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Editorial

Sacramentum Caritatis

Pope Benedict XVI

Canon Law Section

Augustine Mendonça, JCD

Homilies for April to July 2007

Enrico Gonzales, OP

Efren Rivera, OP

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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EDITORIAL

The frenzy over the upcoming May 2007 election highlights what we already know from daily experience: the pervasive moral decadence in our national politics. Peace, unity, progress and development dominate public discourses, yet the hope of a better Philippine society appears bleak and dismal without sincere conversion of the heart and transformation of our socio-political structures. The electoral process in this Catholic country is a time when injustice, selfish ambitions and disregard for human life are the rule of the day.

The most recent Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, comes as an opportune reminder that sets us on the path of authentic love of God and neighbor. The Holy Eucharist, as *Sacramentum Caritatis* solemnly reiterates, is the summit and source of the Church's life and mission where Jesus meets us and *becomes our companion along the way of peace, justice and prosperity*.

Sacramentum Caritatis is also a testament to Pope Benedict XVI's commitment to what his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, has earlier put in motion. It is noteworthy to recall that Pope Benedict XVI has carried the Year of the Eucharist to its

fruition. He has also taken into consideration the many initiatives and recommendations made by the Synod of Bishops on the theme of the Eucharist. Furthermore, *Sacramentum Caritatis* is a recognition of the significance of Pope John Paul II's last encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* that emphasized the centrality of the Eucharist in Christian life. The present exhortation is a theological and pastoral meditation on the mystery of the Eucharist complementing Benedict XVI's first Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, wherein he mentioned frequently the sacrament of the Eucharist and stressed its relationship to Christian love, both of God and neighbor.

In *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that "God's name is love." In *Sacramentum Caritatis*, he tells us that this love, God himself, is experienced and shared in the Eucharist. Thus, living the love of God is living creatively and fruitfully the Eucharist. Accordingly, the three parts of the exhortation defines the centrality of the Eucharist in the life of the Church as: (1) Mystery to be believed; (2) to be celebrated; and (3) to be lived.

The Eucharist is a "mystery of faith" par excellence, "the sum and summary of our faith." The celebration of the Eucharist is neither a mere commemoration of the Last Supper nor a simple remembrance of the Paschal Mystery. In the Eucharist, we are drawn into a dynamic relation with the Trinity. As a divine worship, it permeates every aspect of existence, *which penetrates to the heart of all being, a change meant to set off a process which transforms reality, a process leading ultimately to the transfiguration of the entire world, to the point where God will be all in all.*

Sacramentum Caritatis enjoins us to give the highest value to the Eucharist in our ecclesial life. Moreover, Pope Benedict XVI, through this Pastoral Exhortation, instructs the ordained ministers and the lay faithful on the importance of the art of the proper celebration of the sacrament. Finally, he beseeches in us a renewed and profound fervor in the appreciation of and commitment to the liturgical norms – the very condition of the authenticity of the celebration, the very landscape of experiencing love, Jesus himself.

Sacramentum Caritatis clearly spells out the essential link between faith, worship and social renewal in the mystery of the Eucharist. Thus, much needed social and moral renewal can only come from steadfast dedication to the celebration of the Eucharist. It is in our daily commitment to the Holy Eucharist that we are able to bring our people to an authentic renewal in the heart of Jesus. Pope Benedict has untiringly spoken of the impact and influence of the Eucharist in all aspects of life. By cultivating the spirituality of the Eucharist, we lead the flock into a formation that mere politics and education alone will always fall short to achieve. In the Eucharist, Jesus brings radical newness to our life.

DOCUMENTATION

Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation ***Sacramentum Caritatis***

POPE BENEDICT XVI

*To the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons
and the Lay Faithful on the Eucharist*

INTRODUCTION

1. The sacrament of charity,¹ the Holy Eucharist is the gift that Jesus Christ makes of himself, thus revealing to us God's infinite love for every man and woman. This wondrous sacrament makes manifest that "greater" love which led him to "lay down his life for his friends" (*Jn 15:13*). Jesus did indeed love them "to the end" (*Jn 13:1*). In those words the Evangelist introduces Christ's act of immense humility: before dying for us on the Cross, he tied a towel around himself and washed the feet of his disciples. In the same way, Jesus continues, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, to love us "to the end," even to offering us his body and his blood. What amazement must the Apostles have felt in witnessing

¹ Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 73, a. 3.

what the Lord did and said during that Supper! What wonder must the eucharistic mystery also awaken in our own hearts!

The food of truth

2. In the sacrament of the altar, the Lord meets us, men and women created in God's image and likeness (cf. *Gen* 1:27), and becomes our companion along the way. In this sacrament, the Lord truly becomes food for us, to satisfy our hunger for truth and freedom. Since only the truth can make us free (cf. *Jn* 8:32), Christ becomes for us the food of truth. With deep human insight, Saint Augustine clearly showed how we are moved spontaneously, and not by constraint, whenever we encounter something attractive and desirable. Asking himself what it is that can move us most deeply, the saintly Bishop went on to say: "What does our soul desire more passionately than truth?"² Each of us has an innate and irrepressible desire for ultimate and definitive truth. The Lord Jesus, "the way, and the truth, and the life" (*Jn* 14:6), speaks to our thirsting, pilgrim hearts, our hearts yearning for the source of life, our hearts longing for truth. Jesus Christ is the Truth in person, drawing the world to himself. "Jesus is the lodestar of human freedom: without him, freedom loses its focus, for without the knowledge of truth, freedom becomes debased, alienated and reduced to empty caprice. With him, freedom finds itself."³ In the sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus shows us in particular the *truth about the love* which is the very essence of God. It is this evangelical truth which challenges each of us and our whole being. For this

² Saint Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 26,5: PL 35, 1609.

³ Benedict XVI, Address to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (10 February 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 255.

reason, the Church, which finds in the Eucharist the very centre of her life, is constantly concerned to proclaim to all, *opportune importune* (cf. 2 Tim 4:2), that God is love.⁴ Precisely because Christ has become for us the food of truth, the Church turns to every man and woman, inviting them freely to accept God's gift.

The development of the eucharistic rite

3. If we consider the bimillenary history of God's Church, guided by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we can gratefully admire the orderly development of the ritual forms in which we commemorate the event of our salvation. From the varied forms of the early centuries, still resplendent in the rites of the Ancient Churches of the East, up to the spread of the Roman rite; from the clear indications of the Council of Trent and the Missal of Saint Pius V to the liturgical renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council: in every age of the Church's history the eucharistic celebration, as the source and summit of her life and mission, shines forth in the liturgical rite in all its richness and variety. The *Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, held from 2-23 October 2005 in the Vatican, gratefully acknowledged the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this rich history. In a particular way, the Synod Fathers acknowledged and reaffirmed the beneficial influence on the Church's life of the liturgical renewal which began with the *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*.⁵ The Synod of Bishops was able to evaluate the reception of the renewal in the years following the Council.

⁴ Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops (1 June 2006): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 2 June 2006, p. 5.

⁵ Cf. *Propositio 2*.

There were many expressions of appreciation. The difficulties and even the occasional abuses which were noted, it was affirmed, cannot overshadow the benefits and the validity of the liturgical renewal, whose riches are yet to be fully explored. Concretely, the changes which the Council called for need to be understood within the overall unity of the historical development of the rite itself, without the introduction of artificial discontinuities.⁶

The Synod of Bishops and the Year of the Eucharist

4. We should also emphasize the relationship between the recent Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist and the events which have taken place in the Church's life in recent years. First of all, we should recall the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, with which my beloved Predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, led the Church into the third Christian millennium. The Jubilee Year clearly had a significant eucharistic dimension. Nor can we forget that the Synod of Bishops was preceded, and in some sense prepared for, by the *Year of the Eucharist* which John Paul II had, with great foresight, wanted the whole Church to celebrate. That year, which began with the *International Eucharistic Congress in Guadalajara in October 2004*, ended on 23 October 2005, at the conclusion of the XI Synodal Assembly, with the canonization of five saints particularly distinguished for their eucharistic piety: Bishop Józef Bilczewski, Fathers Gaetano Catanoso, Zygmunt Gorazdowski and Alberto Hurtado Cruchaga, and

⁶ I am referring here to the need for a hermeneutic of continuity also with regard to the correct interpretation of the liturgical development which followed the Second Vatican Council: cf. Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia (22 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006), 44-45.

the Capuchin Fra Felice da Nicosia. Thanks to the teachings proposed by John Paul II in the Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine*⁷ and to the helpful suggestions of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments,⁸ many initiatives were undertaken by Dioceses and various ecclesial groups in order to reawaken and increase eucharistic faith, to improve the quality of eucharistic celebration, to promote eucharistic adoration and to encourage a practical solidarity which, starting from the Eucharist, would reach out to those in need. Finally, mention should be made of the significance of my venerable Predecessor's last Encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*,⁹ in which he left us a sure magisterial statement of the Church's teaching on the Eucharist and a final testimony of the central place that this divine sacrament had in his own life.

The purpose of this Exhortation

5. This Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation seeks to take up the richness and variety of the reflections and proposals which emerged from the recent Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops – from the *Lineamenta* to the *Propositiones*, along the way of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, the *Relationes ante* and *post disceptationem*, the interventions of the Synod Fathers, the *auditores* and the fraternal delegates – and to

⁷ Cf. AAS 97 (2005), 337-352.

⁸ *The Year of the Eucharist: Suggestions and Proposals* (15 October 2004): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15 October 2004, Supplement.

⁹ Cf. AAS 95 (2003), 433-475. Also, the Instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004): AAS 96 (2004), 549-601, expressly desired by John Paul II.

offer some basic directions aimed at a renewed commitment to eucharistic enthusiasm and fervour in the Church. Conscious of the immense patrimony of doctrine and discipline accumulated over the centuries with regard to this sacrament,¹⁰ I wish here to endorse the wishes expressed by the Synod Fathers¹¹ by encouraging the Christian people to deepen their understanding of the relationship between the *eucharistic mystery*, the *liturgical action*, and the *new spiritual worship* which derives from the Eucharist as the *sacrament of charity*. Consequently, I wish to set the present Exhortation alongside my first Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*, in which I frequently mentioned the sacrament of the Eucharist and stressed its relationship to Christian love, both of God and of neighbour: “God incarnate draws us all to himself. We can thus understand how *agape* also became a term for the Eucharist: there God’s own *agape* comes to us bodily, in order to continue his work in us and through us.”¹²

¹⁰ To name only the more important documents: Ecumenical Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones de ss. Missae sacrificio*, DS 1738-1759; Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Mirae Caritatis* (28 May 1902): ASS (1903), 115-136; Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* (20 November 1947): AAS 39 (1947), 521-595; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Mysterium Fidei* (3 September 1965): AAS 57 (1965), 753-774; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003): AAS 95 (2003), 433-475; Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (25 May 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 539-573; Instruction *Liturgiam Authenticam* (28 March 2001): AAS 93 (2001), 685-726.

¹¹ Cf. *Propositio* 1.

¹² No. 14: AAS 98 (2006), 229.

PART ONE
THE EUCHARIST, A MYSTERY
TO BE BELIEVED

**“This is the work of God: that you believe
in him whom he has sent” (Jn 6:29)**

The Church’s eucharistic faith

6. “*The mystery of faith!*” With these words, spoken immediately after the words of consecration, the priest proclaims the mystery being celebrated and expresses his wonder before the substantial change of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, a reality which surpasses all human understanding. The Eucharist is a “mystery of faith” par excellence: “the sum and summary of our faith.”¹³ The Church’s faith is essentially a eucharistic faith, and it is especially nourished at the table of the Eucharist. Faith and the sacraments are two complementary aspects of ecclesial life. Awakened by the preaching of God’s word, faith is nourished and grows in the grace-filled encounter with the Risen Lord which takes place in the sacraments: “faith is expressed in the rite, while the rite reinforces and strengthens faith.”¹⁴ For this reason, the Sacrament of the Altar is always at the heart of the Church’s life: “thanks to the Eucharist, the Church is reborn ever anew!”¹⁵ The more lively the eucharistic faith of the People of God, the deeper is its sharing in ecclesial life in steadfast commitment to the mission

¹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1327.

¹⁴ *Propositio* 16.

¹⁵ Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass of Installation in the Cathedral of Rome (7 May 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 752.

entrusted by Christ to his disciples. The Church's very history bears witness to this. Every great reform has in some way been linked to the rediscovery of belief in the Lord's eucharistic presence among his people.

The Blessed Trinity and the Eucharist

The bread come down from heaven

7. The first element of eucharistic faith is the mystery of God himself, trinitarian love. In Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus, we find an illuminating expression in this regard: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (*Jn* 3:16-17). These words show the deepest source of God's gift. In the Eucharist Jesus does not give us a "thing," but himself; he offers his own body and pours out his own blood. He thus gives us the totality of his life and reveals the ultimate origin of this love. He is the eternal Son, given to us by the Father. In the Gospel we hear how Jesus, after feeding the crowds by multiplying the loaves and fishes, says to those who had followed him to the synagogue of Capernaum: "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven; for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world" (*Jn* 6:32-33), and even identifies himself, his own flesh and blood, with that bread: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" (*Jn* 6:51). Jesus thus shows that he is the bread of life which the eternal Father gives to mankind.

A free gift of the Blessed Trinity

8. The Eucharist reveals the loving plan that guides all of salvation history (cf. *Eph* 1:10; 3:8- 11). There the *Deus Trinitas*, who is essentially love (cf. *I Jn* 4:7-8), becomes fully a part of our human condition. In the bread and wine under whose appearances Christ gives himself to us in the paschal meal (cf. *Lk* 22:14-20; *I Cor* 11:23-26), God's whole life encounters us and is sacramentally shared with us. God is a perfect communion of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At creation itself, man was called to have some share in God's breath of life (cf. *Gen* 2:7). But it is in Christ, dead and risen, and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, given without measure (cf. *Jn* 3:34), that we have become sharers of God's inmost life.¹⁶ Jesus Christ, who "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God" (*Heb* 9:14), makes us, in the gift of the Eucharist, sharers in God's own life. This is an absolutely free gift, the superabundant fulfilment of God's promises. The Church receives, celebrates and adores this gift in faithful obedience. The "mystery of faith" is thus a mystery of trinitarian love, a mystery in which we are called by grace to participate. We too should therefore exclaim with Saint Augustine: "If you see love, you see the Trinity."¹⁷

The Eucharist: Jesus the true Sacrificial lamb

The new and eternal covenant in the blood of the Lamb

9. The mission for which Jesus came among us was accomplished in the Paschal Mystery. On the Cross from which

¹⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 4.

