evangelist has a Jesus that says:

Do you not believe that */ am in the Father and the Father in me*? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the *Father who dwells in me does his works*. Believe me that */ am in the Father and the Father in me*; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves (*Jn 14: 10-11*)

/ and the Father are one. {*Jn 10:30*}

He was thus fully charged with divine energy.

The *Spirit of the Lord is upon me...* to proclaim good news to the poor. (*Lk 4:18*)

And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years... She came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment ... And immediately the hemorrhage ceased... And Jesus, perceiving in himself that *power had gone forth from him*, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, "Who touched my garments?" {*Mk 5:25-31*}

On one of those days, as he was teaching, there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the *power of the Lord was with him to heal*. {*Lk 5:17*}

The *Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness*. And he was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him. {*Mk 1:12-13*}

"...it is *by the Spirit of God* that I cast out demons..." {*Mt 12:28*}

In touch with the Source. He was in vibrant communion with His Father.

THE SECOND ESSENTIAL: **POURED OUT IN MISSION** FOR TOTAL HUMAN AND COSMIC **LIBERATION**

We have just finished reflecting on the first "essential" about Jesus: - He was in touch with the Source.

The second "essential" about Jesus is this: - He was totally poured out in mission. And, we hasten to add; His mission was for total salvation, human and cosmic.

First, notice with what passion and vigor Jesus plunged into his life's work!

At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them. But he said to them, *7 must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.*' (Lk 4:43; Mk 1:38)

Let us now re-read the Scripture to piece together this mission of Jesus for total salvation.

/ start with my childhood catechism. For me, then, the mission of Jesus was to *die* to save my *soul* from *sin*, to give me *sanctifying grace* in this life, so that when I die, I may go to *heaven* where I will *see God face to face*.

Now that I am grown up, find that formulation of the mission of Jesus to be *correct but too narrow*.

The over-all lifework and mission of Jesus was, as one would expect, the *proclamation of salvation*. But what was

the salvation Jesus proclaimed? Jesus proclaimed a *new world and a new history for humankind and creation*. In biblical language it is called "Kingdom of God" (Mk 1:14-15) or "New Heaven and New Earth (2 Pet 3:13)" or "Age to Come" (Mk 10:29-30). Jesus' preferred the term "*Kingdom of God*".

It is a *new world on earth, to be consummated at the end of history*. In fact, it is a *new universe* as will the biblical testimonies will show presently. At any rate, it is *not* heaven. We are not saying that there is no heaven. There is indeed a heaven; Yahweh's abode in the firmament 'above,' but the Kingdom of God is *not* that heaven.

Inspired by the book of Isaiah¹, Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God as: - good news of liberation for the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, the jubilee year happenings of release of slaves, rest for the land, recall of the debts of the poor, restoration of land and property and houses of dispossessed ancestral folk (Lk 4:16-20). It is a *new world replete with various blessings for human beings, specially the poor and oppressed*.

During his lifetime Jesus summarized his work of salvation thus: "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news (of liberation and justice) proclaimed to them" (Mt 11:2-5 = Lk 7:18-23). No word about forgiving sins or saving souls for heaven. It is all about *health, life, justice and liberation*.

¹ Isa 52:7; 40:9; 35: 5-6; 29:18-19; 61:1-2; 58:6; 42:1-4; 26:19. Also: Isa 52:7-10; 40: 9-11; 35:1-10; 61:1-4; 29:17-21; 42:1-9; 26:19; 24:23; 51:4-5; 25:8.

A rich source of information about the Kingdom of God can be found in the beatitudes. The Kingdom of God is a new earth for humankind, promised specifically to the meek. In that new earth, there will be justice and liberation for the poor², a blessing for the poor in spirit, food for those who had suffered hunger, righteousness for those who hunger for it, joy and comfort for the sorrowing, mercy for the merciful, vision of God for the pure in heart, divine sonship-daughter-ship for the peacemakers.³ Again, the Kingdom of God is a new earth⁴ where human beings, individually and collectively, will experience a different history.

Mt 19:28 pictures biblical salvation as *paliggenesia*. Various translations attempt to render this breathtaking reality thus: "when all things are reborn," "at the renewal of all things," "the renewal of the earth," "regeneration," "new world." "when everything is made new again," "*when the world experiences a rebirth*," "a reborn universe."

Jesus said to them. 'Truly I tell you, *at the renewal of all things*, [in Luke's version: "kingdom"⁵] when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me, will also sit on twelve *thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*' (Mt 19:28)

² "Justice and liberation" is the blessing implied in the beatitude, "Blessed are the poor, theirs is the Kingdom of God".

³ Lk 6:20-21; Mt 5:3-10.

⁴ The term "Kingdom of Heaven" is used in the New Testament, especially by Matthew. It does not refer to heaven. The word "heaven" here is used as a substitute for the word "God". Therefore, Kingdom of Heaven is exactly the same as Kingdom of God and refers to a new earth, not heaven.

⁵ Lk 22:29.30.

Kingdom of God then means *a new world experiencing total salvation, a new universe experiencing total well-being*. More than hinted at is a salvation of the universe, therefore, cosmic⁶.

Good News to the Poor: Justice and Liberation

Very well, salvation for Jesus refers to the total salvation and its many life-blessings. But there is a whole range of life-blessings: - from food and healing to divine filiation. Which of these is of the greatest moment for Jesus? This is an important question. The biblical data bid us to throw all hesitation to the winds. Of the *greatest moment is justice and liberation for the poor*. Why is this so? Because it is so etched in the consciousness of Jesus that he probably proclaimed it even in his sleep! We have, of course, no record of what Jesus said in his sleep, but at any rate, in his waking hours, "good news to the poor" was often, if not always, on his lips. We take careful note then of the following:

(1) the *obvious and unalloyed meaning* of "good news to the poor" is nothing more and nothing less than *justice and liberation for the poor*

(2) it is *always mentioned* in *key mission statements*

(3) it is the *only detail* always mentioned in these mission statements

(4) the *other details* - health for the sick, life for the dead, vision of God for the pure in heart - are *not always mentioned*

Cosmos = universe.

(5) it occupies a special spot in the listing, either the *prominent first* or the *climactic last*. Look:

The blind receive their sight,
the lame walk,
the lepers are cleansed,
the deaf hear,
the dead are raised,
and *the poor have good news brought to them*.
(MM 1:2-6 = Lk 7:18-23)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...
To *bring good news to the poor*,
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'
(1*4:16-21)

Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the Kingdom of God.
Blessed are the hungry ...
... the sorrowful
... the pure in heart,
...etc. {Lk 6:20 = Mt 5:3}

Basis and Meaning of "Church of the Poor"

In passing, our Philippine Church has made the official statement⁷ that we are the "Church of the Poor". What is the basis for such a statement? The *basis* for being the Church

⁷ The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II), par. 122-126.

of the Poor is the biblical "Good News to the Poor", meaning Justice and Liberation, which was so etched in the consciousness of Jesus that it was *always on his lips*. We follow a Jesus for whom Justice and Liberation was an article of faith, so to speak. That is the basis for your being Church of the Poor.

And not just basis. It is the *only serious meaning* of Church of the Poor. (We play around* with so many meanings of Church of the Poor but seldom hit on its biblical meaning.) A Church of the Poor is one that is totally committed to liberation and justice for the poor.

Risky Business

But that is risky business ... For Jesus, not only Good News to the Poor but the whole mission for total salvation turned out to be a *risky affair*. For it meant: -

that he put primacy on the human being and human life over and against the accepted tradition and law. (e.g. *Mk* 3:1-6; *Mk* 2:23-28; *Mk* 2:15-17; *Lk* 16:20-22).

that he be a non-conformist and a rebel against tradition (*MA*: 7; *Mk* 2:21-22; *Mk* 2:21).

that he be an uncompromising critic of the value-system or ideology of the establishment (*Mt* 23:23; *Mk* 2:7; *Mt* 9:13; *Mk* 8:15)

that he stage a double-assault - in speech and feat - against the most massive institution, the temple (*Mk* 11:15-19; 13:1-2).

Is it any wonder that Jesus made enemies? Conflict was an integral part of the Jesus story.

The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Is it any wonder that some people would want to get rid of him? And they did. They *killed* Jesus. Jesus was *executed*. This is the historical aspect of Jesus' death.

In itself, Jesus' execution would already have had a weighty significance - the death of a rebel for the sake of the Kingdom, of a martyr for justice and the oppressed. But in fact, another meaning was given to his death, that of a *death in atonement for sin*. {Rom 3:21-25; Eph 5:2; Jn 1:29}. This is the faith meaning or theological aspect of Jesus' death.

This Jesus did. not remain a captive of death. He rose from the dead. As the Risen Spirit, he pours out the Divine Energy into our hearts "for our justification."

Thus Paul can say succinctly: Jesus was "*put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification*. {Rom 4:25}"

The Coming Again of Jesus and the Consummation of the Kingdom

All stories have a *closure*. Jesus' story has. The closure occurs at the Jesus' *parousia* ('coming again,' or more, popularly, second coming) at the end of time. The Kingdom that was inaugurated at his first coming will be consummated at his second coming. {1 Thess 2:11-12; 3:13; Lk 21:25-28} With Jesus' parousia, the final and definitive Kingdom of God will have come. Final and definitive salvation will have visited our aching and thirsting world!

This final and definitive salvation, according to Acts 3:21 is *apokatastasis pantoon*, a thrilling reality, variously translated "universal restoration," "when all things will be made whole again," "restoring all things to perfection."

2 Pet 3:13 says that what God has promised is "new heaven(s) and a new earth"⁸ (not heaven), where there will be justice (not beatific vision) for humans (not souls). A *world where there is justice*: can one find a more concise expression of the dream of the poor?

Behind the symbolic language of Rev 21:1-5, we can discern a scenario of a *new world*, to which a new beautiful city has come *from above down to earth* (!), where God dwells in bonded familiarity with humans, where there will be no more death, nor mourning, nor pain, where the old world has passed away, where all things have been made new.

Eph 1:9-10 clearly also takes us beyond this earth to the great universe. God's plan is to *"unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth."*

1 Cor 15:24-28 paints a scenario, where, after the defeat of all evil forces, the Divine Energy will permeate all of reality, "God will be all in all." This *universe, pulsating with the Divine*, is our final goal, not heaven for souls. Salvation is indeed of cosmic proportions!

Rom 8:19-23 makes explicit that *nature, not just humans, will experience liberation*. "Creation itself will be set free from its slavery to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God!" Humans and nature groan in travail, like a woman in labor, aspiring for final and total liberation, we humans towards becoming full children of God through the resurrection of our mortal selves, nature

⁸ **Heaven-and-earth** means "world" or "universe". So **New Heaven and New Earth** means **new world** or **a new universe**.

towards its radical transformation from decay to beauty. An inspiration and challenge to care for our earth and all that is in it!

The *parousia* or coming again of Jesus is therefore an *event of salvation*. That is the Victory-Day, *the day of the coming of the Kingdom!* Our complete redemption is at hand! (cf. *Lk* 21:27-28). Whether or not we take Jesus' *parousia* literally, its basic message is that this our history of mourning, pain, suffering, and death - will give way to a new creation where all things will have been made new!

Thus though indeed we can hope for a heaven after each one of us dies, heaven is not our final goal. Our *final goal is a new earth*, in fact, a new universe, where all reality will experience total well-being.

BITS OF INSIGHTS

It is clear how the Jesus of my childhood catechism is a pale shadow of the original and why I had to outgrow it.

The main salvation events cannot be limited to Jesus' death and resurrection. Rather, the *main salvation events* in the lifework of Jesus are (1) the pre-crucifixion activity of Jesus (2) his death (3) his resurrection (4) his *parousia*.

Salvation is not just salvation from sin, but *liberation from all evils: personal evil* (Jesus addressed the sickness of individual persons), *social evil* ("Blessed are you that hunger..." addresses the hunger of the hungry at large), *historical evil* ("Liberty to the oppressed" addresses the oppression found in human history), *cosmic evil* (all evil cosmic powers will be vanquished).

Salvation is not for soul⁹ but *for the human person* (the sick, the sinner, the poor, the resurrected person), humankind (the collectivities - the poor, the hungry, the peacemakers - mentioned in the beatitudes) and *nature, creation and universe* (the regenerated universe, all things united in Christ, God being all in all.).

The blessing(s) of salvation in the here and now is not limited to sanctifying grace but extend to *all life-giving blessings* or *total well-being*, such as food, land, health, forgiveness of sins, divine life.

The *final goal* of salvation is not just heaven after a person's death, but the *Kingdom of God at the end of history*. It is a new world with a new history. In fact it is a new universe.

The blessing(s) of final salvation is not limited to seeing God face to face but extends to all life-promoting blessings: - personal, social, historical, cosmic such as resurrection, seeing God, food, justice, divine filiation. "Total human and cosmic well-being" is a pale human way of approximating the tremendous reality.

THE MISSION TODAY

So Jesus' mission was about total human and cosmic liberation. How does that translate to today? How does the disciple continue the mission of Jesus?

" The word "soul" appears in the New Testament, but it does not carry the Greek meaning, the immaterial part of the person. Rather it refers to the whole person, with a particular reference to the person's interiority.

Globalization: The HIV of the World

Let us start right away with a thought from Pope John Paul II.

Our world today is sick. What is the illness? The diagnosis points to a worldwide disease that goes by the name 'globalization.' Pope John Paul II, in a visit to Mexico, "attacked free-market policies for their neglect of the poor and their 'purely economic conception of man (sic).' He blamed globalization for the growing gap between rich and poor."

The HIV-like virus of globalization is deceptive and treacherous because it seems to carry a blessing. It globalizes information, which has become instantaneous, massive and worldwide. But it is deadly because it also globalizes the exploitation and destruction of human beings and nature. It is a tenacious parasite-like virus because a few millionaires in the world live by it, make profit by it and swear by it.

The essence of this virus, is this: Capitalist enterprises - transnational corporations with the inter-active partnership of the IMF, World Bank and the WTO - extract mega-profits from the peoples of the globe and from the resources of nature.

What Globalization Does to Humankind and Nature

Here are some of the visible effects of globalization:

> The already all too familiar growing gap between the rich and poor people, rich and poor nations is widening.

>• The workers are experiencing unemployment, job insecurity, loss of benefits, contractualization, the destruction of unions.

>- The farmers lose their lands in favor of industrial sites, golf courses, recreational facilities for the rich. They have to compete with the products of rich countries, not to mention problems that chemical fertilizers and pesticides bring to them.

>- The ordinary fisher folk may no longer get food from the seas which have now been taken over by sophisticated trawling ships.

>• Women, especially working women, experience intensification of their manifold exploitation.

>- Indigenous peoples' right to ancestral lands is undermined by the incursion of multinational plantations, mining and logging enterprises.

>- Environment, where profit has prime priority, is among the prime victims of globalization. The deadly effects include climate change, ozone depletion, air and water pollution, ocean resource depletion and pollution, deforestation, extinction of species and cold-blooded genetic manipulation.

>- Human rights are sidelined. The priority given to the business interests abets violations of people's rights - economic, social, cultural, political and civil.

> States and governments are subjected to the dictates of transnational business. Legislations, even constitutions, are changed to promote the gains of these businesses.

CHA: Globalization is the antithesis of the Kingdom of God. Motivated by Jesus' summons, let us join - organizations of youth, environmentalists, women, workers, peasants, mothers, overseas workers, drug and alcohol rehab groups, indigenous peoples, small vendors, urban poor and other grassroots organizations - who assert, in word and action, that something of the new earth has got to be visible and tangible today. Kingdom-work means to join in the global project to find alternative paradigms for living and being in the globe, our home. Like Jesus, may we be able to say: 'The Kingdom of God - or something of it - is already among us.'

CONCLUSION

First, Jesus was someone in touch with the Source. *Second*, he was poured out in mission for total human and cosmic liberation.

These two essentials go together: union and mission. Union with God and Kingdom mission.

Or: Inward journey and outward movement. Inward to the core and outward to mission.

The *Abba* was the Jesus' Fountainhead. Connected with that Source, Jesus was a mighty river flooding the Palestinian hills and plains with a message to proclaim. The *Abba* was a Fire aflame in his heart. Ablaze with that Fire, Jesus sallied forth with passion into his lifework and mission.

The mission of Jesus' disciple in the 21st century is to continue the mission of Jesus. Inspired by the Jesus' story, we, today's disciples, will hopefully yearn to *be in touch with the Source and out of that Wellspring be a prophet in word and act for the Kingdom of God. And may "Justice and*

Liberation for the Poor" be a badge on our hearts and a fearless word on our lips. "Justice and Liberation for the Poor" gave purpose to Jesus' life. May it give purpose and direction to ours too.

POST-SCRIPT: THE PRECEPT-ASPECT

Jesus' mission then was the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Is there something more to be said regarding his mission? Yes, he also spoke about a way of being and acting. Jesus would say: 'If you want to enter the Kingdom of God, this is what you do. Be this. Do this.'

Corresponding to the proclamation of the Kingdom Jesus spoke of *precepts, moral requirements, conditions for entry, a moral code, ethical, rules of conduct, and guidelines for living*. These constitute a code for living in order for people to enter the Kingdom of God. Let us take *Mk 1:14-15* as an illustration:

Now after John was arrested, *Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near [PROCLAMATION] change your lives and believe in, the good news.'* [PRECEPT]

Regarding this precept aspect, we note the following briefly:

1. Proclamation and precept must be distinguished from each other.

Thus Kingdom of God (proclamation) does not consist in conversion of hearts (precept). Kingdom of God is a new

earth. Some pastors and catechists tend to talk of the Kingdom of God as moral conversion. The Kingdom of God consists, they say, in repentance or conversion of hearts. That is biblically incorrect. Conversion of hearts is a moral act. Kingdom of God is the salvation offered by God; it is the response of the disciple.

When this distinction is not recognized, preachers preach do's and don'ts (precept) but do not proclaim the biblical Kingdom of God (proclamation).

If we do not recognize this distinction, religion and life tend to be moralistic. Religion is identified with commandments. Religion is made to consist in the precept aspect. What inscription does one frequently find in Filipino church patios and sanctuaries? We often find, in big, big letters and written in big, big tablets, the ten commandments of Moses! A religion of commandments indeed! Lurks a police-God behind? A Jesus-inspired religion would dwell equally, if not more, on the proclamation aspect. The proclamation aspect has to do with food, land, health, justice, peace, human rights.

(It was to avoid this danger of over-moralism that I did not include this precept-aspect in the main body of this essay.)

2. Jesus Offered an Alternative Ethic

Seen in the background of the prevailing ethic of his time (or of our time even) Jesus offered an alternative ethic.

I say, "or of our time," because the name Christian does not necessarily free us from a pharisaic ethic.

Without further comment, the following samples of precept suggest how different Jesus' ethic was from the pre-

vailing ethic of his time or even from much of our Christian *practice today*.

SAMPLES OF PRECEPT

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind ...You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (*Mt 22:37-39*)

Leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be *reconciled* to your brother or sister. (5:24)

If any one strikes you on the *right cheek*, *turn* to him *the other also*. (5:39)

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (5:44)

When you give alms, do not let your *left hand* know what your *right hand* is doing. (6:3)

Whenever you *pray*, *go into your* room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. (6:6)

When you are *praying*, *do not heap up empty phrases* ... for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (6:7)

Do not store up for yourselves *treasures on earth*, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves *treasures in heaven* ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (6:19-21)

No one can serve *two masters* ... You cannot serve *God and wealth*. (6:24)

Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or *what you will drink*, or about your body, *what you will wear*. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (6:25)

You received without payment; *give without payment*. (10:8)

Everyone who *acknowledges me* before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. (10:32)

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not *take up the cross* and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find *their* life will lose it, and those who *lose their life for my sake* will find it. (10:37-39)

I desire *mercy, and not sacrifice*. (12:7)

What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is *what defiles*. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile. (15:18)

Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not *revealed* this to you, but my Father in heaven. (16:17)

If any want to become my followers, let them *deny themselves and take up their cross* and follow me. For

those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who *lose their life* for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they *gain the whole* world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? (16:24-27)

If you wish to be perfect, go, *sell your possessions*, and *give the money to the poor*, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me. (19:2 1)

And everyone who has *left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake*, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are *first* will be last, and the *last* will be first. (19:29-30)

For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: *justice and mercy and faith*. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel! (23:23-24)

Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for *I was hungry and you gave me food*, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' (25:34-36)

Unless your *righteousness* exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (5:20)

3. A Recommendation: By Being, Not By Doing

Irrational! Impossible! Indeed. But we must reckon with the author of this ethic. He was in touch with the Source. He was always a pregnant cloud. And perhaps he expected his followers to be the same. And our excuse for failing? Because he was divine and we are not? Such 'bad thoughts' are not to be entertained. Let us try this: He was in touch. We are not... or less in touch. Our cloud is less seeded...

This is the kind of ethic that you don't try hard to follow by *doing*. It is more the kind of ethic that happens to you by just *being* ... being in touch. For, the best kind of spirituality is one that happens to you rather than one that you make happen. This is so in the best of Asian religious traditions. Be in touch and there are no longer precepts - only the spontaneous dance-movements of the heart.

Asian Faces of Jesus:

Within the Islamic Context of Asia

THEOTONIUS GOMES, DD, CSC

Preamble:

Theology has been shifting from a predominantly doctrinal and verbal reflection to its more spiritual component. Relating to Jesus it means a shifting from a sense of the pure "mystery" of Jesus to the living presence of his person. Thus we are concerned about the "vision" ("*darshan*") of Jesus. Scripture talks about "seeing" Jesus as a very important point. It is relevant that we talk about the "faces" of Jesus, indeed about the "Asian faces" of Jesus.

The "Asian" relevance regarding Jesus has been mentioned in the Post Asian-synod document *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA). Three issues need to be noted: (a) Firstly, in Asia along with the exclusive latter Western experience of Jesus there is need to bring in the experience of the early centuries of the Church along with the experiences of the Eastern/Orthodox Churches, (b) Secondly, it also means that the face of Jesus has to be seen vis-a-vis the multi-religious tradi-

tions of Asia, taking into consideration how Jesus has been contemplated in those traditions, especially in Islam, (c) Thirdly, we need to see the matter under the "innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul"... "not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony" (EA 6), values that arise from a spirit of communion rather than of individualism.

Contemplation of the Face of Jesus: spiritual task for the 3rd Millennium

Pope John Paul II mentions that the core of the great legacy of Jubilee 2000 is "the contemplation of the face of Christ" (NMI 15). He explains this to be "Christ considered in his historical features and in his mystery, Christ known through his manifold presence in the Church and in the world, and confessed as the meaning of history and the light of life's journey" (ibid.). This Contemplation of the Face of Jesus is "seeing" in him the face of the Son, of the Sorrowful and of the Risen One (NMI-part II). Seeing or showing the face of Jesus is the truly religious task and goal of Christianity for the New Millennium.

God eternally invisible moves from invisibility to visible manifestation in creation and redemption. The created order, on the other hand, must move from the visible-temporal into the invisible-eternal. Here below all reality is finally "visible" in order to be credible. Religions have expressed the visible mode of the presence of the invisible God. In Christianity the Incarnation is surely that, leading us to a "vision" of the invisible eternal God: "he who has seen me has seen the Father" (*Jn* 14:9). The Gospels relate how

people expressed their desire to see Jesus (*Jn* 12:21). The Resurrected Lord is believed through the visible sign of the wounds imprinted in his body, leading to confess what is invisible mystery in Him (*Jn* 20:26-29). The Apostle John has insisted on the aspects of hearing, seeing, looking upon, touching the Word made manifest (*1 Jn* 1:1-3), text chosen as introductory scriptural reference in Vatican II document on Revelation (*Dei Verbum*). In the "Divine Comedy" Poet Dante is granted the vision of the face of the historical Christ, imprinted in the eternal Trinity, indicating the mysterious presence of the visible Son in the invisible God!

Theologians and spiritual writers affirm "beauty" to be the visible form of the "good", and "good" to be the quality of "truth". A fourth element, namely "joy", may be seen as the visible fruit of a living encounter with the "beautiful". If truth is the invisible root, beauty and joy are the visible flowering and fruit. The eternal Son of God as "truth" has been made visible in his "splendor and beauty" leading to true "joy" (*Jn* 16; *1 Jn* 1: 4). Joy for the "splendor and beauty" of the person of Jesus and of the Gospel is the more convincing and attractive way of relating to the truth and the good of the Gospel. Contemplating the face of Jesus points precisely to that.

Contextual theology points to this fact as well. Contextual theology places us squarely into the visible existential level, even down to the very base visible level of the "poorest of the poor", in order to reach its "highest" invisible divine component. Just as the measure of a pendulum's movement to the right can be understood only in the percep-

tion of the same measurement to the left, so too the highest everlasting truth invisible is perceived only through its lowest historical visible living manifestation. (And vice-versa.) The economy of salvation in Jesus is enacting the visible temporal component of the eternal invisible love of God.

Theology as Spirituality:

We require a methodology in theology that finalizes all theology into spirituality, projecting the verbal expression into its spiritual extension. Theological truth articulated in its abstract doctrinal formulation becomes authoritative and credible in its living and existential manifestation, which is its spiritual formation. Sacred Scriptures present the Word always accompanied by the Spirit; the Spirit is present in the Incarnate Word Jesus; and the world redeemed by the Incarnate Word is under the Sign of the Spirit in the present age. In the Holy Trinity too the procession of persons seem to be "finalized/perfected" from the procession of the Word through the procession of the Spirit, for God "to be" the living inter-relational communion.

Theology moving into spirituality does the following:

(a) Firstly, spirituality places us squarely into the existential simple and common order, the doctrinal being a more erudite and elite but secondary one.

(b) Secondly, spirituality projects us into the living order as "communion" of many, which is the proper function of the Spirit ("to make one"). Pure "singular" belongs only to the conceptual and verbal order, and operating under the "prin-

ciple of (non-) contradiction", it highlights difference and distinction. The existential and living order, on the other hand, is always a communion of multiple as inter-relational, and operating under the principle of "complementarity and harmony", it brings differences together, to unite for communion.

(c) Thirdly, the spiritual behavior as seeking communion has a democratic orientation, namely it seeks to inter-relate all diversities from the highest down to the lowest one through their common living factors. This democratic spiritual element is simply "bhakti" / "religio" (devotion/adoration), that is communion, that is the simple result of the complex religious disciplines.

Dissentions and conflicts among Religions and cultures result from the unilateral trust on the doctrinal, failing the more difficult task of relating the diverse doctrines into their common spiritual intent.

For example, the Christ and his coming is doctrinally different in Judaism and in Christianity. The differences, however, can be spiritually edifying to both: The Christian can contemplate in Judaism how still to long and wait for the Messiah lovingly, as indeed the Christian still has to do in his heart; the Jewish person can contemplate in Christianity the blessings and joys at the coming of the Messiah, as indeed he experiences them in his heart as he awaits him.

Jesus in Christianity and Islam may be contemplated in a spiritual way through many of the doctrinal differences as well.

The Face of Jesus in the context of Islam:

We consider this matter under three headings: a) the burden of history between Christianity and Islam; b) the face of Jesus in Islam consonant with teachings in Christianity; and c) main doctrinal differences about Jesus between Christianity and Islam.

Burden of History

Qur'an itself indicates an historical transition from a rather positive attitude for Christians to a more negative one later on. It is important to note that the positive attitude was based precisely on spiritual aspects in Christianity (Q 5:85: "You will find ... that the nearest in affection to the believers are those who say: We are Christians, that is because there are priests and monks among them; and because they are free from pride"), whereas the negative arose rather from doctrinal aspects (Q 9:29: "Fight against such of those ... as believe neither in God nor the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and his apostle have forbidden, and do not embrace the True Faith ...").

Tensions of theological and of historical nature grew increasingly between Christianity and Islam, during Mohamed's time itself and later on. Within the Mediterranean and European context Islam very soon overran the Christian areas in the Middle East and the Holy Land, Christians tried desperately to regain these territories through Crusades, Islam became a threat to Christianity as it advanced into Western Europe. There have been some positive contacts between the two on religio-cultural aspects, but the political aspects brought about enduring conflicts. During these centuries

Islam also spread into the large non-Christian Asia. From the 16th century Christianity spread to the new continents and in course of time became the colonial power over Muslims in the Middle East and in Asia. This gave rise to new tensions between Islam and Christianity. Later Islam gained political power in many Muslim countries, and recently Muslims have become sizeable community in traditionally Western Christian countries in an age of democracy. In the resulting conflicts power and domination in the name of religion have played the greater role than religion itself.

Biased by this a very pejorative theological and spiritual attitude about Islam has prevailed in the Christian World, the same being true in the Islamic World about Christianity. This burden of history has to be borne with dignity by both. It is imperative for both to achieve a "purification of memory" (NMI 6), through a "request for forgiveness", as has been demonstrated by Pope John Paul II.

Christians need to think of Islam in a more positive manner especially through knowing and appreciating authentic spiritual values in the life of Muslims.

Titles of Jesus in Qur'an consonant with Christianity

It is wonderful that Muslims have been called to contemplate the face of Jesus not only through the Christian tradition, but also as revealed in their Scriptures, the Qur'an. For them it is not a matter of mere convenience, but of revelation and faith. And Christian can share in that contemplation a good amount from their Scriptures.

Jesus' virginal conception is cause for great honor for Jesus and for His Mother Mary. Muslims consider Jesus'

birth and life as miraculous and mysterious, although only of human nature yet surpassing the order of earthly "flesh and blood" (*bashar*). The negative of this mystery, namely not purely human, is the same in both; in both the positive of the mystery has the same spiritual elevation of Jesus toward God, even though without the same doctrinal extension.

The Qur'an beautifully acknowledges several of the very important names for Jesus, consonant with the Gospel: He is called the Messiah (*al-Masih*), the servant (*'abd*), prophet (*nabi*), messenger (*rasul*), word (*kalima*), and spirit (*ruh*). Some other titles of Jesus are: sign (*aya*), example (*mathal*), witness (*shahid*), mercy (*rahma*), eminent (*wajih*), one brought near (*min al-muqarrabin*), one of the up-right (*min al-salihin*), blessed (*mubarak*). In all these titles, especially the more important ones, while the doctrinal conclusion has differences, yet the base spiritual reflection has foundations in the scriptural traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam alike, around which both the Muslim and the Christian can feel comfortable about the person of Jesus. Contemplating together lovingly the common aspects of the names of Jesus, we can together develop a greater appreciation for the differences, even to respect the spiritual difficulty in the heart of the other vis-a-vis the differences.

Jesus are very dear to both Christians and Muslims. Firstly, in line with the Gospel the Qur'an also affirms the coming of Jesus on the last day of the world, projecting his Mission beyond the earthly times. This manifests a unique role of Jesus as prophet and Messenger of God. Secondly, mystics in Islam call Jesus the Seal of the Saints, considering him as

model of sanctity and poverty. Over and above the doctrinal difficulties with the person of Jesus, the splendor and beauty of the mystery of his sanctity is what captivates the heart of Muslims. They honor and love Jesus because of his holiness. The Christian believer too is called to contemplate Jesus in the mystery of his holiness. For both Christians and Muslims the heart finds its rest in Jesus in his holiness.

Doctrinal differences in Christianity and Islam about Jesus

Basically two essential doctrines of the Christian faith about Jesus seem to be denied in the Qur'an, namely the divinity of Jesus (43:59), which is tied up with the doctrine of the Trinity (4:171), and the Crucifixion (4:157). Discussions on these will continue, also on whether the Qur'an is in fact denying the authentic Christian doctrine or denying merely some form of Christian heresy. Such discussion is meaningful, but probably alone leads to no conclusion. Also in Christian traditions there are diverse and conflicting interpretations of these doctrines. Both share in the difficulties of these doctrines.

(a) *The divinity of Jesus as Son of God.* For the Christians too Jesus' "being"(essence) as Son of God is an overpowering mystery, which is rendered attractive through his "living" (existence) on earth as Son of God in the form of son of man, which is redemptive for the world. If it is difficult to understand Jesus as the Son of God, its conviction has to be sought in the immense depth of his being the Son of Man. Christianity is called to do that spiritual synthesis of the Son of God in the person of the Son of Man, Jesus.

How is the divinity of Jesus manifest in the Gospels? It is not the prodigy of his being that guarantees his divinity, but rather his overflowing spiritual authority while least like God. Jesus' spiritual journey for immeasurable communion with the least of humanity measures his inner capacity of communion with the Highest Divine. It is his capacity for forgiving love for the least forgivable that indicates the capacity of the divine love in his heart.

While Jesus' divinity is to be professed, it is his forgiving divine love that needs to be proclaimed. Islam and so many others, who find it difficult to profess the divinity of Jesus, will be captivated by the beauty of the divine capacity in Jesus for forgiving love, as expression of his limitless sanctity, so attractive to humanity.

It is good for us Christians to assert with Muslims and others our own difficulty to comprehend the doctrine of Jesus as Son of God that we profess. We too contemplate the Face of Jesus not so much in the divinity of his being, but in the humanity of the divine love in him, love as forgiveness, which Muslims can comprehend in Jesus.

We need to recognize the mind of Jesus himself as regards his divinity. Not his belonging to the Godhead, but rather his acting in the Godhead as Son in obedience is prominent. While we can profess the uniqueness and universality of Jesus as the privilege of his being, we know that Jesus' desire and joy was to be totally immersed in the least of humanity, as servant to it, reflecting his divinity. "The last shall be the first" is such a breathtaking mystery of spiritual perfection that is Jesus Himself. The "little ones" of this world

are not scared nor is their being threatened in the face of the splendor of this human simplicity of the divine in Jesus. We need to present the uniqueness and universality of Jesus in the spiritual way that the "poor" are at ease to recognize, affirm and love. The Muslim can accept Jesus as the holy person of forgiving love, a very earthly way of being immersed in his divinity.

(b) *Crucifixion of Jesus*: Islam finds it difficult to accept the crucifixion and death of Jesus because it considers Jesus as the beloved of God, the exalted one. It is meaningful to share with Muslims that our difficulty on this matter is the same. The disgraceful suffering and death of the Messiah at the hands of his enemies was a problem in the Gospel as well; and in the first centuries up to the time of arrival of Islam this matter had been debated quite widely within Christianity. We can share with Muslims that for us too the humiliation of the crucifixion of Jesus is difficult to accept, but that we find its meaningfulness in his Resurrection, and that very simply for us his crucifixion is expression of his unspeakable love for mankind, that is the glory underneath the humiliation.

Pastoral Reflections

Islam especially in Asia has been formed by its Sufi spiritualistic traditions, which could incorporate many Asian spiritual practices. In Asia, therefore, Islam too has immersed into the Asian way of spirituality. Because of this wide Sufi influence in their life in Asia Christian spirituality and Jesus as the immensely holy person can be especially dear to Asian Muslims.

Asian peoples of other religions as also Islam generally describe Christianity as a religion of mercy and love, of forgiving love. Christianity should take special notice of this essential patrimony especially for the present Millennium. In this new Millennium contemplation of the face of Jesus as Forgiving Love will be the "new" element for the new age. A genuine pastoral program of Forgiving Love will convince the world of the divine love of Jesus, manifesting his uniqueness and universality.

Christians and Muslims may come closer to each other in Jesus through a greater closeness together to the "poor", who are closest to the heart of Jesus. This will be especially valid for the Asian context, where the "poor" are numerous. The holy loving Face of Jesus in the countenance and heart of the "poorest and weakest" will help to demolish the doctrinal superiority and conflicts among religions and peoples. Together we are to desire ever more earnestly to see the face of Jesus in the poor. In this our severely mentally disabled brothers and sisters can play a pivotal role.

The hearts of Muslims are inclined to Jesus through the Qur'an. From that background they have a natural desire to know more about Jesus from the life witness of Christians. Muslims live to hear about Jesus and like to hear about Gospel paraphrases of Jesus' teaching, parables, about his works of mercy and compassion, as if that provides a *catechesis* on the Jesus of the Qur'an. Jesus' basic message (repent and accept God's reign) can reach them - as Muslims - and that through their encounters with Jesus Visa's representatives - that is, us - they will be motivated to receive the grace to repent and let God reign more fully in their

lives. Through the Qur'an the Muslim is open to be like a disciple of "Jesus of Galilee", although it is difficult for him to be a disciple of "Jesus of Jerusalem".

Finally, it is through prayer that we are brought close to God and to one another. Christians and Muslims as also peoples of all religions must pray together to come close to one another. Pope John Paul II has wished and done that. By praying together we can enter the heart of others and see the beauty of their heart before God, despite the difficulties outwardly. In contemplating the Face of Jesus we are brought to contemplate the face of one another, seeing there mutual differences too, which nonetheless lead to mutual affection, because even the differences are cherished with so much love.

Reflections on Suffering

FREDERIK FERMIN, O.P.

Suffering is part of life and part of love. You have not lived and you have not loved if you have not suffered. Life and love have their source in God. He is Life and Love. They are mysteries, and are beyond the grasp of reason. Suffering is therefore also a mystery. Faith can throw some light on it, but it cannot dispel the darkness in which all mysteries are shrouded.

Women can confirm more readily than men that suffering is truly part of life. Unless they are put under anesthesia, they give birth in excruciating pain. Life begins with suffering; not only of the mother; the first thing the baby does is to cry. Life is born from more than physical pain, for the woman also suffers the anxiety that she may have to sacrifice her own life in order to give birth to the life in her womb.

But having suffered the pains and anxiety of childbirth, a woman has become a mother, and in motherhood she attains the perfection of womanhood. And then, it is said that

the pains of giving birth make the bond of the mother with her child stronger than it would have been had she delivered painlessly while under anesthesia. Suffering, then, leads to life, to human maturity, and it inspires love.

The fact that a woman bore her child for nine months and delivered it in pain and at the risk of her own life, makes a mother's love different, stronger, than a father's love. A father may give upon a wayward son, or a son who did not come up to his expectations. But for a mother, a child remains forever bone from her bones, flesh from her flesh. She will continue to believe in her son even if he becomes the black sheep of the family and is no good in the eyes of others.

Through Isaiah Yahweh describes his own love as a mother's love: "Does a woman forget her baby at the breast, or fail to cherish the son of her womb? Yet even if these forget, I wilt never forget you." (Is. 49:15)

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus paints a picture of his Father. The father of the Parable could not forget his son. When he asked for his inheritance, the son had made it clear that the father meant nothing to him. The father nevertheless gave him half of his properties and continues to think of him. He must have worried that the boy would come to a bad end and he must have hoped that he might eventually return home. When the boy does go home, the father spots him when he is still a far way off. The father rushes out to welcome him and embraces him without allowing the boy to complete his confession of guilt. Instead of making him reproaches, he orders his servants to prepare a welcome party. Surely, the boy's own suffering, and the knowledge that he

had made his father suffer, now make the son love the father as he deserves to be loved. The experience has created a bond between the two of them that did not exist before. Such a bond evidently did not exist with the obedient elder son. The suffering that the father endured because of his son proved his love, and the suffering that the son underwent when he was abroad taught him to love as he had not been able to love before.

At the time of the Jubilee of the year 2000, a Jubilee Cross was issued. It represents God the Father as a venerable old Pope who holds in his hands the cross with the dead Christ. The Holy Spirit hovers between the two of them as a dove.

The Jubilee Cross is the counterpart of the Pieta, the image of Mary holding the body of her dead son. A Pieta always depicts Mary as the sorrowing mother whose own heart had been pierced by a sword. God the Father of the Jubilee Cross shows no sign that the death of His Son has caused Him great grief. Is God incapable to suffer as theologians have claimed? Or would the suffering and death of His Son indeed have given Him a sense of morbid satisfaction, because supposedly Jesus' sacrifice would have expiated the lese-majesty of sin?

It is difficult to believe on at least two accounts. First: A father who would be so concerned with his own honor and prestige that his hurt could only be appeased by the cruel death of his son does not conform at all to the portrait Jesus paints of his Father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The father of the parable is loving, tolerant and forgiving to the extreme and evidently entirely forgetful of self. Second:

God's love is the source of all love, including Mary's. If her son's death broke Mary's heart, the compassion she experienced cannot be denied to God, for Mary's love has its origin in God's love.

Mary stood at the foot of the cross, if the Father's love cannot be less than Mary's, how come then that Jesus uttered that heartrending cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!"

Since then, that cry has been on the lips of innumerable victims of violence, indifference, hatred and perversion. Where was God? Did He not see what was being done to them? After Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it has seemed to many people that God is truly an absent God, dead as far as our human history is concerned.

But is God truly indifferent to human suffering? Does the suffering of the innocent victims of evil really not disturb him?

How can God be absent if in Him "we live, and move and exist" (Acts 17:28). Human history takes place in God, and God has made Himself part of it, He has entered into our history. And how would He not notice the suffering of the just if He has made His home in their hearts (cf. Jn. 14: 23). God is present, and, being love. He cannot but be compassionate with human suffering. Does it follow that He is powerless in the presence of evil and that he is incapable of preventing the suffering of innocent people, including millions of children?

Evil is a terrifying presence in our world. It causes the suffering and death of innumerable innocent people. Consi-

dering the destruction of the Twin Towers and the recent Madrid bombings, for instance, or the suffering of thousands of children in our streets, is it still possible to ascribe to evil the diaphanous non-existence of a *privatio boni*, as some theologians have wanted? That theory was devised to save God's face, for how could one otherwise reconcile the evident existence of evil with the infinite goodness of the one God, thought of as the *Summum Bonum*?

But God cannot be confined to a concept that conforms to our logic, our metaphysics, or our psychology for that matter. He is always other and more than anything we understand or imagine. He is not simply the loving Father who waits for us, His prodigal children, to return to Him while we continue to create havoc here on earth. He is that, but other and more. Nor is He the slightly bewildered Pope whose honor has been vindicated by the suffering and death of Jesus, and who now supervises a heavenly administration that keeps an account of the kind and number of our wrongdoings. Neither is He simply the sublime Being of luminous Truth and infinite Goodness for whom evil cannot exist. The Bible and human experience tell us otherwise.

The God of the Bible says of Himself: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." (Is. 45:7). Not only does God allow evil to happen, He utilizes it for His own purposes and even brings it about. For instance, God caused the death of innocent children when He inflicted the last plague on the Egyptians; He enjoined the Israelites to kill the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, and Jebusites (Josh. 12:2), expecting them in fact to commit genocide, although He had

chosen them to become an example of moral living; He authorized Satan to inflict unspeakable suffering on God's loyal servant Job, and His Spirit led Jesus into the desert to have Satan tempt him. And could Jesus have been scourged and crucified if God had not strengthened the arms that beat him and that drove the nails into his hands and feet?

No wonder that God inspires fear, the fear that made the Jews delegate all dealings with Him to Moses; the fear that moves Christians to relegate God to a distant heaven together with the Son who will be our judge in His name. They feel more comfortable with the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom we give the place of honor on many of our altars and whom we expect to protect us from God's wrath and Christ's judgment.

The Bible calls God the God of the Covenant, and describes the covenant between God and His people as a conjugal relationship, a partnership of life sealed by a bond of love. St. Paul makes the Covenant the proto-marriage.

A covenant presumes that the parties have committed themselves freely. The freedom in which the covenant with God is rooted, gives us the capacity to love, but at the same time the capacity to be unfaithful and to commit sin. It opens the door, to evil, but without freedom there could be no covenant.

In a marriage, the man is husband thanks to the woman who has accepted him as such, and vice versa. In the same way, God is God as He is our God, and we are ourselves as we are His people and His children. We call God as He is our God, our Father, and we tend to get terribly confused

regarding our own identity unless we see ourselves as His creatures who draw their life from Him.

He is close to us, closer than we are to ourselves, St. Agustin says. But at the same time he remains other, unknown, a mystery we cannot fathom, like husband and wife remain other, unknown, a mystery to one another, however well they have gotten to know one another in the course of their married life.

The history of a marriage is not scripted; it is the continuous and constant interaction of two persons who are each endowed with free will. This interaction has its ups and downs, its moments of bliss and its crises. At times, one of the parties, or both of them, may feel like giving up, but their irrevocable commitment prevents them from calling it quits. But eventually, through disappointments and disillusionings, misunderstandings and conflicts, betrayals and disloyalties, their union grows closer, and the bond between them stronger, because they have kept faith with one another.

The history of the Covenant between God and man is not completed although we are said to be in its last chapter. At times the drama of it threatens to turn it into a tragedy, as if the prophesies of the Book of Revelation are already coming true. There are moments when we do not know what to expect from God, and moments when God may not know anymore what to do with us. We then have to fall back on blind faith.

A Jew, who was about to perish in the Warsaw ghetto during the last war, expressed this in a note, which I cite in

part. "I believe in the God of Israel, even though He has done everything to make that I won't believe in Him (xxx)". Then, addressing God: "You have done everything to make that I won't believe in You anymore or make me doubt You. But I die exactly as I have lived in an unshakable faith in You (xxx). Something altogether special is happening in the world at the moment: the All-powerful turns His face away from those who call on Him (xxx). These are the last words I address to You ... You will not succeed in making me fall (xxx). Blessed be for all eternity the God who soon will show His face again to the world."

Evil and the suffering it causes to put our faith in God to the test, but our religion is a religion of hope, and hope enables us to remain faithful and to continue to love God "until He show His face again..."

Is evil an expression of God's wrath over human sinfulness? If it is, does it follow that God makes the innocent suffer with the guilty? Julian of Norwich, who was given deep insights into the mystery of God, states categorically that there is no wrath in God. Firmly believing in God's wisdom and love, she is sure that eventually all will be well, yes, that in Christ, the Risen Lord, all is well.

An old mystical sign (*mandela*) facilitates to understand that in Christ opposites meet and are reconciled. It shows a square in a circle. The square cannot be reduced to the circle, and vice versa, but the two share the same center. If we put Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, in the center, we "see" that in him heaven and earth meet, God and man are one, and good and evil are reconciled.

Evil is a challenge, a challenge that God enables us to meet by giving us Christ. His love has overcome evil. But Christ is the sacrament of the love of God. It is therefore in last analysis God's love that overcomes evil.

Until God establishes His Kingdom in which all will be well, He draws good from evil and transforms it. Through the love of Christ, He enables us to become from sinners saints with the power to overcome evil for God's greater glory.

In last analysis we have to say with Julian of Norwich that there are "hidden mysteries which can never be known until the time when God in his goodness has made us worthy to see them." Until that time the Covenant, sealed in Christ, challenges us to exercise the kingly office of fighting evil, in the world and in ourselves, remaining faithful in our trust in God's goodness, wisdom and love, and certain of the hope that indeed all will be well.

(Delivered on the occasion of the annual retreat of the Dominican community of U.S.T. on the 5th of April 2004.)

Eucharist: Sacrifice and Sacrament of Love

ANSCAR CHUPUNGO, OSB

In the Eucharist we may speak of a theological shape defined by sacrifice and meal and by word and sacrament. We may also speak of a liturgical shape made up of the liturgy of the word and liturgy of the Eucharist.

The task I was assigned to develop is the aspect of love in the Eucharist as a sacrifice and sacrament. Let me then begin by reviewing briefly the theology of the Eucharist as sacrifice and meal, to be followed by reflections on the love aspect of the Eucharist as liturgical celebration.

Eucharist as Sacrifice and Meal

a. The heart of Eucharistic theology is the *anamnesis* or memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Indeed this is the culmination of the entire salvation history: on the cross and there alone God redeemed us, reconciled us to himself, and favored us with participation in the divine life.

b. The Last Supper of Jesus was the ritual anticipation of that sacrifice on the cross: the broken bread signified his pierced body: "This is my body which will be given up [that is, offered in sacrifice] for you"; the wine signified his blood poured out in sacrifice: "This is the cup of my blood... it will be shed for you and for all"

The Last Supper was celebrated in the context of the Passover feast, most probably of the yearly Passover meal itself. But instead of looking back to the event of Exodus, Jesus looked forward, in anticipation, to death on the cross, which is his Passover from this world to the Father.

c. Our Eucharistic celebration is "the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice" or "the sacramental celebration of his paschal sacrifice" (S. Marsili). It is the *anamnesis* or memorial of Christ's sacrifice. What the last supper anticipated as a future event, our Eucharist commemorates as a past event.

Thus, the Eucharistic celebration is in the form of a meal, which is patterned after the basic plan of the Last Supper: "he took bread/cup (preparation of gifts), he said a prayer of blessing (eucharistic prayer), he broke the bread, and gave the broken bread and the blessed cup to his disciples (communion rite)". But what this meal signifies is the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

d. Consider this: the liturgical appearance of the Mass consists of meal components: assembly and presider, table, word around the table, offering of gifts by the assembly, a meal prayer (or Eucharistic Prayer), and communion. However, its theological meaning consists of sacrificial components: the presider performs the priestly role, the table symbo-

lizes the altar of sacrifice, the bread and wine are the sacrament of the pierced body of Jesus and of his blood shed on the cross.

Eucharist as Sacrament of Love

John 13:1: "It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed them how perfect his love was." Note that the Last Supper, the washing of the feet, and the crucifixion are his expressions of perfect love for his disciples. The love shown by Jesus in the Last Supper, the washing of the feet, and crucifixion is now re-expressed or finds resonance in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Offertory Rite: Love of the Poor

a. Seventh century *Roman Ordo*: The assembly offered bread and wine; the presider chose a loaf and amount of wine just enough for communion. The rest were placed on a credence table for distribution to the poor. Note that in the second century (cf. Justin the Martyr) bread and wine and other material things were offered for distribution to the poor, widows, and orphans. The so-called symbolic offering (flowers and dead bodies in coffins!) detracts from the original meaning of the offertory rite.

b. In the third century we see that all, especially the poor, brought the gifts of bread and wine. Note how St. Cyprian of Carthage reprimanded a rich lady who never brought gifts for the community's Eucharist yet "dared to eat the bread of the poor".

c. Connected with the offering of the poor is the practice of adding water to the wine (watered wine or *poterion*, cf. Justin the Martyr) because the wine, coming from the poor, was of poor quality. Romans did not mix good wine with water. Today we continue the practice in order to affirm the Church of the poor.

d. The joy of giving is expressed in Zairean offertory procession where all the assembly came dancing toward the altar and singing joyful songs of generosity as they offer their contribution. Note the attempt to capture this joy by introducing ballet-style of dance at the offertory.

e. Note the reminder that on Holy Thursday the offerings at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper are to be given to the poor.

Breaking of Bread: Love through Sacrifice

a. What happens when something breaks? There is pain when something breaks: broken marriage, broken family, broken friendship, broken heart, and broken promises. The sound produced by a glass that breaks hurts the ears.

b. But in many other instances, there is need to break in order to share: we break bread, cake, pizza. Unless we break we cannot share, and unless we share, we cannot express our love. In this sense, breaking does not separate, rather it unites. The broken pieces express the unity of all.

c. At the Last Supper Jesus broke the bread and gave the broken pieces to his disciples as a sign of his love for them. In the Eucharist the priest breaks the bread to signify the love of Christ whose body is "broken" for us.

d. Every time the bread is broken we are reminded of the pain endured by Christ on the cross; every time the priest breaks the bread, he identifies himself with Christ who broke himself for others; every time the faithful receive communion, they are reminded that they too must be broken like the Christ they receive.

e. This momentous symbol is weakened when the priest breaks the bread and consumes all by himself, forgetting that he breaks in order to share. For practicality, we use pre-broken bread called small hosts, but the meaning of sharing in broken bread should be understood.

f. Hence, the Eucharist may be described in three words: breaking, sharing, and loving. We break in order to share; and we share in order to express love.

Holy Communion: Sharing with the Poor

a. In the 7th century *Roman Ordo*, we note that at the offertory rite the presider took a loaf and a quantity of wine just enough to distribute to the assembly for Holy Communion. The rest was placed at the credence for distribution to the poor.

b. Cf. 1 *Cor* 11:20: "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you are eating, since when the time comes to eat, everyone is in such hurry to start his or her own supper that one person goes hungry while another is getting drunk. Surely you have homes for eating and drinking in? Surely you have enough respect for the community of God not to make poor people embarrassed?"

c. At Communion we do not eat and drink to be satiated. That is not what communion is all about. We eat and drink as little as possible, in order that the poor may have more to eat and drink. This is the meaning of the Holy Communion.

The Washing of the Feet: Love through Humble Service

a. The washing of feet existed by the middle of the fifth century in Jerusalem whence it was adopted by the other Churches in the East and the West. In the seventh century, the papal household practiced it, but it did not form part of the liturgy until the reform of Vatican II. In the ancient world foot-washing expressed care and hospitality toward guests and especially travelers on foot.

b. In the Gospel of John, the narration of the Eucharistic institution is missing, but in reality it exists in the symbol of the washing of the feet. This humble gesture of Jesus expresses what he meant by the Eucharist: Love one another by serving one another.

The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Preface

At the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, towards the end of the working session in October, 2001, the synod fathers were asked to suggest a topic for the next assembly. Among the various proposals was the subject of the Eucharist. Afterwards, in the accustomed consultation of the episcopal conferences, the Eastern Churches sui iuris, the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General, a major priority was also given to the Eucharist. The members of the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat had the same preference. The Holy Father then decided to choose this topic for the collegial discussion of the bishops in their gathering for the Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly. Its formulation comes from the teaching and language of the Second Vatican Council: Eucharistia: fons et culmen vitae et missionis Ecclesiae.

Subsequently, the Council of the General Secretariat, assisted by experts, treated the subject in various work sessions, resulting in this present Lineamenta document.

This first step in the general consultation will allow the particular Churches around the world to become a part of the synodal process through their reflections, prayers and timely recommendations in the preparation of the Instrumentum Laboris, the document which is to serve as the agenda of the synodal assembly.

In the history of the Synod of Bishops, the consultation for the upcoming synodal assembly is somewhat novel insofar as the topic to be treated is also the subject of a recently published papal encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia, on the Eucharist and its vital relation to the Church. Because of the encyclical's direct influence on the consultation and on the synod's work, this fact merits consideration.

Not surprisingly, a synod is called to treat material which is part of the ordinary papal magisterium. What is unusual is the timing and the announcement. Shortly after the Holy Father writes on the Eucharist, he proposes the same subject for a synod. The entire matter is of great importance for the Holy Father, the bishops and the Church.

The encyclical clearly manifests the desire of the Pope to urge its readers, the members of the universal Church, to re-dedicate themselves with new spiritual vigor and love to the Eucharistic mystery so vital to the Church. This act of the ordinary magisterium is concerned with repeating to the People of God, in a manner adapted to the times, a perennial and necessary truth for the Church's continuation in history.

Many reasons exist for calling the pastors together to treat a subject so decisive for the life and mission of the Church. By its nature, a synodal assembly is consultative. On this occasion the Holy Father is not calling the bishops to make recommendations on how to present doctrine but to consider the needs and pastoral implications of the Eucharist in celebration, worship, preaching, charity and various works in general.

The following point deserves consideration. Given the similarity in titles, the question inevitably arises as to why the Holy Father has chosen a topic already treated. The response comes from observing the present state of affairs in the Church. Today, the Church is undeniably experiencing a certain "Eucharistic need" based not on an incertitude regarding the presentation of doctrine - as occurred in the period of the Second Vatican Council - but on a Eucharistic practice which calls for a renewed attitude of love that is expressed in acts of faith in the One who is present for those continuing to search for him in our world: "Master, where do you live?"

This Lineamenta is intended to encourage episcopal conferences, the Eastern Churches sui iuris, the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Union of Superiors General to invite the participation of all in the Church so that they can enter into discussion and take a pastoral inventory. In this way, the responses of these entities to the questions in the Lineamenta might be indicative and complete, thereby ensuring a fruitful synod.

To properly prepare for the next stage in the synod process, these responses should arrive at the General Secretariat before 31 December 2004.

With this consultation the path towards the Synod continues in the particular Churches, where the Bishops, as Pastors of the flock, prepare themselves, in collegiality with their fellow bishops and in union with the Holy Father, to reflect on this great Sacrament which gives life to the Church.

25 February 2004

Jan P. Card. Schotte, C.I.C.M.
General Secretary

INTRODUCTION

WHY A SYNOD ON THE EUCHARIST?

1. The unseen God manifested himself in the Word-Made-Flesh, His Son, Jesus Christ. After the ascension, "what until then was visible of our Redeemer was changed into a sacramental presence."¹ For this reason, "We see one thing and understand another. We see a man (Jesus), but we make an act of faith in God."²

The Church, the Sacrament of humanity's salvation in Jesus Christ, exists through her worship centred on the Incarnate Word, Sacrament of the Father. The Roman Canon and the anaphora of St. John Chrysostom state that the Mass is an

¹ LEONIS MAGNI, *Sermo 2 de Ascensione*, 61 (74), 2: *SC*h 74bis, 278.

² ORIGENIS, *In epistolam ad Romanos*, 4, 2: *PG* 14, 968B.

oblationem rationabilem and a "*logiken latreian*," brought about by the divine word, in which spirit and reason participate. He who is the Word speaks to the individual and awaits an intelligible, reasoned (*rationabile obsequium*) response. In this way, human words becomes adoration, sacrifice and thanksgiving (*eucharistia*). This "spiritual worship" (cf. *Rm* 12:1) is at the core of an active, intelligible "participation" by the People of God in the Eucharistic mystery,³ reaching its fullness in the reception of Holy Communion.⁴

2. The Second Vatican Council treated the Eucharistic Mystery in Chapter III of the Constitution *De Sacra Liturgia*. What is said in this document about the liturgy, the *source and summit* of the Church's actions, concerns for the most part the celebration of the Eucharist or, as the Eastern Churches say, the "Divine Liturgy." The topic of the next synod is to be the Eucharist in which the People of God participate in virtue of Baptism. The Eucharist is the "summit" of Christian initiation and all apostolic activity, because the Sacrament presupposes membership in the communion of the Church. At the same time, it is the "source," because the Sacrament is nourishment for her life and mission.⁵ For this reason, the Encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, referring to the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* in

³ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 14 e 48; II CCETUS EXTRAORDINARIII GENERALIS SYNODI EPISCOPORUM (1985), *Relationem finalem*, II.B.b.1.

⁴ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 13; CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., sess. XXII, cap. 6.

⁵ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 10.

which he made the appeal for people to know, love and imitate Christ, states that "a renewed impetus in Christian living passes through the Eucharist."⁶

3. The Sixth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops treated the topic of reconciliation and, in this context, the Sacrament of Penance, the ordinary means of returning to communion with Christ and the Church, a communion which culminates in the Eucharist. This subject is amply presented in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Pcenitentia*. The Fifth Ordinary General Assembly, on the Family, also gave attention to the basic communion of blood and spirit which has the source of its vitality in another sacrament, Matrimony, a great mystery and sign of the union between Christ and his Church (cf. *Eph* 5: 32). The last four ordinary general assemblies have reflected on the basic groups which make up the Church's communion, namely, the lay faithful, the ministerial priesthood, those in the consecrated life and bishops. The Eucharist presupposes ecclesial communion, a communion which the Sacrament brings to perfection.⁷ It is understandable, then, that a synodal assembly should treat the Sacrament which manifests the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church and causes unity and holiness to increase.

Such a treatment will permit:

- a. that the Eucharist maintain its central place in the eyes of the Church, at the universal and local levels

⁶ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 60: AAS 95 (2003), 473.

⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, 35: AAS 95 (2003), 457.

- especially in parishes and communities - even in the preparatory phase of the synod;
- b. that a necessary increase of faith in the Eucharist may result;
- c. that, in giving preeminence to this topic, the synodal assembly might give special importance to the beginning of the third millennium of Christianity and contribute to the renewal program in the life and Christian mission of individuals and communities; and
- d. that the Church's teaching on the Sacred Eucharist might be taken up anew and more profoundly received in its entirety. This Sacrament has always received special attention in apostolic times, in the Church Fathers and holy medieval writers, in Councils - particularly Trent and Vatican II - and in the principal inter-dicasterial and pontifical documents, including the recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*.

4. The topic chosen by Pope John Paul II for the Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is *Eucharistia fons et culmen vitae et missionis Ecclesiae*. Three aspects emerge from those deserving consideration:

- a. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, through his actions at the Last Supper and particularly his words "Do this in Memory of me," did not intend simply to institute a fraternal meal but a liturgy, a true act of worship and adoration of the Father "in spirit and in truth" (*Jn* 4:24);

- b. Liturgical reform did not lead to the destruction of the secular patrimony of the Catholic Church but was intended to foster, in faithfulness to Catholic tradition, the renewal of the liturgy for the sanctification of Christians; and
- c. The Lord has desired his Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament so that God-Emmanuel might be, today and always, a God near to humanity as its Redeemer and Lord.

5. The context for the preparation and actual work of the Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is the entire magisterium and teaching on the Eucharist, particularly that of the Second Vatican Council, which has made the Church more aware that "at the Last Supper, on the night when he was betrayed, Our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until he should come again..."⁸ As a beloved spouse, the Church knows she is to celebrate "the memorial of his death and resurrection, a sacrament of life, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us."⁹

Eucharistic doctrine, with its biblical, patristic and theological foundations, together with its catechetical and mysta-

⁸ CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 47.

⁹ Ibidem.

gogical connotations, permeates all the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar magisterium and is intended to lead to a deeper appreciation of the mystery of the Eucharist and to adoration of this mystery, as illustrated in the traditions of the East and West, in the one Catholic Church. From the post-conciliar documents which have captured the spirit of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the following remain basic for understanding the Eucharist and Eucharistic celebrations: the Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei* of Pope Paul VI and the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, published in 1970 and revised in 2000, containing the norms to be observed for Holy Mass in the Roman rite. These texts, together with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,¹⁰ the *Codes of Canon Law* in the Latin Church¹¹ and the Eastern Churches,¹² the *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, published in 1996, have provided a deeper understanding of Eucharistic doctrine and offered pastoral guidelines to which Pope John Paul II has made reference in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*}^

¹⁰ *Catechismus Catholicce Ecclesice*, 1322-1419.