¹⁷ *De Trinitate*, VIII, 8, 12: CCL 50, 287.

he draws all people to himself (cf. *Jn* 12:32), just before “giving up the Spirit,” he utters the words: “it is finished” (*Jn* 19:30). In the mystery of Christ’s obedience unto death, even death on a Cross (cf. *Phil* 2:8), the new and eternal covenant was brought about. In his crucified flesh, God’s freedom and our human freedom met definitively in an inviolable, eternally valid pact. Human sin was also redeemed once for all by God’s Son (cf. *Heb* 7:27; *1 Jn* 2:2; 4:10). As I have said elsewhere, “Christ’s death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form.”¹⁸ In the Paschal Mystery, our deliverance from evil and death has taken place. In instituting the Eucharist, Jesus had spoken of the “new and eternal covenant” in the shedding of his blood (cf. *Mt* 26:28; *Mk* 14:24; *Lk* 22:20). This, the ultimate purpose of his mission, was clear from the very beginning of his public life. Indeed, when, on the banks of the Jordan, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming towards him, he cried out: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (*Jn* 1:29). It is significant that these same words are repeated at every celebration of Holy Mass, when the priest invites us to approach the altar: “This is *the Lamb of God* who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.” Jesus is the *true* paschal lamb who freely gave himself in sacrifice for us, and thus brought about the new and eternal covenant. The Eucharist contains this radical newness, which is offered to us again at every celebration.¹⁹

¹⁸ Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 12: AAS 98 (2006), 228.

¹⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 3.

The institution of the Eucharist

10. This leads us to reflect on the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. It took place within a ritual meal commemorating the foundational event of the people of Israel: their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. This ritual meal, which called for the sacrifice of lambs (cf. Ex 12:1-28, 43-51), was a remembrance of the past, but at the same time a prophetic remembrance, the proclamation of a deliverance yet to come. The people had come to realize that their earlier liberation was not definitive, for their history continued to be marked by slavery and sin. The remembrance of their ancient liberation thus expanded to the invocation and expectation of a yet more profound, radical, universal and definitive salvation. This is the context in which Jesus introduces the newness of his gift. In the prayer of praise, the *Berakah*, he does not simply thank the Father for the great events of past history, but also for his own "exaltation." In instituting the sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus anticipates and makes present the sacrifice of the Cross and the victory of the resurrection. At the same time, he reveals that he himself is the *true* sacrificial lamb, destined in the Father's plan from the foundation of the world, as we read in *The First Letter of Peter* (cf. 1:18-20). By placing his gift in this context, Jesus shows the salvific meaning of his death and resurrection, a mystery which renews history and the whole cosmos. The institution of the Eucharist demonstrates how Jesus' death, for all its violence and absurdity, became in him a supreme act of love and mankind's definitive deliverance from evil.

Figura transit in veritatem

11. Jesus thus brings his own radical *novum* to the ancient Hebrew sacrificial meal. For us Christians, that meal no longer

need be repeated. As the Church Fathers rightly say, *figura transit in veritatem*: the foreshadowing has given way to the truth itself. The ancient rite has been brought to fulfilment and definitively surpassed by the loving gift of the incarnate Son of God. The food of truth, Christ sacrificed for our sake, *dat figuris terminum*.²⁰ By his command to “do this in remembrance of me” (*Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:25*), he asks us to respond to his gift and to make it sacramentally present. In these words the Lord expresses, as it were, his expectation that the Church, born of his sacrifice, will receive this gift, developing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the liturgical form of the sacrament. The remembrance of his perfect gift consists not in the mere repetition of the Last Supper, but in the Eucharist itself, that is, in the radical newness of Christian worship. In this way, Jesus left us the task of entering into his “hour.” “The Eucharist draws us into Jesus’ act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving.”²¹ Jesus “draws us into himself.”²² The substantial conversion of bread and wine into his body and blood introduces within creation the principle of a radical change, a sort of “nuclear fission,” to use an image familiar to us today, which penetrates to the heart of all being, a change meant to set off a process which transforms reality, a process leading ultimately to the transfiguration of the entire world, to the point where God will be all in all (cf. *1 Cor 15:28*).

²⁰ Roman Breviary, *Hymn for the Office of Readings of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi*.

²¹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 13: AAS 98 (2006), 228.

²² Benedict XVI, Homily at Marienfeld Esplanade (21 August 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 891-892.

The Holy Spirit and the Eucharist

Jesus and the Holy Spirit

12. With his word and with the elements of bread and wine, the Lord himself has given us the essentials of this new worship. The Church, his Bride, is called to celebrate the eucharistic banquet daily in his memory. She thus makes the redeeming sacrifice of her Bridegroom a part of human history and makes it sacramentally present in every culture. This great mystery is celebrated in the liturgical forms which the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, develops in time and space.²³ We need a renewed awareness of the decisive role played by the Holy Spirit in the evolution of the liturgical form and the deepening understanding of the sacred mysteries. The Paraclete, Christ's first gift to those who believe,²⁴ already at work in Creation (cf. *Gen* 1:2), is fully present throughout the life of the incarnate Word: Jesus Christ is conceived by the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mt* 1:18; *Lk* 1:35); at the beginning of his public mission, on the banks of the Jordan, he sees the Spirit descend upon him in the form of a dove (cf. *Mt* 3:16 and parallels); he acts, speaks and rejoices in the Spirit (cf. *Lk* 10:21), and he can offer himself in the Spirit (cf. *Heb* 9:14). In the so-called "farewell discourse" reported by John, Jesus clearly relates the gift of his life in the paschal mystery to the gift of the Spirit to his own (cf. *Jn* 16:7). Once risen, bearing in his flesh the signs of the passion, he can pour out the Spirit upon them (cf. *Jn* 20:22), making them sharers in his own mission (cf. *Jn* 20:21). The Spirit would then teach the disciples all things and bring to their remembrance all that

²³ Cf. *Propositio* 3.

²⁴ Cf. Roman Missal, *Eucharistic Prayer IV*.

Christ had said (cf. *Jn* 14:26), since it falls to him, as the Spirit of truth (cf. *Jn* 15:26), to guide the disciples into all truth (cf. *Jn* 16:13). In the account in *Acts*, the Spirit descends on the Apostles gathered in prayer with Mary on the day of Pentecost (cf. 2:1-4) and stirs them to undertake the mission of proclaiming the Good News to all peoples. Thus it is through the working of the Spirit that Christ himself continues to be present and active in his Church, starting with her vital centre which is the Eucharist.

The Holy Spirit and the eucharistic celebration

13. Against this backdrop we can understand the decisive role played by the Holy Spirit in the eucharistic celebration, particularly with regard to transubstantiation. An awareness of this is clearly evident in the Fathers of the Church. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, in his *Catecheses*, states that we “call upon God in his mercy to send his Holy Spirit upon the offerings before us, to transform the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood of Christ. Whatever the Holy Spirit touches is sanctified and completely transformed”.²⁵ Saint John Chrysostom too notes that the priest invokes the Holy Spirit when he celebrates the sacrifice:²⁶ like Elijah, the minister calls down the Holy Spirit so that “as grace comes down upon the victim, the souls of all are thereby inflamed”.²⁷ The spiritual life of the faithful can benefit greatly from a better appreciation of the richness of the anaphora: along with the words spoken by Christ at the Last Supper, it contains the epiclesis, the petition to the Father to send down

²⁵ *Cat.* XXIII, 7: PG 33, 1114ff.

²⁶ Cf. *De Sacerdotio*, VI, 4: PG 48, 681.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 4: PG 48, 642.

the gift of the Spirit so that the bread and the wine will become the body and blood of Jesus Christ and that "the community as a whole will become ever more the body of Christ."²⁸ The Spirit invoked by the celebrant upon the gifts of bread and wine placed on the altar is the same Spirit who gathers the faithful "into one body" and makes of them a spiritual offering pleasing to the Father.²⁹

The Eucharist and the Church

The Eucharist, causal principle of the Church

14. Through the sacrament of the Eucharist Jesus draws the faithful into his "hour;" he shows us the bond that he willed to establish between himself and us, between his own person and the Church. Indeed, in the sacrifice of the Cross, Christ gave birth to the Church as his Bride and his body. The Fathers of the Church often meditated on the relationship between Eve's coming forth from the side of Adam as he slept (cf. *Gen* 2:21-23) and the coming forth of the new Eve, the Church, from the open side of Christ sleeping in death: from Christ's pierced side, John recounts, there came forth blood and water (cf. *Jn* 19:34), the symbol of the sacraments.³⁰ A contemplative gaze "upon him

²⁸ *Propositio* 22.

²⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 42: "This eucharistic encounter takes place in the Holy Spirit, who transforms and sanctifies us. He re-awakens in the disciple the firm desire to proclaim boldly to others all that he has heard and experienced, to bring them to the same encounter with Christ. Thus the disciple, sent forth by the Church, becomes open to a mission without frontiers."

³⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 3; for an example, see: Saint John Chrysostom, *Catechesis* 3, 13-19: SC 50, 174-177.

whom they have pierced” (*Jn* 19:37) leads us to reflect on the causal connection between Christ’s sacrifice, the Eucharist and the Church. The Church “draws her life from the Eucharist”.³¹ Since the Eucharist makes present Christ’s redeeming sacrifice, we must start by acknowledging that “there is a causal influence of the Eucharist at the Church’s very origins.”³² The Eucharist is Christ who gives himself to us and continually builds us up as his body. Hence, in the striking interplay between the Eucharist which builds up the Church, and the Church herself which “makes” the Eucharist,³³ the primary causality is expressed in the first formula: the Church is able to celebrate and adore the mystery of Christ present in the Eucharist precisely because Christ first gave himself to her in the sacrifice of the Cross. The Church’s ability to “make” the Eucharist is completely rooted in Christ’s self-gift to her. Here we can see more clearly the meaning of Saint John’s words: “he first loved us” (*1 Jn* 4:19). We too, at every celebration of the Eucharist, confess the primacy of Christ’s gift. The causal influence of the Eucharist at the Church’s origins definitively discloses both the chronological and ontological priority of the fact that it was Christ who loved us “first.” For all eternity he remains the one who loves us first.

The Eucharist and ecclesial communion

15. The Eucharist is thus constitutive of the Church’s being and activity. This is why Christian antiquity used the

³¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 1: AAS 95 (2003), 433.

³² *Ibid.*, 21: AAS 95 (2003), 447.

³³ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 20: AAS 71 (1979), 309-316; Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cenae* (24 February 1980), 4: AAS 72 (1980), 119-121.

same words, *Corpus Christi*, to designate Christ's body born of the Virgin Mary, his eucharistic body and his ecclesial body.³⁴ This clear datum of the tradition helps us to appreciate the inseparability of Christ and the Church. The Lord Jesus, by offering himself in sacrifice for us, in his gift effectively pointed to the mystery of the Church. It is significant that the Second Eucharistic Prayer, invoking the Paraclete, formulates its prayer for the unity of the Church as follows: "*may all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.*" These words help us to see clearly how the *res* of the sacrament of the Eucharist is the unity of the faithful within ecclesial communion. The Eucharist is thus found at the root of the Church as a mystery of communion.³⁵

The relationship between Eucharist and *communio* had already been pointed out by the Servant of God John Paul II in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. He spoke of the memorial of Christ as "the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church."³⁶ The unity of ecclesial communion is concretely manifested in the Christian communities and is renewed at the celebration of the Eucharist, which unites them and differentiates them in the particular Churches, "*in quibus et ex quibus una et unica Ecclesia catholica existit.*"³⁷ The fact that the one Eucharist is celebrated in each Diocese around its own Bishop helps us to see how those particular Churches subsist *in* and *ex Ecclesia*. Indeed, "the oneness and indivisibility

³⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 5.

³⁵ Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 80, a. 4.

³⁶ No. 38: AAS 95 (2003), 458.

³⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23.

of the eucharistic body of the Lord implies the oneness of his mystical body, which is the one and indivisible Church. From the eucharistic centre arises the necessary openness of every celebrating community, of every particular Church. By allowing itself to be drawn into the open arms of the Lord, it achieves insertion into his one and undivided body.”³⁸ Consequently, in the celebration of the Eucharist, the individual members of the faithful find themselves in *their* Church, that is, in the Church of Christ. From this eucharistic perspective, adequately understood, ecclesial communion is seen to be catholic by its very nature.³⁹ An emphasis on this eucharistic basis of ecclesial communion can also contribute greatly to the ecumenical dialogue with the Churches and Ecclesial Communities which are not in full communion with the See of Peter. The Eucharist objectively creates a powerful bond of unity between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Churches, which have preserved the authentic and integral nature of the eucharistic mystery. At the same time, emphasis on the ecclesial character of the Eucharist can become an important element of the dialogue with the Communities of the Reformed tradition.⁴⁰

³⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion *Communiois Notio* (28 May 1992), 11: AAS 85 (1993), 844-845.

³⁹ *Propositio* 5: “The term ‘catholic’ expresses the universality deriving from the unity that the Eucharist, celebrated in each Church, fosters and builds up. The particular Churches in the universal Church thus have, in the Eucharist, the duty to make visible their own unity and diversity. This bond of fraternal love allows the trinitarian communion to become apparent. The Councils and Synods express in history this fraternal aspect of the Church.”

⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

The Eucharist and the Sacraments

The sacramentality of the Church

16. The Second Vatican Council recalled that “all the sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed towards it. For in the most blessed Eucharist is contained the entire spiritual wealth of the Church, namely Christ himself our Pasch and our living bread, who gives life to humanity through his flesh – that flesh which is given life and gives life by the Holy Spirit. Thus men and women are invited and led to offer themselves, their works and all creation in union with Christ.”⁴¹ This close relationship of the Eucharist with the other sacraments and the Christian life can be most fully understood when we contemplate the mystery of the Church herself as a sacrament.⁴² The Council in this regard stated that “the Church, in Christ, is a sacrament – a sign and instrument – of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race.”⁴³ To quote Saint Cyprian, as “a people made one by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,”⁴⁴ she is the sacrament of trinitarian communion.