¹¹ *Codex Iuris Canonici*, c 897-958.

¹² *Corpus Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*, c 698-717.

¹³ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 9: AAS 95 (2003), 438-439.

CHAPTER I

THE SACRAMENT OF THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT

The Eucharist in Salvation History

6. The Old Testament offering and sacrifice made to God as a sign of thanksgiving, supplication and reparation for sin is the remote preparation for the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. This is recalled in the figure of the Servant of Yahweh who offers himself in sacrifice, pouring out his blood for the new covenant (cf. *Is* 42:1-9; 49:8) in place of humanity and for its benefit. The religious festivals of the Jews, especially those of the Passover *memorial* of Exodus and the sacrificial banquet, serve to express thanksgiving for God's favours and provide access to communion with him through the victim sacrificed (cf. *1 Cor* 10:18-21). The Eucharist also unites a person to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, according to Jewish worship and tradition, the blessing (*beraka*) is both the communication of divine life to humanity and human-kind's wondrous acknowledgment and adoration of the God's work. This happens in the sacrifice in the temple and the meal in the home (cf. *Gn* 1:28; 9:1; 12: 2-3; *Lk* 1:69-79). At one time, the blessing was *euloghia*, that is, "praise to God", and *eucharistia*, that is, "thanksgiving." In Christianity, the latter term will come to identify the form and content of the anaphora or the Eucharistic prayer.

At the time of Christ, the Jews also had a sacred meal or a sacrificial banquet (*todd*) (cf. for example, *Ps* 22; *Ps* 51) which included a thanksgiving and an unbloody sacrifice of bread and wine. This allows for another aspect of the Last

Supper to be understood - that of a sacrificial banquet of thanksgiving. The Old Testament rite of pouring out blood in sacrifice serves as the background for the topic of the covenant which God gratuitously makes with his people (cf. *Gn* 24: 1-1,1). This rite, foretold by the prophets (cf. *Is* 55:1-5; *Jer* 31: 31-34; *Ez* 36:22-28) and absolutely necessary to understand the Last Supper and the entire revelation of Christ, bears the name (*berit* in Hebrew, translated in Greek as *diatheke*) used to designate the body of New Testament writings. At the Last Supper, the Lord sealed the covenant, his testament with his disciples and the entire Church.

The prophetic signs and the memorial foretold in the Old Testament (the supper in Egypt, the gift of manna, the annual celebration of the Passover) are fulfilled in the Church's sacraments or sacred mysteries. They have the God-given power of sanctifying, transforming and deifying in virtue of the death and resurrection of the Lord, celebrated each Sunday, indeed daily, in the Christian Pasch. St. Ambrose states: "Now consider which is more excellent, the bread of angels or the Flesh of Christ, which is indeed the body of life.... One is figure, the other is truth."¹⁴

The One Sacrifice and Priesthood of Jesus Christ

7. The historic fact of the Last Supper is narrated in the Gospels of St. Matthew (*Mt* 26:26-28), St. Mark (*Mk* 14:22-23), St. Luke (*Lk* 22:19-20) and in St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (*1 Cor* 11:23-25), all of which provide some understanding of the event. Jesus Christ gives himself (cf. *Jn*

¹⁴ *De Mysteriori*, 47: *SCh* 25bis, 182.

13:1) to humanity as nourishment; he *gives his body and sheds his blood for us*. This covenant is *new* because it inaugurates a new state of communion between God and humanity (cf. *Heb* 9:12). Furthermore, this covenant is new and supersedes the old, because the Son gives himself on the cross. To those who receive him, he gives the power of becoming children of the Father (cf. *Jn* 1:12; *Gal* 3:26). The command, "Do this in memory of me," refers to fidelity to the action and its continuity, until the Lord comes again (cf. *1 Cor* 11:26).

With this act, the Church reminds the world that an indestructible friendship exists between God and humanity, because of the love of Christ, who conquered evil through his offering of self. In this sense, the Eucharist provides the unifying power of the human race and is also the place of that unity. The new character and meaning of the Last Supper are immediately and directly tied to the redemptive act of the cross and resurrection of the Lord, God's "last word" to humanity and the world. In this way, Christ, longing to make his Passover and to offer himself (cf. *Lk* 22:14-16), becomes our Pasch (cf. *1 Cor* 5:7). *The cross began at supper* (cf. *1 Cor* 11:26). Jesus Christ, in an unbloody manner at Supper and in his blood on the cross, is at one and the same time both priest and victim offered to the Father: "a sacrifice that the Father accepted, giving, in return for this total self-giving by his Son, who 'became obedient even to death' (*Phil* 2:8), his own paternal gift, that is to say the grant of new immortal life in the resurrection, since the Father is the first source and the giver of life from the beginning."¹⁵ For this reason, the death

¹⁵ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Redemptor hominis* (4.III.1979), IV, 20:AA571 (1979), 309-316.

of Christ is inseparable from his resurrection (cf. *Rm* 4:24-25), which brings new life and in which we are immersed at Baptism (cf. *Rm* 6:4).

8. The Gospel of St. John treats the mystery of the Eucharist in Chapter 6. On a plan similar to that of the Last Supper, St. John recounts the miracle of the bread distributed to a crowd, while Jesus speaks of the bread which gives life, that is, his flesh and blood, true food and true drink. The person who has faith in Jesus Christ eats his flesh and obtains eternal life. Understanding the discourse on the Eucharist is difficult: it is accessible only to the one who seeks Jesus and not himself (cf. *Jn* 6:14, 26). After Pentecost, this awareness is expressed in the frequent meeting of the baptized, according to apostolic teaching, in fraternal communion and for the *fractio panis* (cf. *Acts* 2:42.46; 20:7-11), at the "Lord's Supper" (cf. *1 Cor* 11:20). This is the foundation of the *apostolic dimension* of the Eucharist. The New Testament accounts of the Eucharist, as thanksgiving and sacramental memorial, highlight the fact that recognizing the Lord's Body and Blood in communion with the consecrated bread and wine is a recognition of his presence. By the same token, it is a grave error, indeed a condemnation, to consider the "Lord's Supper" as any other meal. (Cf. *1 Cor* 11:29). Furthermore, the Apostle states as a known fact that the Lord's presence in his Body and Blood does not depend on the conditions of those who receive him. Communion makes them one body, because the life of Christ flows in them. They are one heart and one mind (cf. *Acts* 2:46; 4:32-33), to the point of making the communion of goods possible, after the manner of the apostolic Church, who shared the joys and sufferings of her members, namely, in a lived charity (cf. *1 Cor* 12:26-27).

The Bible provides basic truths about the Eucharist, making the Sacrament of the Altar a unique, sacrificial, priestly reality; thanksgiving and praise of the Father; the memorial of the Paschal Mystery; and the abiding Presence of the Lord.¹⁶

Thanksgiving and Praise to the Father

9. In the Church's memory, the words of Jesus' presence in our midst are at the centre of the Eucharistic celebration: "This is my Body...; this is the cup of my Blood...." Jesus offers himself as the true, final sacrifice, bringing to fulfillment all the types found in the Old Testament. All unattainable desires are satisfied in him.

According to the prophet (cf. *Is* 53:1 Iff), Jesus is to suffer for many and demonstrate that the longed-for, true sacrifice and worship is accomplished in him. He himself is the one who *stands before* God, *interceding* not for himself but for all. This intercession is a true sacrifice, a *prayer*, a thanksgiving-celebration to God in whom we and the world are restored. The Eucharist is therefore a *sacrifice* to God in Jesus Christ for receiving the gift of his love.

10. Jesus Christ is the Living One, who is in glory, in the sanctuary of heaven, which he has entered through his blood (cf. *Heb* 9:12). In this eternal, unchangeable state as high priest (cf. *Heb* 8:1-2), "he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever" (*Heb* 7:24ff). He offers himself *to the Father* and continues to work, because of the infinite merits of his earthly life, the redemption of humanity

Cf. *Catechismum Catholicæ Ecclesie*, 1356-1381.

and the cosmos, which are transformed and restored in him (cf. *Eph* 1:10). This means that the Son, Jesus Christ, is mediator of a new covenant for those who have been called to an eternal inheritance (cf. *Heb* 9:15). His sacrifice endures into eternity in the Holy Spirit who reminds the Church all that the Lord has done as high and eternal priest (cf. *Jn* 14:26; 16: 12-15). St. John Chrysostom notes that the one who truly offers the divine liturgy is Jesus Christ; he who celebrated the Eucharist "during that supper, works the same miracle today. We have holy orders but he is the one who sanctifies and transforms the offering."¹⁷ Therefore, "it is not a figure or some kind of sacrifice, but a true sacrifice."¹⁸

God saw fit to accept the immolation of his Son as a victim for sin. The Church prays that this sacrifice leads to the salvation of the world. Sacrifice and sacramental renewal are one and the same, instituted in the Supper which Christ commanded his Apostles to celebrate in his memory as a sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, atonement and expiation.¹⁹ Therefore, because of the Lord's sacrificial love, "the Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross; it does not add to the sacrifice nor does it multiply it."²⁰ Sacrifice is the primary act; afterwards, comes the meal in which we take as food the Lamb immolated on the Cross.

¹⁷ *In S. Mattheum*, 82, 5: PG 58, 744.

¹⁸ Cf. N. CABASILAE, *Expositio divince liturgice*, 32, 10: *SC* 4bis, 205.

¹⁹ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 2; CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 3, 28; Deer. de Presbyterorum ministerio et vita *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 2,4,5.

²⁰ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 12: AAS 95 (2003), 441.

The Memorial of the Paschal Mystery

11. "Doing in Christ's memory" means remembering his entire life. These mysteries of redemption are made present, in their own way, throughout the year, at Mass. In a special manner, the Mass is a memorial - according to St. Paul - of his act of emptying himself (cf. *Phil* 2), the supreme gesture of love which made him obedient unto death on the cross. Each time we eat his Body and drink his Blood we proclaim his death (cf. / *Cor* 11:26) and resurrection (cf. *Acts* 2:32-36; *Rm* 10:9; *1 Cor* 12:3; *Phil* 2:9-11), until he comes again. He, then, is the sacrificial Paschal Lamb (cf. *1 Cor* 5:7-8) who stands, because he is risen (*Rev* 5:6).

The institution of the Eucharist took place at the Last Supper. The words pronounced by Jesus are an anticipation of his death. These words, however, would have been empty, if his love did not have the power to bring him from death to the resurrection. For this reason, Christian tradition calls the death and resurrection of Christ *mysterium paschale*. This expression means that the Eucharist is more than a simple supper. Its *cost* was a death overcome in resurrection. From the open side of Christ, the Church is born; from here come the sacraments which build up the Church - Baptism and the Eucharist, the gift and bond of charity (cf. *Jn* 19:34). Thus, in the Eucharist we adore he who died but is now alive for evermore (cf. *Rev* 1:18). This is expressed in the Roman Canon immediately after the consecration: "In this sacrifice, O Father, we your people and your ministers, recall his passion, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into glory; and from the many gifts you have given us we offer to you, God of glory and majesty, this holy and perfect sacrifice: the bread of life and the cup of eternal salvation."

During this "mystical supper,"²¹ Jesus Christ brings together in his Person the past of the Old Covenant, the present of the New Covenant and the future of the things to come.²² With the Eucharist, we enter into another dimension of time not subject to our measurement, in which the future, illuminated by the past, is offered to us as the unchanging present. In this way, the mystery of Christ, Alpha and Omega, becomes contemporaneous to each person in every age and time.²³ Time grows short (cf. *1 Cor* 7:29), we await the resurrection of the dead and even now live the life of heaven. "This mystery makes heaven of earth."²⁴

The Abiding Presence of the Lord

12. In the sacraments Jesus Christ acts through sensible signs which, without changing their appearances, take on a capacity that leads to sanctification. Christ is present in the Eucharist, Body and Blood, soul and divinity, giving himself and his life to all. In the Old Testament, God sent those who

²¹ This very beautiful and meaningful expression is used in the Eastern Churches to refer to the "Last Supper" or the "Lord's Supper." The adjective "last" should be understood as indicating Christ's desire to celebrate, according to Jewish custom, the Passover meal for a final time before his death, so as to render it "new and eternal" and to constitute it as a mystical covenant. In this way, the "hermeneutic key" of the Eucharist can be considered, united to the Paschal Mystery, to include not only the Lord's death and resurrection but also his incarnation.

²² Cf. S. IOANNIS CHRYSOSTOMI, *In S. Mattheum*, 82, 1: PG 58, 737-738.

²³ Cf. N. CABASIL^Λ, *De vita in Christo*, I, 1: SC 355, 74.

²⁴ S. IOANNIS CHRYSOSTOMI, *In epistula I ad Corinthios*, 24, 5: PG 61, 205.

would point out his presence: in the cloud (*shekhind*), in the tent, in the temple. In the New Testament, in the fullness of time, he comes to live among humanity as the Word-Made-Flesh (cf. *Jn* 1:14), becoming Emmanuel indeed (cf. *Mt* 1:23), speaking through the Son, his heir.

To make understandable what takes place in the Sacrament in receiving Holy Communion, St. Paul states: "He who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (*1 Cor* 6: 17), in a new life which comes from the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine had a deep perception of this mystery, earlier understood by St. Ignatius of Antioch and later developed by the many monks, mystics and theologians who came after him. The Divine Liturgy is Christ's presence "which gathers (*ekkle-sidzori*) all of creation,"²⁵ beckons all to assemble around the holy altar and "providentially unites them to himself and to one another."²⁶ St. John Chrysostom says: "When you are about to approach the holy table, believe that the King of creation is present there."²⁷ For this reason, adoration is inseparable from communion.

The Real Presence of Jesus Christ is truly a great mystery!²⁸ The Second Vatican Council used the same word as the Council of Trent to describe the mystery: through *transubstantiation* the Lord is made present in his Body and

²⁵ S. GREGORII NISSENI, *Homilia in Ecclesiastem*, **III**: PG 44, 469.

²⁶ S. MAXIMICONFESSORIS, *Mystagogia*, 1: PG 91, 664.

²⁷ *Homilia in Oziam*, 6,4: PG 56, 140.

²⁸ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, *Litt. encycl. Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), **15: AAS 95 (2003), 442-443.**

Blood.²⁹ The Eastern Fathers speak of the *metabolismos*³⁰ of the bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood. These are two significant ways of reconciling mystery and reason, since, as Pope Paul VI has affirmed, the Eucharistic presence "constitutes in its own way the greatest of miracles."³¹

CHAPTER II

THE EUCHARIST: A GIFT TO THE CHURCH, ALWAYS TO BE DISCOVERED

The Fathers and Doctors of the Church

13. Since the Last Supper, the Church has used many names to refer to the Sacrament: the Lord's Supper, the Breaking of Bread, the Holy Sacrifice and Oblation, the Eucharistic Assembly, Holy Mass, the Mystical Supper and the Holy and Divine Liturgy.³² The preferred term, however, is the *Eucharist*, to indicate that the Sacrament is above all "to give thanks" (from the Greek word *Eucharistein*). This explains the fact that the Eucharist begins to be celebrated by the baptized on Sunday mornings without catechumens and penitents. The procedure for celebration seems already to be described in the Emmaus account in St. Luke's Gospel (cf.

²⁹ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 7, 47; Deer, de Presbyterorum ministerio et vita *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 5,18; *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 3.

³⁰ Cf., e.g., S. CYRILLI IEROSOLIMITANI, *Catechesin mystagogicam*, IV, 2,1-3; IV, 7,5-6; V, 22, 5: *SCh* 126bis, 136. 154. 172.

³¹ PAULI VI, Litt. encycl. *Mysterium fidei* (3.IX.1965), 26: AAS 57 (1965), 766.

³² Cf. *Catechismum Catholicce Ecclesie*, 1328-1332.

Lk 24:25-31). On Easter Sunday evening, the risen Lord appears to the disciples. They listen to him evermore intently, until he finally reveals himself in the act of giving thanks and breaking bread. According to the *Apostolic Tradition*, the Eucharist is the revelation of the Father in the mystery of his Son, who redeems humanity. At the same time, it is the Church's act of thanksgiving for this salvific redemption.³³ In this document, considered one of the oldest testimonies after the apostolic age, the Church's unceasing connection to the Eucharist is repeatedly emphasized. After the consecration, the presence of the Holy Spirit is invoked to make the Church worthy to make the offering.

St. Ignatius of Antioch witnesses to the obligation of participating in the Eucharist so as to strengthen harmony in the faith and to conquer the divisions provoked by Satan. He invites all to live the Eucharist in unity, because the Body and Blood of Christ are one, and because there is one altar and one bishop. He also exhorts the community to recognize in the Eucharist the flesh of Jesus Christ which suffered for sins, but is now risen.³⁴ The Eucharist is spiritual nourishment for eternal life, a universal sacrifice foretold by the prophet Malachi, the font of true peace.³⁵ The celebrated passage from St. Justin describes the Sunday Eucharist, the day on which the creation of the world and the resurrection of Jesus Christ take place.³⁶ St. Irenaeus uses the Eucharist

³³ Cf. VIII:SOil, 79.

³⁴ Cf. *Ad Ephesios*, 13,1; *Ad Philadelphienses*, 4; *Ad Smyrnenses*, 7,1: *Patres Apostolici*, EX. Funk ed., Tübingen 1992, p. 186; 220; 230.

³⁵ Cf. *Didachen* 9-10. 14: J.P. Audet ed., Parisiis 1958, 235-236; 240.

³⁶ Cf. *I Apologiam*, 67, 1-6; 66, 1-4: *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum Secundi Saeculi*, vol. I, pars 1, Wiesbaden 1969, p. 180-182; 184-188.

to affirm the reality of the incarnation against Gnosticism. He also repeatedly underlines Christ's Real Presence in the Body and Blood, and the necessity of partaking of the Eucharist, if our body is to enjoy a resurrection.³⁷ St. Cyprian insists on identifying the bread and wine with the Body and Blood of Christ and cites two effects of communion: strength for martyrs and unity for Christians.³⁸

14. The official recognition of the Church lead to the first theological reflection which eventually determined future Eucharistic doctrine on the Christ's Real Presence, on the manner in which it is realized and on the sacrificial aspect. This is seen in the catechesis of the Church Fathers which preceded, accompanied and followed Christian initiation. St. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, maintains that Eucharistic communion brings adherence to the Body of Christ, just as faith brings adherence to his soul,³⁹ and confers immortality. The bishop, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, referring to St. Peter, recalls that in the Eucharist we become participants in the divine nature.⁴⁰ St. John Chrysostom looks at the Eucharist from the perspective of baptismal initiation, as the food of a life which is received and sustained in the struggle against Satan. His words of explanation are particularly helpful in understanding the eschatological aspect of the Sacrament: "For when you see the Lord sacrificed, laid upon the altar, and the priest standing and praying over the victim, and all the worshippers empurpled with that precious blood, can you

³⁷ Cf. *Adversus Hcereses*, 4. 17, 5; 18, 5: *SCh* 100, 592. 610.

³⁸ Cf. *Epistulam* 63,13: *PL* 4, 383-384.

³⁹ Cf. *Catechesin magnam*, 37: *SCh* 453, 315-325.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Catechesin mystagogicam*, 4, 3: *SCh* 126bis, 136.

then think that you are still among men, and standing upon the earth? Are you not, on the contrary, straightway translated to heaven, and casting out every carnal thought from the soul, do you not, with disembodied spirit and pure reason, contemplate the things which are in heaven?"⁴¹

The Eucharistic reality, together with its sanctifying power coming from the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, not to mention the *epiclesis* which makes all who receive communion one, is characteristic of Theodore of Mopsuestia's thoughts on Eucharistic doctrine and ritual.⁴² For him, baptismal life is nourished in the Eucharist. St. Ambrose develops the Eucharist in the Old Testament economy and in eschatology.⁴³ Jesus' words pronounced by the priest, through which Jesus offers and is offered to the Father, are a proof of his Real Presence. Various Church Fathers begin to reflect on the transformation of the substance of the bread and wine. St. Augustine's thoughts on the Eucharist focus primarily on its realism and symbolism,⁴⁴ its connection to the Church-Body (*Christus Totus*)⁴⁵ and the sacrificial nature of the Sacrament.⁴⁶

15. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Christ's presence, which, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, differentiates it from

⁴¹ *De Sacerdotio*, III, 4: *SCh* 272, 142-144.

⁴² Cf. *Homilias Catecheticas* 15 et 16: R. Tonneau-R.Devresse, ed., ST 145, in *Civitate Vaticana* 1949,461-605.

⁴³ Cf. *De Sacramentis*, 4-5; *De Mysteriis*, 8-9: *SCh* 25bis, 102-137; 178-193.

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g. *Sermonem* 132: *PL* 38, 743-737.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Sermonem* 227, 1: *PL* 38, 1099-1101.

⁴⁶ Cf. *De Civitate Dei*, X, 5-6: *PL* 41, 281-284.

the other sacraments.⁴⁷ His use of the term "*reprcesentare*" indicates that the Eucharist is not simply a pious recollection of the dead and risen Lord, who wishes to touch every person, but his effective and efficacious presence.⁴⁸ The meaning of the Sacrament is threefold: "The first concerns the past, insofar as it commemorates the passion of the Lord, which was a true sacrifice... Accordingly, the celebration of this Sacrament is called Christ's sacrifice. The second ...concerns the present effect, namely the unity of the Church in which people are brought together through this Sacrament... The third concerns the future, since this Sacrament is a prefigurement of the Divine Blessedness to be realized in heaven."⁴⁹ In the office of *Corpus Christi*, St. Thomas Aquinas has left a famous hymn which states this meaning in lyric form: *O Sacrum Convivium, in quo Christus sumitur, recolitur memoria passionis eius, mens impletur gratia et future gloria; nobis pignus dator.*

St. Bonaventure has also contributed to Eucharistic theology, pointing to the spirit of piety necessary for receiving Christ in Holy Communion. In addition to the Lord's words at the Last Supper, he recalls that in the Eucharist the Lord's promise is fulfilled: "I am with you all days even until the end of the age" (*Mt 28:20*).⁵⁰ In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ is really and truly present in the Church.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Summam Theologicam*, III, 73, a. 1.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, 74, a.1; 79, a.1.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 73, a.4.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Breviloquium*, VI, 9: *Opera omnia, Opuscoli Teologici*/2, Romae 1966, 276.

The Sacrament of the Church's Unity and Holiness

16. The Eucharist also reveals the nature of the Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, both at the local and universal levels. The recent encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, makes a particularly enlightening contribution to the Church's magisterium in understanding the relation between the Eucharist and the Church. The greatness and beauty of the Catholic Church rests in the fact that she does not remain fixed in any one age or millennium. Rather, she continues, develops and penetrates the mystery more and more, proposing truths which are to be believed by the world and celebrated in the liturgy, thus making clear that the one Church of Christ endures in her.

St. Augustine explains the Eucharist to neophytes on Easter night in the following manner: "You must be enlightened as to what you have received. Listen therefore briefly to what the Apostle says, or better, what Christ says through his Apostle, on the Sacrament of the Lord's Body: 'One bread, though many, we are one body.' Behold, this is everything. Though I have spoken to you briefly, do not count the number of words but their weight instead!"⁵¹ This sentence of the Apostle, according to the saintly Bishop of Hippo, is a summary of the mystery which they received.

From the Church's very beginning, however, there are signs of resistance to this reality by those who preferred, instead, to close themselves off in a limited group of people

⁵¹ *Sermo* 229, A (*Guelferbytanus* 7), *Tractatus de Dominica Sancta Paschce*, 1; PLS 2, 555; E.D.G. Morin, *Miscellanea Agostiniana*, I, Romae 1930, 462.

(cf. *1 Cor* 11:17-22). Because of its unifying power,⁵² the Eucharist has always meant bringing persons together, overcoming barriers and leading people to a new *unity* in the Lord. The Eucharist is the Sacrament with which Christ unites us to himself in one Body and makes the Church *holy*.

The Apostolicity of the Eucharist

17. The Lord left the sacraments to the Apostles. In this manner, the Church received them, and for two thousand years has transmitted them in fidelity to the apostolic faith. From the day of the ascension, the Church has fixed her gaze on the Lord who said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man" (*Jn* 3:13). Christ, risen and ascended into heaven with his glorified, earthly body, remains on earth in his Mystical Body, the Church, in her members (cf. *1 Cor* 12:5) and in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. He said beforehand: "If I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you" (*Jn* 16:7). He who made possible the *Corpus Verum* in the incarnation, now gives life to the *Corpus Mysticum*, the Church.

The apostolicity of the Eucharist and the Church is not simply a mark historical in nature, but the ongoing manifestation that Christ is present each person in every age;⁵³ it concerns the mystery of ecclesial communion. The Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* quotes an incisive phrase from St. Augustine: "You receive your own mystery."⁵⁴ This pre-

⁵² Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 23: AAS 95 (2003), 448-449.

⁵³ Cf. *ibidem* 59: AAS 95 (2003), 472-473.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem* 40: AAS 95 (2003), 460.

sence, a consequence of the incarnation, is therefore the mystery of faith in which the mystery of the Church is also revealed. In the Eucharistic celebration, then, the Church is full of wonder⁵⁵ and made to contemplate: *Ave verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine*.

18. The Second Vatican Council has stated that the Church grows through the redemption at work in the Sacrament of the Altar.⁵⁶ Pope Paul VI recalls that the Roman Missal is proof of an uninterrupted tradition of the Roman Church and "the theology of the Eucharistic mystery."⁵⁷ Pope John Paul II mentions the inseparable connection between the Eucharist and the Church using the aphorism, "the Eucharist makes the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist." He then affirms that what is professed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed about the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, must also be applied to the Eucharist, above all the mark of apostolicity,⁵⁸ "not because it did not originate in Christ... but because it is celebrated in conformity to the faith of the apostles."⁵⁹ Furthermore, "succession to the Apostles in the pastoral mission necessarily entails the Sacrament of Holy Orders."⁶⁰ In a real way, the Church's mark of

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, 5: AAS 95 (2003), 436.

⁵⁶ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, dogm. de Ecclesia *Lumen gentium*, 3; IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 21: AAS 95 (2003), 447.

⁵⁷ PAULI VI, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (26.III.1970), 8.

⁵⁸ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 26: AAS 95 (2003), 451.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 27: AAS 95 (2003), 451.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 28: AAS 95 (2003), 451-452.

apostolicity is intrinsic to the profound communion of the Mystical Body and the cause of her interior transformation. This understanding clearly leads to the fact that the Eucharist is a 'gift and mystery,' "which radically transcends the power of the assembly."⁶¹ The Eucharist is not brought about by the community from within, but is given to the community from above. This is emphasized in priestly ordination with which the Church provides a local community with a minister who can celebrate.

Consequently, "it cannot be forgotten that, if the Church makes the Eucharist, the Eucharist makes the Church to the point of becoming the criterion of confirmation for the same right doctrine."⁶² For this reason, the Eucharist is a gift to be discovered personally as communion with Christ, the depth of mystery and existential truth.

The Catholicity of the Eucharist

19. No less important is the catholicity of the Eucharist or its relation to the universal and local Church. Communion, which has "not by chance become one of the names given to this sublime sacrament,"⁶³ is also the nature of the Church. Even though the Church "continually lives and grows"⁶⁴ from

⁶¹ Ibidem, 29: AAS 95 (2003), 452-453.

⁶² *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 32.

⁶³ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 34: AAS 95 (2003), 456.

⁶⁴ CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, dogm. de *Ecclesia Lumen gentium*, 26.

the Eucharist and manifests herself in it, the celebration of the Sacrament "cannot be the starting point for communion; it presupposes that communion already exists, a communion which it seeks to consolidate and bring to perfection."⁶⁵ The Second Vatican Council recalls that Catholic communion is expressed in the 'bonds' coming from a professed faith, an apostolic doctrine, the sacraments and ecclesiastical government.⁶⁶ Holy Communion requires then "a context where the outward bonds of communion are intact,"⁶⁷ especially in Baptism and Orders. These bonds are necessary in the Eucharist, which to be visibly catholic must be celebrated *una cum Papa et Episcopo*, the principles of visible unity on the universal and local levels. This is "intrinsically required for the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice (which) for its character of ecclesial communion..., while always offered in a particular community, is never a celebration of that community alone, ... but the image and true presence of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church."⁶⁸

20. In the first centuries of Christianity, utmost importance was given to having only one bishop and one altar in each city as an expression of the unity of the one Lord. In his gift of self in the Eucharist, Christ is entirely present in

⁶⁵ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 35: AAS 95 (2003), 457.

⁶⁶ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, dogm. de *Ecclesia Lumen gentium*, 14.

⁶⁷ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 38: AAS 95 (2003), 458-459.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, 39: AAS 95 (2003), 459-460; cf. CONGREGATIONIS PRO DOCTRINA FIDEI, Litt. *Communione notio* (28. V. 1992), 11: AAS 85 (1993), 814.

each place. Wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, the entire mystery of the Church is also present. At the same time, Christ is uniquely present in each place; he cannot to be received in discord. Precisely because Christ is undivided and unable to be separated from his members, the Eucharist renders its sign value only when it is celebrated in union with the whole Church.

Pope Paul VI, in the 1969 Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum*, expressed his desire that the Missal, revised according to the norms of Vatican II, be considered as a means of bearing witness to and affirming the unity of the Church and expressing, in the variety of languages, "one identical prayer." Herein lies the meaning of observing liturgical and canonical norms concerning the Eucharist. When she gives the norms for the Eucharist, the Church takes to heart Jesus' command to the Apostles of preparing for the Passover (cf. *Lk 22:12*).

Consequently: "the profound relationship between the invisible and the visible elements of ecclesial communion is constitutive of the Church as the sacrament of salvation. Only in this context can there be a legitimate celebration of the Eucharist and true participation in it. Consequently, it is an intrinsic requirement of the Eucharist that it should be celebrated in communion, and specifically maintaining the various bonds of that communion intact."⁶⁹

⁶⁹ **IOANNIS PAULI II**, *Litt. encycl. Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 35: AAS 95 (2003), 457.

CHAPTER III

THE EUCHARIST: THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH PROCLAIMED

The Magisterium of the Catholic Church

21. In presenting faith in the Eucharist and refuting doctrinal and pastoral errors which have appeared over time, the conciliar and papal magisterium of the Catholic Church draws primarily on the apostolic and patristic traditions of both East and West.

The Council of Trent, in three decrees, defined Eucharistic doctrine after the Protestant Reformation, particularly in regard to the true, real and substantial presence of the Lord Jesus, true God and true Man, in the species of bread and wine. It also affirmed that the Body of the Lord is present not only under the appearance of bread but also of wine and his Blood is present not only under the appearance of wine but also of bread. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ is also present in each species with his *soul* and *divinity*. Thus, Christ, the Father's Word, true God and true Man, is present whole and entire under the two species and in each of them.⁷⁰ The same Council also defined *transubstantiation*,¹¹ the manner of receiving communion⁷² and the relation between the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass and the bloody sacrifice of the

⁷⁰ Cf. CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer, de ss. Eucharistia, sess. XIII, cap. 1, *De reali prcesentia D.N.I. Christi in ss. Eucharistice sacramento*, cap. 2, *De ratione institutionis ss. huius sacramenti*: DS 1637-41; Can. 1-5: DS 1651-55.

⁷¹ Cf. ibidem, Deer, de ss. Eucharistia, sess. XIII, cap. 4, *De Transsubstantiatione*: DS 1642.

⁷² Cf. ibidem, Deer, de communione euch., sess. XXI: DS 1725-1734.

cross.⁷³ It also affirmed that to consider the words of institution and the command to celebrate in his memory in a figurative, *typological* or metaphorical way would be erroneous and unworthy of the nature of the Sacrament.⁷⁴ The institution of the Eucharistic sacrifice makes present the priesthood of Christ, while the redemptive power of the cross obtains for humanity the forgiveness of sins, of both the living and the dead.⁷⁵

The sacrificial nature of the Mass, developed in *Mediator Dei* by Pope Pius XII,⁷⁶ is reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council. Christ is the one and only priest, the ministers act in his name, re-present the one sacrifice of the New Covenant until he comes again,⁷⁷ continually renewing the Church. Those validly ordained⁷⁸ act *in persona Christi*.¹⁹

⁷³ Cf. ibidem, Deer, de Missa, sess. XXII: DS 1738-1759.

⁷⁴* Cf. ibidem, Deer, de ss. Eucharistia, sess. XIII, cap. 1, *De reali præsencia D.N.I. Christi in ss. Eucharistia; sacramento*: DS 1636-1637, cap. 2, *De ratione institutionis ss. huius sacramenti*: DS 1638.

⁷⁵ Cf. ibidem, Deer, de Eucharistia, sess. XIII, cap. 5 - 8: DS 1643-1750; can. 1-3: DS 1751-1753.

⁷⁶ Cf. PII XII, Litt. encycl. *Mediator Dei* (20XI.1947), II: AAS 39 (1947), 547-552.

⁷⁷ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, dogm. de Ecclesia *Lumen gentium*, 28.

⁷⁸ Cf. INNOCENTII III, *Professionem fidei Waldensibus præsriptam*, DS 794; CONC. CECUM. LATERANENS. IV, *Definitionem contra Albigenses et Catharos*: DS 802; CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer, de Missa, sess. XXII, cap. 1, *De institutione sacrosancti Missa sacrificii*: DS 1740, can. 2: DS 1752.

⁷⁹ Cf. IOANNIS PAULIII, Litt. Ap. *Dominicce Cence* (24.II.1980), 8: AAS 72 (1980), 127-130; Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 28-29: AAS 95 (2003), 451-453.

The Nature of the Eucharist

22. Beginning with the Tridentine doctrine on the Eucharist, the Second Vatican Council clarifies the various modes of Christ's presence and specifically states the different characteristics of Eucharistic presence.⁸⁰ Thus, the work of redemption, accomplished once and for all by Jesus Christ, continues to extend its effects each time the sacrifice of the cross, in which Christ Our Pasch is immolated, is celebrated on the altar in his memory.⁸¹ As for the sacramental effects, the Eucharist completes the building of the Church, the Body of Christ, and makes it grow.⁸² Therefore, it has salvific effects on the Church's members, conferring on them the grace of unity and charity insofar as the Eucharist is the spiritual food of the soul, the antidote for sin, the beginning of future glory and the fountain of holiness.

Pope Paul VI reaffirmed in the Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei* that the Mass is always the action of Christ and the Church, even in the exceptional case of being celebrated in private, that is, by the priest alone. Christ is present not in a spiritual or symbolic way, but in a real manner in the Eucharist, as the source of the unity of the Church, his Body.⁸³ According to the faith which the Church has professed from

⁸⁰ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. H, Const, de sacra Liturgia. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 7; Deer, de activitate missionali Ecclesiae *Ad gentes*, 14.

⁸¹ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, dogm. de Ecclesia *Lumen gentium*, 3; Deer, de presbyterorum ministerio et vita *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 4-5.

⁸² Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, dogm. de Ecclesia *Lumen gentium*, 17; Deer, de Oecumenismo *Unitatis redintegratio*, 2,15.

⁸³ Cf. PAULI VI, Litt. encycl. *Mysterium fidei* (3.IX.1965), 17-25: AAS 57 (1965), 762-766.

the beginning, the Eucharist, unlike the other sacraments, is "the flesh of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who suffered for our sins and whom the Father in his goodness has raised from the dead."⁸⁴ Concerning the transubstantiation of the species, Paul VI, in both the Encyclical and the *Profession of Faith*, again emphasized the causal link with the Real Presence. Christ makes himself present in the Eucharist through a transformation of the entire substance of the two species.⁸⁵

The teaching of Pope Paul VI develops the subject of *transubstantiation* insofar as he declared that, after this substantial change, the two species "acquire new meaning and a new end in that they contain a new reality which justly is defined as *ontological*."⁸⁶

The Eucharist and the Incarnation of the Word

23. In bodily form Jesus was the Son of God present in the midst of humanity. This was affirmed not only by him but by both the Spirit and the Father, primarily at his Baptism and Transfiguration. Throughout history, the Lord is present day by day, "always, to the close of the age" (*Mt* 28:20). This presence, finding its source in the Father and continually re-given to him, is made present to every person, in every time, through the Holy Spirit. The divine fullness of the Word of Life was in the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. Since his

⁸⁴ S. IGNATII ANTIOCHENI, *Ad Smyrnenses* 7, 1: *Patres Apostolici*, F.X. Funk ed., Tubingen 1992, p. 230.

⁸⁵ Cf. PAULI VI, *Sollemnem Professionem fidei* (30.VI.1968), 25: AAS (1968), 442-443.

⁸⁶ PAULI VI, Litt. encycl. *Mysterium fidei* (3.IX.1965), 27: AAS 57 (1965), 766.

ascension (cf. *Mk* 16:19-20; *Lk* 24:50-53; *Acts* 1:9-14) he remains in the mystery of the Eucharist, the Sacrament par excellence of the presence of God in the midst of humanity. The ascension does not mean that Christ went to a heaven beyond our sight. The open heavens indicate the manner of his return: "In this...the Son of Man was known in a most exalted and holy manner as the Son of God: being *even more present (prcesentior)* in his divinity, though more distant in his humanity...When I will ascend to my Father, then you can touch me in *a more perfect and exalted manner*." ⁸⁷ Therefore, at his ascension, Jesus Christ did not absent himself from the world but became present in a new manner.

Christ said: "You will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (*Mt* 23: 39). The Apostles took the chalice of blessing from Christ, when he returned to them alive. From that moment, each time the Church gathers, she acclaims him as blessed. In the liturgy, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* is added to the triple *Holy, Holy, Holy*.

24. Consequently, the Christian faith is not only believing in the existence of God or the historic person of Jesus, but in him, the Word of God made flesh, *continually abiding among us*. At the beginning of his earthly life he had a mortal body bound by space and time; now he has a risen body no longer bound by them. In fact, the risen Lord passes through locked doors, overcomes unspeakable distances in a lightning flash so as to make himself known, heard, seen and

⁸⁷ S. LEONIS MAGNI, *Sermo 2 in Ascensione*, 61 (74), 4: *SCh* 74bis, 280-282.

touched by his own. From the moment of his resurrection and ascension, his presence is a new *reality*.

The First Letter of St. John seems to make reference to this divine manner of reaching people throughout history: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life... we proclaim also to you so that you might have fellowship with us" (/ *Jn* 1:1-3). St. Ambrose comments: "...we prove the truth of the mystery with the mystery of the incarnation itself. Was not this done in the ordinary course of nature, when the Lord Jesus was born of Mary? ... Very well, that which we re-present is the body, born of the Virgin... It is the true flesh of Christ, who was crucified and was buried. It is indeed the sacrament of his flesh."⁸⁸

Consequently, the truth and reality of the incarnation of the Word is at the basis of the Body of Christ in the Eucharist and the Body of Christ, his Church,⁸⁹ as they are also for the doctrine of the Eucharist and sacramental theology. St. Hilary maintained that "if it is true that the Word was made flesh (cf. *Jn* 1:14), then it is also true that in the food of the Eucharist, we receive the Word-Made-Flesh."⁹⁰ Pope John Paul II writes, "The Eucharist, while commemorating the passion and resurrection, is also in continuity with the incarnation. At the annunciation, Mary conceived the Son of God

⁸⁸ *De Mysteriis*, 53: *SCh* 25bis, 186.

⁸⁹ Cf. CONGREGATIONIS PRO DOCTRINA FIDEI, *Declarationem Dominus Jesus* (6.VIII.2000), 16: *AAS* 92 (2000), 756-758.

⁹⁰ *De Trinitate*, 8, 13: *SCh* 448, 396.

in the physical reality of his body and blood, thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives, under the signs of bread and wine, the Lord's Body and Blood."⁹¹

Lights and Shadows in Appreciating the Gift

25. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Pope and bishops have periodically made needed pronouncements to encourage application of the liturgical reform and to assess its results. In the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul II, after having treated the positive elements or lights - primarily the participation of the faithful at the liturgy - passed "with profound grief to the shadows, including, in some places, the complete abandonment of the practice of Eucharistic adoration and abuses which lead "to confusion with regard to sound faith and Catholic doctrine concerning this wonderful sacrament."⁹² The lights which come from the Eucharist as sacrament need to be separated from the shadows which come from human deeds. For example, there are indications in Eucharistic catechesis and practice of an overemphasis on a single aspect, e.g., on the Eucharist as meal, on the baptismal common priesthood, on the sufficiency of a Liturgy of the Word only and on ecumenical practices at Mass which are contrary to the faith and discipline of the Church.

Ritual practices need to regain a sense of the totality of the mystery of the Eucharist, understood to be: the Word of

⁹¹ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 55: AAS 95 (2003), 470.

⁹² Cf. *ibidem*, 10: AAS 95 (2003), 439.

God proclaimed, the community gathered with a priest who celebrates *in persona Christi*, the rendering of thanks to God the Father for his gifts, the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord, his sacramental presence as a result of the Lord's words of consecration, the offering to the Father of the sacrifice of the Cross and communion with the Body, and Blood of the risen Christ. The Holy Father states: "The mystery of the Eucharist - sacrifice, presence, banquet - does not allow for reduction or exploitation; it must be experienced and lived in its integrity... (consequently) the Church is firmly built up and it becomes clear what she truly is."⁹³

26. In another place the Encyclical Letter clearly states: "The Church constantly draws her life from the redeeming sacrifice; she approaches it not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since this sacrifice is made present ever new, sacramentally perpetuated, in every community which offers it as the hands of the consecrated minister."⁹⁴ The Eucharist has the power of the Spirit who is transmitted to humanity in communion and in adoration of the Lord, who is really present.

The life of grace is transmitted in a sensible way through each sacrament, but in a more evident manner in the Eucharist. The Church does not give life to herself; she does not build herself up; she lives because of a reality which precedes her. "The joint and inseparable activity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, who is at the origin of the Church, of

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 61: AAS 95 (2003), 473-474.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 12: AAS 95 (2003), 441.

her consolidation and her continued life, is at work in the Eucharist."⁹⁵ Therefore, the Church is not born from below; *communio* is a grace, a gift which comes from above.

"The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift - however precious - among so many others, but as the gift par excellence, for it is the gift of himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past, since 'all that Christ is - all that he did and suffered for all men - participates in the divine eternity and so transcends all times' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1085)."⁹⁶

The Eucharist: *Signum Unitatis*

27. "Come together in a common faith and in Jesus Christ...", says St. Ignatius of Antioch, "breaking one bread which is the medicine of immortality."⁹⁷ St. John Chrysostom says, "this is the unity of faith: when we are one; when everyone acknowledges the bond which unites us."⁹⁸ Admittance into the unity of the Sacred Eucharist presupposes unity in the faith received at Baptism, because in the Sacrament we enter into communion with the one whom, according to our faith in him, we believe to be consubstantial with the Father. How would it be possible to receive Christ in communion with a person who has a different faith in him? We would be

⁹⁵ Ibidem, 23: AAS 95 (2003), 448-449.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, 11: AAS 95 (2003), 440-441.

⁹⁷ *Ad Ephesios*, 20, 2: Patres Apostolici, EX. Funk ed., Tubingen 1992, p. 190.

⁹⁸ *In epistulam ad Ephesios*, 11, 3: PG 62, 83.

guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord (cf. *1 Cor* 11:27). The Church, as a mother, has anguish and love for non-believers, catechumens and those far from the faith but she does not have the power to give communion to the non-baptized, nor to those teaching error nor to persons living an immoral life."

In receiving the *one* bread, we enter into *one* life and we become *one* Body of the Lord. The effect of the Eucharist is to join Christians who were once scattered into the unity of the one bread and the one cup. Consequently, communion can be received only in union with the whole Church, after overcoming any separation because of religion or morality.¹⁰⁰

28. With this in mind, we should treat *intercommunion* with the required humility and patience. Instead of a kind of experimentation which sacrifices the greatness of the mystery of the Eucharist, reducing the Sacrament to a mere human instrument, the preferred choice is to defer, in common prayer and hope, to "respect the demands from its being the sacrament of communion in faith and in apostolic succession."¹⁰¹

The Orthodox Churches and the ancient Eastern Churches share the same faith in the Eucharist, because they have true sacraments.¹⁰² Therefore, in certain cases, Eucharistic com-

⁹⁹ Cf. S. CYRILLI ALEXANDRINI, *De adoratione in spiritu et veritate*, 11:PG68,761D.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 30.44-45: AAS 95 (2003), 453-454, 462-463.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, 61: AAS 95 (2003), 473-474.

¹⁰² Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, *Deer, de Oecumenismo Unitatis redintegratio*, 15.

munion is possible.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, what remains to be considered carefully is the relationship between Eucharistic hospitality and proselytism. Some Church communities of the Reformation, above all Lutherans, believe in Christ's presence during the celebration, but, without the Sacrament of Orders, they have not conserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery.¹⁰⁴ Though some successes in dialogue have occurred, no full agreement exists. Therefore, only in the case of the spiritual need of a well-prepared, non-Catholic member, that is, one who professes the same faith in the Eucharist, can Holy Communion be given. A Catholic, however, can only receive communion from a validly ordained minister.¹⁰⁵

CHAPTER IV

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Centre of the Cosmic Liturgy

29. The Lord's incarnation and ascension have made communication possible between heaven and earth, a mystery hidden in the vision of Jacob's Ladder (cf. *Gn* 28:12) and foretold by Christ himself (cf. *Jn* 1:51). The Book of Revelation, with the altar of the Lamb at the centre of the heavenly Jerusalem descending to earth, is the archetype of Christian worship: the worship of God by humanity and humanity's

^{mi} Cf. *Codicem Iuris Canonici*, c. 844.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Deer, de Oecumenismo *Unitatis redintegratio*, 22.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 46: AAS 95 (2003), 463-464.

communion with God.¹⁰⁶ In the invocation *supplices te rogamus*, the Roman Canon mentions "the altar in heaven," from which descends the grace of the one who is risen and alive, fulfilling the wonderful exchange which saves humanity.

Christ is the *catholicus Patris sacerdos*®¹ Through his human nature the Holy Spirit communicates divine life to creation and humanity, bringing it to perfection. The human nature of Christ is the source of salvation; he is the high priest and prime celebrator of liturgy. According to the Eastern Churches, the Trinitarian presence makes the Eucharistic liturgy a meeting point between earth and heaven: "the dwelling of God with men" (Rev 21:3). St. Dionysius the Areopagite states that God "is called beauty...because he draws (*kalei*) all things to himself ... and brings everything into a unity (*synaghei*)."¹⁰⁵ The Greek terms are synonymous for calling the Church together. Christ's presence at the gathering of the faithful for the Eucharist makes heaven of earth: "This mystery transforms earth into heaven for you... I will show you on earth the most venerable of heavenly things...I show you neither angels nor archangels, but their very Lord...."¹⁰⁹

Consequently, it is possible "strongly to experience the universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church,

¹⁰⁶ Cf. **CONC. CECUM. VAT. II**, Const, de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, **8**; **IOANNIS PAULI II**, *Litt. encycl. Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 19: AAS 95 (2003), **445-446**.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. **TERTULLIANI**, *Contra Marcionem*, IV, 9, 9: *SCh* 456,124.

¹⁰⁸ *De divinis nominibus*, **4**, 7: *PG* 3, 701C.

¹⁰⁹ **S. IOANNIS CHRYSOSTOMI**, *In epistolam I ad Corinthios*, 24, 5: *PG* 61,205s.

the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated *on the altar of the world*. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation."¹¹⁰

When the Eucharist is Validly Celebrated

30. The sacrament is "the visible sign of a sacred reality and the visible form of an invisible grace."¹¹¹ This definition of the Council of Trent is still valid, since it refers to the elements which constitute the Sacrament of the Eucharist: the minister, those who receive the Sacrament and the perceivable aspects.

As for the matter of the Sacrament, the Eucharist can only be celebrated with bread and wine, with some drops of water to express the union of the holy people with the sacrifice of Christ.¹¹² The water, however, is not strictly necessary for validity.¹¹³ According to our Catholic faith, the form of the Sacrament is the words of consecration, which are essential and solely necessary.¹¹⁴ The minister is a validly ordained

¹¹⁰ IOANNIS PAULIII, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 8: AAS 95 (2003), 437-438.

¹¹¹ CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer, de Eucharistia, cap. 3, *De excellentia ss. Eucharistice super reliqua sacramenta*: DS 1639.

¹¹² Cf. CONC. FLORENTIN., Deer, pro Gratis: DS 1303, Deer, pro Armeniis: DS 1320, CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer, de Eucharistia, sess. XIII, cap. 4, *De Transsubstantiatione*: DS 1642; etiam *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 319-324.

¹¹³ Cf. CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer, de Missa, sess. XXII, cap. 7, *De aqua in calice offerendo vino miscenda*: DS 1748.

¹¹⁴ Cf. CONC. FLORENTIN., Deer, pro Armeniis: DS 1321; Deer, pro Iacobitis: DS 1352; CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer, de Missa, sess. XXII, cap. 1, *De institutione sacrosancti Missae sacrificii*: DS 1740.

priest.¹¹⁵ Only those baptised can validly receive the Eucharist. The tradition of the Latin Church requires recipients to have the use of reason, that is, a certain knowledge of the mystery of faith, and to approach the Sacrament with a right intention and devotion. The person is also required to be in the state of grace. Mortal sin requires sacramental confession before receiving communion.¹¹⁶

The preceding serves as a reminder that the liturgy is not the property of any individual, to be used to express one's creativity whether in celebrations for communities or in those where only a few or no faithful are present.¹¹⁷ The Roman rite has specific norms for concelebrated Masses where many priests take part, manifesting the unity of the priesthood, of the sacrifice and the whole People of God.¹¹⁸ In the rites of the Eastern Churches, this high expression of unity is not advisable, "particularly when the number of concelebrants is disproportionately greater than the presence of the lay faithful."¹¹⁹

31. Chapter One of the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, on "The Importance and Dignity of the Eucha-

¹¹⁵ Cf. CONC. OECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer. de Missa, sess. XXII, cap. 1, *De institutione sacrosancti Missa sacrificii*: DS 1740; can. 2: DS 1752.

¹¹⁶ Cf. ibidem, cap. 7, *De praeparatione, quae adhibenda est, ut digne quis s. Eucharistiam percipiat*: DS 1646-1647, cap. 8, *De usu admirabilis huius sacramenti*: DS 1648-1650, can. 11: DS 1661.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000) 19; IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 52: AAS 95 (2003), 467-468.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 199.

¹¹⁹ *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 57.

ristic Celebration," states that the Mass is the action of Christ and the People of God hierarchically assembled. It is the centre of the whole Christian life for both the universal and the local Church, and for each of the faithful. Certain "elements and parts of the Mass,"¹²⁰ common to the Churches of both East and West, demonstrate the deep symbolism and pastoral aspects of the Eucharist which should not be altered in any way, from either a so-called "liturgical creativity" or from a critical spirit of what has been legitimately decreed.

The Penitential Rite

32. The purpose of the Penitential Rite, particularly in the Roman rite, is *to dispose* the community to listen to God's Word and worthily to celebrate the Eucharist. The Byzantine, Armenian, Syro-Antiochine rites have prayers of preparation by the priest, along with acts of purification (washing and incense), which also appear in the Maronite, Chaldean and Coptic rites. The formula proposed in the Roman Missal leads to the recognition of our state as sinners, the stirring of contrition in the heart and the desire for pardon from God and others. It does not include an examination of conscience as in sacramental confession, which requires more time and a thorough personal reflection. The Penitential Rite concludes with an invocation of God's mercy.¹²¹

The Word of God and the Symbol of Faith

33. In the Eastern rites, the first part of the Mass is living the mystery of the incarnation of the Word, who comes

¹²⁰ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), cap. II.

¹²¹ Cf. *ibidem*, 51.

into the world to make himself heard and to nourish humanity. The *Didache* states that in partaking of the food and drink of the Eucharist, we are offered the knowledge of God and receive it.¹²²

The Gospel has for its object the Word, the *Verbum*, the joyous proclamation (*euangelion*) that God has descended to the earth to give us the food of eternal life. The Eucharist makes us friends of Christ, who is the Wisdom of God. The Word is the "Gospel of Hope"!¹²³

In response to this proclamation, the "symbol of faith" is recited after the homily for the Latins and Armenians, or after the transference of the gifts, for the Byzantines and other Eastern Rites.¹²⁴ Unable to be interpolated or changed, the symbol of faith is one of the essential bonds for approaching the Eucharist, because the Table of the Word and the Table of the Eucharist¹²⁵ are the one Table of the one Lord, requiring "a single act of worship."¹²⁶

The Presentation of the Gifts

34. In the Roman rite the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the preparation of the gifts. At this time, the lay faithful assume an important role of bringing the bread and wine to

¹²² Cf. **IX, 3:Audet,323.**

¹²³ Cf. **IOANNIS PAULI II, Adhort. Ap.** postsynod. *Ecclesia in Europa* (28.VI.2003), **13: AAS 95 (2003)**, 657-658.

¹²⁴ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 67.

¹²⁵ **Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const, de sacra Liturgia Sacrosanctum concilium**, 56.

¹²⁶ *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (20.IV2000), 28.

the sanctuary, where the priest receives them to offer them to God the Father. It is possible to bring additional gifts for the assistance of the poor or other churches. The presentation of bread and wine, together with charitable gifts, underline the strong bond between the Eucharist and the commandment to love others. However, the liturgy provides that the bread and wine be placed directly on the altar, while the other gifts be brought to a more adapted spot, apart from the altar. This is to express the due veneration for the elements which will become the Body and Blood of Christ.¹²⁷

In addition to altar coverings, the Byzantine Liturgy calls for the use of a sacred cloth depicting the deposition of the body of Christ from the cross. On this cloth rest the gifts which will become the Body and Blood of the Lord through an act representing the spotless passion of the Lord and his tomb.¹²⁸ To be worthy to offer these gifts for himself and for the sins of the people, the priest, after the "Great Entrance," addresses a prayer of supplication to the Father. Sin (*amartia*) must be something foreign to him; even his most minor faults are serious, according to John Chrysostom: "not by their nature but by the dignity of the priest who dares to commit them."¹²⁹ The incensation of the holy Gifts follows, a pre-figurement of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them¹³⁰ and the prayer of adoration which arises in Christ to the

¹²⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, 73.

¹²⁸ Cf. THEODORI ANDIDENSIS, *De divince liturgice symbolis ac mysteriis*, 18: PG 140, 441C.

¹²⁹ *De Sacerdotio*, VI, 11: SCh 272,340.

¹³⁰ Cf. S. GERMANI COSTANTINOPOLITANI, *Historiam Ecclesiasticam et mysticam contemplationem*: PG 98, 400C.

Father. The preparation and presentation of the Gifts, then, is not merely a moment of passage but an integrating, highly symbolic part of the Sacrifice.

The Eucharistic Prayer

35. The priest, or the deacon in the Eastern rites, introduces the Eucharistic Prayer with the invitation: "Lift up your hearts." The *Apostolic Constitutions* state: "Turned towards the Lord, with fear and trembling we stand to offer the oblation."¹³¹ In the words of St. John Chrysostom, this dialogue serves "to present our souls upright before God and not recumbent, as they are inclined to be because of the everyday affairs of life... Consider who is standing next to you; you are in the company of someone who is about to call upon God, in the company of the Cherubim... No one should participate in these sacred, mystic hymns without fervour... Each one is to uproot from his spirit all that belongs to earth and transfer all to heaven. He is to think of himself as next to the very throne of glory and flying with the Seraphim so as to offer to God the holiest hymn of majesty and splendour. For this reason we are called upon at this moment to compose ourselves..., namely, to stand with 'fear and trembling' (*Phil* 2: 12), with an upright, attentive spirit."¹³²

To raise up the spirit is the meaning of the word *andfora*: the act of all believers to lift up their hearts.¹³³ The Gifts are scarcely carried to the altar on earth, when they are lifted to

¹³¹ VIII, 12, 2: F.X.Funk ed., Paderborn 1905,1, 494.

¹³² *De incomprehensibilitate Dei*, 4, 5: *SCh* 28bis, 260.

¹³³ Cf. S. ANASTASIISYNAIT[^], *Orationemdesacra Synaxi*: PG 89, 833BC.

the altar of heaven, an action which takes place in tranquility, in the imperturbable peace of heaven.¹³⁴ Furthermore, the sacrifice is offered for one purpose: love and mercy. Thus, it is made acceptable in the Lord's sight. It is the sacrifice of praise, because it exalts the Lord's love.¹³⁵

36. The faithful respond in unison: "It is right and just." St. John Chrysostom observes: "rendering thanks, the Eucharist, is a communal act: the priest is not the only one to render thanks, all the people take part. The priest begins, and immediately afterwards the faithful give their assent: 'It is right and just.' After that, the priest begins the act of thanksgiving, the Eucharist."¹³⁶ This expresses the participation of the People of God, its movement towards the heavenly Church, culminating in the *Sanctus*, the hymn of victory (*epiniko*), a blending of the angel's hymn in the vision of Isaiah and the acclamation of the people of Jerusalem to the Lord, who entered the Holy City to give himself freely to his passion.

At the conclusion of the anaphora, the faithful respond, "Amen" to the doxology and "with this acclamation they make their own everything said by the priest."¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Cf. S. IOANNIS CHRYSOSTOMI, *Homiliam in diem natalem Domini nostri Iesu Christi*, 7: PG 49, 361.

¹³⁵ Cf. S. BASILII MAGNI, *Homiliam inpsalmum* 115: PG 30, 113B.

¹³⁶ *In epistulam II ad Corinthios*, 18, 3: PG 61, 527.

¹³⁷ Cf. N. CABASILJE, *Commentarium in divinam liturgiam*, 15, 2: *SCh* 4bis, 125.

The Institution of the Eucharist

37. On the night before his passion, the Lord took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said.... Christ's command "Do this in memory of me" is addressed to his Apostles who, at the mystic supper, represent the whole Church, beginning with their successors. These words are a reference to the Eucharistic action which culminates in not only the change of the bread and wine into the Lord's Body and Blood, but also faith in his word.

From the beginning, the Church solemnly fulfills the Lord's actions, coming to understand them by meditating on them one by one, as if to be instructed over and over again in their meaning: the presentation of the Gifts, the consecration, the breaking of the bread and the distribution of Holy Communion.¹³⁸ For this reason, the words "Take and eat" are not followed by the breaking of the host. If this be done, that moment would immediately become communion. Instead, at this highly charged mystical moment, the liturgy indicates that the celebrant is to bow his head and pronounce the words with a clear, moderate voice so as to promote contemplation, as does the Bishop on Holy Thursday, when he breathes over the Oil of Chrism. "By his actions and by his proclamation of the words, he (the celebrant) should impress upon the faithful the living presence of Christ."¹³⁹ At this moment, indeed, the sacramental Sacrifice is accomplished.¹⁴⁰

Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 72.

Ibidem, 93; etiam *Catechismus Catholicæ Ecclesie*, 1348.

Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 79 d.

The Epiclesis over the Consecrated Gifts

38. In the first centuries, before the consecration, an invocation was made with hands extended (*epiclesi*) to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to sanctify and transform the bread and wine into the Lord's Body and Blood. The basis of such a prayer is found in the Lord's words following the institution of this mystery: "When the Counselor comes... he will bear witness to me" (*Jn* 15:26), "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (*Jn* 14:25) and "will glorify me" (*Jn* 16:14). Because of the controversies concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit between the fourth and fifth centuries, the prayer was placed after the consecration, as witnessed by some liturgical traditions. The majority of the anaphora prayers, however, keep it in its original place, as in the Roman Canon which invokes the Father to send the Spirit, "the power of his blessing."¹⁴¹

The Church Fathers, who maintained the importance of the *epiclesi* to the Spirit, thought to unite it to the words of institution to render the sacramental sign complete. The Lord's words are spirit and life (cf. *Jn* 6:63). Christ works together with the Holy Spirit, while remaining the one consecrator of the Eucharist and the dispenser of the Spirit. The Council of Trent has established that the epiclesis is not essential to the validity of the Eucharist.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Cf. *Catechismus Catholicæ Ecclesie*, 1353.

¹⁴² Cf. **BENEDICTI XII, Lib. "Cum dudum" (VIII.1341): DS 1017; PII VII, Brev. "Adorabile Eucharistice" (8.V.1822): DS 2718; PII X, Ep. "Ex quo, nono" (26.XII.1910):DS3556.**

St. Ambrose states: "...what are we to say of that divine consecration where the very words of the Lord and Saviour operate? For that Sacrament which you receive is made what it is by the word of Christ...Shall not the word of Christ, which was able to make out of nothing that which was not, be able to change things which already are into what they were not? For it is not less difficult to create things than to change them... The Lord Jesus Himself proclaims: 'This is My Body.' Before the blessing with the heavenly words, another nature is spoken of; after the consecration, the Body is signified. He himself speaks of his Blood. Before the consecration, it has another name; after the consecration, it is called Blood. And you say, *Amen*, that is, *It is true*." ¹⁴³

The Church of the Saints in the Eucharist

39. The Divine Liturgy remembers those who are alive in Christ. St. Dionysius the Areopagite states: "the ranks of saints are present and inseparably united, showing how the saints are one with him in a sacred union beyond this world." ¹⁴⁴ Consequently, the worship of the Lord cannot be opposed to the veneration of the saints. When they were living in this world, they sought to do all for the glory of God. Now, they rejoice that God is glorified in them. ¹⁴⁵ The *Intercessions* express the offering of the Eucharist in union with the whole Church, in heaven and on earth, for all her

¹⁴³ *De Mysteriis*, 52.54: *SCh* 25bis, 188.

¹⁴⁴ *De ecclesiastica hierarchia*, 3, 9: *PG* 3, 464.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. N. CABASILiE, *Commentarium in divinam liturgiam*, 48, 5: *SCh* 4bis, 271-273.

members, both living and dead.¹⁴⁶ First of all, an invocation is made to the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, because her act of consecration to the Lord is analogous to our gift of self, which is always renewed in the Eucharistic sacrifice. We offer the Eucharist in memory of the saints to honour them and render thanks to God for their intercession. The ones who represent humanity's act of thanksgiving to God for his favours *intercede and speak* at our Eucharists.