The fact that the Church is the “universal sacrament of salvation”⁴⁵ shows how the sacramental economy ultimately determines the way that Christ, the one Saviour, through the Spirit, reaches our lives in all their particularity. The Church

⁴¹ Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5.

⁴² Cf. *Propositio* 14.

⁴³ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

⁴⁴ *De Orat. Dom.*, 23: PL 4, 553.

⁴⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 48, cf. *ibid.*, 9.

receives and at the same time *expresses* what she herself is in the seven sacraments, thanks to which God's grace concretely influences the lives of the faithful, so that their whole existence, redeemed by Christ, can become an act of worship pleasing to God. From this perspective, I would like here to draw attention to some elements brought up by the Synod Fathers which may help us to grasp the relationship of each of the sacraments to the eucharistic mystery.

I. The Eucharist and Christian initiation

The Eucharist, the fullness of Christian initiation

17. If the Eucharist is truly the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, it follows that the process of Christian initiation must constantly be directed to the reception of this sacrament. As the Synod Fathers said, we need to ask ourselves whether in our Christian communities the close link between Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist is sufficiently recognized.⁴⁶ It must never be forgotten that our reception of Baptism and Confirmation is ordered to the Eucharist. Accordingly, our pastoral practice should reflect a more unitary understanding of the process of Christian initiation. The sacrament of Baptism, by which we were conformed to Christ,⁴⁷ incorporated in the Church and made children of God, is the portal to all the sacraments. It makes us part of the one Body of Christ (cf. *1 Cor* 12:13), a priestly people. Still, it is our participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice which perfects within us the gifts given to us at Baptism.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 13.

⁴⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 7.

The gifts of the Spirit are given for the building up of Christ's Body (*1 Cor* 12) and for ever greater witness to the Gospel in the world.⁴⁸ The Holy Eucharist, then, brings Christian initiation to completion and represents the centre and goal of all sacramental life.⁴⁹

The order of the sacraments of initiation

18. In this regard, attention needs to be paid to the order of the sacraments of initiation. Different traditions exist within the Church. There is a clear variation between, on the one hand, the ecclesial customs of the East⁵⁰ and the practice of the West regarding the initiation of adults,⁵¹ and, on the other hand, the procedure adopted for children.⁵² Yet these variations are not properly of the dogmatic order, but are pastoral in character. Concretely, it needs to be seen which practice better enables the faithful to put the sacrament of the Eucharist at the centre, as the goal of the whole process of initiation. In close collaboration with the competent offices of the Roman Curia, Bishops' Conferences should examine the effectiveness of current approaches to Christian initiation, so that the faithful can be helped both to mature through the formation received in our communities and to give their lives an authentically eucharistic direction, so that

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 11; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes*, 9, 13.

⁴⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cenae* (24 February 1980), 7: AAS 72 (1980), 124-127; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, can. 710.

⁵¹ Cf. *Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults*, General Introduction, 34-36.

⁵² Cf. *Rite of Baptism for Children*, Introduction, 18-19.

they can offer a reason for the hope within them in a way suited to our times (cf. *1 Pet* 3:15).

Initiation, the ecclesial community and the family

19. It should be kept in mind that the whole of Christian initiation is a process of conversion undertaken with God's help and with constant reference to the ecclesial community, both when an adult is seeking entry into the Church, as happens in places of first evangelization and in many secularized regions, and when parents request the sacraments for their children. In this regard, I would like to call particular attention to the relationship between Christian initiation and the family. In pastoral work it is always important to make Christian families part of the process of initiation. Receiving Baptism, Confirmation and First Holy Communion are key moments not only for the individual receiving them but also for the entire family, which should be supported in its educational role by the various elements of the ecclesial community.⁵³ Here I would emphasize the importance of First Holy Communion. For many of the faithful, this day continues to be memorable as the moment when, even if in a rudimentary way, they first came to understand the importance of a personal encounter with Jesus. Parish pastoral programmes should make the most of this highly significant moment.

II. The Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Their intrinsic relationship

20. The Synod Fathers rightly stated that a love for the Eucharist leads to a growing appreciation of the sacrament of

⁵³ Cf. *Propositio* 15.

Reconciliation.⁵⁴ Given the connection between these sacraments, an authentic catechesis on the meaning of the Eucharist must include the call to pursue the path of penance (cf. *1 Cor* 11:27-29). We know that the faithful are surrounded by a culture that tends to eliminate the sense of sin⁵⁵ and to promote a superficial approach that overlooks the need to be in a state of grace in order to approach sacramental communion worthily.⁵⁶ The loss of a consciousness of sin always entails a certain superficiality in the understanding of God's love. Bringing out the elements within the rite of Mass that express consciousness of personal sin and, at the same time, of God's mercy, can prove most helpful to the faithful.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the relationship between the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation reminds us that sin is never a purely individual affair; it always damages the ecclesial communion that we have entered through Baptism. For this reason, Reconciliation, as the Fathers of the Church would say, is *laboriosus quidam baptismus*,⁵⁸ they thus emphasized that the

⁵⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 7; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 36: AAS 95 (2003), 457-458.

⁵⁵ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (2 December 1984), 18: AAS 77 (1985), 224-228.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1385.

⁵⁷ For example, the *Confiteor*, or the words of the priest and people before receiving Communion: "*Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.*" Not insignificantly does the liturgy also prescribe certain very beautiful prayers for the priest, handed down by tradition, which speak of the need for forgiveness, as, for example, the one recited quietly before inviting the faithful to sacramental communion: "*By the mystery of your body and blood, free me from all my sins and from every evil. Keep me always faithful to your teachings and never let me be parted from you.*"

⁵⁸ Cf. Saint John Damascene, *Exposition of the Faith*, IV, 9: PG 94, 1124C; Saint Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* 39, 17: PG 36, 356A; Ecumenical Council of Trent, *Doctrina de sacramento paenitentiae*, Chapter 2: DS 1672.

outcome of the process of conversion is also the restoration of full ecclesial communion, expressed in a return to the Eucharist.⁵⁹

Some pastoral concerns

21. The Synod recalled that Bishops have the pastoral duty of promoting within their Dioceses a reinvigorated catechesis on the conversion born of the Eucharist, and of encouraging frequent confession among the faithful. All priests should dedicate themselves with generosity, commitment and competency to administering the sacrament of Reconciliation.⁶⁰ In this regard, it is important that the confessionals in our churches should be clearly visible expressions of the importance of this sacrament. I ask pastors to be vigilant with regard to the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation, and to limit the practice of general absolution exclusively to the cases permitted,⁶¹ since individual absolution is the only form intended for ordinary use.⁶² Given the need to rediscover sacramental forgiveness, there ought to be a *Penitentiary* in every Diocese.⁶³ Finally, a balanced and sound practice of gaining *indulgences*, whether for oneself or

⁵⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11; John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (2 December 1984), 30: AAS 77 (1985), 256-257.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 7.

⁶¹ Cf. John Paul II, Motu Proprio *Misericordia Dei* (7 April 2002): AAS 94 (2002), 452-459.

⁶² Together with the Synod Fathers I wish to note that the non-sacramental penitential services mentioned in the ritual of the sacrament of Reconciliation can be helpful for increasing the spirit of conversion and of communion in Christian communities, thereby preparing hearts for the celebration of the sacrament: cf. *Propositio* 7.

⁶³ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 508.

for the dead, can be helpful for a renewed appreciation of the relationship between the Eucharist and Reconciliation. By this means the faithful obtain “remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven.”⁶⁴ The use of indulgences helps us to understand that by our efforts alone we would be incapable of making reparation for the wrong we have done, and that the sins of each individual harm the whole community. Furthermore, the practice of indulgences, which involves not only the doctrine of Christ’s infinite merits, but also that of the communion of the saints, reminds us “how closely we are united to each other in Christ ... and how the supernatural life of each can help others.”⁶⁵ Since the conditions for gaining an indulgence include going to confession and receiving sacramental communion, this practice can effectively sustain the faithful on their journey of conversion and in rediscovering the centrality of the Eucharist in the Christian life.

III. The Eucharist and the Anointing of the sick

22. Jesus did not only send his disciples forth to heal the sick (cf. *Mt* 10:8; *Lk* 9:2, 10:9); he also instituted a specific sacrament for them: the Anointing of the Sick.⁶⁶ The *Letter of James* attests to the presence of this sacramental sign in the early Christian community (cf. 5:14-16). If the Eucharist shows how Christ’s sufferings and death have been transformed into love, the Anointing of the Sick, for its part, unites the sick with

⁶⁴ Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina* (1 January 1967), *Norms*, No. 1: AAS 59 (1967), 21.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9: AAS 59 (1967), 18-19.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1499-1532.

Christ's self-offering for the salvation of all, so that they too, within the mystery of the communion of saints, can participate in the redemption of the world. The relationship between these two sacraments becomes clear in situations of serious illness: "In addition to the Anointing of the Sick, the Church offers those who are about to leave this life the Eucharist as viaticum."⁶⁷ On their journey to the Father, communion in the Body and Blood of Christ appears as the seed of eternal life and the power of resurrection: "Anyone who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day" (*Jn* 6:54). Since viaticum gives the sick a glimpse of the fullness of the Paschal Mystery, its administration should be readily provided for.⁶⁸ Attentive pastoral care shown to those who are ill brings great spiritual benefit to the entire community, since whatever we do to one of the least of our brothers and sisters, we do to Jesus himself (cf. *Mt* 25:40).

IV. The Eucharist and the Sacrament of Holy Orders

In persona Christi capitis

23. The intrinsic relationship between the Eucharist and the sacrament of Holy Orders clearly emerges from Jesus' own words in the Upper Room: "Do this in memory of me" (*Lk* 22:19). On the night before he died, Jesus instituted the Eucharist and at the same time established the *priesthood of the New Covenant*. He is priest, victim and altar: the mediator between God the Father and his people (cf. *Heb* 5:5-10), the victim of atonement (cf. *1 Jn* 2:2,

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1524.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 44.

4:10) who offers himself on the altar of the Cross. No one can say "this is my body" and "this is the cup of my blood" except in the name and in the person of Christ, the one high priest of the new and eternal Covenant (cf. *Heb* 8-9). Earlier meetings of the Synod of Bishops had considered the question of the ordained priesthood, both with regard to the nature of the ministry⁶⁹ and the formation of candidates.⁷⁰ Here, in the light of the discussion that took place during the last Synod, I consider it important to recall several important points about the relationship between the sacrament of the Eucharist and Holy Orders. First of all, we need to stress once again that the connection between *Holy Orders and the Eucharist* is seen most clearly at Mass, when the Bishop or priest presides *in the person of Christ the Head*.

The Church teaches that priestly ordination is the indispensable condition for the valid celebration of the Eucharist.⁷¹ Indeed, "in the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, High Priest of the redemptive sacrifice."⁷² Certainly the ordained minister also acts "in the name of the whole Church, when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering

⁶⁹ Cf. Synod of Bishops, Second General Assembly, Document on the Ministerial Priesthood *Ultimis Temporibus* (30 November 1971): AAS 63 (1971), 898-942.

⁷⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 42-69: AAS 84 (1992), 729-778.

⁷¹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 10; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter on Certain Questions Concerning the Minister of the Eucharist *Sacerdotium Ministeriale* (6 August 1983): AAS 75 (1983), 1001-1009.

⁷² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1548.

the eucharistic sacrifice.”⁷³ As a result, priests should be conscious of the fact that in their ministry they must never put themselves or their personal opinions in first place, but Jesus Christ. Any attempt to make themselves the centre of the liturgical action contradicts their very identity as priests. The priest is above all a servant of others, and he must continually work at being a sign pointing to Christ, a docile instrument in the Lord’s hands. This is seen particularly in his humility in leading the liturgical assembly, in obedience to the rite, uniting himself to it in mind and heart, and avoiding anything that might give the impression of an inordinate emphasis on his own personality. I encourage the clergy always to see their eucharistic ministry as a humble service offered to Christ and his Church. The priesthood, as Saint Augustine said, is *amoris officium*,⁷⁴ it is the office of the good shepherd, who offers his life for his sheep (cf. *Jn* 10:14-15).

The Eucharist and priestly celibacy

24. The Synod Fathers wished to emphasize that the ministerial priesthood, through ordination, calls for complete configuration to Christ. While respecting the different practice and tradition of the Eastern Churches, there is a need to reaffirm the profound meaning of priestly celibacy, which is rightly considered a priceless treasure, and is also confirmed by the Eastern practice of choosing Bishops only from the ranks of the celibate. These Churches also greatly esteem the decision of many priests to embrace celibacy. This choice on the part of the priest expresses in a special way the dedication which conforms him to

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1552.

⁷⁴ Cf. *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 123, 5: PL 35, 1967.

Christ and his exclusive offering of himself for the Kingdom of God.⁷⁵ The fact that Christ himself, the eternal priest, lived his mission even to the sacrifice of the Cross in the state of virginity constitutes the sure point of reference for understanding the meaning of the tradition of the Latin Church. It is not sufficient to understand priestly celibacy in purely functional terms. Celibacy is really a special way of conforming oneself to Christ's own way of life. This choice has first and foremost a nuptial meaning; it is a profound identification with the heart of Christ the Bridegroom who gives his life for his Bride. In continuity with the great ecclesial tradition, with the Second Vatican Council⁷⁶ and with my predecessors in the papacy,⁷⁷ I reaffirm the beauty and the importance of a priestly life lived in celibacy as a sign expressing total and exclusive devotion to Christ, to the Church and to the Kingdom of God, and I therefore confirm that it remains obligatory in the Latin tradition. Priestly celibacy lived with maturity, joy and dedication is an immense blessing for the Church and for society itself.

The clergy shortage and the pastoral care of vocations

25. In the light of the connection between the sacrament of Holy Orders and the Eucharist, the Synod considered the difficult situation that has arisen in various Dioceses which face

⁷⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 11.

⁷⁶ Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 16.