Christ also gives himself in communion to the deceased, in the words of Cabasilas "in a manner known only to him;"¹⁴⁷ St. John Chrysostom observes that if they are in the state of purification, they receive no less a part of grace than the living for the remission of their sins.¹⁴⁸

The Preparation for Communion

40. The Eucharist is the living presence of Christ in the Church. The Lord's passion led to his transformation into food for humanity (cf. *1 Cor* 10:16; 11:23ff). One of the traditional symbols of this mystery is the *fish*. The most ancient reference on the subject is found in the celebrated epigraph of St. Abercius, a bishop of the second century: "...he abundantly feeds me with fish from clear waters..., which the chaste virgin takes and offers each day to her friends so they can eat it with choice wine together with bread." Another symbol of self-giving is the *pellican*: "*Pie pellicane*

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 79g.

¹⁴⁷ N. CABASILAS, *Commentarium in divinam liturgiam*, 42, 3: *SCh* 4bis, 241.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. S. IOANNIS CHRYSOSTOMI, *In epistulam ad Philippenses*, 3,4: *PG* 62, 204.

Jesu Domine..." exclaims St. Thomas Aquinas in the hymn *Adoro te devote*. The mystery of the incarnation of the Word continues in his *Eucharistic Body*, in making himself bread for humanity. Jesus foretold it in the discourse at Capernaum: *"I am the bread which came down from heaven..."* (*Jn* 6:41). His Flesh is real food, his Blood is real drink (cf. *Jn* 6:55). Ecclesial communion and the Communion of Saints are nourished in Eucharistic communion; indeed "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body" (*1 Cor* 10:17).

41. The Eucharist is the Paschal meal of the Sacrificial Lamb, Christ the Lord. Full participation of the faithful at Holy Mass is accomplished in Holy Communion, received with proper internal and external dispositions.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, just as people should not stay away from communion for a prolonged period of time because of an excessive scrupulosity, by the same token, people should not receive communion in a casual, routine manner.

As seen in the very words of institution: "poured out... for the forgiveness of sins" (*Mt* 26:28) and in the ancient anaphora,¹⁵⁰ grave sin excludes a person from receiving communion. From her earliest days, the Church required a course for catechumens and penitents; the latter being able to participate at Mass as *Akoinonetoï* (without receiving communion). Grave sins required a canonical penance. The insistence by many Church Fathers on the necessity of a *worthy* reception of communion proves that the call for the forgiveness of sins,

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Catechismum Catholicæ Ecclesiæ*, 1384-1390.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *Constitutiones Apostolicas*, VIII, 12, 39; F. X. Funk, ed., Paderborn 1905, 1, 510, et Anaphoras alexandrinæ Marci, Serapionis, Basilii copti.

even in the epiclesis after the consecration¹⁵¹ is not an invitation addressed to those guilty of grave sin to approach the Eucharist without the foreseen penitence. Even though a person can truly participate at Mass without receiving communion, the integrating but non essential¹⁵¹ part of the sacrifice, full participation in the Body of Christ should only be done by those who are properly disposed.¹⁵²

42. Personal preparation is perfected in the communion rites:

- the *Our Father* contains an appeal for daily bread, which is also the Eucharistic bread, and for "the purification from sin!., so that the *Holy Gifts* might truly be given to the holy."¹⁵³ In asking for forgiveness, we also seek how to forgive, so that the Kingdom and the will of God might be fulfilled in us and we be made worthy to receive the Sacrament.

- the *Rite of Peace*: the kiss of peace, that is, of pardon, is done in the Eastern Churches and the Ambrosian rite before the anaphora and in the Roman rite before communion. The risen Lord appeared in the midst of his disciples, offered them his peace and prepared, according to St. John Chrysostom, "the table of peace."¹⁵⁴ The peace and salvation of souls given in the Eucharist is Christ himself (cf. *Eph* 2:13-17). He was sacrificed to bring peace to all heavenly and earthly realities

¹⁵¹ Cf. CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer, de Missa, sess. XXII, cap. 6, *De Missa, in qua solus sacerdos communicat*: DS, 1747, can. 8: DS, 1758.

¹⁵² Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 80.

¹⁵³ Ibidem, 81.

¹⁵⁴ PSEUDO CHRYSOSTOMI, *De proditiōe Iudce*, 1, 6: PG 49, 381.

and to make possible living in peace with others.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, the Eucharist is the bond of peace (cf. *Eph* 4:3): "Just as peace makes one out of many, so discord makes many out of one."¹⁵⁶ "Peace... is the Church of Christ."¹⁵⁷ In asking for peace, the Christian is really asking for Christ: "he who seeks peace seeks Christ, since he is our peace."¹⁵⁸ The liturgy is the mystery which again brings the peace of Christ to all creation.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* describe the procedure for the kiss of peace in the following manner: "The members of the clergy greet the bishop, and among the laity, men greet men and women women."¹⁵⁹ The kiss of the faithful is a sacred action, an experience uniting the faithful among themselves and with the Word.¹⁶⁰ Peace is implored with a prayer asking for the unity of the Church and of all humankind. Peace expresses mutual love in a brief dialogue between the priest and faithful. The kiss of peace is not obligatory; it is done as opportunity presents itself.¹⁶¹ In these cases, according to the simple style of the Roman liturgy and the rich style of the Byzantine rite, each exchanges greetings with those nearby, without leaving one's place and creating a distraction. During the rite, a certain discipline would be opportune to ensure proper decorum in the liturgy.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, 381-382.

¹⁵⁶ N. CABASIUE, *Commentarium divines liturgies*, 12, 8: *SCh* 4bis, i11.

¹⁵⁷ *Constitutiones Apostolicce*, II, 20, 10: EX. Funk ed., Paderborn 1905,1, 77.

¹⁵⁸ S. BASILII MAGNI, *Homilia in psalmum*, 33, 10: *PG* 29, 376.

¹⁵⁹ VIII, 11, 9-10: F. X. Funk ed., Paderborn 1905,1, 494.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. S. MAXIMI CONFESSORIS, *Mystagogiam*, 13: *PG* 91, 691.

¹⁶¹ Cf. *Institutionem Generalis Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 82.

The first Christians gave the name "peace" to the Eucharist, because it means *to gather*, to overcome barriers and to unify people in a new way. By coming together at the Eucharist and forgiving each other before going to communion, Christians create conditions for peace in a world without peace.

- *The breaking of bread*: the rite means that, though many, we become one body by receiving the bread which is broken. St. John Chrysostom says: "What Christ did not suffer on the cross he suffers in the oblation for your sake; he accepts being broken so that all might be filled."¹⁶² Though Christ be broken, however, he is not divided. Even after the breaking, each particle, of holy bread is the whole Christ.¹⁶³ All those who approach communion receive the whole Christ, who fills them entirely. No community can receive Christ without receiving him with the whole Church.

- *The mingling of the sacred species*: in the Roman rite, this is a simple action but one of great significance, exalting the work of the Spirit from the Lord's incarnation to his resurrection. The Byzantine liturgy explains it as "the fullness of the Holy Spirit." In the particular rite of *Zeon*, the action is that of pouring hot water into the chalice, using the words: "the fullness of the Holy Spirit." Now Christ is risen!

- *personal preparation*: The priest prepares himself with prayers recited in a low voice and some moments of silence, in anticipation of the more extended period of silence after

¹⁶² *In epistulam I ad Corinthios*, 24, 2: PG 61, 200.

¹⁶³ Cf. S. GERMANI COSTANTINOPOLITANI, *Historiam ecclesiasticam et mysticam contemplationem*: PG 98, 449B.

communion. His example is to assist the faithful in their preparation.

Holy Communion

43. The priest elevates the consecrated host "as Christ was lifted on the cross,"¹⁶⁴ and says in the Latin liturgy: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper;" and in the Byzantine rite: "Holy Things for the Holy." Likewise, "Since communion is not given indifferently to all, the priest does not extend the invitation to everyone... He invites to communion those who can participate worthily: '*holy things for the holy*'... He calls 'holy' those who are perfect in virtue and also those working towards a perfection not yet attained. For those who participate in the sacred mysteries, nothing stands in the way of their being made holy."¹⁶⁵

The Eucharist is the Sacrament for those who have been reconciled. The Lord offers it to those who have become one with him. Therefore, from the very beginning, *discernment* precedes the Eucharist (cf. *1 Cor* 11:27ff) under pain of sacrilege.¹⁶⁶ The *Didache* takes up this apostolic tradition and speaks the following words to the priest, before he distributes the Sacrament: "If one is holy, come; if one is not, repent."¹⁶⁷ The Byzantine liturgy retains this invitation. In the Roman liturgy, the priest makes the invitation to communion and

¹⁶⁴ S. IOANNIS DAMASCENI, *In epistulam ad Zachariam ep. de immaculate corpore*, 5: PG 95, 409.

¹⁶⁵ N. CABASELE, *Commentarium divine liturgice*, 36, 1: *SCh* 4bis, 223.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Catechismus Catholicæ Ecclesiæ*, 2120.

¹⁶⁷ X, 6: Audet, 236.

recites with the faithful a phrase from the Gospel, "*Lord, I am not worthy*" to express sentiments of humility.¹⁶⁸ Each person who receives communion responds, "*Amen.*"

44. Ancient sources indicate that communion was not taken but received, an act symbolizing the Sacrament's meaning, that is, a Gift received with adoration. In the Latin rite, where provision is made for communion under two species, Catholic teaching is to be followed.¹⁶⁹ In the rites of the Eastern Churches the tradition established in the canons is to be observed.¹⁷⁰

True devotion is called for in approaching the altar to receive Holy Communion. St. Francis burned "with love in every fibre of his being towards the Sacrament of the Body of the Lord and was overcome with inexpressible wonder at such a benevolent outpouring and unbounded charity. He received communion often and so devoutly as to render others devout."¹⁷¹ Cabasilas offers the reflection that "when we receive the flesh and blood attached to Christ's human nature, we receive the spirit of God: the body of God no less than that of man, the blood and soul of God, the mind and will of God, no less than those of man."¹⁷² The reality of the Body of Christ is his person and life, a mystery and salvific truth to embrace, as St. Thomas Aquinas states, with faith and reason.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Institutionem Generalis Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 84.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, 282.

¹⁷⁰ cf. *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 59.

¹⁷¹ THOM/E A CELANO, *Vita Seconda*, 201(789): *Fonti Francescane*, Padova 1980,713.

¹⁷² *De vita in Christo*, IV, 26: *SCh* 355, 288.

In conclusion, the prayer after communion asks that the mystery celebrated and received be fruitful, since this is the purpose of Holy Mass.¹⁷³

CHAPTER V

THE EUCHARISTIC MYSTAGOGY FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

The Church Fathers

45. The Lord promised: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt* 28:20). We do not make him present by ourselves; it is he who makes himself present among us and remains with us always. Access to the mystery of his abiding presence comes through instructing the faithful in a catechesis for catechumens, intimately joined to the liturgy, and *mystagogy* or post-baptismal catechesis for the initiated.¹⁷⁴

Christian initiation took an ordered theological-liturgical form at the beginning of the 5th century in catechetical homilies. The Alexandrine Fathers, from Origen to Pseudo-Dionysius, proposed an allegorical mystagogy. They looked upon the liturgy, much like Scripture, as the path which allowed a person to pass from the letter to the spirit, from the mystery visible in sacramental signs to the mystery unseen. The liturgy followed the biblical narration and proposed a moral, personal eschatology as the path from this life to God. The mystagogy

¹⁷³ Cf. *Institutionem Generalis Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 17. 89.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 30.

of the Antiochene Fathers, especially St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia, took the liturgy and described the historical and mystical events of salvation in a *typological manner*. For them, the sacraments reproduce the salvific actions of Jesus' life in imitating them (*mimesis*) or calling them to mind (*anamnesis*). The sacraments also anticipate the final liturgy, making it contemporary through the presence of the risen Lord among those who are gathered for worship.

The Denial of Mystery Today

46. In some parts of the world the sense of mystery remains strong, while in others there are signs of a widespread mentality which, though not formally denying the mystery of God, excludes the possibility of knowing him through reason and freely adhering to him. A kind of neo-paganism is pushing people to take flight from reality and seek refuge in myths and in idols which bring momentary relief in life. At the same time, a need for spirituality is also manifested.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, increasing gnostic tendencies are leading people to seek the meaning of everyday happenings from a select few who claim a privy knowledge.

The Church desires to assist humanity in rediscovering the mystery hidden for centuries and manifested in Jesus Christ (cf. *Eph* 3:5-6). Since mystagogy means a method of leading a person to mystery, it is understandable that liturgical formation be accompanied by personal conversion.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Ep. Ap. *Novo millennio ineunte* (6.1.2001), 33:/IAS 93 (2001), 289-290.

Mystagogy Today

47. The Lord walked with his people. He always accompanied the mission of the Church with his presence which transforms us and makes us enter into the final age (*eschaton*). Mystagogy begins with a *faith-encounter* with the Lord through his grace. The custom of the Eastern Churches of giving Holy Communion to children at Baptism and Confirmation shows that the grace of the Eucharist comes before any human act. How could mystagogy take place without the attraction of Jesus? The Gospel refers to Jesus' encounters with men and women of various conditions of life. A personal encounter with Christ initiates an itinerary of knowledge which develops into a faith-experience: "where are you staying? ... and they stayed with him" (*Jn* 1:38-39). Thus it happens that some followed him. This is the mystagogy of God towards humanity; he begins by taking our flesh and redeeming it.

Mystagogy today must avoid an exaggerated use of symbolism which, often unintelligible and abstract, leads to a lengthy, drawn-out commentary. Instead, mystagogy is to be entrusted to the power of the Spirit who is communicated through the simplicity of words and sacramental actions. The mission of the Holy Spirit makes intelligible what Jesus Christ has revealed. He is the unseen mystagogue. According to St. Basil the Great, though each person of the Trinity does something individually, it remains the work of all three.¹⁷⁶

Consequently, rediscovering the methodology of the Church Fathers is important in responding to the contemporary visual need for images and symbols. The contribution

Cf. *De Spiritu Sancto*, V, 10: *SCh* 17bis, 280.

of medieval theologians is useful in responding to the rational needs of adhering to mystery. This patrimony is conserved in prayers and liturgical rites. Participation in the Eucharistic mystery greatly depends on understanding them.¹⁷⁷ Catechesis should also help priests and the faithful understand and put into effect the various aspects concerning the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁷⁸

Presiding at the Eucharist

48. The mystagogical method is to read the mystery of Christ in the rites and to contemplate the underlying, unseen reality. The mystagogue in the liturgy, then, does not speak in his own name; he echoes to the Church what he has received and what has been entrusted to him. The liturgy cannot be treated by the celebrant or the community as "private property."¹⁷⁹

St. John the Baptist is the most emblematic figure of the minister who makes himself small so that the Lord may increase. This is the basis of the sacred power, *exousia* in the Holy Spirit, entrusted by Christ to the Church, the priesthood of Christ in which his ministers participate. St. Cyril of Jerusalem recalls that the word *ecclesia* appears for the first time in the passage in which Aaron is assigned the priestly ministry. The priesthood and the Church are born at the same

¹⁷⁷ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 48.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Catechismum Catholicæ Ecclesie*, 1135-1186.

¹⁷⁹ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 52; AAS 95 (2003), 467-468.

time and are inseparable parts of each other.¹⁸⁰ The Roman Canon states: "Accept this offering from us your ministers and from your whole family." As for the different roles in the Body, at Mass the priest fulfills the role of *Christ the Head*, while the faithful exercise the role of *Christ's members*. The priest acts *in persona Christi*, in that it is no longer he who acts but Christ acts in him (cf. *Gal* 2:20).

49. The Eucharist extends its efficacy to all the minister's actions, since the priestly function does not only include sanctification but also shepherding and teaching. This is true of the bishop's ministry, when he celebrates the Eucharist. In addition, he manifests "with major clarity"¹⁸¹ the fullness of the Church as the sacrament of unity. The same truth underlies the ministry of the priest "when he celebrates... the Eucharist with dignity and humility."¹⁸² It is also the model of the role of deacon, the ministers - particularly the acolyte and extraordinary minister of the Eucharist - and the faithful who ought "to offer themselves..." with a deep sense of religion and charity towards everyone.¹⁸³

Dignity at Eucharistic Celebrations

50. Mystagogy presupposes a certain dignity at celebrations. The Roman liturgy, in its simplicity, desires that "...the sacred places and things might indeed be worthy, beautiful,

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *Catechesin illuminandorum*, 18, 24: PG 33, 1046.

¹⁸¹ *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 92.

¹⁸² *Ibidem*, 93; cf. 84.

¹⁸³ Cf. *ibidem*, 95.

signs and symbols of the heavenly realities."¹⁸⁴ The mystery is set in "the spirit and expression of deep reverence and adoration in which the liturgy is carried out."¹⁸⁵ For this reason, Pope John Paul II, speaking of dignity at the Eucharistic celebration, has called for the strict observance of the Church's liturgical norms and their external expressions.¹⁸⁶ The Latin word *ordo*, used in the liturgical rites, comes from the apostolic precept of St. Paul (cf. *1 Cor* 14:40) which states that everything in the liturgical assembly might be done properly and in hierarchical order.¹⁸⁷ According to the profound spirit of the liturgy, this begins in the priest's "putting on a particular vestment to accomplish a sacred act, signifying his leaving the usual dimensions of daily life to enter the presence of God in the celebration of the divine Mysteries..."¹⁸⁸ The norms on sacred vessels also respond to this need. Everything contributes to the sense of mystery. St. Francis set down for his friars that the chalices, vessels and linens for the Eucharist have a particular dignity and be treated with the highest respect and veneration.¹⁸⁹

The Dignity of Chant and Sacred Music

51. Chant and music ought to be worthy of the mystery which is celebrated, as seen in the psalms, hymns and spiri-

¹⁸⁴ Ibidem, 288.

⁵ Ibidem, *Procemium*, 3.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 49: AAS 95 (2003), 465-466.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 34.

¹⁸⁸ Ibidem, 66.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *Fonti Francescane*, I, *Testamento*, 13: 114; *Lettere* 208, 224.

tual canticles of Sacred Scripture (cf. *Col* 3:16). Therefore, from the first centuries, the Church has considered sacred music as an integrating part of the Liturgy. While embracing various musical forms, the Church's Magisterium has constantly emphasised that "various forms of music be consistent with the spirit of the Sacred-Liturgy,"¹⁹⁰ so as to avoid the risk that divine worship might be adversely affected by unsuitable profane elements.

The Encounter with Mystery through Art

52. God's encounter with humanity in search of salvation took place in the incarnation of the Word, which rendered God visible (cf. *Jn* 14:9). In its turn, because of Christ's Paschal mystery, humanity is co-involved in a process of ascending to God, necessarily passing through the cross, and consequently, through human reality (cf. *Col* 1:15-20). The celebration of these mysteries finds a vivid analogy in "the most noble expression of human genius," among which are rightly numbered the liberal arts, particularly religious art, which, like the liturgy, leads the spirit to contemplation through the experience of the senses, and therefore, is specially equipped in "fully turning people's minds to God."¹⁹¹

These expressions of faith, therefore, in a rich, artistic patrimony cannot be overlooked in the life of the Church. For this reason, "architecture, sculpture, painting and music,

¹⁹⁰ IOANNIS PAULI II, *Discorso ai partecipanti al Convegno Internazionale di Musica Sacra* (25-27.1.2001): AAS 93 (2001), 351; cf. Lett. Ap. *Spiritus et Sponsa* (4.XII.2003), 4; *L'Osservatore Romano* (7.XII.2003), 7.

¹⁹¹ CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Const. de sacra Liturgia *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 122.

moved by the Christian mystery, have found in the Eucharist, both directly and indirectly, a source of great inspiration"¹⁹² In this way, splendid architectural works have been constructed as sacred space for the celebration of the Eucharist; magnificent works of art have been done out of reverence for the altar in the West and the iconostasis in the East; and precious, sacred vessels have been created to enhance the dignity of the liturgical service.

The Orientation of Prayer

53. The cosmic conception of salvation which "is visited from on high" (*Lk* 1:78), inspired the apostolic tradition of orientating Christian buildings and the altar towards the East, so as to celebrate the Eucharist facing the Lord, a custom still followed in the Eastern Churches. "It is not a question, as is often claimed, of presiding at the celebration with the back turned to the people, but rather of guiding the people in pilgrimage towards the Kingdom, invoked in prayer until the return of the Lord."¹⁹³

In the Roman rite, the separate locations of the ambo and altar provide a natural variation in focus and attention for the liturgical actions done in these places. The same is true in Eucharistic worship outside of Mass; the faithful, upon entering the Church, turn their eyes towards the monstrance, where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

¹⁹² IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 49: AAS 95 (2003), 465-466.

¹⁹³ *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 107.

The Sacred Area for the Clergy or Sanctuary

54. New Testament tradition, a prolongation of the Jewish liturgy in the Temple, separated the area of the faithful, catechumens and penitents from the sanctuary, the holy place of God (cf. *Gen* 28:17; 3:5), where the ministers fulfilled their service to the divine mysteries. It is a sacred space for divine worship, which "ought to be distinguishable"¹⁹⁴ in the Eastern Churches as well as the Latin Church.

The Altar, the Table of the Lord

55. The biblical and patristic image of heaven descending to earth is manifested in the Eucharist celebrated on the altar.

The altar, though not necessarily large, is to be proportionate to the sanctuary. The priest approaches the altar for the offertory rites; in concelebrated Masses the priests gather around the altar for the anaphora.¹⁹⁵ To express reverence for the altar as a symbol of Jesus Christ, the living stone (*1 Pt* 2: 4), a fixed altar is specially recommended in every Church.¹⁹⁶ For the same reason, the altar is also ornate and covered with at least one cloth of noble quality.¹⁹⁷

56. The altar is the symbol of Christ, Calvary and the Tomb from which the Lord rose in glory.¹⁹⁸ It is the table¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 295.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, 215.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, 297.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, 304.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 103.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 296.

on which the Lamb of God is prepared. Communion is distributed to the faithful outside the sanctuary. Consequently, the altar is venerated and incensed together with the book of the Gospels placed upon it.²⁰⁰ The Catechism states: "The altar, around which the Church is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist, represents the two aspects of the same mystery: the altar of the sacrifice and the table of the Lord. This is all the more so, since the Christian altar is the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven, who is giving himself to us. 'For what is the altar of Christ if not the image of the Body of Christ?' asks St. Ambrose. He says elsewhere 'The altar represents the Body (of Christ) and the Body of Christ is on the altar.'"²⁰¹

The Tabernacle, the Tent of Presence

57. Adoration is not to be seen in opposition to communion, nor is it to be placed on the same level. Communion reaches to the depths of a person when it is sustained by adoration. There is no conflict of signs between the tabernacle and the altar of Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharistic presence is not bound by time nor limited to the Mass. It is a mystery which is to endure throughout history until the Second Coming of the Lord in glory.

The Eastern Churches, which do not have the practice of Eucharistic adoration, often conserve the *artofdrío* on the altar, that is, they reserve the Holy Gifts for the infirm and

²⁰⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, 273.

²⁰¹ *Catechismus Catholicæ Ecclesiæ*, 1383.

those who are absent. The book of the Gospels is also placed on the altar.

58. The necessary correspondence between the altar, tabernacle and chair is due to the preeminence of the Lord in relation to his minister. The centrality of the tabernacle and the cross ought not to be compromised by the chair of the celebrant, which liturgical norms dictate should "avoid every form of throne."²⁰² If the tabernacle is on the central altar, it is better that the chair not be located in front of it, since the celebrant is to have and display humility. If the altar is in the centre of the sanctuary and the chair is placed behind it, a meaningful and functional solution is needed to foster "communication between the priest and the assembly."²⁰³

In conclusion, it is well to recall that, in both the West and East, "the arrangements of the places, images, liturgical vestments and sacred vessels are not left to each one's taste, but ought to correspond to the intrinsic needs of the celebration and are to be coherent with them."²⁰⁴

CHAPTER VI

THE EUCHARIST: A GIFT TO BE ADORED

The Spirit of the Liturgy is Adoration

59. St. Cyril of Jerusalem states: "After you have received the Body of Christ, go also to the chalice of his Blood, not

²⁰² *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 310.

²⁰³ *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁴ *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 108.

extending your hands, but bowing and saying 'Amen' with an attitude of adoration and reverence."²⁰⁵ It is possible to say that sacramental communion leads to adoration, which is expressed in a profound bow of the body and spirit. The principal signs of adoration, prevalent among Catholics and practised in common with Orthodox Christians, are bowing (*proskynesis*) and genuflecting (*gonyklis(a)*). Just as standing is associated with the resurrection, prostration signifies adoration of the Living One, risen from the dead. In the New Testament, in the liturgy recorded in the Book of Revelation, the word *proskynesis* is repeatedly used. This heavenly liturgy is presented to the Church as the model and standard for the earthly liturgy. The acts of adoration, called for in this liturgy, acknowledge the Lord's majesty and humanity's belonging to God.

Kneeling and standing are two parts of a single act of adoration done during the Eucharistic Prayer and communion. True adoration is conscious of the mystery present and knows that the Mass is more than a simple meal of fellowship. The spirit of the Christian liturgy needs better to take into account: communion with Christ, adoration of God and the offering of everything to him-history, the cosmos and ourselves.

Communion and Adoration are Inseparable

60. Receiving communion means to enter into communion with the Lord and the saints of the Church, both in heaven and on earth. Thus, communion and contemplation follow each other. We cannot receive sacramental communion, with-

²⁰⁵ *Catechesis mystagogica*, 5, 22: *SCh* 126bis, 172.

out making it personal: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (*Rev.* 3:20). This is also the profound truth of Eucharistic piety.

For the Catholic Church, this attitude of adoration is reserved for not only the celebration of the Eucharist but also its worship outside of Mass; it is the Sacrament of "infinite value," intended for the "sacramental and spiritual communion" of the faithful.²⁰⁶ In the Byzantine liturgy, the hymn accompanying the communion rite is "We have seen the light," because to contemplate the Eucharist is not presumptuous, but to receive it without discernment is (cf. *1 Cor* 11: 28). In the Latin Church, the entire content of the faith passed down for two millennia needs to be guarded and strengthened.²⁰⁷

Adoration of the Eucharist begins in communion and leads to acts of Eucharistic piety, adoring God the Father, in Spirit and in Truth, in the risen and living Christ, truly present among us.

²⁰⁶ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 25: AAS 95 (2003), 449-450.

²⁰⁷ For the renewal of Eucharistic worship after the Second Vatican Council, see: *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, the Instruction of the Congregation of Divine Worship and *Consilium*, approved and confirmed by Paul VI (25 May 1967); *EV*, Vol. II., 1084-1153; *Eucharistia Sacramentum*, in which the Congregation for Divine Worship has done a revision of the *Ritus de Sacra Communionem et de cultu mysterii eucharistici extra Missam* (21 June 1973); *ibidem*, Vol. IV, 1624-1659; *Inestimabile Donum* of the Congregation for Divine Worship on Certain Norms for Eucharistic Worship (3 April 1980): Cf. *ibidem*, Vol. VII, 282-303.

The Sense of Mystery and Attitudes Which Express It

61. The sacred is a sign of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil the Great states: "Everything with a sacred character derives it from him."²⁰⁸ In the process of the world's loss of a sense of the sacred, many think that the line between the sacred and profane no longer exists. However, God does not retreat from the world to leave it to its worldly designs. Though God is not yet "everything to everyone" (*1 Cor 15:28*), the distinction between the sacred and profane will remain until the world is transformed. The sacred aspect of the Eucharist can be seen in the preparatory prayer of the priest for Mass and communion, in his prayers of thanksgiving after Mass and communion, in silence,²⁰⁹ in acts of purification,²¹⁰ in incensations,²¹¹ in genuflections and in bows.²¹² These actions lead to a more intimate participation.²¹³ Though the Sacrament involves a human dimension, we participate in an action which is not our own; Jesus is the Word and then he becomes Flesh. The liturgical action is truly an action of God himself. This consciousness gives the Christian liturgy its newness and special character; God himself acts and fulfills the essential part. Without the awareness of being made participants, the understanding called for in the celebration of the liturgy remains only exterior.

²⁰⁸ *De Spiritu Sancto*, 9, 22: *SCh* 17bis, 324.

²⁰⁹ Cf. *Institutionem Generalem Missalis Romani* (20.IV.2000), 45.

²¹⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, 76; 278-280.

²¹¹ Cf. *ibidem*, 276-277.

²¹² Cf. *ibidem*, 274-275.

²¹³ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, *Litt. encycl. Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV.2003), 10: *AAS* 95 (2003), 439.

The Eucharist: *Sacramentum Pietatis*

62. In the liturgy we *celebrate* the risen Christ. For the Christian, this is the meaning of celebration, particularly *Sunday* celebration. The Church's expressions of piety, especially those of Eucharistic worship outside of Mass, have a fundamental link to the Eucharistic liturgy and require attentive discernment.

In the liturgy, the inculturation of the faith takes place in a special way. It can be said that inculturation first took place in the incarnation, when the Word assumed a human nature and used human words to express himself in a specific time, place and culture. The Second Vatican Council has recalled that the incarnation is the basis for bringing the Gospel, the liturgy and Christian doctrine to local cultures in order to benefit its recipients, especially the poor and simple-hearted.

63. *Popular piety* brings together great geographic areas into the unity of faith and spans various cultures. Though distinct from the liturgy, it can be considered as an expression naturally flowing from the liturgy. The liturgy provides the context for traditional and new forms of Eucharistic adoration, such as Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Eucharistic Processions, Holy Hours, Forty Hours Devotion, Perpetual Adoration and Eucharistic Congresses.²¹⁴

Liturgy as well as popular piety are an expression of the faith and the life of the Christian people. In the process of inculturating Christianity in non-Christian cultures, care and

²¹⁴ Cf. CONGREGATIONS DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM, *Direttorio su pietà popolare e liturgia*, ed. Vaticana 2002, n. 160-165.

concern needs to be given to the culture and popular religious traditions which have flowered within Christianity. The same Holy Spirit sustains in the faith not only the liturgy but also popular piety.

64. Elements of EucMristic spirituality are seen in the worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass, which is "directed towards communion, both sacramental and spiritual.... The Eucharist is a priceless treasure: by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass, we are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of grace."²¹⁵ Contemplation and adoration intensify a person's desire for total union with the Lord and Creator. At the same time, they make us conscious of our unworthiness. The Holy Father also mentions the practice of "spiritual communion," recommended by the masters of the spiritual life for those unable to receive communion sacramentally.²¹⁶

Outside the Mass, the Lord Jesus is also living, spiritual food. He is the unfathomable mystery of God-among-us, accompanying us on our way.