⁷⁷ Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia* (1 August 1959): AAS 51 (1959), 545-579; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Sacerdotalis Coelibatus* (24 June 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 657-697; John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 29: AAS 84 (1992), 703-705; Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia (22 December 2006): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 December 2006, p. 6.

a shortage of priests. This happens not only in some areas of first evangelization, but also in many countries of long-standing Christian tradition. Certainly a more equitable distribution of clergy would help to solve the problem. Efforts need to be made to encourage a greater awareness of this situation at every level. Bishops should involve Institutes of Consecrated Life and the new ecclesial groups in their pastoral needs, while respecting their particular charisms, and they should invite the clergy to become more open to serving the Church wherever there is need, even if this calls for sacrifice.⁷⁸ The Synod also discussed pastoral initiatives aimed at promoting, especially among the young, an attitude of interior openness to a priestly calling. The situation cannot be resolved by purely practical decisions. On no account should Bishops react to real and understandable concerns about the shortage of priests by failing to carry out adequate vocational discernment, or by admitting to seminary formation and ordination candidates who lack the necessary qualities for priestly ministry.⁷⁹ An insufficiently formed clergy, admitted to ordination without the necessary discernment, will not easily be able to offer a witness capable of evoking in others the desire to respond generously to Christ's call. The pastoral care of vocations

⁷⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 11.

⁷⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 6; Code of Canon Law, can. 241, § 1 and can. 1029; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, can. 342 § 1 and can. 758; John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 11, 34, 50: AAS 84 (1992), 673-675; 712-714; 746-748; Congregation for the Clergy, Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests *Dives Ecclesiae* (31 March 1994), 58; Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders (4 November 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 1007-1013.

needs to involve the entire Christian community in every area of its life.⁸⁰ Obviously, this pastoral work on all levels also includes exploring the matter with families, which are often indifferent or even opposed to the idea of a priestly vocation. Families should generously embrace the gift of life and bring up their children to be open to doing God's will. In a word, they must have the courage to set before young people the radical decision to follow Christ, showing them how deeply rewarding it is.

Gratitude and hope

26. Finally, we need to have ever greater faith and hope in God's providence. Even if there is a shortage of priests in some areas, we must never lose confidence that Christ continues to inspire men to leave everything behind and to dedicate themselves totally to celebrating the sacred mysteries, preaching the Gospel and ministering to the flock. In this regard, I wish to express the gratitude of the whole Church for all those Bishops and priests who carry out their respective missions with fidelity, devotion and zeal. Naturally, the Church's gratitude also goes to deacons, who receive the laying on of hands "not for priesthood but for service."⁸¹ As the Synod Assembly recommended, I offer a special word of thanks to those *Fidei Donum* priests who work faithfully and generously at building up the community by proclaiming the word of God and breaking the Bread of Life, devoting all their energy to serving the mission of the Church.⁸²

⁸⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 12; John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 41: AAS 84 (1992), 726-729.

⁸¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 29.

⁸² Cf. *Propositio* 38.

Let us thank God for all those priests who have suffered even to the sacrifice of their lives in order to serve Christ. The eloquence of their example shows what it means to be a priest to the end. Theirs is a moving witness that can inspire many young people to follow Christ and to expend their lives for others, and thus to discover true life.

V. The Eucharist and Matrimony

The Eucharist, a nuptial sacrament

27. The Eucharist, as the sacrament of charity, has a particular relationship with the love of man and woman united in marriage. A deeper understanding of this relationship is needed at the present time.⁸³ Pope John Paul II frequently spoke of the nuptial character of the Eucharist and its special relationship with the sacrament of Matrimony: “The Eucharist is the sacrament of our redemption. It is the sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride.”⁸⁴ Moreover, “the entire Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. Already Baptism, the entry into the People of God, is a nuptial mystery; it is so to speak the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the Eucharist.”⁸⁵ The Eucharist inexhaustibly strengthens the indissoluble unity and love of every Christian marriage. By the power of the sacrament, the marriage bond is intrinsically linked to the eucharistic unity of Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride, the

⁸³ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 57: AAS 74 (1982), 149-150.

⁸⁴ Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August 1988), 26: AAS 80 (1988), 1715-1716.

⁸⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1617.

Church (cf. *Eph* 5:31-32). The mutual consent that husband and wife exchange in Christ, which establishes them as a community of life and love, also has a eucharistic dimension. Indeed, in the theology of Saint Paul, conjugal love is a sacramental sign of Christ's love for his Church, a love culminating in the Cross, the expression of his "marriage" with humanity and at the same time the origin and heart of the Eucharist. For this reason the Church manifests her particular spiritual closeness to all those who have built their family on the sacrament of Matrimony.⁸⁶ The family – the domestic Church⁸⁷ – is a primary sphere of the Church's life, especially because of its decisive role in the Christian education of children.⁸⁸ In this context, the Synod also called for an acknowledgment of the unique mission of women in the family and in society, a mission that needs to be defended, protected and promoted.⁸⁹ Marriage and motherhood represent essential realities which must never be denigrated.

The Eucharist and the unicity of marriage

28. In the light of this intrinsic relationship between marriage, the family and the Eucharist, we can turn to several pastoral problems. The indissoluble, exclusive and faithful bond uniting Christ and the Church, which finds sacramental expression

⁸⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 8.

⁸⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 8.

⁸⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August 1988): AAS 80 (1988), 1653-1729; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World* (31 May 2004): AAS 96 (2004), 671-687.

in the Eucharist, corresponds to the basic anthropological fact that man is meant to be definitively united to one woman and vice versa (cf. *Gen* 2:24, *Mt* 19:5). With this in mind, the Synod of Bishops addressed the question of pastoral practice regarding people who come to the Gospel from cultures in which polygamy is practised. Those living in this situation who open themselves to Christian faith need to be helped to integrate their life-plan into the radical newness of Christ. During the catechumenate, Christ encounters them in their specific circumstances and calls them to embrace the full truth of love, making whatever sacrifices are necessary in order to arrive at perfect ecclesial communion. The Church accompanies them with a pastoral care that is gentle yet firm,⁹⁰ above all by showing them the light shed by the Christian mysteries on nature and on human affections.

The Eucharist and the indissolubility of marriage

29. If the Eucharist expresses the irrevocable nature of God's love in Christ for his Church, we can then understand why it implies, with regard to the sacrament of Matrimony, that indissolubility to which all true love necessarily aspires.⁹¹ There was good reason for the pastoral attention that the Synod gave to the painful situations experienced by some of the faithful who, having celebrated the sacrament of Matrimony, then divorced and remarried. This represents a complex and troubling pastoral problem, a real scourge for contemporary society, and one which increasingly affects the Catholic community as well. The Church's pastors, out of love for the truth, are obliged to

⁹⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 9.

⁹¹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1640.

discern different situations carefully, in order to be able to offer appropriate spiritual guidance to the faithful involved.⁹² The Synod of Bishops confirmed the Church's practice, based on Sacred Scripture (cf. *Mk* 10:2- 12), of not admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments, since their state and their condition of life objectively contradict the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist. Yet the divorced and remarried continue to belong to the Church, which accompanies them with special concern and encourages them to live as fully as possible the Christian life through regular participation at Mass, albeit without receiving communion, listening to the word of God, eucharistic adoration, prayer, participation in the life of the community, honest dialogue with a priest or spiritual director, dedication to the life of charity, works of penance, and commitment to the education of their children.

When legitimate doubts exist about the validity of the prior sacramental marriage, the necessary investigation must be carried out to establish if these are well-founded. Consequently there is a need to ensure, in full respect for canon law,⁹³ the presence of local ecclesiastical tribunals, their pastoral character, and their correct and prompt functioning.⁹⁴ Each Diocese should have a sufficient number of persons with the necessary preparation,

⁹² Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 84: AAS 74 (1982), 184- 186; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the Reception of Holy Communion by Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful *Annus Internationalis Familiae* (14 September 1994): AAS 86 (1994), 974-979.

⁹³ Cf. Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, Instruction on the Norms to be Observed at Ecclesiastical Tribunals in Matrimonial Proceedings *Dignitas Connubii* (25 January 2005), Vatican City, 2005.

⁹⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 40.

so that the ecclesiastical tribunals can operate in an expeditious manner. I repeat that “it is a grave obligation to bring the Church’s institutional activity in her tribunals ever closer to the faithful.”⁹⁵ At the same time, pastoral care must not be understood as if it were somehow in conflict with the law. Rather, one should begin by assuming that the fundamental point of encounter between the law and pastoral care is *love for the truth*: truth is never something purely abstract, but “a real part of the human and Christian journey of every member of the faithful.”⁹⁶ Finally, where the nullity of the marriage bond is not declared and objective circumstances make it impossible to cease cohabitation, the Church encourages these members of the faithful to commit themselves to living their relationship in fidelity to the demands of God’s law, as friends, as brother and sister; in this way they will be able to return to the table of the Eucharist, taking care to observe the Church’s established and approved practice in this regard. This path, if it is to be possible and fruitful, must be supported by pastors and by adequate ecclesial initiatives, nor can it ever involve the blessing of these relations, lest confusion arise among the faithful concerning the value of marriage.⁹⁷

Given the complex cultural context which the Church today encounters in many countries, the Synod also recommended devoting maximum pastoral attention to training couples preparing for marriage and to ascertaining beforehand their convictions regarding the obligations required for the validity of the sacrament of Matrimony. Serious discernment in this

⁹⁵ Benedict XVI, Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota for the Inauguration of the Judicial Year (28 January 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 138.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 40.

⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

matter will help to avoid situations where impulsive decisions or superficial reasons lead two young people to take on responsibilities that they are then incapable of honouring.⁹⁸ The good that the Church and society as a whole expect from marriage and from the family founded upon marriage is so great as to call for full pastoral commitment to this particular area. Marriage and the family are institutions that must be promoted and defended from every possible misrepresentation of their true nature, since whatever is injurious to them is injurious to society itself.

The Eucharist and Eschatology

The Eucharist: a gift to men and women on their journey

30. If it is true that the sacraments are part of the Church's pilgrimage through history⁹⁹ towards the full manifestation of the victory of the risen Christ, it is also true that, especially in the liturgy of the Eucharist, they give us a real foretaste of the eschatological fulfilment for which every human being and all creation are destined (cf. *Rom* 8:19ff.). Man is created for that true and eternal happiness which only God's love can give. But our wounded freedom would go astray were it not already able to experience something of that future fulfilment. Moreover, to move forward in the right direction, we all need to be guided towards our final goal. That goal is Christ himself, the Lord who conquered sin and death, and who makes himself present to us in a special way in the eucharistic celebration. Even though we

⁹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

⁹⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 48.

remain “aliens and exiles” in this world (*1 Pet* 2:11), through faith we already share in the fullness of risen life. The eucharistic banquet, by disclosing its powerful eschatological dimension, comes to the aid of our freedom as we continue our journey.

The eschatological banquet

31. Reflecting on this mystery, we can say that Jesus’ coming responded to an expectation present in the people of Israel, in the whole of humanity and ultimately in creation itself. By his self-gift, he objectively inaugurated the eschatological age. Christ came to gather together the scattered People of God (cf. *Jn* 11:52) and clearly manifested his intention to gather together the community of the covenant, in order to bring to fulfilment the promises made by God to the fathers of old (cf. *Jer* 23:3; *Lk* 1:55, 70). In the calling of the Twelve, which is to be understood in relation to the twelve tribes of Israel, and in the command he gave them at the Last Supper, before his redemptive passion, to celebrate his memorial, Jesus showed that he wished to transfer to the entire community which he had founded the task of being, within history, the sign and instrument of the eschatological gathering that had its origin in him. Consequently, every eucharistic celebration sacramentally accomplishes the eschatological gathering of the People of God. For us, the eucharistic banquet is a real foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets (cf. *Is* 25:6-9) and described in the New Testament as “the marriage-feast of the Lamb” (*Rev* 19:7-9), to be celebrated in the joy of the communion of saints.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 3.

Prayer for the dead

32. The eucharistic celebration, in which we proclaim that Christ has died and risen, and will come again, is a pledge of the future glory in which our bodies too will be glorified. Celebrating the memorial of our salvation strengthens our hope in the resurrection of the body and in the possibility of meeting once again, face to face, those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. In this context, I wish, together with the Synod Fathers, to remind all the faithful of the importance of prayers for the dead, especially the offering of Mass for them, so that, once purified, they can come to the beatific vision of God.¹⁰¹ A rediscovery of the eschatological dimension inherent in the Eucharist, celebrated and adored, will help sustain us on our journey and comfort us in the hope of glory (cf. *Rom* 5:2; *Tit* 2:13).

The Eucharist and the Virgin Mary

33. From the relationship between the Eucharist and the individual sacraments, and from the eschatological significance of the sacred mysteries, the overall shape of the Christian life emerges, a life called at all times to be an act of spiritual worship, a self-offering pleasing to God. Although we are all still journeying towards the complete fulfilment of our hope, this does not mean that we cannot already gratefully acknowledge that God's gifts to us have found their perfect fulfilment in the Virgin Mary,

¹⁰¹ Here I would recall the words filled with hope and consolation found in Eucharistic Prayer II: "*Remember our brothers and sisters who have gone to their rest in the hope of rising again. Bring them and all the departed into the light of your presence.*"

Mother of God and our Mother. Mary's Assumption body and soul into heaven is for us a sign of sure hope, for it shows us, on our pilgrimage through time, the eschatological goal of which the sacrament of the Eucharist enables us even now to have a foretaste.

In Mary most holy, we also see perfectly fulfilled the "sacramental" way that God comes down to meet his creatures and involves them in his saving work. From the Annunciation to Pentecost, Mary of Nazareth appears as someone whose freedom is completely open to God's will. Her immaculate conception is revealed precisely in her unconditional docility to God's word. Obedient faith in response to God's work shapes her life at every moment. A virgin attentive to God's word, she lives in complete harmony with his will; she treasures in her heart the words that come to her from God and, piecing them together like a mosaic, she learns to understand them more deeply (cf. *Lk* 2:19, 51); Mary is the great Believer who places herself confidently in God's hands, abandoning herself to his will.¹⁰² This mystery deepens as she becomes completely involved in the redemptive mission of Jesus. In the words of the Second Vatican Council, "the blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son until she stood at the Cross, in keeping with the divine plan (cf. *Jn* 19:25), suffering deeply with her only-begotten Son, associating herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim who was born of her. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus, dying on the Cross, as a mother to his disciple, with these words: 'Woman, behold your Son'."¹⁰³ From

¹⁰² Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily (8 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006), 15-16.

¹⁰³ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 58.

the Annunciation to the Cross, Mary is the one who received the Word, made flesh within her and then silenced in death. It is she, lastly, who took into her arms the lifeless body of the one who truly loved his own “to the end” (*Jn* 13:1).

Consequently, every time we approach the Body and Blood of Christ in the eucharistic liturgy, we also turn to her who, by her complete fidelity, received Christ’s sacrifice for the whole Church. The Synod Fathers rightly declared that “Mary inaugurates the Church’s participation in the sacrifice of the Redeemer.”¹⁰⁴ She is the Immaculata, who receives God’s gift unconditionally and is thus associated with his work of salvation. Mary of Nazareth, icon of the nascent Church, is the model for each of us, called to receive the gift that Jesus makes of himself in the Eucharist.

PART TWO

THE EUCHARIST, A MYSTERY TO BE CELEBRATED

**“Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses
who gave you the bread from heaven;
my Father gives you the true bread from heaven”
(*Jn* 6:32)**

Lex orandi and lex credendi

34. The Synod of Bishops reflected at length on the intrinsic relationship between eucharistic faith and eucharistic celebration, pointing out the connection between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*, and stressing the primacy of the *liturgical*

¹⁰⁴ *Propositio* 4.

action. The Eucharist should be experienced as a mystery of faith, celebrated authentically and with a clear awareness that “the *intellectus fidei* has a primordial relationship to the Church’s liturgical action.”¹⁰⁵ Theological reflection in this area can never prescind from the sacramental order instituted by Christ himself. On the other hand, the liturgical action can never be considered generically, prescinding from the mystery of faith. Our faith and the eucharistic liturgy both have their source in the same event: Christ’s gift of himself in the Paschal Mystery.

Beauty and the liturgy

35. This relationship between creed and worship is evidenced in a particular way by the rich theological and liturgical category of beauty. Like the rest of Christian Revelation, the liturgy is inherently linked to beauty: it is *veritatis splendor*. The liturgy is a radiant expression of the paschal mystery, in which Christ draws us to himself and calls us to communion. As Saint Bonaventure would say, in Jesus we contemplate beauty and splendour at their source.¹⁰⁶ This is no mere aestheticism, but the concrete way in which the truth of God’s love in Christ encounters us, attracts us and delights us, enabling us to emerge from ourselves and drawing us towards our true vocation, which is love.¹⁰⁷ God allows himself to be glimpsed first in creation, in the beauty

¹⁰⁵ *Relatio post discepcionem*, 4: *L’Osservatore Romano*, 14 October 2005, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Serm.* 1, 7; 11, 10; 22, 7; 29, 76: *Sermones dominicales ad fidem codicum nunc denuo editi*, Grottaferrata, 1977, pp. 135, 209ff., 292ff.; 337; Benedict XVI, *Message to Ecclesial Movements and New Communities* (22 May 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 463.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

and harmony of the cosmos (cf. *Wis* 13:5; *Rom* 1:19- 20). In the Old Testament we see many signs of the grandeur of God's power as he manifests his glory in his wondrous deeds among the Chosen People (cf. *Ex* 14; 16:10; 24:12-18; *Num* 14:20- 23). In the New Testament this epiphany of beauty reaches definitive fulfilment in God's revelation in Jesus Christ:¹⁰⁸ Christ is the full manifestation of the glory of God. In the glorification of the Son, the Father's glory shines forth and is communicated (cf. *Jn* 1:14; 8:54; 12:28; 17:1). Yet this beauty is not simply a harmony of proportion and form; "the fairest of the sons of men" (*Psalms* 45[44]:3) is also, mysteriously, the one "who had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him" (*Isaiah* 53:2). Jesus Christ shows us how the truth of love can transform even the dark mystery of death into the radiant light of the resurrection. Here the splendour of God's glory surpasses all worldly beauty. The truest beauty is the love of God, who definitively revealed himself to us in the paschal mystery.

The beauty of the liturgy is part of this mystery; it is a sublime expression of God's glory and, in a certain sense, a glimpse of heaven on earth. The memorial of Jesus' redemptive sacrifice contains something of that beauty which Peter, James and John beheld when the Master, making his way to Jerusalem, was transfigured before their eyes (cf. *Mk* 9:2). Beauty, then, is not mere decoration, but rather an essential element of the liturgical action, since it is an attribute of God himself and his revelation. These considerations should make us realize the care which is needed, if the liturgical action is to reflect its innate splendour.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 2, 4.

The Eucharistic celebration, the work of “Christus Totus”

Christus totus in capite et in corpore

36. The “subject” of the liturgy’s intrinsic beauty is Christ himself, risen and glorified in the Holy Spirit, who includes the Church in his work.¹⁰⁹ Here we can recall an evocative phrase of Saint Augustine which strikingly describes this dynamic of faith proper to the Eucharist. The great Bishop of Hippo, speaking specifically of the eucharistic mystery, stresses the fact that Christ assimilates us to himself: “The bread you see on the altar, sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. The chalice, or rather, what the chalice contains, sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. In these signs, Christ the Lord willed to entrust to us his body and the blood which he shed for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have received them properly, you yourselves are what you have received.”¹¹⁰ Consequently, “not only have we become Christians, we have become Christ himself.”¹¹¹ We can thus contemplate God’s mysterious work, which brings about a profound unity between ourselves and the Lord Jesus: “one should not believe that Christ is in the head but not in the body; rather he is complete in the head and in the body.”¹¹²

The Eucharist and the risen Christ

37. Since the eucharistic liturgy is essentially an *actio Dei* which draws us into Christ through the Holy Spirit, its basic

¹⁰⁹ *Propositio* 33.

¹¹⁰ *Sermo* 227, 1: PL 38, 1099.

¹¹¹ *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 21, 8: PL 35, 1568.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 28, 1: PL 35, 1622.

structure is not something within our power to change, nor can it be held hostage by the latest trends. Here too Saint Paul's irrefutable statement applies: "no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid, which is Jesus Christ" (*1 Cor* 3:11). Again it is the Apostle of the Gentiles who assures us that, with regard to the Eucharist, he is presenting not his own teaching but what he himself has received (cf. *1 Cor* 11:23). The celebration of the Eucharist implies and involves the living Tradition. The Church celebrates the eucharistic sacrifice in obedience to Christ's command, based on her experience of the Risen Lord and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, from the beginning, the Christian community has gathered for the *fractio panis* on the Lord's Day. Sunday, the day Christ rose from the dead, is also the first day of the week, the day which the Old Testament tradition saw as the beginning of God's work of creation. The day of creation has now become the day of the "new creation," the day of our liberation, when we commemorate Christ who died and rose again.¹¹³

Ars celebrandi

38. In the course of the Synod, there was frequent insistence on the need to avoid any antithesis between the *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration, and the full, active and fruitful participation of all the faithful. The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way

¹¹³ Cf. *Propositio* 30. Weekday Masses, which the faithful are encouraged to attend, find their proper form on the day of the Lord, the day of Christ's resurrection; *Propositio* 43.

to ensure their *actuosa participatio*.¹¹⁴ The *ars celebrandi* is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness; indeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers, called to take part in the celebration as the People of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (cf. *1 Pet* 2:4-5, 9).¹¹⁵

The Bishop, celebrant par excellence

39. While it is true that the whole People of God participates in the eucharistic liturgy, a correct *ars celebrandi* necessarily entails a specific responsibility on the part of those who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders. Bishops, priests, and deacons, each according to his proper rank, must consider the celebration of the liturgy as their principal duty.¹¹⁶ Above all, this is true of the Diocesan Bishop: as “the chief steward of the mysteries of God in the particular Church entrusted to his care, he is the moderator, promoter, and guardian of the whole of its liturgical life.”¹¹⁷ This is essential for the life of the particular Church, not only because communion with the Bishop is required for the lawfulness of every celebration within his territory, but also because he himself is the celebrant par excellence

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 2.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 25.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 19. *Propositio* 25 states: “An authentic liturgical action expresses the sacredness of the eucharistic mystery. This should be evident from the words and actions of the priest who celebrates, as he intercedes to God the Father both with the faithful and on their behalf.”

¹¹⁷ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 22; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 41; cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004), 19-25; AAS 96 (2004), 555-557.

within his Diocese.¹¹⁸ It is his responsibility to ensure unity and harmony in the celebrations taking place in his territory. Consequently the Bishop must be “determined that the priests, the deacons, and the lay Christian faithful grasp ever more deeply the genuine meaning of the rites and liturgical texts, and thereby be led to an active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist.”¹¹⁹ I would ask that every effort be made to ensure that the liturgies which the Bishop celebrates in his Cathedral are carried out with complete respect for the *ars celebrandi*, so that they can be considered an example for the entire Diocese.¹²⁰

Respect for the liturgical books and the richness of signs

40. Emphasizing the importance of the *ars celebrandi* also leads to an appreciation of the value of the liturgical norms.¹²¹ The *ars celebrandi* should foster a sense of the sacred and the use of outward signs which help to cultivate this sense, such as, for example, the harmony of the rite, the liturgical vestments, the furnishings and the sacred space. The eucharistic celebration is enhanced when priests and liturgical leaders are committed to making known the current liturgical texts and norms, making available the great riches found in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* and the *Order of Readings for Mass*. Perhaps we take it for granted that our ecclesial communities already know and appreciate these resources, but this is not always the case.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 14; Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 41.

¹¹⁹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 22.

¹²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

¹²¹ Cf. *Propositio* 25.

These texts contain riches which have preserved and expressed the faith and experience of the People of God over its two-thousand-year history. Equally important for a correct *ars celebrandi* is an attentiveness to the various kinds of language that the liturgy employs: words and music, gestures and silence, movement, the liturgical colours of the vestments. By its very nature the liturgy operates on different levels of communication which enable it to engage the whole human person. The simplicity of its gestures and the sobriety of its orderly sequence of signs communicate and inspire more than any contrived and inappropriate additions. Attentiveness and fidelity to the specific structure of the rite express both a recognition of the nature of Eucharist as a gift and, on the part of the minister, a docile openness to receiving this ineffable gift.

Art at the service of the liturgy

41. The profound connection between beauty and the liturgy should make us attentive to every work of art placed at the service of the celebration.¹²² Certainly an important element of sacred art is church architecture,¹²³ which should highlight the unity of the furnishings of the sanctuary, such as the altar, the crucifix, the tabernacle, the ambo and the celebrant's chair. Here it is important to remember that the purpose of sacred architecture is to offer the Church a fitting space for the celebration of the mysteries of faith, especially the Eucharist.¹²⁴ The very nature of a Christian church is defined by the liturgy, which is an assembly

¹²² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112-130.

¹²³ Cf. *Propositio* 27.

¹²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

of the faithful (*ecclesia*) who are the living stones of the Church (cf. *1 Pet* 2:5).

This same principle holds true for sacred art in general, especially painting and sculpture, where religious iconography should be directed to sacramental mystagogy. A solid knowledge of the history of sacred art can be advantageous for those responsible for commissioning artists and architects to create works of art for the liturgy. Consequently it is essential that the education of seminarians and priests include the study of art history, with special reference to sacred buildings and the corresponding liturgical norms. Everything related to the Eucharist should be marked by beauty. Special respect and care must also be given to the vestments, the furnishings and the sacred vessels, so that by their harmonious and orderly arrangement they will foster awe for the mystery of God, manifest the unity of the faith and strengthen devotion.¹²⁵

Liturgical song

42. In the *ars celebrandi*, liturgical song has a pre-eminent place.¹²⁶ Saint Augustine rightly says in a famous sermon that “the new man sings a new song. Singing is an expression of joy and, if we consider the matter, an expression of love.”¹²⁷ The People of God assembled for the liturgy sings the praises of God. In the course of her two-thousand-year history, the Church has

¹²⁵ In these matters the provisions of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 319-351, are to be faithfully observed.

¹²⁶ Cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 39-41; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 112-118.

¹²⁷ *Sermo* 34, 1: PL 38, 210.

created, and still creates, music and songs which represent a rich patrimony of faith and love. This heritage must not be lost. Certainly as far as the liturgy is concerned, we cannot say that one song is as good as another. Generic improvisation or the introduction of musical genres which fail to respect the meaning of the liturgy should be avoided. As an element of the liturgy, song should be well integrated into the overall celebration.¹²⁸ Consequently everything – texts, music, execution – ought to correspond to the meaning of the mystery being celebrated, the structure of the rite and the liturgical seasons.¹²⁹ Finally, while respecting various styles and different and highly praiseworthy traditions, I desire, in accordance with the request advanced by the Synod Fathers, that Gregorian chant be suitably esteemed and employed¹³⁰ as the chant proper to the Roman liturgy.¹³¹

The structure of the Eucharistic Celebration

43. After mentioning the more significant elements of the *ars celebrandi* that emerged during the Synod, I would now like to turn to some specific aspects of the structure of the eucharistic celebration which require special attention at the present time, if we are to remain faithful to the underlying intention of the liturgical renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council, in continuity with the great ecclesial tradition.

¹²⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 25: “Like every artistic expression, singing must be closely adapted to the liturgy and contribute effectively to its aim; in other words, it must express faith, prayer, wonder and love of Jesus present in the Eucharist.”

¹²⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 29.

¹³⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 36.

¹³¹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 116; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 41.

The intrinsic unity of the liturgical action

44. First of all, there is a need to reflect on the inherent unity of the rite of Mass. Both in catechesis and in the actual manner of celebration, one must avoid giving the impression that the two parts of the rite are merely juxtaposed. The liturgy of the word and the Eucharistic liturgy, with the rites of introduction and conclusion, "are so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship."¹³² There is an intrinsic bond between the word of God and the Eucharist. From listening to the word of God, faith is born or strengthened (cf. *Rom* 10:17); in the Eucharist the Word made flesh gives himself to us as our spiritual food.¹³³ Thus, "from the two tables of the word of God and the Body of Christ, the Church receives and gives to the faithful the bread of life."¹³⁴ Consequently it must constantly be kept in mind that the word of God, read and proclaimed by the Church in the liturgy, leads to the Eucharist as to its own connatural end.

The liturgy of the word

45. Together with the Synod, I ask that the liturgy of the word always be carefully prepared and celebrated. Consequently I urge that every effort be made to ensure that the liturgical proclamation of the word of God is entrusted to well-prepared readers. Let us never forget that "when the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and

¹³² *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 28; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 56; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (25 May 1967), 3: AAS 57 (1967), 540-543.