CHAPTER VII

THE EUCHARIST: A GIFT FOR MISSION

The Sanctification and Divinization of Humanity

65. The Eucharist's meaning *for the person* is put in relief, so to speak, by St. Cyril of Jerusalem who remarks that

²¹⁵ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 25: AAS 95 (2003), 449-450.

²¹⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, 34: AAS 95 (2003), 456.

through the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ a person becomes "one body (*syssomos*) and one blood (*synaimos*) with him."²¹⁷ St. John Chrysostom imagines Christ speaking to him in the following manner: "I have again descended to earth, not simply to be present among you but to embrace you. I leave myself as food for you and I allow myself to be assimilated until our oneness and togetherness are truly perfect. Persons united together maintain their individuality, but I become totally one with you. In the end, I do not want anything to come between us; this only I desire: to be one with you."²¹⁸ On this basis, the body of the believer becomes the temple of the Trinitarian God: "he has Christ living in him, together with his Father and the Paraclete."²¹⁹ During communion, the Divine Byzantine Liturgy sings the hymn: "We have seen the true light, we have received the heavenly Spirit, we have found the true faith, and we adore the undivided Trinity as it has saved us."

Communion, then, has an ontological effect; it is union with the life of Christ who transforms the life of each person. This establishes a vital identification which perfects and fulfills the filial adoption of Baptism.

66. Another aspect of the Eucharist's sacramental grace is its being the *antidote* which liberates²²⁰ and preserves from sin.²²¹ The Eucharist strengthens the Christian's super-

²¹⁷ *Catechesis mystagogica*, 4, 1: *SCh* 126bis, 134.

²¹⁸ *In epistulam ad Timotheum*, 15,4: *PG* 62, 586.

²¹⁹ *Exhortatio ad Theodorum lapsam*, 1: *PG* 47, 278.

²²⁰ Cf. *Summam Theologicam*, III, 79, 1.

²²¹ Cf. CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN. Deer, de Eucharistia, sess. XIII, can. 2, *De ratione institutionis ss. huius sacramenti*: *DS* 1638.

natural life and is a defense against the loss of the theological virtues. It is a sacrament of the living, that is, for those who enjoy union with Christ and his Church. Mortal sin causes separation from God and the Church, thus barring access to the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the antidote, the salutary medicine for healing the wounds of sin, because God's mercy is symbolized and realized in this sacrament: "The Lord, lover of humanity, immediately saw what happened and the gravity of the wound. He hurried towards curing the injury so that it would not grow larger and become incurable... Moved by his goodness, he did not stop for a moment in providing for humanity."²²²

The Eucharist, therefore, is a gift which involves each one in a personal way; the sacrament's personal character finds confirmation in the apostolate.

The Eucharist: *Vinculum Charitatis*

67. The primary effect of the Eucharist is the truth of the Body and Blood present in the Sacrament. Pope Innocent III expresses it in the following manner in a letter, "the form is bread and wine, the truth is the Body and Blood and the power is unity and charity."²²³ St. Thomas Aquinas confirms such a truth saying that the Sacrament's immediate effect is the *real Body* of Christ,²²⁴ immolated and living, present in the Sacrament. This presence in the substances is real for those who participate in a particular time and place. At work

²²² SYMEON NOVUS THEOLOGUS, *In Genesin*, 17, 2: PG 53, 136.

²²³ INNOCENTII III, Ep. "*Cum Marthce circa*" ad Ioannem quondam archiep. Lugdun. (29.XI.1202): DS 783.

²²⁴ Cf. *Summam Theologicam*, III, 73, 6.

in them is the transformation which is the pledge of the heavenly banquet. The Second Vatican Council recalls that "in any community existing around the altar, under the sacred ministry of the bishop, there is manifested a symbol of charity and 'unity of the Mystical Body, without which there can be no salvation' (*Summa Theologica*, 3, 73, 3.)"²²⁵

Union *with* Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body, the Church, is the principal fruit of the Eucharist and its meaning.

Belonging to Christ and incorporation into the Church is the immediate, particular effect of Baptism (cf. *Rm* 6:1-11); it is perfected in the Eucharist. Indeed, precisely by becoming a member of the Body of Christ in Baptism can the believer participate in the Eucharist. The Eucharist, then, presupposes ecclesial communion received in Baptism.²²⁶ In the Eucharist the baptismal priesthood is exercised and the vital relationship with Christ grows (cf. *Jn* 6: 55-57). Undeniably connected to these is the unity of the faithful who bear witness to mutual charity as members of the same body, a much-needed unity so that the world might believe (cf. *Jn* 10:9-17; 15: 1-11; 17: 20-23). In the Eucharist, Christ presses us towards charity, inside and outside the Church.

The Medicine of Body and Spirit

68. The Eucharist, especially in time of sickness or at the moment of death, is called *viaticum* for eternal life. With it comes the pledge of future glory, of seeing God as he is.

²²⁵ CONC. CECUM. VAT; II, Const, dogm. de Ecclesia *Lumen gentium*, 26.

²²⁶ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 35: AAS 95 (2003), 457.

The Council of Trent followed the patristic tradition of calling the Eucharist the "*medicine of immortality*" for humanity and made the invitation to eat it until the Lord returns in glory, when, according to his promise (cf. *Jn* 6:54), the ultimate effect of the Eucharist will be fulfilled: the resurrection of the body.²²⁷

The Eucharist is the banquet to conquer death²²⁸ and with it "we digest, as it were, the 'secret' of the resurrection"²²⁹ so as to live forever. *Eternal life* is not quantitative, nor simply time without end, but a different level of existence. St. John makes the distinction between *bios*, "transitory life in this world", and *zoe*, "true life" which enters into us in the encounter with the Lord. This is the meaning of his promise: "he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life...(and) has passed from death to life" (*Jn* 5:24), "I *am* the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (*Jn* 11:25). Because of this *eschatological* meaning of the Eucharist, we await the final resurrection, when God will be "everything to everyone" (*1 Cor* 15:28).

69. Christianity does not only promise immortality to the soul but resurrection to the body, namely, the whole human person. The Eucharist's transforming grace affects every

²²⁷ Cf. CONC. CECUM. TRIDENTIN., Deer, de Eucharistia, sess. XIII, cap. 2, *De ratione institutionis ss. huius sacramenti*: DS 1638; cap. 8, *De usu admirabilis huius sacramenti*: DS 1649.

²²⁸ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 17: AAS 95 (2003), 444-445.

²²⁹ Ibidem, 18: AAS 95 (2003), 445.

anthropological element, extending its influence to the existential aspects of each person, like freedom and the meaning of life, suffering and death. If these fundamental questions of life do not receive a response, how difficult would it be to have faith in this Sacrament as the instrument of salvation and the means of personal transformation in Christ.

The Social Meaning of the Eucharist

70. Feeding on the Eucharist, Christians nourish their soul and become the soul which sustains the world,²³⁰ thus giving a Christian meaning to life,²³¹ which is the meaning of the Sacrament. The Sacrament brings the gift of charity and solidarity, because the Sacrament of the Altar is inseparable from the new commandment of mutual love.

The Eucharist is the power that transforms us²³² and strengthens us in virtue. "It spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us"²³³ in the family, at work and in society. From this social character of the Eucharist, each person's mission in the Church receives its power and trust.

71. From the beginning of the second century, St. Ignatius of Antioch defined Christians as those who "live according

²³⁰ Cf. *AdDiognetum*, V, 5.9.11; VI, 1-2.7: *Patres Apostolici*, EX. Funked., Tubingen 1992, p. 312-314.

²³¹ Cf. *Orationem post Communionem I Dominica? Adventus*, *Missale Romanum*, Typis Vaticanis 2002, 121.

²³² Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 62: AAS 95 (2003), 474-475.

²³³ *ibidem*, 20: AAS 95 (2003), 446-447.

to Sunday,"²³⁴ with faith in the Lord's resurrection and his presence in the Eucharistic celebration.²³⁵ St. Justin emphasized a practical urgency at the conclusion of the Sunday Eucharist: "And they who are well-to-do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is placed with the presider, who assists orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, as well as those who are in prison and the strangers sojourning among us, and, in a word, takes care of all who are in need."²³⁶

The Eucharist is the basis for the *missio ad gentes* and the means to bring it to perfection.²³⁷ From the Eucharist comes the duty of every Christian to cooperate in making the ecclesial body grow.²³⁸ Indeed, missionary activity "by the preaching of the word and by the celebration of the sacraments, whose centre and summit is the Most Holy Eucharist, brings about the presence of Christ, the author of salvation."²³⁹ The missionary mandate quite often entails martyrdom which to our very day is suffered by pastors and the faithful precisely during the celebration of the Eucharist. It allows the salvation given in the Sacrament of Bread and Wine to reach multitudes of people.

²³⁴ *AdMagnesios*, 9, \: *PatresApostolici*, F.X. Funked.,Tubingen 1992,196.

²³⁵ Cf. IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 41: AAS 95 (2003), 460-461.

²³⁶ / *Apologia*, 67, 6: *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum Secundi Saecluli*, vol. I, pars 1, Wiesbaden 1969, 186-188.

²³⁷ Cf. CONC. CECUM. VAT. II, Deer, de activitate missionali ecclesiae *Ad gentes*, 39.

²³⁸ Cf. ibidem, 36.

²³⁹ Ibidem, 9.

Consequently, Holy Communion brings its fruits: growth in union with Christ, separation from sin, a strengthening of ecclesial communion, a commitment towards the poor, the increase of grace and the pledge of eternal life.²⁴⁰

CONCLUSION

72. The Lord Jesus instituted the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Communion and Revelation of the Father. Our Lady was the first to follow this method: "In a certain sense, Mary lived her *Eucharistic faith* even before the institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that *she offered her virginal womb for the incarnation of God's Word...* As a result, there is *a profound analogy* between the *Fiat* which Mary said in reply to the angel, and the Amen which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord. Mary was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived 'through the Holy Spirit' was the 'Son of God' (*Lk* 1:30-35). In continuity with the Virgin's faith, in the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in his full humanity and divinity under the signs of bread and wine."²⁴¹

On the first Easter, the Lord Jesus, together with his disciples, accomplished the new, definitive exodus out of the condition of slavery to sin. There is no longer the blood of a lamb; now, bread and wine distributed to all become the Body

²⁴⁰ Cf. *Catechismum Catholicæ Ecclesiæ*, 1391-1405.

²⁴¹ **IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt.** encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 55: AAS 95 (2003), 470.

and Blood of the true Lamb of God. Thus, the new covenant is realized.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church takes up the words of St. Irenaeus: "our way of thinking conforms to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking."²⁴²

73. Faith finds its strength and dynamism in the Sacrament of the Real Presence, because truly the *lex orandi* remains linked to the *lex credendi* which, in turn, is translated into the *lex agendi* of the Church's life and mission. The Eucharist, then, has also a personal dynamism: it is the gift to celebrate, bringing a deeper knowledge of the mystery of salvation, accomplishing communion, leading to adoration, and finally affecting the Church's life through mission and pastoral ministry, all the while fostering charity inside and outside the Church.

By its nature, the Eucharist is inseparably bound to the Church's marks of unity, holiness, apostolicity and catholicity,²⁴³ professed in the Creed. Thus, the life and mission of Christian communities in the world conserve their proper ecclesial character, when they guard it and foster the entire richness of those gifts. The topic of the Synod indicates that the Church lives through the Eucharist, in that she receives from the Eucharist as from a font the divine life which comes from above, and in her mission tends towards it as the summit of her mystery of communion: "The Eucharist thus appears

Catechismus Catholicce Ecclesie, 1327.

Cf. *ibidem*, partem II, sess. I, cap. II.

as both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit."²⁴⁴

QUESTIONS

1. *The Eucharist in the Life of the Church:* What importance does the celebration of the Eucharist have in the life of your community and that of the individual believer? What is the frequency of participation at Mass on Sundays? On weekdays? On the major feast days of the liturgical year? Could you supply statistics - even approximate - in this regard?

2. *Eucharistic Doctrine and Formation:* What attempts are being made to transmit the teaching on the Eucharist, whole and entire, to your community and the individual believer? Specifically, how are *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1322-1419, and the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* being utilized by priests, deacons, consecrated persons and the laity involved in pastoral work? In what way is the formation of faith in the Eucharist being ensured in initial catechesis? In homilies? In the programs of ongoing formation for priests, permanent deacons, and seminarians? Of consecrated persons? Of the laity?

3. *The Understanding of the Eucharistic Mystery:* What is the prevailing idea on the Eucharist among priests and the faithful of your community: sacrifice?, memorial of the Paschal

²⁴⁴ IOANNIS PAULI II, Litt. encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17.IV. 2003), 22: AAS 95 (2003), 448.

Mystery?, the precept of Sunday Mass?, fraternal meal?, act of adoration? Other....? Practically speaking, is any one of these ideas prevalent? If so, what is the reason.

4. *The Shadows in the Celebration of the Eucharist:*

In the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* (n. 10) the Holy Father mentions "shadows" in the celebration of the Eucharist. What are the negative aspects (abuses, misunderstandings) existing in Eucharistic worship? What elements or actions done in practice can obscure the profound sense of the Eucharistic mystery? What is the cause of such a disorienting situation for the faithful?

5. *The Eucharistic Celebration and Liturgical Norms:*

In an attempt to be personal and avant-garde, do priests manifest any attitudes in their celebration of Mass which are explicitly or implicitly contrary to the liturgical norms established by the Catholic Church (cf. *The General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, Chapter IV; *Instruction for Applying the Liturgical Prescriptions of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*) ? In your estimation, what are the underlying reasons for such behaviour? What elements or actions during the celebration of Holy Mass, and also in Eucharistic worship outside of Mass, according to their respective norms and dispositions, should receive attention so as to highlight the profound sense of this great Mystery of the faith hidden in the gift of the Eucharist?

6. *The Sacrament of the Eucharist and The Sacrament of Penance:* Conversion is necessary to participate fully in partaking of the Eucharist. What is the faithful's understanding of the relationship between the Sacrament of Penance and the Sacrament of the Eucharist? Holy Mass is also the celebration

of salvation from sin and death. For the return of sinners, above all on Sundays, what is provided so that the faithful can celebrate the Sacrament of Penance in time to participate in the Eucharist? Do Christian communities often display a casual approach to receiving Holy Communion or do they unjustifiably refrain from receiving it? What is being done to assist the faithful to discern if they have the proper dispositions to approach this great Sacrament?

7. *The Sacred Character of the Eucharist:* The Eucharist is the mystery of the Real Presence of God-among-us; at the same time, it is an unfathomable mystery. How should its sacred character be acknowledged? How do priests and the faithful manifest this sacred character in their celebration of Holy Mass on Sundays, weekdays, and major feast days and at other liturgical times during the year? What cultural attitudes and practices obscure this sacred character?

8. *Holy Mass and the Celebration of the Word:* In parishes awaiting a priest, how widespread is the practice of celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with the distribution of the Eucharist, over which a lay person or Eucharistic minister often presides? What specific formation do those responsible receive? Are the faithful able to understand the difference between such celebrations and Holy Mass? Do they have an adequate knowledge of the distinction between an ordained and non-ordained minister?

9. *The Eucharist and the Other Sacraments:* To what measure and with what criteria are the other sacraments celebrated during Holy Mass? When the sacraments and sacramentals are celebrated during Holy Mass (Matrimony, Funerals, Baptisms, etc.) with non-practising Catholics, non-Catholics

and unbelievers present, what steps are taken to avoid a casual attitude or even carelessness towards the Eucharist?

10. *The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist:* Have the faithful in your parishes preserved faith in the Lord's Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist? Do they have a clear understanding of the gift of the Lord's Real Presence? Do situations exist in Eucharistic Liturgies or the Worship of the Eucharist which might lead to a diminished regard for the Real Presence. If so, what might be the reasons?

11. *Eucharistic Devotion:* Does the Worship of the Most Blessed Sacrament have a due place in parish life and communities? What importance do pastors give to adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament? To Perpetual Adoration? To Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament? To personal prayer before the tabernacle? To processions on the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ? To Eucharistic devotion in parish missions?

12. *Holy Mass and the Liturgical-Devotional Life:* Do the faithful understand the difference between Holy Mass and other devotional practices like the Liturgy of the Hours, the celebration of the sacraments and sacramentals outside of Mass, the Liturgy of the Word, processions, etc.? How is the substantial difference shown between Eucharistic celebration and other liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations?

13. *Dignity at Eucharistic Celebrations:* Is attention given in your Churches to the liturgical environment for Eucharistic celebrations? What is the artistic-architectural setting in which the Eucharistic liturgy is celebrated both on solemn occasions and on weekdays? Do the surroundings

give a clear indication that the Eucharistic banquet is truly a "sacred" banquet (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 48)? How frequently and for what pastoral reasons is Mass celebrated outside of this place of worship?

14. *The Eucharist and Inculturation*: To what measure must attention be given to inculturation in the celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist so as to avoid a misunderstood creativity which leads to peculiar and strange practices. What criteria are followed in inculturation? In the Latin Church, are the norms proposed in the Instruction *De Liturgia Romana et Inculturazione* given adequate consideration? What is the experience of the Eastern Churches in the inculturation of the Eucharist?

15. *The Eschatological Aspect of the Eucharist*: Is the eschatological aspect of the Eucharist given sufficient emphasis in catechesis, in ongoing formation, in homiletics and in liturgical celebration? In what way is the eschatological tension flowing from the Eucharist present in pastoral life? How does the celebration of Mass manifest "the Communion of Saints," a foretaste of the eschatological reality?

16. *The Eucharist, Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue and the Sects*: Considering the ideas on the Eucharist held by our separated brothers and sisters in the West and the challenges of other religions and the sects, how is the mystery of the Most Blessed Sacrament preserved and presented in its entirety, so as not to cause confusion or misunderstanding among the faithful, particularly at ecumenical and interreligious meetings?

17. *The Eucharist and Ecclesial "Intercommunion"*: "The celebration of the Eucharist cannot be the starting-point

for communion" (*Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 35). How are the norms of intercommunion applied (cf. *The Code of Canon Law*, canon 844)? Are the faithful aware of the norm that a Catholic cannot receive the Eucharist in communities which do not have the Sacrament of Orders (cf. *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, 46)?

18. ***The Eucharist and the Moral Life:*** The Eucharist provides growth in the moral life of the Christian. What do the faithful believe about the necessity of sacramental grace for living according to the Spirit and becoming saints? What do the faithful think about the relation between the reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and other aspects of the Christian life: personal sanctification, moral obligations, fraternal charity, the construction of an earthly society, etc.?

19. ***The Eucharist and Mission:*** The Eucharist is also a gift for mission. Are the faithful aware that the Sacrament of the Eucharist leads to the mission they have to fulfill in the world, according to their state in life?

20. ***More on the Eucharist:*** What other aspects of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, not contained in the preceding questions, should be considered in preparing the *Instrumentum laboris* which will be discussed during the synodal assembly?

Basic Text of the 48th International Eucharistic Congress

**PONTIFICAL COMMITTEE FOR
INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESSES**

PRESENTATION

1. Jesus is the creative Word and giver of life who exists from the beginning; (cf. Jn 1:1.3-4). This Life was the light of all people: *"the true light that enlightens every person coming into this world"* (Jn 1:9; cf. Jn 1:4 -Scripture texts from Revised Standard Version, Catholic edition). And the Word was made flesh, precisely in order that we could contemplate and touch him (cf. Jn 1:14), and that we would receive the fullness of life, which he has in abundance (cf. Jn 1, 4.16). Jesus communicates to us life through his flesh and blood, as he emphatically taught in his discourse at Capernaum (cf. Jn 6:51-58).

2. At the dawn of a new millennium, just after it has celebrated with joy and gratitude the Great Jubilee of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Lord, "the same yesterday, today and forever" (cf. Heb 13:8), the Church, which he

founded, continues to experience his renewed presence in diverse ways: through his Word, a light illumining its path, in the liturgy and in one's brothers and sisters, especially among those who are poor, since they show the human face of the suffering Christ (cf. EA 12); however, above all, in the Eucharist, which is a sacrifice, memorial, banquet and presence (cf. SC 7). Truly here in the Eucharist Christ, who is here present bodily,¹ offers as food for the new life the same body that he assumed from the Virgin Mary 2000 years ago (cf. TMA 55), namely, his flesh that gives life to all people since it is enlivened and made life-giving by the Spirit (cf. PO 5).

3. Entrusting ourselves to this presence that the same Risen Lord promised: *"I am with you always, to the close of the age"* (Mt 28:20), we have been motivated and impelled to go forward on our journey by the call of Peter's successor, a call that echoes the words the apostle heard from his Master: *"Put out into the deep!"* (Lk 5:4; cf. NMI 1). The Church launches out into the sea of a new millennium and knows that it will be able to reach a sure haven because it does not venture forth alone nor trust in its own strength, but rather, because its Lord is ever-present, bestowing on it his Spirit and nourishing it with his sacraments, particularly with the Eucharist.

4. This pilgrim Church, looking gratefully towards the eucharistic Jesus Christ, will gather in contemplation at the 48th International Eucharistic Congress at the city of Guadalajara, in Mexico, a land of recently canonized martyrs, who discovered in the Eucharist the power and courage to give up

Cf. *MystFid*: AAA 57 (1965) 766.

their lives for their people and their faith as they shouted: "Long live Christ the King, and our Lady of Guadalupe!" [*"Viva Cristo Rey, y Santa Maria de Guadalupe!"*]. Gathered in prayer, contemplation and celebration at the *Statio orbis* of this Congress, the Church plunges into the new millennium with renewed hope, adoring the eucharistic Jesus, who is the light and life of humanity's pilgrimage in pursuit of better living conditions, while yearning for its ultimate fatherland.

5. The next International Eucharistic Congress should be for the Church a wonderful opportunity to glorify Jesus Christ, present in it, worshipping him publicly in the bonds of charity and unity. This will be a magnificent event at which the Church will manifest its faith in the eucharistic presence. It will enable a deepening of some aspects of this mystery. It will highlight the central place of the Eucharist in the Church's life and mission in the world today, as new commitments regarding evangelization are undertaken. To achieve these objectives a painstaking preparation is required.

6. Thus, the purpose of the present text consists in providing local churches with some points for reflection, which could serve as a basis for further development and deepening in study circles and prayer groups, both while preparing for and during the celebration of the Congress. The text begins with an invitation to feel a yearning to contemplate Jesus Christ, true God and true man, and to allow oneself to come under his gaze and experience his presence: *We want to see your face, Lord* (chapter I). Through contemplation, which "in no way distances us from our contemporaries, but on the contrary, makes us attentive and open to the joys and endeavors

of other persons, widening the capacity of our hearts to embrace all aspects of the world"², we prepare a vision of faith concerning our present condition in the certitude that "*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*" (Jn 1:5), (chapter *IT*). Being "'the apex of all evangelization' and the most outstanding witness of the Resurrection of Christ."³, the *Eucharist* is the *light and life of the new millennium* for the Church that is on pilgrimage and is committed to the task of a new evangelization (chapter *III*). Finally, at the outset of this new millennium, we need a forthright and joyous proclamation of our faith in Jesus Christ, who enlightens this new phase of history: *Prayer before Jesus Christ in the Eucharist*.

tJuan Cardinal Sandoval Iniguez
Archbishop of Guadalajara

² John Paul II, *Letter on Eucharistic Adoration* sent to the Bishop of Liege on the occasion of the 750th Anniversary of the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, May 28, 1996, n. 5.

³ Ibid n.8 - citing LG 28.

I. WE WANT TO SEE YOUR FACE, LORD

The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic Mystery

Contemplatives of the face of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist

7. Just as those Greek pilgrims, who went to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover, told Philip that they wanted to see Jesus, so people of our time, even though perhaps not always explicitly, ask Christians today not only to tell them about Jesus, but to show him to them clearly. This is precisely the task of the Church! To reflect the light of Christ in every epoch of history and also to manifest his face resplendently before people of the new millennium: However we shall not be able to fulfill such a task if we are not the first contemplatives of Christ's face (cf. NMI 16). Hence, it is indispensable that we first have that living experience of him spoken of by the apostle John: *"what we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us"* (1 Jn 1:3).

8. How can we, today, see and contemplate this Life, the light of all people (cf. Jn 1:4) that has been manifested? Thanks to the Incarnation of God's Son (cf. NMI 22), Christ has made himself visible, has established his dwelling place among us (cf. Jn 1:14). Thanks to him, the apostles were able to behold in the human appearance of Jesus the face of the Father, above all in being witnesses of his many signs and promises (cf. Jn 20:30-31; cf. NMI 24). They also contemplated the face of the suffering Christ, exposed on the Cross, a Mystery in the mystery; before this mystery human beings must prostrate themselves in adoration (cf. NMI 25). And above all they contemplated the face of the Risen One (cf.

NMI 28), who restored to them all the peace and joy they had lost (cf. Lk 24:36-43). The Church experiences all this in contemplating the eucharistic mystery. Here is where we daily encounter this Jesus, true *God* and man; here his passion and his death itself is realized, though in an unbloody manner; finally, here we encounter the Risen Jesus, bread of eternal life, pledge of our resurrection.

9. Jesus is light and life (cf. Jn 8:12). Therefore adequate measures are to be sought for the proclamation of his word and the celebration of his Eucharist in ecclesial communities, from which he transcends all the circumstances of society as. the leaven of a new civilization.

We believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist

10. Can we really meet Jesus in the Eucharist? Since the Last Supper (cf. Mt 26:17ss; Lk 22:15), the Church believes in the real,presence of Christ's body and blood with his soul and divinity under the appearances of bread and wine: "At the heart of the celebration are the bread and wine that, by the words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become Christ's Body and Blood" (CCC 1333). Certainly Christ makes himself present in many ways in his Church, but above all, as the Church teaches, under the eucharistic species of the bread and wine (cf. CCC 1373).

11. Recalling a chain of witnesses from Tradition, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "the mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as 'the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend' (CCC 1374). The Church has always understood

the realism of Jesus' words at the time of the institution of the Eucharist, because of which the Council of Trent summarized the Catholic faith in the Real Presence by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again" (CCC 1376).

12. Jesus' discourse at Capernaum after the multiplication of the loaves (cf. Jn 6:1-71), brings out the realism of his words, which reveal to us that he is the bread come down from heaven (v. 51). Because of this, we must eat his body and drink his blood (v. 53) in order to be able to enjoy the life that is offered to us by the bread of life (v. 48). So struck by the realism of Jesus' words people began to argue: *"how can he give us his flesh to eat?"* (v. 52). And in the face of Christ's insistence on the literal truth of his statements: *"because my flesh is real food and my blood real drink"* (v. 55), many of his disciples were scandalized to such a degree that they left him (v. 66). At the end of the discourse he even asked his disciples if they too wanted to depart. Peter's words show Jesus that they were relieved in the truth of his words: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life"* (v. 68). Sadly, many have not and do not believe in the Real Presence of Jesus in the eucharistic bread (v. 64). At the beginning of the Third Millennium the Church has to ask: Why is it difficult to discover the face of Jesus in the Eucharist? What has to be done in order that more people may appreciate and enjoy this Christ who handed himself over to us? What must be done so that people may adore him in silence before the tabernacle or solemnly acclaim him at the feast of *Corpus Christi*?

***"The disciples rejoiced to see the Lord" (Jn 20:20):
the journey of the spirit***

13. The face that the apostles contemplated after the Resurrection was the same that Jesus had shown them during their three years in his company; and now he convinced them of the amazing truth of his new life in showing them his hands and his side. Indeed it was not easy to believe. The disciples of Emmaus believed only after undertaking the difficult journey of the spirit (cf. Lk 24:13-35). The apostle Thomas believed only after having been invited to touch the Risen Lord (cf. Jn 20:24-29). Indeed, even though one were to see and touch his body, only faith could break through to the mystery. This was the experience that the disciples should have already had during Christ's mortal life, when they daily had been struck by the wonderful things he did and by his words. No one really comes to Jesus except through faith, along the steps of a path that the Gospel presents to us in the well-known scene at Caesarea-Philippi: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven'"* (Mt 16: 16-17; cf. NMI 19).

14. St Peter could express his faith in the eucharistic Jesus because it did not spring from a human source, but received as a gift from God (cf. NMI 20). Thus, 'It is not by the senses that we perceive him or are close to him. Faith and love enable us to recognize the Lord under the appearances of bread and wine.'⁴ Today more than ever before it is

John Paul II, *Letter on Eucharistic Adoration*, n. 3.

important to point out that "only the experience of silence and prayer offers the proper setting for the growth and development of a true, faithful and consistent knowledge of that mystery" (NMI 20).

"Lord, I seek your face" (Ps 27:8):

the Eucharistic face of Jesus

15. The ancient longing of the Psalmist could receive no fulfillment greater and more surprising than the contemplation of the face of Christ. God has truly blessed us in him and has made 'his face shine upon us' (*Ps* 67:1). At the same time, God and man that he is, he reveals to us also the true face of man, 'fully revealing man to man himself. (NMI 23; cf. GS 22). This yearning of the psalmist is present in the heart of every human being, but especially in a person who by faith has already been touched by God. This yearning to contemplate the face of God is not in vain because Christ has not departed, but has fulfilled his promise: *"I am with you always, to the close of the age"* (Mt 28:20).

16. Aware of this presence of the Risen Lord in our midst, thanks to the Eucharist, "two thousand years after these events, the Church relives them as if they had happened today. Gazing on the face of Christ, the Bride contemplates her treasure and her joy. *"Dulcis Iesus memoria, dans vera cordis gaudia"*: how sweet is the memory of Jesus, the source of the heart's true joy! Heartened by this experience, the Church today sets out once more on her journey, in order to proclaim Christ to the world at the dawn of the Third Millennium: he 'is the same yesterday and today and for ever' (Heb 13:8)" (NMI 28).

17. Following the invitation of his Holiness John Paul II, to "open more widely than ever the living Door that is Christ" (NMI 59), we fittingly reflect on the manner of sharing the experience of eucharistic contemplation that illumines our communities and transforms them into communities filled with joy and hope.

II. *"THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS AND THE DARKNESS HAS NOT OVERCOME IT"* (Jn 1:5)

Lights and shadows in the world today

18. Jesus is the light and life. These words sum up everything worthwhile that he offers us and that embrace the mystery of the Eucharist. Bread and wine are the means necessary for natural life. Analogously, if we do not eat the eucharistic bread we cannot nourish the life received at Baptism. It is a life that goes on developing to fulfillment, because through the Eucharist we grow in the life of virtue and all the gifts of the Spirit are fostered so that they lead us to salvation, thus realizing the purpose for which the Eucharist was instituted. As distinct from natural life, the life of grace has no limits. On the horizon of this new millennium there appear questions and hopes, lights and shadows - there is the eternal struggle of the darkness seeking to extinguish the light. The Savior has already come and his presence in the Eucharist guarantees salvation for us and history.

Lights

19. His Holiness Pope John Paul II frequently asks us to turn our gaze to the lights that make this world loveable,

worthy of affection, despite its miserable condition, since the Son of God became flesh in a beautiful world, which his Father had created as good in every one of its tiniest details (cf. Gen 1:10.12.18.21.25). In the New Testament, Luke contrasts the children of light against those of this world; John tells us that God is the fullness of light; Christ as the revelation of the Father is the light that is revealed to all people; however, this world, which is darkness, does not receive the light. As children of the light we are called to give the world meaning, so that the rays of light are clearly evident. We point out some of these here:

20. It is a joy to notice the increase of Catholics in recent years, the growth of many ecclesial movements, a hopeful awakening of the spiritual life. The following of Jesus continues to answer the restlessness of so many men and women in the world. Likewise we perceive a growth in the number of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, which is a reason to hope for a better future.

21. Defense of the dignity and rights of human beings in the name of the Gospel is a central aspect in the mission and work of many Christians. Pope Paul VI stated: "The Church describes itself throughout the whole of the [Second Vatican] Council, in a sense, as the servant of humanity."⁵ A great light for this world comes from beholding how the Lord's Glory has been manifested "down the age, and especially during the century which we have just left behind, by granting his Church *a great host of saints and martyrs*. [...] an eloquent message that needs no words, holiness is a living

⁵ BIFFI F, // *magistero del Papi: Seminarium* 35 (1983) 347.

reflection of the face of Christ" (NMI 7). There are even other signs of hope: the fall of atheistic totalitarian regimes, new room for freedom and the development of democracy in many nations.

22. All people seek truth, they do not want to live in lies; hence the Pope rightly suggested to young people a magnificent task: to become "sentinels of the morning" (cf. NMI 9; Is 21:11-12). The Eucharist will always be for them the sun illuminating and warming their lives, in it they encounter he who is Life. In the Eucharist it is not just a person who is seeking God, but God who is seeking and waiting for us.

23. The Church has often spoken of the culture of life, presenting us with the incomparable value of the whole human person and how *"the Gospel of God's love for humanity, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel"* (EV 2). The Eucharist, Bread of eternal life, leads us to proclaim again that the value of human life is sacred from its conception unto its natural term of death. In every encounter with the Eucharist, Jesus reminds us: *"Respect, protect, love and serve life, every human lifer"* (EV 5).

24. The Christian community and secular society have proposed, and continue encouraging, many endeavors for the care of the weakest and defenseless. Children are valued as a gift of God. Centers are opened for the support of life. A great importance is given to scientific progress, technology and medicine, as contributing always to the service and dignity of the human person and the promotion of the common good of nations. A strong opposition is evident in regard to the death penalty and to war as a solution to conflicts (cf. EV 26-27).

25. Likewise, a respect for nature is given more serious consideration since as human beings we have received it as a gift and have the responsibility of being the stewards of creation. Indeed, the eucharistic bread and wine, fruit of the earth and the work of human hands, signify a yearning to bring to its fullness all creation, which groans in giving birth, awaiting redemption (cf. Rom 8:22).

26. Grateful for the lights that we have pointed out, we may ask: how can the positive aspects be further developed in the present world, as we ask for the grace of God and commit our efforts in a responsible manner?

Shadows

27. We are facing most grave problems: we live in an environment of ambivalent globalization, that at times is exclusive. Fierce economic systems are springing up that do not take into account human beings, powerful cultures that do not include the weak; so the gap between the rich and the poor, instead of being reduced, is broadening.

28. We regret the coming about of a darkening of moral awareness, loss of the capacity to love unto the end, terrorism, death and suffering occasioned by violence, an indifference towards truth, the break-up of families, an anguish in living a meaningless existence, abortion that results from insensitivity towards the most indefensible, precarious conditions of employment that slowly suffocate the lives of many individuals and families.

29. Darkness seems to overshadow the journey of Christians: "Among these social sins crying out to heaven must be mentioned: 'the drug trade, the recycling of illicit

funds, corruption at every level, the terror of violence, the arms race, racial discrimination, inequality between social groups and the irrational destruction of nature'. These sins are the sign of a deep crisis caused by the loss of a sense of God and the absence of those moral principles that should guide the life of every person. In the absence of moral points of reference, an unbridled greed for wealth and power takes over, obscuring any Gospel-based vision of social reality" (EA 56).

30. We draw attention to a sense of the absence of God, who becomes excluded for both private and social life. While, on the other hand there abounds a flourishing of a certain type of sectarian and fanatical religiosity, at times fundamentalist, or the spread of a vague spirituality without reference to God or requiring no commitment to moral values.

31. These and other lights and shadows, characteristic to our times, makes us ask ourselves: What must be done in order that the members of our communities in following out their Christian vocation as children of the light may offer the world evidence of the light: goodness, holiness and truth? (cf. Eph 5:8).

III. THE EUCHARIST LIGHT AND LIFE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

"The Eucharist, source and summit of the Christian life"
(LG 11)

1. THE EUCHARIST ACCOMPANIES OUR PILGRIMAGE

32. At the beginning of the Third Millennium the Church will be celebrating the 48th International Eucharistic Con-

gress, confident because of the Lord's presence always anew in its midst. The Church, a pilgrim people, encounters in the Eucharist the food of life that sustains it along its journeying, aware that its course leads to the fatherland (cf. Heb 11:13-16). The Church "celebrates the memorial of the Risen Lord, while it looks forward to that Sunday without end in which all humanity will enter into your rest" (Preface for Sunday, X).

Sacrifice of the New Covenant

33. The Eucharist is a sacrifice: the sacrifice of Redemption and at the same time the sacrifice of the New Covenant⁶. At the Last Supper Jesus instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood, through which he perpetuated for all time his sacrifice on the cross and gave his Church the memorial of his death and Resurrection (cf. SC 47).

34. Jesus in the Eucharist is the victim that the Father gives us to be immolated; a victim who hands himself over to purify and reconcile us with the Father. This surrender of himself in sacrifice is prefigured in the Old Testament in the sacrifice of Abraham (cf. Gen 22:1-14), which is sung in the poetic sequence of the Feast of *Corpus Christi*: "*In figuris praesignatur, cum Isaac immolatur*" (Sequence "*Lauda Sion*"). The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is clear in the very words of the Institution: "body that is given up" and "blood that is poured out" (cf. Lk 22, 19-20; CCC 1365). Christ's sacrifice and that of the Eucharist are one unique sacrifice: the victim is the same, the only difference being the manner of offering it (cf. Trento DH 1743; CCC 1367). Christ's sacri-

Cf. John Paul II, *Dominicae Cenae*, 9.

fice is also the sacrifice of the members of his body, in such a way that "the lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, and so acquire a new value" (CEC 1368).

35. *Likewise*, "The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the making present and the sacramental offering of his unique sacrifice, in the liturgy of the Church which is his Body" (CCC 1362). This is a memorial that is a proclamation of the wonderful deeds accomplished by God for humankind, and that makes Christ's Passover present. The sacrifice that he offered once and for ever on the cross is actualized by the celebration (cf. Heb 7:25-27).-Actualizing the past in the present, the memorial impels us towards the future in the hope of the Lord's return: "When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory" (Acclamation 2 after the consecration).

36. From its origins the Church has celebrated the Eucharist in obedience to the Lord's command: "*Do this in remembrance of me*" (1 Cor 11:24-25). Thus, we proclaim in the central part of the Eucharistic Prayer, immediately after the Institution Account: "Father, calling to mind the death your Son endured for our salvation, his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven, and ready to greet him when he comes again, we offer you in thanksgiving this holy and living sacrifice" (Eucharistic Prayer III).

Bread that transforms

37. Holy Scripture presents the Eucharist also as food. The eucharistic figures of the Old Testament announce and highlight this perspective. One of these figures is the sacri-

fice of Melchizedek who offered to Almighty God bread and wine (cf. Gen 14:18). Also the Paschal Lamb and the unleavened bread prefigure the Eucharist as food (cf. Ex 12:1-28): before the people were freed from slavery there was a meal in which the lamb is a sign of God's saving action; after that the people undertook the long pilgrimage that brought them to the promised land. A figure of the Eucharist itself is contained in the banquet that Moses celebrated with the seventy elders after the sacrifice that sealed the covenant (cf. Ex 24:11).

38. The significance of the pilgrim banquet, which the Eucharist has, is found in the figure of the Manna (cf. Ex 16: 1-35; Dt 8:3); this was a miraculous food that God sent the Hebrew people and lasted forty years as their sustenance during their desert wanderings; and it is the food that Christ referred to explicitly when he spoke of his eucharistic body as the bread of life come down from heaven (Jn 6:49-51.58).

39. Another figure of the Eucharist as a banquet that nourishes pilgrims is the bread which was cooked under ashes and eaten by Elijah: *"He arose, and ate arid drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God"* (1 Kg 19, 5-8).

40. The condition of the Eucharist as food of pilgrims is recalled poetically in the sequence of the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*: *"Ecce panis angelorum, factus cibus viatorum"* [*Behold the bread of angels, become food for wayfarers*] (Sequence *"Lauda, Sion"*). The bread of the Eucharist is the strength of the weak: *"As we eat his body which he gave for us, we grow in strength"* (Preface of the Eucharist I); it is the comfort of the sick, *viaticum* of the dying for whom

Christ "makes himself spiritual food and drink in order to feed us in our journey to the eternal Passover" (Preface of the Eucharist III); it is the substantial food that sustains so many Christians in their bearing witness in favor of the truth of the Gospel which they manifest in a variety of situations.

41. "*He who eats me will live because of me*" (Jn 6: 57), Jesus tells us in order to emphasize the necessity for Christians to be nourished by him who is the Bread come down from heaven. Participation in this sacred Banquet builds us up as the Mystical Body of Christ. Jesus in the Eucharist is, then, the center of the Church's life.

42. The Church has in the Eucharist the food that sustains it and transforms its inner life. In this regard St. Leo the Great states: "Our participation in the body and blood of Christ do not lead to anything other than that of changing us into what we eat."⁷ We are assimilated by Christ, we are transformed into being a new people, united intimately to him who is the head of the Mystical Body.

43. The new life that Christ gives us in the Eucharist becomes for us "the medicine of immortality, our antidote to ensure that we shall not die but live in Jesus Christ for ever" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians* 20, 2). Those of us who are living from Christ, who desires that all may have life in abundance, must proclaim the sacred character of human life, from the moment of conception unto its natural term and oppose the recent influences of the culture of death.

Sermon 12 on the Passion, 7: CCL 138*, 388.

2. THE EUCHARIST, MYSTERY OF COMMUNION AND CENTER OF THE CHURCH'S LIFE

44. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church's unity, as St Paul proclaims: "*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread*" (1 Cor 10:17). In the prayer that he addressed to the Father for his disciples after having instituted the Eucharist, Christ himself expressed his yearning that all may be one and remain in him, just as he remains in the Father (cf. Jn 17:20-23). The *Acts of the Apostles* bears witness to the coming about of the community of life and attitude, which comes about by the breaking of the bread (cf. Acts 2:42-47). This unity is signified and brought about by the Eucharist.

45. Participation at one table is already itself a symbol of brotherhood and communion of attitudes. The outward sign of the food that is consumed also recalls, as the *Didache* (9,4) states, that the grains of wheat, which were dispersed over the hills, become gathered into one loaf as a symbol of the Church's unity, brought together from the ends of the earth. The Fathers since the beginning of the Church have copiously referred to this eucharistic symbolism related to the Church's unity. The Council of Trent recalled this truth when it declared that Christ gave the Eucharist to his Church "as a symbol of his unity and charity, in which he desired that all Christians be united and bonded among themselves" (DH 1628). It went on to see this eucharistic symbolism as referring to that one Body whose head is Christ. Likewise the Second Vatican Council describes the Eucharist as "a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity" (SC 47 - referring to St. Augustine).

46. Now, if the Eucharist is the source of unity, it is also the center of the Church's life. This is because we have in it a unique and transcendent principle. In virtue of this principle what is impossible for people, because of their sinfulness and disunity, can be attained. This same principle of unity is the physical Body of Christ, given up for his Church to build it up as his Mystical Body, of which he is the Head and we are his members.

47. The Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church (cf. RH 20). Because of this fact the Eucharist is the center of the Church's life and all the other sacraments are ordered to it (cf. SC 7), as are likewise the ecclesial ministries and apostolic works. The Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of the preaching of the Gospel. In the Eucharist the whole spiritual good of the Church is contained, namely, Christ himself, our Passover and the living Bread, through his flesh that is enlivened and life-giving through the Holy Spirit, who gives life to people" (PO 5).

48. It follows that the eucharistic mystery should be also the center of the local church. Christ's Church is truly present in every legitimate gathering of the faithful united with their pastors; these gatherings are called "churches" in the New Testament. Here the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated so that by means of his Body and Blood the whole brotherhood is united. In these communities even though some are often insignificant and poor, or are scattered about, because of Christ's presence the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is congregated. For participation in the Body and Blood of the Lord enables us to become what we receive, (cf. LG 26).

49. The Eucharist as a mystery of communion is for the salvation of the world. Despite what is defective in them the separated Churches and communities, are, as the Second Vatican Council states, "means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church" (UR 3). These Churches do not enjoy that unity that Christ conferred on his Church, because they do not benefit from the fullness of the means of salvation with which Christ enriched it. Among the various means of salvation, the celebration of the Eucharist holds a particular importance because this celebration symbolizes and realizes the unity of all believers in Christ.

50. The Eastern Churches, as the same Vatican Council states, have maintained the sacrament of Orders and the same eucharistic faith as we have (cf. UR 15). On the other hand, the separated Churches in the West have not preserved the proper and integral nature of the eucharistic mystery, since they lack above all the sacrament of Order, "nevertheless, when they commemorate the Lord's death and Resurrection in the Holy Supper, they profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and await his coming in glory (UR 22). For this reason the celebration of the sacrament of unity itself spurs us on to discover the positive values existing in the Churches and ecclesial communities that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, and to guide them to their fulfillment in an approach that recognizes that unity, just as the Eucharist, is God's work, in which we are called to co-operate actively and responsibly "with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility" (UR 11).

51. A living parish means that it is a eucharistic community: "No Christian community, however, is built up unless

it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist; from this, therefore, all education to the spirit of community must take its origin" (PO 6). Therefore, the planning and realization of pastoral programmes must be begun by and properly related to the Eucharist as celebrated and contemplated in adoration, in order to bear fruits, especially in the field of the vocation apostolate.

3. THE EUCHARIST, NEED FOR SHARING

52. "The authentic sense of the Eucharist becomes of itself the school of active love for one's neighbour." (*Dominicae Cenaе*, 6). We understand the relation between the Eucharist and Light in keeping with the Apostle John's statement: "He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still" (1 Jn 2:9).

53. To offer Christ's sacrifice truly implies that we continue this same sacrifice in a life committed to others. Just as he is offered in sacrifice under the form of bread and wine, so too we must give ourselves in fraternal and humble service to our brothers and sisters, taking into account of their needs rather than whether they are deserving of our help, and offering them bread, that is, the basic necessities for a living in a way befitting human dignity.

54. The notions of food or banquet for religious rituals pre-date Christianity. These are basic elements and vital needs pertaining to human existence. The richness of their significance is shown not so much in the physical act of eating and drinking, but rather in the experience of communicating, sharing and fraternal exchange. For Christians, who are aware of being members of Christ's Mystical Body, the opportunity

for celebrating the "eucharistic Banquet" is a privilege, but also a challenge. The bread and wine that we present at the altar refer us to the food or drink that should be on the table of every human being. For there are many people who are unable to enjoy such a basic human right, either because they do not have food or because they do not have someone with whom to share it. This is a sign of outrageous injustice!

55. Such a situation is radically opposed to that which Jesus spoke about and realized during his life, and also which the primitive Christian community paid attention to and lived in accordance with Christ's teachings. Hence, when it is celebrated and shared as a banquet, the Eucharist invites us to realize the coherence between the breaking of bread and the following human dimensions: a sharing of material goods (cf. Acts 2:42,44; 4:34); a collection taken up for the benefit of those in need (cf. Acts 11:29; 12:25); service of the tables (cf. Acts 6:2); an overcoming of all divisions and discrimination (cf. 1 Cor 10:16; 11:18-22; Ja 2:1-13). All these dimensions have direct implications concerning evangelization in the world and, concretely, in developing countries.

56. The Eucharist makes real the *Diakonia* or service of Christ, and it is the place of the renewal of the Church's mission, above all for the most needy. Thus the Eucharist is a school, fountain of love and *Diakonia*, the significance of which must be expressed in living. This implies that in the Eucharist and because of the Eucharist the following values will be fostered: fraternal acceptance, solidarity, sharing of goods, as well as preferential care of the most needy. A fitting witness of love is an indispensable dimension of true evangelization.

4. JESUS CHRIST EVANGELISER AND THE EUCHARIST, FOUNT OF EVANGELIZATION

57. At the center of Jesus Christ's saving mission is the task of evangelization. Nevertheless, Jesus did not only proclaim the Kingdom only in words, but "by the total fact of his presence and self-manifestation [...] but above all by his death and glorious resurrection from the dead"(DV 4). Most truly we can say that Jesus himself is the Kingdom.

58. As Paul VI himself mentioned, evangelization "is begun during the life of Christ and definitively accomplished by his death and resurrection. But it must be patiently carried on during the course of history, in order to be realized fully on the day of the final coming of Christ" (EN 9). Because of this the Church has as her first duty the responsibility of continuing the mission of Jesus. Regarding this we must take-the apostle Paul's words to heart, "*Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!*" (1 Cor 9:16).

59. The Eucharist is a fount of evangelization because it is in a certain manner the "center of the Gospel", since it appears related to the Passover according to the narratives of the Institution of the Eucharist (cf. Mt 26:17-25 & parallel), and in keeping with the most important themes of the Gospel itself, such as: the proclamation of the word of God, conversion and faith, charity and *koinonia*, reconciliation and forgiveness, and even eternal life (cf. Jn 6; Acts 2:42-46; 1 Cor 10:14-22; 11:17-26).

60. The Eucharist is, moreover, the summit of the sacramental journey because it synthesizes and refers us to the different stages of sacramental living: baptism, confirmation, reconciliation, matrimony. By means of these Christians

express their incorporation into the mystery of Christ and his Church. Through this -the Eucharist involves the whole Church and every Christian, as members of Christ's Mystical Body, to become not only more deeply identified with Christ, but also committed to the task of evangelizing others.

61. Finally, the Eucharist is an impulse for evangelization in this Third Millennium because it is not only its center, but also the fount from which the evangelizing action flows and is moved ahead in the contemporary world (cf. NMI 36).

62. A particular feature of the liturgical and popular devotion to Jesus present sacramentally is seen in the following traditions: watching before the Reserved Sacrament on Holy Thursday, the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi* with its processions, the custom of Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, adoration during the Forty Hours, the Shrines of expiation with continuous exposition, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, communion on the first Fridays of the month, nocturnal adoration and Eucharistic Congresses. All these, among other devotions, are expressions of a simple and profound faith in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. They indicate a deep-felt love for him who has desired "to dwell among us". It is undeniable that the Church's task of evangelization finds in all these practices a terrain for purification and growth, above all in our time so that in confronting "the darkness and shadow of death" (Lk 1:79) that enfold this world the Eucharist may be in its fullness the light and light for the whole of humanity.

63. The evangelizing power of the Eucharist is such that it invites Christians to become wholly involved in a generous missionary commitment, that responds to the circumstances

of each region and country. For, as Jesus told us at the Last Supper "*do this in memory of me*" (Lk 22:19), we cannot ignore his invitation to be, like him, bread that is broken and shared; blood that is poured out for the life of the world; if not, the celebration of the Eucharist without commitment will not be fully a "proclamation of the Gospel", as Paul warned the community of Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34).

64. Likewise, participation in the Eucharist is the center of Sunday for all Christians. Sanctification of the Lord's Day is a privilege that cannot be given up; it must be experienced not only as a precept to be observed, but as a need, that is truly recognized and consistent with Christian living (cf. NMI 36). Therefore, to encourage participation in the Eucharist, especially the Sunday celebration, should be an integral part in drawing up pastoral programmes of the New Evangelization.

5. MARY, "MOTHER OF THE TRUE GOD FOR WHOM ONE LIVES" (*NICAN MOPOHUA*)

65. Mary told Juan Diego and now repeats to each Christian: "Know that I am the ever Virgin Mary, Mother of the true God for whom one lives"; and also: "Am / not here, / who am your Mother?"⁸. The Virgin was showing herself as the Mother of Jesus and of all people. The Lady of Guadalupe is today still the sign of Christ's nearness, as she invites us to enter into communion with him, who leads us to the Father. Relying on Mary's help, the Church wishes to guide people to encounter Christ, who is the starting point of authentic conversion and renewed communion and solidarity.

⁸ LAMADRID J.G., *Nican Mopohua*, ed.Jus p., 45.

66. The Virgin Mary for the indigenous people of these lands, with her maternal and merciful face, is the great sign of the nearness of the Father and Christ, with whom she invites us to enter into communion. Thus, the particular characteristic of the religious piety of the American peoples throughout their history and culture has been a profoundly maternal and Marian aspect; this expression can be seen in the *mestizo* [mixed race] face of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who being the Mother of Christ made herself also the Mother of the Indians, of the oppressed poor and of all who need her. In fact, the first missionaries who came to America from lands with a strong Marian tradition taught love for the Virgin, the Mother of Jesus and of all people, as part of the rudiments of Christian faith. The apparition of Mary to Blessed Juan Diego, on the hill of Tepeyac, Mexico, had a decisive effect for evangelization (cf. EA 11). Referring to this, Pope John Paul II stated that "in the American continent, the *mestizo* face of the Virgin of Guadalupe was from the start a symbol of the inculturation of evangelization, of which she has been the lodestar and the guide" (EA70).

67. Mary's presence in the cenacle is reference point of the entire ecclesial community as it prepared to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit in order to go out from there to evangelize (cf. AG 4; LG 49; EN 82). The Marian experience of the Christian communities can be regarded as a permanent reality. This is a well-known fact evident in the eucharistic celebration of the early Christian communities and likewise in the widespread expressions of Marian popular piety. St. Ephrem highlights in his poetical hymns the profound relationship that exists between the Virgin Mary and the Eucharist: "Mary gives us the Eucharist, in contrast to the bread given

by Eve. Mary is also the tabernacle where the Word made flesh dwelt, symbol of the dwelling place of the Word in the Eucharist. The same body of Jesus, born of Mary, was born to become Eucharist."⁹

Mary, "star of evangelization"

68. At the end of his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI gives the title of "star of evangelization" to the Mother of God: "On the morning of Pentecost she watched over with her prayer the beginning of evangelization prompted by the Holy Spirit: may she be the Star of the evangelization ever renewed which the Church, docile to her Lord's command, must promote and accomplish, especially in these times which are difficult but full of hope!" (EN 82). So, Mary is the sure way to find Christ. Authentic piety towards the Mother of the Lord always encourages us to direct our life according to the Spirit and the values of the Gospel (cf. EAII).

69. Mary is the "star of evangelization" in different senses: because she maternally shared in the Church's beginnings by her prayer together with the apostles in obtaining the grace of the Holy Spirit; because it is through her maternity that she is the model and image of the Church; because of her disposition of faith and her maternal intercession she makes the Church's faith grow. She is the one who accompanies the Church's evangelizing activity, which through the word and the sacraments stimulates faith, leads to conversion from sin and bestows life on the children of God. In this way the part she plays is truly maternal.

⁹ BACKE., CSCO, 218-219, Louvain, 1961.

70. Let us entrust to the most holy Virgin Mary the preparation and realization of the 48th International Eucharistic Congress, so that it may be an event of faith and an impulse towards evangelizing in the new millennium - an impulse that is much required for acknowledging the true light and life, that is Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

PRAYER BEFORE JESUS CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST

1. God our Father, we believe that you are the creator
of all things
and that you have made us for yourself close
to the face of your Son,
who was born of the Virgin Mary by the work
of the Holy Spirit,
to be our means and guarantee of eternal life.
2. We believe, provident Father,
that by the power of your Spirit bread and wine
become transformed into the body and blood of your Son,
the finest wheat that eases the hungers of our journey.
3. We believe, Lord Jesus, that your Incarnation
is continued in the wheat-grain of your eucharistic body,
in order to nourish our yearning for light and life,
love and forgiveness, grace and salvation.
4. We believe that in the Eucharist you inserted
yourself into history
in order to sustain pilgrims in their weakness
and all who dream to reap the fruits of their toil.
We know that at Bethlehem, the "house of Bread",
the eternal Father prepared in the womb of the Virgin Mary
the Bread that he offers those hungering for the infinite.

5. We believe, Jesus in the Eucharist, that you are
really and truly
presenting the consecrated bread and wine,
extending your saving presence
and offering to your flock abundant pastures and fresh water.
6. We believe that eyes are deceived in seeing bread
and our tongue mistaken in tasting wine,
because it is all your entire self
offered in sacrifice and giving life to the world,
paradise for which it is always starved.
7. That night in the Cenacle,
Lord, in taking bread and wine in your hands,
you offered these gifts to all
for all time and infinite ages.
8. With you, Lamb of the Covenant,
there is raised up on every altar on which
you offer yourself to the Father,
the fruits of the earth and the work of human hands,
the life of the believer, the doubt of the seeker,
the laughter of children, the plans of youth,
the pain of those who suffer
and the offering of the giver and the one who gives
himself to his brethren.
9. We believe, Lord Jesus, that your goodness has prepared
a table for the great and little ones,
and that at your table we become brothers and sisters
by giving our lives for one another,
as you did for us.
10. We believe, Jesus, that on the altar of your sacrifice,
we receive strength for our weak flesh,

which does not always respond to the yearnings
of the spirit,
but which you will transform into the image of your body.

11. We believe that at the table prepared for all,
there will always be a place for those who seek,
room for those at the fringes of our society,
the signs of death being overcome,
a new heaven and a new earth opening up.
12. We believe, Jesus, that you have not deserted your brethren,
you remain discretely present in the sanctuary
of conscience
and in the bread and wine of your table,
as light and strength for the weak pilgrim.
13. We believe, indeed, that at the dawn of the Third Millennium
you make yourself a companion for our journey.
"Put out into the deep" is the mandate
at this moment to your Church,
so that, filled with hope, it takes
a new step forward in history.
14. Thank you, Jesus in the Eucharist, for impelling us
to undertake a new evangelization strengthened by you.
May your Mother accompany those who are willing
to live and announce your word,
and, through her intercession, bring its seed to fruition.
Amen.

*Translation from the Spanish by the Pontifical Committee for International
Eucharistic Congresses.*

PRAYER FOR THE
48TH INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

Lord, Holy Father,
in Jesus Christ, your Son,
truly present in the Eucharist,
you give us the light that enlightens every person
coming into this world,
and the true life that fills us with joy;
we ask you to grant that we, your people,
who are entering the Third Millennium,
may celebrate with confidence
the 48th International Eucharistic Congress,
so that we may be strengthened at this sacred banquet
to become in Christ a light in the darkness,
and to live closely united to him who is our life.

May the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of the true God for whom we live
truly support and accompany us always.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.
AMEN.

ABBREVIATIONS

- CCC - *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (II-X-1992)
ChL - Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II
Christifideles Laid (30-XII-1988)
CCL - *Corpus Christianorum*. Series Latina, Tournhout 1953ff.
CSCO - *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Paris-
Louvain, 1903ff.
DD - Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Dies Domini* (31-V-1998)

- DetV** - Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18-V-1986)
- DH H.** - Denzinger-P. Hiinermann, *El Magisterio de la Iglesia*, Herder, Barcelona, 2000
- DI** - Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus* (6-VIII-2000)
- DM** - Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (30-XI-1980)
- DTC** - *Dictionnaire de theologie catholique*, Paris 1903-1970
- DV** - Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution, *Dei Verbum* (18-XI-1965)
- EA** - Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II *Ecclesia in America* (22-I-1999)
- EN** - Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8-XII-1975)
- EV** - Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (25-III-1995)
- FetR** - Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (14-IX-1998)
- GS** - Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* (7-XII-1965)
- LG** - Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* (21-XI-1964)
- NMI** - Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6-III-2001)
- OLM** - Congregation for the Sacraments and Worship, *Ordo lectionum Missae* (21-I-1981)
- PO** - Vatican Council II, Decree, *Presbiterorum Ordinis* (7-XII-1965)
- RH** - Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (4-III-1979)
- SC** - Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (4-XII-1963)
- TMA** - Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10-XI-1994)
- UR** - Vatican Council II, Decree, *Unitatis Redintegratio* (21-XI-1964)
- VS** - Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (6-VIII-1993)

Cases and Inquiries

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

ON THE ADMISSION TO THE SACRAMENTS OF CATHOLICS WHO HAVE DIVORCED AND REMARRIED

Question:

This is regarding the stand of the Catholic Church on those Catholics who have contracted a new marriage and are happily living with their second spouse, but who are barred from approaching the sacraments since their previous marriage bond still remains: It is fine to hear that they should be treated with utmost respect and care; but actually what they truly want is to have access to the Sacraments! Could you, please, inform me of any new development on the stand of the Church on this matter... if there is anything new about it? Thank you.

Answer:

If the answer to this query were limited to inform of the novelties on the stand of the Church regarding the access to the sacraments on the part of Catholics who have divorced

and remarried, the answer would be very brief: simply to say that, as far as I know, there is nothing new in the Church's teaching on this matter different from what was stated in Pope John Paul's Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) and, more recently, in the "Letter to the Bishops Concerning the Reception of Holy Communion by Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful," issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on October 14, 1994.

However the expression used in the question: "*It is fine to hear that they should be treated with utmost respect and care; but actually what they truly want is to have access to the Sacraments!*" seems to reflect certain incomprehension of the stance of the Church toward them (the divorced and remarried), as if we were dealing with two irreconcilable things, or with a punishment or with a discriminatory measure; or as if the dispositions that the Church dictates on this matter depended only on the will of those in authority.

A brief comment on the reasons for the Church's denial of sacramental communion from the theological-canonical point of view as well as from the pastoral perspective may help here.

1. An "irregular" situation

The Church holds that the situation of those Catholics who have divorced and remarried is "irregular." That is to say, it is not according to what the law of the Church demands (and expects) from the Christ's faithful. The Church makes clear that those who have recourse to civil authorities to obtain a divorce do not annul the sacramental bond of marriage, which remains intact. Thus if the parties to that marriage later

contract another marriage, their situation is "objectively irregular in the light of the Gospel" and their marital status creates an "insurmountable obstacle" to sacramental communion. Such matrimonial irregularity will persist until it is solved by means of a declaration of nullity of the first marriage by the competent authority or by an ecclesiastical tribunal.

In several occasions Pope John Paul II has indeed ratified the teaching of the Church on the topic, which includes a clear statement that those married couples who, by entering into an invalid second marriage, have made a choice different from what the Gospel demands on the question of marriage, should not in principle be admitted to the Eucharistic communion and sacramental absolution.

This clear position of the magisterium is maintained in all its force also by the recent "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Reception of the Holy Communion by Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful," issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1994. The document stresses that, "in fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ, the Church affirms that a new union cannot be recognized as valid if the preceding marriage was valid. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law. Consequently, they cannot receive holy communion as long as this situation persists." Well, there is an exception, the Letter clarifies: "The faithful who persist in such a situation may receive holy communion only after obtaining sacramental absolution, which may be given only to those who, repenting of having broken the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ, are sincerely ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradic-

tion to the indissolubility of marriage. This means, in practice, that when for serious reasons, for example, for the children's upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they "take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples. In such a case they may receive holy communion as long as they respect the obligation to avoid giving scandal."