¹³³ Cf. *Propositio* 18.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel.”¹³⁵ When circumstances so suggest, a few brief words of introduction could be offered in order to focus the attention of the faithful. If it is to be properly understood, the word of God must be listened to and accepted in a spirit of communion with the Church and with a clear awareness of its unity with the sacrament of the Eucharist. Indeed, the word which we proclaim and accept is the Word made flesh (cf. *Jn* 1:14); it is inseparably linked to Christ’s person and the sacramental mode of his continued presence in our midst. Christ does not speak in the past, but in the present, even as he is present in the liturgical action. In this sacramental context of Christian revelation,¹³⁶ knowledge and study of the word of God enable us better to appreciate, celebrate and live the Eucharist. Here too, we can see how true it is that “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”¹³⁷

To this end, the faithful should be helped to appreciate the riches of Sacred Scripture found in the lectionary through pastoral initiatives, liturgies of the word and reading in the context of prayer (*lectio divina*). Efforts should also be made to encourage those forms of prayer confirmed by tradition, such as the Liturgy of the Hours, especially Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer, and vigil celebrations. By praying the Psalms, the Scripture readings and the readings drawn from the great tradition which are included in the Divine Office, we can come to a deeper experience of the Christ-event and the economy of salvation,

¹³⁵ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 29.

¹³⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio* (14 September 1998). 13: AAS 91 (1999), 15-16.

¹³⁷ Saint Jerome, *Comm. in Is.*, *Prol.*: PL 24, 17; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 25.

which in turn can enrich our understanding and participation in the celebration of the Eucharist.¹³⁸

The homily

46. Given the importance of the word of God, the quality of homilies needs to be improved. The homily is “part of the liturgical action,”¹³⁹ and is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God, so that it can bear fruit in the lives of the faithful. Hence ordained ministers must “prepare the homily carefully, based on an adequate knowledge of Sacred Scripture.”¹⁴⁰ Generic and abstract homilies should be avoided. In particular, I ask these ministers to preach in such a way that the homily closely relates the proclamation of the word of God to the sacramental celebration¹⁴¹ and the life of the community, so that the word of God truly becomes the Church’s vital nourishment and support.¹⁴² The catechetical and paraenetic aim of the homily should not be forgotten. During the course of the liturgical year it is appropriate to offer the faithful, prudently and on the basis of the three-year lectionary, “thematic” homilies treating the great themes of the Christian faith, on the basis of what has been authoritatively proposed by the Magisterium in the four

¹³⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 31.

¹³⁹ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 29; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7, 33, 52.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 19.

¹⁴¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 52.

¹⁴² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 21.

“pillars” of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the recent *Compendium*, namely: the profession of faith, the celebration of the Christian mystery, life in Christ and Christian prayer.¹⁴³

The presentation of the gifts

47. The Synod Fathers also drew attention to the presentation of the gifts. This is not to be viewed simply as a kind of “interval” between the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. To do so would tend to weaken, at the least, the sense of a single rite made up of two interrelated parts. This humble and simple gesture is actually very significant: in the bread and wine that we bring to the altar, all creation is taken up by Christ the Redeemer to be transformed and presented to the Father.¹⁴⁴ In this way we also bring to the altar all the pain and suffering of the world, in the certainty that everything has value in God’s eyes. The authentic meaning of this gesture can be clearly expressed without the need for undue emphasis or complexity. It enables us to appreciate how God invites man to participate in bringing to fulfilment his handiwork, and in so doing, gives human labour its authentic meaning, since, through the celebration of the Eucharist, it is united to the redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

The Eucharistic Prayer

48. The Eucharistic Prayer is “the centre and summit of the entire celebration.”¹⁴⁵ Its importance deserves to be adequately

¹⁴³ To this end the Synod has called for the preparation of pastoral aids based on the three-year lectionary, to help connect the proclamation of the readings with the doctrine of the faith; cf. *Propositio* 19.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 20.

¹⁴⁵ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 78.

emphasized. The different Eucharistic Prayers contained in the Missal have been handed down to us by the Church's living Tradition and are noteworthy for their inexhaustible theological and spiritual richness. The faithful need to be enabled to appreciate that richness. Here the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* can help, with its list of the basic elements of every Eucharistic Prayer: thanksgiving, acclamation, epiclesis, institution narrative and consecration, anamnesis, offering, intercessions and final doxology.¹⁴⁶ In a particular way, eucharistic spirituality and theological reflection are enriched if we contemplate in the anaphora the profound unity between the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the institution narrative¹⁴⁷ whereby "the sacrifice is carried out which Christ himself instituted at the Last Supper."¹⁴⁸ Indeed, "the Church implores the power of the Holy Spirit that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated, that is, become Christ's Body and Blood, and that the spotless Victim to be received in communion be for the salvation of those who will partake of it."¹⁴⁹

The sign of peace

49. By its nature the Eucharist is the sacrament of peace. At Mass this dimension of the eucharistic mystery finds specific expression in the sign of peace. Certainly this sign has great value (cf. *Jn* 14:27). In our times, fraught with fear and conflict, this gesture has become particularly eloquent, as the Church

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 78-79.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 22.

¹⁴⁸ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 79d.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 79c.

has become increasingly conscious of her responsibility to pray insistently for the gift of peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family. Certainly there is an irrepressible desire for peace present in every heart. The Church gives voice to the hope for peace and reconciliation rising up from every man and woman of good will, directing it towards the one who “is our peace” (*Eph* 2:14) and who can bring peace to individuals and peoples when all human efforts fail. We can thus understand the emotion so often felt during the sign of peace at a liturgical celebration. Even so, during the Synod of Bishops there was discussion about the appropriateness of greater restraint in this gesture, which can be exaggerated and cause a certain distraction in the assembly just before the reception of Communion. It should be kept in mind that nothing is lost when the sign of peace is marked by a sobriety which preserves the proper spirit of the celebration, as, for example, when it is restricted to one’s immediate neighbours.¹⁵⁰

The distribution and reception of the Eucharist

50. Another moment of the celebration needing to be mentioned is the distribution and reception of Holy Communion. I ask everyone, especially ordained ministers and those who, after adequate preparation and in cases of genuine need, are authorized to exercise the ministry of distributing the Eucharist, to make every effort to ensure that this simple act preserves its importance

¹⁵⁰ Taking into account ancient and venerable customs and the wishes expressed by the Synod Fathers, I have asked the competent curial offices to study the possibility of moving the sign of peace to another place, such as before the presentation of the gifts at the altar. To do so would also serve as a significant reminder of the Lord’s insistence that we be reconciled with others before offering our gifts to God (cf. *Mt* 5:23 ff.); cf. *Propositio* 23.

as a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus in the sacrament. For the rules governing correct practice in this regard, I would refer to those documents recently issued on the subject.¹⁵¹ All Christian communities are to observe the current norms faithfully, seeing in them an expression of the faith and love with which we all must regard this sublime sacrament. Furthermore, the precious time of thanksgiving after communion should not be neglected: besides the singing of an appropriate hymn, it can also be most helpful to remain recollected in silence.¹⁵²

In this regard, I would like to call attention to a pastoral problem frequently encountered nowadays. I am referring to the fact that on certain occasions – for example, wedding Masses, funerals and the like – in addition to practising Catholics there may be others present who have long since ceased to attend Mass or are living in a situation which does not permit them to receive the sacraments. At other times members of other Christian confessions and even other religions may be present. Similar situations can occur in churches that are frequently visited, especially in tourist areas. In these cases, there is a need to find a brief and clear way to remind those present of the meaning of sacramental communion and the conditions required for its reception. Wherever circumstances make it impossible to ensure that the meaning of the Eucharist is duly appreciated, the appropriateness of replacing the celebration of the Mass with a celebration of the word of God should be considered.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004), 80-96: AAS 96 (2004), 574-577.

¹⁵² Cf. *Propositio* 34.

¹⁵³ Cf. *Propositio* 35.

The dismissal: "Ite, missa est"

51. Finally, I would like to comment briefly on the observations of the Synod Fathers regarding the dismissal at the end of the eucharistic celebration. After the blessing, the deacon or the priest dismisses the people with the words: *Ite, missa est*. These words help us to grasp the relationship between the Mass just celebrated and the mission of Christians in the world. In antiquity, *missa* simply meant "dismissal." However in Christian usage it gradually took on a deeper meaning. The word "dismissal" has come to imply a "mission." These few words succinctly express the missionary nature of the Church. The People of God might be helped to understand more clearly this essential dimension of the Church's life, taking the dismissal as a starting-point. In this context, it might also be helpful to provide new texts, duly approved, for the prayer over the people and the final blessing, in order to make this connection clear.¹⁵⁴

Actuosa participatio

Authentic participation

52. The Second Vatican Council rightly emphasized the active, full and fruitful participation of the entire People of God in the eucharistic celebration.¹⁵⁵ Certainly, the renewal carried out in these past decades has made considerable progress towards fulfilling the wishes of the Council Fathers. Yet we must not

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 24.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14-20; 30ff.; 48ff; Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004), 36-42; AAS 96 (2004), 561-564.

overlook the fact that some misunderstanding has occasionally arisen concerning the precise meaning of this participation. It should be made clear that the word "participation" does not refer to mere external activity during the celebration. In fact, the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life. The conciliar Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* encouraged the faithful to take part in the eucharistic liturgy not "as strangers or silent spectators," but as participants "in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, actively and devoutly."¹⁵⁶ This exhortation has lost none of its force. The Council went on to say that the faithful "should be instructed by God's word, and nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. They should give thanks to God. Offering the immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to make an offering of themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other."¹⁵⁷

Participation and the priestly ministry

53. The beauty and the harmony of the liturgy find eloquent expression in the order by which everyone is called to participate actively. This entails an acknowledgment of the distinct hierarchical roles involved in the celebration. It is helpful to recall that active participation is not per se equivalent to the exercise of a specific ministry. The active participation of the laity does not

¹⁵⁶ No. 48.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

benefit from the confusion arising from an inability to distinguish, within the Church's communion, the different functions proper to each one.¹⁵⁸ There is a particular need for clarity with regard to the specific functions of the priest. He alone, and no other, as the tradition of the Church attests, presides over the entire eucharistic celebration, from the initial greeting to the final blessing. In virtue of his reception of Holy Orders, he represents Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, and, in a specific way, also the Church herself.¹⁵⁹ Every celebration of the Eucharist, in fact, is led by the Bishop, "either in person or through priests who are his helpers."¹⁶⁰ He is helped by a deacon, who has specific duties during the celebration: he prepares the altar, assists the priest, proclaims the Gospel, preaches the homily from time to time, reads the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful, and distributes the Eucharist to the faithful.¹⁶¹ Associated with these ministries linked to the sacrament of Holy Orders, there are also other ministries of liturgical service which can be carried out in a praiseworthy manner by religious and properly trained laity.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Ministry of Priests *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (15 August 1997): AAS 89 (1997), 852-877.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 33.

¹⁶⁰ *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 92.

¹⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 94.

¹⁶² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 24; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 95-111; Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (25 March 2004), 43-47: AAS 96 (2004), 564-566; *Propositio* 33: "These ministries must be introduced in accordance with a specific mandate and in accordance with the real needs of the celebrating community. Those entrusted with these liturgical services must be chosen with care, well prepared, and provided with ongoing formation. Their appointment must

The eucharistic celebration and inculturation

54. On the basis of these fundamental statements of the Second Vatican Council, the Synod Fathers frequently stressed the importance of the active participation of the faithful in the eucharistic sacrifice. In order to foster this participation, provision may be made for a number of adaptations appropriate to different contexts and cultures.¹⁶³ The fact that certain abuses have occurred does not detract from this clear principle, which must be upheld in accordance with the real needs of the Church as she lives and celebrates the one mystery of Christ in a variety of cultural situations. In the mystery of the Incarnation, the Lord Jesus, born of woman and fully human (cf. *Gal* 4:4), entered directly into a relationship not only with the expectations present within the Old Testament, but also with those of all peoples. He thus showed that God wishes to encounter us in our own concrete situation. A more effective participation of the faithful in the holy mysteries will thus benefit from the continued inculturation of the eucharistic celebration, with due regard for the possibilities for adaptation provided in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*,¹⁶⁴ interpreted in the light of the criteria laid down by the Fourth Instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments *Varietates Legitimae* of 25 January 1994¹⁶⁵ and the

be for a limited term. They must be known to the community and be gratefully acknowledged by the community.”

¹⁶³ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37-42.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 386-399.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction on the Roman Liturgy and Inculturation *Varietates Legitimae* (25 January 1994): AAS 87 (1995), 288-314.

directives expressed by Pope John Paul II in the Post-Synodal Exhortations *Ecclesia in Africa*, *Ecclesia in America*, *Ecclesia in Asia*, *Ecclesia in Oceania* and *Ecclesia in Europa*.¹⁶⁶ To this end, I encourage Episcopal Conferences to strive to maintain a proper balance between the criteria and directives already issued and new adaptations,¹⁶⁷ always in accord with the Apostolic See.

Personal conditions for an “active participation”

55. In their consideration of the *actuosa participatio* of the faithful in the liturgy, the Synod Fathers also discussed the personal conditions required for fruitful participation on the part of individuals.¹⁶⁸ One of these is certainly the spirit of constant conversion which must mark the lives of all the faithful. Active participation in the eucharistic liturgy can hardly be expected if one approaches it superficially, without an examination of his or her life. This inner disposition can be fostered, for example, by recollection and silence for at least a few moments before the beginning of the liturgy, by fasting and, when necessary, by sacramental confession. A heart reconciled to God makes genuine participation possible. The faithful need to be reminded

¹⁶⁶ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (14 September 1995), 55-71: AAS 88 (1996), 34-47; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (22 January 1999), 16, 40, 64, 70-72: AAS 91 (1999), 752-753, 775-776, 799, 805-809; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (6 November 1999), 21ff.: AAS 92 (2000), 482-487; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania* (22 November 2001), 16: AAS 94 (2002), 382-384; Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (28 June 2003), 58-60: AAS 95 (2003), 685-686.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 26.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 35; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 11.

that there can be no *actuosa participatio* in the sacred mysteries without an accompanying effort to participate actively in the life of the Church as a whole, including a missionary commitment to bring Christ's love into the life of society.

Clearly, full participation in the Eucharist takes place when the faithful approach the altar in person to receive communion.¹⁶⁹ Yet true as this is, care must be taken lest they conclude that the mere fact of their being present in church during the liturgy gives them a right or even an obligation to approach the table of the Eucharist. Even in cases where it is not possible to receive sacramental communion, participation at Mass remains necessary, important, meaningful and fruitful. In such circumstances it is beneficial to cultivate a desire for full union with Christ through the practice of spiritual communion, praised by Pope John Paul II¹⁷⁰ and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life.¹⁷¹

Participation by Christians who are not Catholic

56. The subject of participation in the Eucharist inevitably raises the question of Christians belonging to Churches or Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church. In this regard, it must be said that the intrinsic link between the Eucharist and the Church's unity inspires us to long

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1388; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 55.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 34: AAS 95 (2003), 456.

¹⁷¹ See, for example, Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. LXXX, a. 1, 2; Saint Teresa of Jesus, *The Way of Perfection*, Chapter 35. The doctrine was authoritatively confirmed by the Council of Trent, Session XIII, c. VIII.

for the day when we will be able to celebrate the Holy Eucharist together with all believers in Christ, and in this way to express visibly the fullness of unity that Christ willed for his disciples (cf. *Jn* 17:21). On the other hand, the respect we owe to the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood prevents us from making it a mere "means" to be used indiscriminately in order to attain that unity.¹⁷² The Eucharist in fact not only manifests our personal communion with Jesus Christ, but also implies full *communio* with the Church. This is the reason why, sadly albeit not without hope, we ask Christians who are not Catholic to understand and respect our conviction, which is grounded in the Bible and Tradition. We hold that eucharistic communion and ecclesial communion are so linked as to make it generally impossible for non-Catholic Christians to receive the former without enjoying the latter. There would be even less sense in actually concelebrating with ministers of Churches or ecclesial communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church. Yet it remains true that, for the sake of their eternal salvation, individual non-Catholic Christians can be admitted to the Eucharist, the sacrament of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick. But this is possible only in specific, exceptional situations and requires that certain precisely defined conditions be met.¹⁷³ These are clearly indicated in the

¹⁷² Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* (25 May 1995), 8: AAS 87 (1995), 925-926.

¹⁷³ Cf. *Propositio* 41; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8, 15; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* (25 May 1995), 46: AAS 87 (1995), 948; Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 45-46: AAS 95 (2003), 463-464; *Code of Canon Law*, can. 844 §§ 3-4; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, can. 671 §§ 3-4; Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Directoire pour l'application des principes et des normes sur l'œcuménisme* (25 March 1993), 125, 129-131: AAS 85 (1993), 1087, 1088-1089.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*¹⁷⁴ and in its *Compendium*.¹⁷⁵ Everyone is obliged to observe these norms faithfully.

Participation through the communications media

57. Thanks to the remarkable development of the communications media, the word “participation” has taken on a broader meaning in recent decades. We all gladly acknowledge that the media have also opened up new possibilities for the celebration of the Eucharist.¹⁷⁶ This requires a specific preparation and a keen sense of responsibility on the part of pastoral workers in the sector. When Mass is broadcast on television, it inevitably tends to set an example. Particular care should therefore be taken to ensure that, in addition to taking place in suitable and well-appointed locations, the celebration respects the liturgical norms in force.

Finally, with regard to the value of taking part in Mass via the communications media, those who hear or view these broadcasts should be aware that, under normal circumstances, they do not fulfil the obligation of attending Mass. Visual images can represent reality, but they do not actually reproduce it.¹⁷⁷ While it is most praiseworthy that the elderly and the sick participate in Sunday Mass through radio and television, the same cannot be said of those who think that such broadcasts dispense them from

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Nos. 1398-1401.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. No. 293.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Pastoral Instruction on Social Communications on the Twentieth Anniversary of “*Communio et Progressio*” *Aetatis Novae* (22 February 1992): AAS 84 (1992), 447-468.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 29.

going to church and sharing in the eucharistic assembly in the living Church.

Active participation by the sick

58. In thinking of those who cannot attend places of worship for reasons of health or advanced age, I wish to call the attention of the whole Church community to the pastoral importance of providing spiritual assistance to the sick, both those living at home and those in hospital. Their situation was often mentioned during the Synod of Bishops. These brothers and sisters of ours should have the opportunity to receive sacramental communion frequently. In this way they can strengthen their relationship with Christ, crucified and risen, and feel fully involved in the Church's life and mission by the offering of their sufferings in union with our Lord's sacrifice. Particular attention needs to be given to the disabled. When their condition so permits, the Christian community should make it possible for them to attend the place of worship. Buildings should be designed to provide ready access to the disabled. Finally, whenever possible, eucharistic communion should be made available to the mentally handicapped, if they are baptized and confirmed: they receive the Eucharist in the faith also of the family or the community that accompanies them.¹⁷⁸

Care for prisoners

59. The Church's spiritual tradition, basing itself on Christ's own words (cf. *Mt* 25:36), has designated the visiting of prisoners as one of the corporal works of mercy. Prisoners have a particular need to be visited personally by the Lord in

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 44.

the sacrament of the Eucharist. Experiencing the closeness of the ecclesial community, sharing in the Eucharist and receiving holy communion at this difficult and painful time can surely contribute to the quality of a prisoner's faith journey and to full social rehabilitation. Taking up the recommendation of the Synod, I ask Dioceses to do whatever is possible to ensure that sufficient pastoral resources are invested in the spiritual care of prisoners.¹⁷⁹

Migrants and participation in the Eucharist

60. Turning now to those people who for various reasons are forced to leave their native countries, the Synod expressed particular gratitude to all those engaged in the pastoral care of migrants. Specific attention needs to be paid to migrants belonging to the Eastern Catholic Churches; in addition to being far from home, they also encounter the difficulty of not being able to participate in the eucharistic liturgy in their own rite. For this reason, wherever possible, they should be served by priests of their rite. In all cases I would ask Bishops to welcome these brothers and sisters with the love of Christ. Contacts between the faithful of different rites can prove a source of mutual enrichment. In particular, I am thinking of the benefit that can come, especially for the clergy, from a knowledge of the different traditions.¹⁸⁰

Large-scale concelebrations

61. The Synod considered the quality of participation in the case of large-scale celebrations held on special occasions

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 48.

¹⁸⁰ Candidates for the priesthood can be introduced to these traditions as part of their seminary training: cf. *Propositio* 45.

and involving not only a great number of the lay faithful, but also many concelebrating priests.¹⁸¹ On the one hand, it is easy to appreciate the importance of these moments, especially when the Bishop himself celebrates, surrounded by his presbyterate and by the deacons. On the other hand, it is not always easy in such cases to give clear expression to the unity of the presbyterate, especially during the Eucharistic Prayer and the distribution of Holy Communion. Efforts need to be made lest these large-scale concelebrations lose their proper focus. This can be done by proper coordination and by arranging the place of worship so that priests and lay faithful are truly able to participate fully. It should be kept in mind, however, that here we are speaking of exceptional concelebrations, limited to extraordinary situations.

The Latin language

62. None of the above observations should cast doubt upon the importance of such large-scale liturgies. I am thinking here particularly of celebrations at international gatherings, which nowadays are held with greater frequency. The most should be made of these occasions. In order to express more clearly the unity and universality of the Church, I wish to endorse the proposal made by the Synod of Bishops, in harmony with the directives of the Second Vatican Council,¹⁸² that, with the exception of the readings, the homily and the prayer of the faithful, such liturgies

¹⁸¹ Cf. *Propositio* 37.

¹⁸² Cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 36, 54.

could be celebrated in Latin. Similarly, the better-known prayers¹⁸³ of the Church's tradition should be recited in Latin and, if possible, selections of Gregorian chant should be sung. Speaking more generally, I ask that future priests, from their time in the seminary, receive the preparation needed to understand and to celebrate Mass in Latin, and also to use Latin texts and execute Gregorian chant; nor should we forget that the faithful can be taught to recite the more common prayers in Latin, and also to sing parts of the liturgy to Gregorian chant.¹⁸⁴

Eucharistic celebrations in small groups

63. A very different situation arises when, in the interest of more conscious, active and fruitful participation, pastoral circumstances favour small group celebrations. While acknowledging the formative value of this approach, it must be stated that such celebrations should always be consonant with the overall pastoral activity of the Diocese. These celebrations would actually lose their catechetical value if they were felt to be in competition with, or parallel to, the life of the particular Church. In this regard, the Synod set forth some necessary criteria: small groups must serve to unify the community, not to fragment it; the beneficial results ought to be clearly evident; these groups should encourage the fruitful participation of the entire assembly, and preserve as much as possible the unity of the liturgical life of individual families.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ *Propositio* 36.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 32.

Interior participation in the celebration

Mystagogical catechesis

64. The Church's great liturgical tradition teaches us that fruitful participation in the liturgy requires that one be personally conformed to the mystery being celebrated, offering one's life to God in unity with the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the whole world. For this reason, the Synod of Bishops asked that the faithful be helped to make their interior dispositions correspond to their gestures and words. Otherwise, however carefully planned and executed our liturgies may be, they would risk falling into a certain ritualism. Hence the need to provide an education in eucharistic faith capable of enabling the faithful to live personally what they celebrate. Given the vital importance of this personal and conscious *participatio*, what methods of formation are needed? The Synod Fathers unanimously indicated, in this regard, a mystagogical approach to catechesis, which would lead the faithful to understand more deeply the mysteries being celebrated.¹⁸⁶ In particular, given the close relationship between the *ars celebrandi* and an *actuosa participatio*, it must first be said that "the best catechesis on the Eucharist is the Eucharist itself, celebrated well."¹⁸⁷ By its nature, the liturgy can be pedagogically effective in helping the faithful to enter more deeply into the mystery being celebrated. That is why, in the Church's most ancient tradition, the process of Christian formation always had an experiential character. While not neglecting a systematic understanding of the content of the faith, it centred on a vital and convincing encounter with Christ,

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 14.

¹⁸⁷ *Propositio* 19.

as proclaimed by authentic witnesses. It is first and foremost the witness who introduces others to the mysteries. Naturally, this initial encounter gains depth through catechesis and finds its source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist. This basic structure of the Christian experience calls for a process of mystagogy which should always respect three elements:

a) *It interprets the rites in the light of the events of our salvation*, in accordance with the Church's living tradition. The celebration of the Eucharist, in its infinite richness, makes constant reference to salvation history. In Christ crucified and risen, we truly celebrate the one who has united all things in himself (cf. *Eph* 1:10). From the beginning, the Christian community has interpreted the events of Jesus' life, and the Paschal Mystery in particular, in relation to the entire history of the Old Testament.

b) A mystagogical catechesis must also be concerned with *presenting the meaning of the signs* contained in the rites. This is particularly important in a highly technological age like our own, which risks losing the ability to appreciate signs and symbols. More than simply conveying information, a mystagogical catechesis should be capable of making the faithful more sensitive to the language of signs and gestures which, together with the word, make up the rite.

c) Finally, a mystagogical catechesis must be concerned with bringing out the *significance of the rites for the Christian life* in all its dimensions – work and responsibility, thoughts and emotions, activity and repose. Part of the mystagogical process is to demonstrate how the mysteries celebrated in the rite are linked to the missionary responsibility of the faithful. The mature fruit of mystagogy is an awareness that

one's life is being progressively transformed by the holy mysteries being celebrated. The aim of all Christian education, moreover, is to train the believer in an adult faith that can make him a "new creation", capable of bearing witness in his surroundings to the Christian hope that inspires him.

If we are to succeed in carrying out this work of education in our ecclesial communities, those responsible for formation must be adequately prepared. Indeed, the whole people of God should feel involved in this formation. Each Christian community is called to be a place where people can be taught about the mysteries celebrated in faith. In this regard, the Synod Fathers called for greater involvement by communities of consecrated life, movements and groups which, by their specific charisms, can give new impetus to Christian formation.¹⁸⁸ In our time, too, the Holy Spirit freely bestows his gifts to sustain the apostolic mission of the Church, which is charged with spreading the faith and bringing it to maturity.¹⁸⁹

Reverence for the Eucharist

65. A convincing indication of the effectiveness of eucharistic catechesis is surely an increased sense of the mystery of God present among us. This can be expressed in concrete outward signs of reverence for the Eucharist which the process of mystagogy should inculcate in the faithful.¹⁹⁰ I am thinking in general of the importance of gestures and posture, such as kneeling during the central moments of the Eucharistic Prayer.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 14.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily at First Vespers of Pentecost (3 June 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 509.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 34.

Amid the legitimate diversity of signs used in the context of different cultures, everyone should be able to experience and express the awareness that at each celebration we stand before the infinite majesty of God, who comes to us in the lowliness of the sacramental signs.

Adoration and Eucharistic devotion

The intrinsic relationship between celebration and adoration

66. One of the most moving moments of the Synod came when we gathered in Saint Peter's Basilica, together with a great number of the faithful, for eucharistic adoration. In this act of prayer, and not just in words, the assembly of Bishops wanted to point out the intrinsic relationship between eucharistic celebration and eucharistic adoration. A growing appreciation of this significant aspect of the Church's faith has been an important part of our experience in the years following the liturgical renewal desired by the Second Vatican Council. During the early phases of the reform, the inherent relationship between Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was not always perceived with sufficient clarity. For example, an objection that was widespread at the time argued that the eucharistic bread was given to us not to be looked at, but to be eaten. In the light of the Church's experience of prayer, however, this was seen to be a false dichotomy. As Saint Augustine put it: "*nemo autem illam carnem manducat, nisi prius adoraverit; peccemus non adorando* – no one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it."¹⁹¹ In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and

¹⁹¹ *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 98:9, CCL XXXIX, 1385; cf. Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia (22 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006), 44-45.

desires to become one with us; eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church's supreme act of adoration.¹⁹² Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we receive. Only in this way do we become one with him, and are given, as it were, a foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly liturgy. The act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself. Indeed, "only in adoration can a profound and genuine reception mature. And it is precisely this personal encounter with the Lord that then strengthens the social mission contained in the Eucharist, which seeks to break down not only the walls that separate the Lord and ourselves, but also and especially the walls that separate us from one another."¹⁹³

The practice of eucharistic adoration

67. With the Synod Assembly, therefore, I heartily recommend to the Church's pastors and to the People of God the practice of eucharistic adoration, both individually and in community.¹⁹⁴ Great benefit would ensue from a suitable catechesis explaining the importance of this act of worship, which enables the faithful to experience the liturgical celebration more fully and more fruitfully. Wherever possible, it would be appropriate, especially in densely populated areas, to set aside

¹⁹² Cf. *Propositio* 6.