This Church's doctrine has not found complete acceptance by all sectors. In fact, as the document itself acknowledges, "in recent years different pastoral solutions in this area have been suggested according to which, to be sure, a general admission of the divorced and remarried to eucharistic communion would not be possible, but divorced and remarried members of the faithful could approach holy communion in specific cases when they consider themselves authorized according to a judgment of conscience to do so." This, however, does not constitute the common doctrine of the Church, who, at the risk even of being misunderstood and fully aware of the suffering it connotes, recognizes that she does not have the power to change Christ's clear and explicit will on the indissolubility of marriage.

Yet, what can the Church do in dealing with those in such situation? Just to abandon them to their own fate? Not at all. The Church "cannot abandon to their own devices those who have been previously bound by sacramental marriage and who have attempted a second marriage" (*Familiaris Consortia*, 84). Furthermore, she commits herself "to make untiring efforts to put at their disposal her means of salvation." To the pastors she asks them to assist those persons; and to

the couples themselves, to participate in the life of the Church *in the measure that it is possible*, while working for a solution that may allow them a complete sacramental participation.

(1) How could pastors help these persons who have divorced and remarried? First, by helping them clarify their own situation. It is an "irregular" situation because it contradicts 'the truth and the love' that should inspire the mutual relationship between man and woman and, therefore, the cause of tensions and divisions in the families with serious consequences especially on the children. (Naturally, the situation of those divorced and remarried is very different from a moral point of view, in accordance with the part of responsibility that each spouse has in the break and the intentions that motivated the new union). Second, by helping those persons to participate in the life of the Church. After all, those persons divorced and remarried are fully entitled to enjoy spiritual support. "They should be encouraged to listen to the word of God, to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to contribute to works of charity and to community efforts in favor of justice, to bring up their children in the Christian faith, to cultivate the spirit and practice of penance and thus implore, day by day, God's grace," the same *Familiaris Consortia* reads.

(2) To the divorced and remarried, in turn, the Church reminds them that they are not excluded from her bosom, although there are many who think that they no longer have anything to expect from her, or who complain that the Church with her 'hardness' and 'legalism' has condemned them to a definitive failure. This is not true. Those who have divorced and remarried are members of the Church and con-

tinue to have rights and duties within her, although their personal irregular state should be reflected, for instance, in certain liturgical limitations (the abstention from the sacramental reconciliation and Eucharistic communion, the exercise of functions that may attract the general attention of the community, etc.) as well as the exclusion from certain ecclesiastical commitments, like being part of pastoral Councils.

Misunderstood Concern of the Church

It is not easy to convince those Catholics who have divorced and remarried of the maternal solicitude that the Church keeps for them. Reacting against the prohibition to receive Holy Communion, they declare themselves wounded and express their suffering... But, as the Archbishop of Toulouse, Mons Emile Marcus, wrote referring to the pastoral attention to be given to the divorced and remarried, "we should ask what is exactly what makes them suffer. Of course, the impossibility to celebrate another sacramental marriage, in the first place. But also the prohibition to receive Holy Communion, as they have attempted a new marriage. However, why to incriminate or blame the Church, as if the norms she dictates depended only on her own will or on the negligence of her authorities? Can such resentment against the Church be easily understood? Is it not originated from a sort of transference of the sense of guilt that they feel, or even simply from the need to complain because the affective wound caused by the break off and its consequences make them suffer much? In the end, won't it be rather that those persons blame themselves by criticizing the Church when they are in inextricable situations?"

Be as it may, it is of utmost importance that these persons in irregular situation are reminded of the great value that

they have for God; that they must carry out a spiritual struggle for which the Church provides them the means that she has; and that they have important tasks to fulfill in and for the Christian community. "These children wounded by life are loved by the mother Church," the Apostolic Exhortation reads. "But she must love them in truth, 'in mercy and in justice', in 'right and in tenderness'" (Osea 2:22), which are the characteristics of the Covenant of God with his people, of which their first marriage carries an indelible mark.

The crucial point of these words about the love of the Church to those faithful divorced and remarried, as well as the consistent deeds that manifest it concretely, will always consist in showing that the love of a man and a woman cannot be worthy of such name if it is not lived by both in the mutual respect to the truth of their own past and to the commitments previously assumed. "But is it possible to understand these options, and to live them, without entering in a way or another in the mystery of the Cross?" (Cf. *Familia et Vita* II, n. 2 [1997]).

The attitude then of the Church in not seeing the possibility of admitting to communion those baptized who, having contracted a new union after a divorce, have put themselves in contradiction with their insertion in the Covenant, is not actually a discriminatory one. It leans on in the fact that Marriage, like the Eucharist, shares in the mystery of the new and eternal Covenant that Christ sealed with his death and resurrection. Christian marriage is inserted in that Covenant and it is a manifestation of it. The difficulty lies in discovering in such Church's attitude her maternal love and concern...

Still, the best remedy for those that doubt of the authenticity of that maternal concern of the Church would consist,

perhaps, instead than in verbal promises, in rather concrete measures that may open them avenues of life as members of the Church, on the base of the invitations formulated in *Familiaris Consortio*, namely, to encourage them "to listen to the word of God, to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to contribute to works of charity and to community efforts in favor of justice, to bring up their children in the Christian faith, to cultivate the spirit and practice of penance and thus implore day by day God's grace, to assume commitments as Christians..." (n. 84). In a word, to live as Christians, in a manner compatible with their faith. The Church on her part "prays for them and sustain them in faith and hope."

A reflective reading of the two documents (*Familiaris Consortio* and the aforementioned Letter from the Congregation for the Faith) may help much in the right understanding of the question. At least one thing will be made clear: that authentic understanding and genuine mercy are never separated from the truth.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers for November-December 2004

EFREN RIVERA, OP

November 7, 2004

◇ **32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): 2 Mc 7:1-2; 9-14; 2 Thes 2:16-3:5; Lk 20:27-38 or
20:27, 34-38

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). ***The Resurrection of the Dead.*** Explicit belief in the resurrection of the dead came late to Judaism, around 300 B.C. It came because of the influence of Hellenistic philosophy, which, we must admit, clarified some of the longings for immortality that are expressed, for example, in the Psalms. It should not be a surprise that some Jews, like the Sadducees, opposed the teaching. In an argument with them, Jesus gave two reasons why there is no marriage in heaven: (1) People in heaven will be like the angels, who do not marry. (2) People in heaven will be "children of God" more perfectly than they were on earth.

They will share in his immortality and glory more than what is possible on earth. Like God, too, they will not need to marry.

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 34-35 "The children on this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage." - Value of marriage for earthly life... Value of celibacy for other-worldly life.

V. 36 "They are children of God..." Value of being *eternally* children of God.

3. SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

As a special feature, here is a quote from the book of Fr. Al Schwarz, *Killing Me Softly*: "After the death of Sr. Vincent, I personally became aware of her presence in my life. It is difficult to express this, but it is not a question of auto-suggestion, self-delusion, or mere sentimentalism. It is a real, deep, delightful experience of a close, intimate, loving presence which becomes a source of strength, grace and consolation. I have had similar experiences on many other occasions. I have always felt the loving presence of Christ in my life... I have experience the presence of Mary as a loving Mother and an intimate friend... At other times, I have experienced the presence of St. Therese of Lisieux..."

Relate this quote to Lk 20:38: "He is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO

(*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - The Church must attend both to the this-worldly and the other-worldly aspects of human life. When we do this, we must show that our primary concern is other-worldly life.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - The times call on us Christians to show the correctness of the Christian stand on marriage.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. Let us train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

As Christians we are convinced that there will be a resurrection of the dead on the last day. The big question for us is: how do we relate to our beloved dead people before the coming of that last day? It is common practice for us to pray for the souls in Purgatory. But what if the immortal souls of our dear ones are already in heaven? As an answer, let us quote from the book of Fr. Aloysius Schwarz, *Killing Me Softly* (p. 15). The Sister Vincent writes about one of the early Korean women who joined and built up his newly founded congregation of the Sisters of Mary of Banneux.

"After Sister Vincent's death, I suggested to the Sisters that we ask for a sign or a miracle of grace to prove that she was indeed with the saints in heaven. This would strengthen our faith and stimulate us to follow her example of self-sacrifice, courage and charity. The sign or miracle we should ask for, I suggested, was a miracle of charity. If by Easter, I

said, there was a definite increase in community, charity and the intensity of our brotherly love, we would attribute this grace to the intercession of Sister Vincent and conclude that she was indeed with God."

"At Easter, we did a study and made a survey of sorts. Being as objective and unbiased as possible, we all agreed that indeed there was a marked increase in the intensity of charity and a true growth as a community in the virtue of brotherly love. Thus we concluded that Sister Vincent was indeed with God in heaven. Now with total conviction, instead of praying for Sister Vincent as I suggested at first, I suggested that we pray to her."

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

November 14,2004
(second to the last)

◇ **33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (C): Mai 3:19-20; 2 Thes 3:7-12; Lk 21:5-19

TODAY IS WORLD DIABETES DAY

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Warning Signs of the End of Jerusalem and the End of the World*. Many commentators believe that Luke wrote when Jerusalem was already in ruins, and from his experience he could confirm the statement, "the end (of the world) does not follow immediately." For Luke's contemporaries, the passage for today's Gospel Reading is an exhortation "not to be perturbed" in spite of times of crisis. When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70, the majority of Christ's followers escaped death and they were unscarred

by their experience of hard and painful times. The experience in fact made them stronger and better persons.

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V.7 "What sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?" - Value of having a forewarning of a time of danger. <> Because the early Christians of Jerusalem were prophetically forewarned about the destruction of the city, they fled and were saved.

V 12-18 "They will persecute you... because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony... I myself will give you wisdom..." - Value of loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus. <> Jesus promised to give Wisdom to his loyal and faithful followers who undergo persecution.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Were there times in your life when you had to show your loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus Christ?
- Have you experienced receiving Wisdom from Jesus during a time when there was so much pressure on you?

4. WHAT **THE LORD** WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - We must remind ourselves that the enemies of the Church still abound around us (like lions seeking their prey). We must prove ourselves to be loyal and faithful to Jesus Christ.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us seek the Wisdom to

identify and expose the anti-Christian trends and pressures in society today, like blaming social and economic woes on the Church.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. Let us train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

WISDOM GIVEN TO SAINT LORENZO RUIZ

The first Filipino to be canonized, St. Lorenzo Ruiz, was not a priest or religious but a married layman. He was not a scholar or intellectual, although he knew how to read and write Spanish - not a mean achievement for a Filipino of his time (early 17th century). He was ill-equipped to argue with his Japanese interrogators who wanted to know what was his mission in Japan. In fact, he was confused when they offered to set him free and let him go back to his wife and children if he would renounce his Christian beliefs.

Given spiritual counseling by his Dominican priest companions, Lorenzo held fast to his faith. In the end he was brave enough and wise enough to say, "I am a Christian. If I were to have a thousand lives, I would gladly lay them down for Jesus Christ." That courage and wisdom came more from Jesus Christ himself than from the insignificant *escribano* (clerk) of the Spanish Dominicans in Binondo, Manila.

November 21, 2004
(last Sunday)



Solemnity of Christ the King

Readings (C): 2 Sam 5:1-3; Col 1:12-20; Lk 23:35-42

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Words to the Good Thief*. As

Jesus suffered the excruciating torture of crucifixion, the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers kept on insulting him. The first one to turn to him as Savior was one of the criminals being similarly crucified beside him. The salvation given to that criminal is described as "being with Jesus in paradise."

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE
(*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 38 "This is the king of the Jews." - Value of having a king.

V 40 "Have you no fear of God..." - Value of defending an innocent man.

V 42-43 "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." - Value of desiring to be counted in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you experienced defending an innocent person?
- Have you experienced giving your loyalty and faithfulness to someone (whether or not you call him/her a king/queen)?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO
(*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Like the repentant criminal, let us follow the urgings of the Holy Spirit to defend the righteousness of Jesus Christ against those who insult him.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us continue to search for leaders - you may call them "kings" or "queens" - who will bring us earthly salvation.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. Let us train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

WORDS OF DIVINE MERCY AT CALVARY

Devotion to Jesus, King of Divine Mercy, has been promoted in our time by the first canonized saint of the new millennium, St. Faustina Kowalska, and Pope John Paul II. This devotion is really just an update of the earlier devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus propagated by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, and devotion to Christ the King.

It is good for all of us to realize that the words of Jesus to the criminal who defended him from the insults of others, are words of Divine Mercy. In this sense, the Feast of Christ the King, using a Gospel Reading from Lk 23:35-43 as it does on year C, this year, is also a feast of Divine Mercy.

This year, which is within the Eucharistic Year from October 2004 to October 2005, we must also remember that the Eucharist and Calvary are intimately, essentially related. In instituting the Eucharist at the Last Supper, Jesus anticipated his sacrifice on Calvary. Conversely, it is the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary that is made present at the Holy Mass, making the Eucharist not only a Sacrament but also a Sacrifice.

Spiritual and Personal Values: see above, n. 2.

November 28, 2004



First Sunday of Advent

LITURGICAL CYCLE "A" BEGINS

Readings (A): Is 2:1-5; Rm 13:11-14; Mt 24:37-44

Dec. 1, Wed., is World Aids Day; Dec. 3, Fri., is Int'l Day for the Disabled

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Be Ready when He Comes Again.* Jesus started the coming of the "end of time" by coming as the Messiah. He will come again, and he warns his followers to be prepared. Their preparedness will be the reversal of what happened to people at the time of Noah. Those people were "totally unconcerned."

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 44 "So too, you must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come." - Value of being forewarned (see Guide for Nov. 14). - Value of being prepared.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Were there times when you were "unconcerned" about spiritual things, like the people at Noah's time?
- When did you start being "concerned" about spiritual things?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us, through Christian Education, help people acquire a truly Christian personality and character that will distinguish them

from those that "will be left" (see vv. 40-41) when the hour of the coming of Christ comes.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us be involved in TOTAL human development, that is, a development of the WHOLE HUMAN PERSON, and a development of ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY, not only of the elite.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

DISTINGUISHED BY CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

In today's Gospel reading, we are told: "Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left." Will the taking and leaving be done by random, that is, simply be chance? Certainly not! The point is that externally, two persons may be doing the same thing. Still there will be a distinction of one from the other. It will be a distinction in their hearts, in their inner being. In other words, it will be a distinction in character and personality.

Christian education must be geared at forming in young people a truly Christian character and personality. Along this line, we can learn something from Fr. Al Schwartz's experience of dealing with a strike at the Boystown-Girlstown complex at Bacood, Sta. Mesa, in 1990.

We quote from Fr. Schwartz's book, *Killing Me Softly* (p. 63).

"At first, I misjudged the situation and treated it in a rather cavalier manner. But as it turned out, it was deadly

serious. It became apparent that the ultimate goal of the teachers was the takeover of our Boystown and Girlstown. Our goal was to remake each of the children entrusted to us into the image and likeness of Christ. The leaders of the striking teachers wanted to take over the education program in order to remake the children into their own image and likeness which was, to express it very charitably, very secular and very un-Christlike. St. Paul writes, "Whoever is the friend of the world is an enemy of God." The leader of the striking teachers were very much friends of the modern world. To give but one example, they objected strongly to the clear, sharp, but balanced guidelines we laid down and gave our children concerning the virtue of chastity. Also, it must be said that some of the striking teachers had the reputation of being gay and the personal lives of some of them was far from exemplary."

December 5, 2004



Second Sunday of Advent

Readings (A): Is 11:1-19; Rm 15:4-9; Mt3:1-12

We celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on Wednesday, December 8.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *The Reign of God / the Kingdom of Heaven is At Hand*. God's reign is his exercise of kingship over a *holy* people. To be part of God's kingdom, people have to reform their lives. This reform, in capsule form, means turning away from their sins and believing in the Good News. What is this Good News? It is the statement that God will fulfill his promises, and he will do it soon!

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).-

V. 2 "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" - Value of Repentance.

V.3b " Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." - Value of being a Precursor.

V. 6 "(People) were being baptized by (John the Baptist) in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins." - Value of symbolic actions (like baptism with water).

V. 1 lb "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." -Value of deep, spiritual purification.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you experienced deep, spiritual purification (Baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire), not necessarily at or soon after your Baptism with water?

- Have you ever been a Precursor for anyone (including Christ)?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us reform our lives and recapture the fervor of the Filipino people at the first International Eucharistic Congress celebrated in Asia (Manila) in 1937. It is expressed by the (Spanish) words of the Congress' Hymn: *La fe de Filipinas es como el sol ardiente, como la roca firme, imensa como el mar, La iniquidad no puede ser de estas islas dueña que tiene izada en nustaras monstes tu celestial ensena.* (Translation: *The*

faith of the Philippines is fiery as the sun, firm as a rock, immense like the sea. Iniquity can't dominate over these islands whose mountains are emblazoned with your standard.)

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us realize that the biggest problem of the Philippines today is poverty. Its cause is NOT overpopulation but GRAFT AND CORRUPTION IN THE GOVERNMENT FROM THE HIGHEST OFFICES DOWN TO THE BARANGAY COUNCILORS. Reform your lives! Let the Kingdom of righteousness come upon you!

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

EUCHARISTIC YEAR PREPARING FOR THE REIGN OF GOD

The Hymn of the International Eucharistic Congress held in Manila in 1937 rightly associated devotion to the Eucharist with the Reign of God over the Philippines. It says, *"El pueblo Filipino Te da su corazon. En templos y en hogares te ensalza nuestra lengua. Tu reinaras sin mengua de Aparri hasta Jolo."* (Translation: *The Filipino people gives you its heart. In our temples and our homes we praise you. Your reign will never wane from Aparri down to Jolo.*)

In the spirit of this Hymn, it seems right to associate today's Gospel Reading, which is about preparing for the Reign of God with the Eucharistic Year we are now celebrating. Below is an excerpt from the Pope's Homily on June 10, Feast of *Corpus Christi*, wherein he declared the celebration of the Eucharistic Year.

"Ever since, with Pentecost, the People of the New Covenant began their pilgrim journey toward the heavenly homeland, the Divine Sacrament has continued to articulate their days, filling them with confident hope. Thinking specifically about this, I wished to dedicate to the Eucharist the first encyclical of the new millennium and I am now happy to announce a special Year of the Eucharist. It will begin with the World Eucharistic Congress, planned from October 10-17 in Guadalajara (Mexico), and will end with the next ordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will be held in the Vatican from October 2-29, 2005, and whose theme will be *"The Eucharist: Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church."*

"Through the Eucharist, the ecclesial community is built as a new Jerusalem, principle of unity in Christ between different peoples and nations."

December 12, 2004
("Gaudete" Sunday)



Third Sunday of Advent

Readings (A): Is 35:1-6, 10; Ja5:7-10; Mt 11:2-11

Aguinaldo Masses begin on Thursday, December 16

"O" Antiphons begin on Friday, December 17

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *John the Baptist Fulfilled Prophecy*. The prophecy of Malachi 3:1 is quoted in Mt 11:10. The "you" in the passage originally meant the remnant of the people of Israel that will come home from exile. In Matthew, the "you" is Jesus Christ. There is an important teaching here,

namely, that Jesus is the "corporate personality" of the remnant of Israel. Jesus is the person who makes concrete the people of Israel *faithful to God*, returning from exile. John the Baptist's mission included assuring that there were enough of such people to start the New Israel when the Messiah is revealed.

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V.3 "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" - Value of being authentic. <> Jesus was the authentic Messiah. We, on our part, have to be authentic followers.

V.4b "Go and tell John what you hear and see..." - Value of being first hand witnesses through the direct experience of hearing and seeing for oneself.

V 8 "Blessed is he who takes no offense at me." - Value of attaining the truth even if one has to go through a screen of prejudices and half-truths. <> John the Baptist, being in prison, could not hear and see the ministry being done by Jesus Christ. He only heard reports about him, second hand information. These were like a screen hiding the truth. But he found a way to penetrate through the screen.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you ever been bothered by a problem of authenticity, as when you wondered, Is he really a Bishop? Is he really a priest? Is he really a Christian?
- Have you ever searched for the truth, cutting through prejudices and half truths?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

In Relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us strive to be authentic Christians. This, is achieved through a good Christian education. According to the Pope, such an education has to concentrate on "being," not on "having," see the "Homily" below.

TO FORM AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANS

From today's Gospel Reading, we pick up the idea of John's search for the authentic Messiah. Jesus proved he is the True Messiah through his miraculous deeds. We, on our part, must strive to be his authentic followers. To achieve this, let us be guided by the words of Pope John Paul II as set forth partially in the following news dispatch.

ROME, JULY 5, 2004 (Zenit.org). - John Paul II says the challenge of education today is to teach men and women the importance of "being," not of "having." This objective is a task for all Christian communities and all their members, the Pope said Saturday when he received in the Vatican the participants in a European symposium of an Episcopal Commission for Catholic education.

Wherever students live, "education should enable them to become ever more men and women of 'being' and not simply of 'having' more," the Holy Father said in his address to those responsible for education and catechesis in the 34 European bishops' conferences.

"School formation is one of the aspects of education, but cannot be reduced to it," he said. "The essential link among

all the aspects of education must be reinforced ceaselessly. The unity of the educational endeavor will lead to ever greater unity in the personality and life of adolescents."

"It is necessary that all mobilize and work together for young people: parents, teachers, educators, chaplaincy teams," John Paul II exhorted.

"They must remember that teaching must be supported by the testimony of life. In fact, young people are sensitive to the testimony of adults, who are models for them. The family continues to be the primary place of education," he said.

December 19,2004
(Marian Sunday of Advent)



Fourth Sunday of Advent

Readings (A): Is 7:10-14; Rm1 1-7; Mt 1:18-24

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *The fulfillment of the Emmanuel Prophecy.* The text we read in Mt 1:22-23 about the fulfillment of the Emmanuel prophecy was written around the year AD 50 or 65. At that time it was already clear to the disciples of Jesus that he was indeed God. He resurrected from the dead in the year AD 30. After that, he worked *signs and wonders that proved his divinity*. He is, *not just figuratively or adoptively but LITERALLY, "GOD WITH US."* At that time, too, it was already the clear belief of the Church that Mary conceived Jesus as a virgin. This means that Jesus has no human father. His only Father, even as a human being on earth, was God. Mary, however, is really and truly his mother. (Later, the Council of Ephesus will define that she is THEO-TOKOS or God Bearer).

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V. 19 "Joseph, her husband, since he was a righteous man..." - Value of being Righteous.

V. 21 "You are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." - Value of having a meaningful name.

V. 23b "They shall call him Emmanuel, which means, 'God is with us'." - Value of reconciliation between God and the human race (which is signified by the name Emmanuel).

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you experienced (like Mary, but in a lesser way), the power of the Holy Spirit to do, through you, something that seemed impossible?

- Or, have you (like St. Joseph, Mary's husband), at least accepted the truth that the Holy Spirit has the power to do what human beings cannot do?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

In Relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - On this Marian Sunday of Advent, let us see to it that Filipino Catholics continue to be a "*pueblo amante de Maria*," (Translation: *a people in love with Mary*). To assure this, our Bishops have declared a National Marian Year from December 8, 2004 to December 8, 2005. It has been occasioned by the 150th anniversary of the declaration of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception on August 15, 1854.

MOTHER OF EMMANUEL

Mary, Mother of Emmanuel, "God With Us", was declared to be the "Immaculate Conception" on August 15, 1854. To mark this anniversary, Pope John Paul II made a pilgrimage to Lourdes where the lady appearing at the grotto told St. Bernadette, "I am the Immaculate Conception." The following news dispatch can serve for our homily this Sunday:

LOURDES, France, AUG. 17, 2004 (Zenit.org). - Cardinal Philippe Barbarin of Lyon presided this year over the traditional national pilgrimage Aug. 15 to Lourdes, which on this occasion had a special guest: Pope John Paul II.

In this interview, the 53-year-old primate of France reflects on the reason for the papal visit, the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and its fruits.

Q: What would you say to a youth who asked you about the mystery of the Immaculate Conception?

Cardinal Barbarin: Let us begin with the voice that was heard when Jesus came out of the waters of the Jordan: "This is my beloved Son." What God desired to give to men took place through Jesus, the sole Mediator. We receive everything - the forgiveness of sins, justice and peace, purity of heart, holiness, victory over death - through baptism, which is our rebirth.

"Do not marvel that I say to you, 'You must be born anew,'" Jesus said to Nicodemus. So we understand why God willed to give this gift beforehand to the Mother of his

Son. Even before God saved the world with the passion and resurrection of Jesus, at the moment that Mary's life was conceived in her mother's womb, she was "all holy." There was nothing that stained or injured her. That is why, in his greeting, the angel Gabriel said: "Hail, full of grace." No matter how much we study and analyze her life, we will see nothing but love.

Q: What is the essential message of the Pope's presence in Lourdes?

Cardinal Barbarin: John Paul II came on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception by his predecessor, Blessed Pius IX.

He has helped us to go deeper into all that of our faith which relates to the Mother of God. After recalling her role in our salvation, the Second Vatican Council has taught us to see the place that Mary has in the Church and in men's journey.

One of our canticles mentions this theme: "She is the first on the way." Thanks to Mary's example and life, the Holy Father helps us to see all the light that God can infuse in a human heart. It is something that encourages us and fills us with hope.

The Pope also prayed the rosary with us, meditating on the luminous mysteries which he proposed two years ago. Jesus is "the light of the world." All those who approach Christ, who love and follow him, who participate in his mission and passion, reflect this light in the world. In this instance we can also say that Mary is the first.

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *Tidings of Great Joy*. After fixing the birth of the Savior in the calendar of history by mentioning the census ordered by the Roman Emperor Augustus (30 BC to 14 AD), Luke goes back to the little corner of the earth (in Asia) where the Savior was born. He says that poor shepherds were the ones to whom the good news was first proclaimed, although the tidings of great joy is to be shared by all people.

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V.6-7a "The time came for her to have her child and she gave birth to her firstborn son..." - Value of being a mother.

V.7b "Laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." - Value of making the best out of adversity.

V.8 "Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock." - Value of doing what you are supposed to do.

VIOb "Do not be afraid..." - Value of overcoming fear.

V 10c "I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." - Value of good news for all.

VIIb "A savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord." - Value of having a Savior.

V.14 "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." - Value of praising God.
- Value of Peace.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you, like Jesus, Mary and Joseph, experienced being one with the poorest of the poor (for example, those who could find no room in the inn... and the shepherds)?
- Have you experienced the Peace of those on whom God's favor rests?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - Let us continue celebrating the Year of the Eucharist with the universal church, and persevere in our national celebration of a special Marian Year to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the Dogma of the the Immaculate Conception.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - As we celebrate Christ's birth and the Glad Tidings for all people broadcast by the angels on the first Christmas, let us continue our commitment to work for Peace.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. We have to train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY

As we continue celebrating the Year of the Eucharist, it is but right to connect the Great Sacrament with the Christmas tidings of great joy. It seems most appropriate to use as homily for today what Pope John Paul II said partly when he opened the Year of the Eucharist on the Feast of Corpus Christ, June 6, 2004.

"Christ, 'the living bread which came down from heaven' (John 6:51), is the only one who can satisfy man's hunger at all times and in all parts of the earth. However, he does not want to do it alone and so, as in the multiplication of the loaves, he involves the disciples: 'And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd' (Luke 9:16). This miraculous sign is a figure of the greater mystery of love that is renewed every day in the holy Mass: Through the ordained ministers, Christ gives his Body and Blood for the life of humanity. And all those who nourish themselves worthily at his table, become living instruments of his presence of love, mercy and peace."

"Lauda, Sion, Salvatorem!" - Sion, praise the Savior, your guide and shepherd, with hymns and canticles. With profound emotion we feel this invitation to praise and joy resound in our hearts. At the end of the holy Mass we will carry the Divine Sacrament in procession to the Basilica of St. Mary Major. Contemplating Mary, we will understand better the transforming force that the Eucharist possesses. Listening to her, we will find in the Eucharistic mystery the courage and strength to follow Christ the Good Shepherd and to serve him in our brothers."

Readings (A): Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Col 3:12-21; Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

1. SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL TEACHING (*Supplement to Bibliarasal Step Three*). *A Family Obedient to God.* The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is an example of a family obedient to God. Through this obedience each one of them, in his or her own way, contributes to the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for all humankind.

2. VALUES THAT WE CAN PICK FROM THE PASSAGE (*Bibliarasal Step Three*).

V.13-15,19-23 - Value of obeying divine directives.

VI5 & 23 "That what the Lord had said through the prophets might be fulfilled..." - Value of experiencing the fulfillment of prophecy.

3. POINTS FOR SHARING (*Bibliarasal Step Five*).

- Have you been like St. Joseph, obedient to divine instructions?

- Have you given importance to the prophecies of Scripture?

4. WHAT THE LORD WANTS US TO DO (*Bibliarasal Step Six*).

a) In relation to Philippine Church Life Today. - We have to continue reminding the flock that people have to

- obey God's Law of respecting and protecting human life in ; the family rather than following the foolish laws of an ill-advised congress.

b) In relation to the Socio-Economic, Political and Cultural Life of Filipinos Today. - Let us keep in mind that the Holy Family was a Migrant Family in Egypt. Let us ask their help as we reach out to Filipinos who migrate to other countries and to our overseas workers.

c) In relation to Spiritual and Personal Life. Let us train ourselves in the values pointed out above (n. 2).

S.A.F.E.

(Subtle Attacks vs. the Family Explained)

SAFE is a response to the January 2001 *National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal's* call to include family and life among the Church's pastoral priorities, and continues in the spirit of the *Fourth World Meeting of Families* of January 2003. The Pastoral Letter of His Eminence, Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, entitled *Subtle Attacks against Family and Life* (of July 9, 2001), will be studied. *Given the importance of the topic, we are opening the seminar to all sectors of society: family and life workers, educators, youth leaders, catechists, policy-makers, health care workers, media professionals, lawyers, priests and religious, etc.*

SAFE, live-out, 2 days seminars are held on second weekends of the month, Saturday & Sunday, from 7:30 am - 6:00 pm, at St. Joseph Retreat House (beside Our Lady of Loreto Parish Church, Bustillos St., Sampaloc, Manila). Sche-

dule for 2004: xxx Sept. 11-12, Oct 09-10, Nov. 1344 and Dec 19 - Christmas Reunion. (All with Masses on Saturday and Sunday noon).

On site training in other dioceses (other than the Archdiocese of Manila), parishes, schools and groups may be arranged, adapting to their needs and circumstances.

Contact Sr. Ma; Caridad, O.P., at Villa San Miguel (tel. 531-7069 or 531-7034).

(Excerpts from a flyer given out by the Association of Women Religious in the Archdiocese of Manila under the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Family Life)