¹⁹³ Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia (22 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006), 45.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 6; Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (17 December 2001), Nos. 164-165, Vatican City, 2002; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium* (25 May 1967): AAS 57 (1967), 539-573.

specific churches or oratories for perpetual adoration. I also recommend that, in their catechetical training, and especially in their preparation for First Holy Communion, children be taught the meaning and the beauty of spending time with Jesus, and helped to cultivate a sense of awe before his presence in the Eucharist.

Here I would like to express appreciation and support for all those Institutes of Consecrated Life whose members dedicate a significant amount of time to eucharistic adoration. In this way they give us an example of lives shaped by the Lord's real presence. I would also like to encourage those associations of the faithful and confraternities specifically devoted to eucharistic adoration; they serve as a leaven of contemplation for the whole Church and a summons to individuals and communities to place Christ at the centre of their lives.

Forms of eucharistic devotion

68. The personal relationship which the individual believer establishes with Jesus present in the Eucharist constantly points beyond itself to the whole communion of the Church and nourishes a fuller sense of membership in the Body of Christ. For this reason, besides encouraging individual believers to make time for personal prayer before the Sacrament of the Altar, I feel obliged to urge parishes and other church groups to set aside times for collective adoration. Naturally, already existing forms of eucharistic piety retain their full value. I am thinking, for example, of processions with the Blessed Sacrament, especially the traditional procession on the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, the Forty Hours devotion, local, national and international Eucharistic Congresses, and other similar initiatives. If suit-

ably updated and adapted to local circumstances, these forms of devotion are still worthy of being practised today.¹⁹⁵

The location of the tabernacle

69. In considering the importance of eucharistic reservation and adoration, and reverence for the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice, the Synod of Bishops also discussed the question of the proper placement of the tabernacle in our churches.¹⁹⁶ The correct positioning of the tabernacle contributes to the recognition of Christ's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, the place where the eucharistic species are reserved, marked by a sanctuary lamp, should be readily visible to everyone entering the church. It is therefore necessary to take into account the building's architecture: in churches which do not have a Blessed Sacrament chapel, and where the high altar with its tabernacle is still in place, it is appropriate to continue to use this structure for the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist, taking care not to place the celebrant's chair in front of it. In new churches, it is good to position the Blessed Sacrament chapel close to the sanctuary; where this is not possible, it is preferable to locate the tabernacle in the sanctuary, in a sufficiently elevated place, at the centre of the apse area, or in another place where it will be equally conspicuous. Attention to these considerations will lend dignity to the tabernacle, which must always be cared for, also from an artistic standpoint. Obviously it is necessary to follow the provisions of

¹⁹⁵ Cf. *Relatio post disceptationem*, 11: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 October 2005, p. 5.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 28.

the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* in this regard.¹⁹⁷ In any event, final judgment on these matters belongs to the Diocesan Bishop.

PART THREE

THE EUCHARIST, A MYSTERY TO BE LIVED

“As the living Father sent me,
and I live because of the Father,
so he who eats me will live because of me”
(*Jn 6:57*)

The Eucharistic form of the Christian life

Spiritual worship – logiké latreía (Rom 12:1)

70. The Lord Jesus, who became for us the food of truth and love, speaks of the gift of his life and assures us that “if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever” (*Jn 6:51*). This “eternal life” begins in us even now, thanks to the transformation effected in us by the gift of the Eucharist: “He who eats me will live because of me” (*Jn 6:57*). These words of Jesus make us realize how the mystery “believed” and “celebrated” contains an innate power making it the principle of new life within us and the form of our Christian existence. By receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ we become sharers in the divine life in an ever more adult and conscious way. Here too, we can apply Saint Augustine’s words, in his *Confessions*, about the eternal *Logos*

¹⁹⁷ Cf. No. 314.

as the food of our souls. Stressing the mysterious nature of this food, Augustine imagines the Lord saying to him: "I am the food of grown men; grow, and you shall feed upon me; nor shall you change me, like the food of your flesh, into yourself, but you shall be changed into me."¹⁹⁸ It is not the eucharistic food that is changed into us, but rather we who are mysteriously transformed by it. Christ nourishes us by uniting us to himself; "he draws us into himself."¹⁹⁹

Here the eucharistic celebration appears in all its power as the source and summit of the Church's life, since it expresses at once both the origin and the fulfilment of the new and definitive worship of God, the *logiké latreía*.²⁰⁰ Saint Paul's exhortation to the Romans in this regard is a concise description of how the Eucharist makes our whole life a spiritual worship pleasing to God: "I appeal to you therefore, my brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (*Rom* 12:1). In these words the new worship appears as a total self-offering made in communion with the whole Church. The Apostle's insistence on the offering of our bodies emphasizes the concrete human reality of a worship which is anything but disincarnate. The Bishop of Hippo goes on to say that "this is the sacrifice of Christians: that we, though many, are one body in Christ. The Church celebrates this mystery in the sacrament of the altar, as the faithful know, and there she shows them clearly

¹⁹⁸ VII, 10, 16: PL 32, 742.

¹⁹⁹ Benedict XVI, Homily at Marienfeld Esplanade (21 August 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 892; cf. Homily for the Vigil of Pentecost (3 June 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 505.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *Relatio post discepcionem*, 6, 47: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 October 2005, pp. 5-6; *Propositio* 43.

that in what is offered, she herself is offered.”²⁰¹ Catholic doctrine, in fact, affirms that the Eucharist, as the sacrifice of Christ, is also the sacrifice of the Church, and thus of all the faithful.²⁰² This insistence on sacrifice – a “making sacred” – expresses all the existential depth implied in the transformation of our human reality as taken up by Christ (cf. *Phil* 3:12).

The all-encompassing effect of eucharistic worship

71. Christianity’s new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (*1 Cor* 10:31). Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here the intrinsically eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape. The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace to reflect the image of the Son of God (cf. *Rom* 8:29ff.). There is nothing authentically human – our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds – that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of

²⁰¹ *De Civitate Dei*, X, 6: PL 41, 284.

²⁰² Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1368.

God is the living man (cf. *1 Cor* 10:31). And the life of man is the vision of God.²⁰³

Iuxta dominicam viventes – living in accordance with the Lord's Day

72. From the beginning Christians were clearly conscious of this radical newness which the Eucharist brings to human life. The faithful immediately perceived the profound influence of the eucharistic celebration on their manner of life. Saint Ignatius of Antioch expressed this truth when he called Christians “those who have attained a new hope,” and described them as “those living in accordance with the Lord's Day” (*iuxta dominicam viventes*).²⁰⁴ This phrase of the great Antiochene martyr highlights the connection between the reality of the Eucharist and everyday Christian life. The Christians' customary practice of gathering on the first day after the Sabbath to celebrate the resurrection of Christ – according to the account of Saint Justin Martyr²⁰⁵ – is also what defines the form of a life renewed by an encounter with Christ. Saint Ignatius' phrase – “living in accordance with the Lord's Day” – also emphasizes that this holy day becomes paradigmatic for every other day of the week. Indeed, it is defined by something more than the simple suspension of one's ordinary activities, a sort of parenthesis in one's usual daily rhythm. Christians have always experienced this day as the first day of the week, since it commemorates the radical newness brought by Christ. Sunday is thus the day when Christians rediscover the

²⁰³ Cf. Saint Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, IV, 20, 7: PG 7, 1037.

²⁰⁴ *Ad Magnes.*, 9, 1: PG 5, 670.

²⁰⁵ Cf. *1 Apologia*, 67, 1-6; 66: PG 6, 430ff., 427, 430.

eucharistic form which their lives are meant to have. "Living in accordance with the Lord's Day" means living in the awareness of the liberation brought by Christ and making our lives a constant self-offering to God, so that his victory may be fully revealed to all humanity through a profoundly renewed existence.

Living the Sunday obligation

73. Conscious of this new vital principle which the Eucharist imparts to the Christian, the Synod Fathers reaffirmed the importance of the Sunday obligation for all the faithful, viewing it as a wellspring of authentic freedom enabling them to live each day in accordance with what they celebrated on "the Lord's Day." The life of faith is endangered when we lose the desire to share in the celebration of the Eucharist and its commemoration of the paschal victory. Participating in the Sunday liturgical assembly with all our brothers and sisters, with whom we form one body in Jesus Christ, is demanded by our Christian conscience and at the same time it forms that conscience. To lose a sense of Sunday as the Lord's Day, a day to be sanctified, is symptomatic of the loss of an authentic sense of Christian freedom, the freedom of the children of God.²⁰⁶ Here some observations made by my venerable predecessor John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*²⁰⁷ continue to have great value. Speaking of the various dimensions of the Christian celebration of Sunday, he said that it is *Dies Domini* with regard to the work of creation, *Dies Christi* as the day of the new creation and the Risen Lord's gift of the Holy Spirit, *Dies Ecclesiae* as the day on which the Christian

²⁰⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 30.

²⁰⁷ Cf. AAS 90 (1998), 713-766.

community gathers for the celebration, and *Dies hominis* as the day of joy, rest and fraternal charity.

Sunday thus appears as the primordial holy day, when all believers, wherever they are found, can become heralds and guardians of the true meaning of time. It gives rise to the Christian meaning of life and a new way of experiencing time, relationships, work, life and death. On the Lord's Day, then, it is fitting that Church groups should organize, around Sunday Mass, the activities of the Christian community: social gatherings, programmes for the faith formation of children, young people and adults, pilgrimages, charitable works, and different moments of prayer. For the sake of these important values – while recognizing that Saturday evening, beginning with First Vespers, is already a part of Sunday and a time when the Sunday obligation can be fulfilled – we need to remember that it is Sunday itself that is meant to be kept holy, lest it end up as a day “empty of God.”²⁰⁸

The meaning of rest and of work

74. Finally, it is particularly urgent nowadays to remember that the day of the Lord is also a day of rest from work. It is greatly to be hoped that this fact will also be recognized by civil society, so that individuals can be permitted to refrain from work without being penalized. Christians, not without reference to the meaning of the Sabbath in the Jewish tradition, have seen in the Lord's Day a day of rest from their daily exertions. This is highly significant, for *it relativizes work* and directs it to the person: work is for man and not man for work. It is easy to see how this actually protects men and women, emancipating them

²⁰⁸ *Propositio* 30.

from a possible form of enslavement. As I have had occasion to say, "work is of fundamental importance to the fulfilment of the human being and to the development of society. Thus, it must always be organized and carried out with full respect for human dignity and must always serve the common good. At the same time, it is indispensable that people not allow themselves to be enslaved by work or to idolize it, claiming to find in it the ultimate and definitive meaning of life."²⁰⁹ It is on the day consecrated to God that men and women come to understand the meaning of their lives and also of their work.²¹⁰

Sunday assemblies in the absence of a priest

75. Rediscovering the significance of the Sunday celebration for the life of Christians naturally leads to a consideration of the problem of those Christian communities which lack priests and where, consequently, it is not possible to celebrate Mass on the Lord's Day. Here it should be stated that a wide variety of situations exists. The Synod recommended first that the faithful should go to one of the churches in their Diocese where the presence of a priest is assured, even when this demands a certain sacrifice.²¹¹ Wherever great distances make it practically impossible to take part in the Sunday Eucharist, it is still important for Christian

²⁰⁹ Homily (19 March 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 324.

²¹⁰ The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 258, rightly notes in this regard: "For man, bound as he is to the necessity of work, this rest opens to the prospect of a fuller freedom, that of the eternal Sabbath (cf. *Heb* 4:9-10). Rest gives men and women the possibility to remember and experience anew God's work, from Creation to Redemption, to recognize themselves as his work (cf. *Eph* 2:10), and to give thanks for their lives and for their subsistence to him who is their author."

²¹¹ Cf. *Propositio* 10.

communities to gather together to praise the Lord and to commemorate the Day set apart for him. This needs, however, to be accompanied by an adequate instruction about the difference between Mass and Sunday assemblies in the absence of a priest. The Church's pastoral care must be expressed in the latter case by ensuring that the liturgy of the word – led by a deacon or a community leader to whom this ministry has been duly entrusted by competent authority – is carried out according to a specific ritual prepared and approved for this purpose by the Bishops' Conferences.²¹² I reiterate that only Ordinaries may grant the faculty of distributing holy communion in such liturgies, taking account of the need for a certain selectiveness. Furthermore, care should be taken that these assemblies do not create confusion about the central role of the priest and the sacraments in the life of the Church. The importance of the role given to the laity, who should rightly be thanked for their generosity in the service of their communities, must never obscure the indispensable ministry of priests for the life of the Church.²¹³ Hence care must be taken to ensure that such assemblies in the absence of a priest do not encourage ecclesiological visions incompatible with the truth of the Gospel and the Church's tradition. Rather, they should be privileged moments of prayer for God to send holy priests after his own heart. It is touching, in this regard, to read the words of Pope John Paul II in his *Letter to Priests* for Holy Thursday 1979 about those places where the faithful, deprived of a priest by a dictatorial regime, would meet in a church or shrine, place on the altar a stole which they still kept and recite the prayers

²¹² Cf. *ibid.*

²¹³ Cf. Benedict XVI, Address to the Bishops of Canada – Quebec during their Visit ad Limina (11 May 2006): cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 12 May 2006, p. 5.

of the eucharistic liturgy, halting in silence “at the moment that corresponds to the transubstantiation,” as a sign of how “ardently they desire to hear the words that only the lips of a priest can efficaciously utter.”²¹⁴ With this in mind, and considering the incomparable good which comes from the celebration of the Eucharist, I ask all priests to visit willingly and as often as possible the communities entrusted to their pastoral care, lest they remain too long without the sacrament of love.

*A eucharistic form of Christian life,
membership in the Church*

76. The importance of Sunday as the *Dies Ecclesiae* brings us back to the intrinsic relationship between Jesus' victory over evil and death, and our membership in his ecclesial body. On the Lord's Day, each Christian rediscovers the communal dimension of his life as one who has been redeemed. Taking part in the liturgy and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ intensifies and deepens our belonging to the one who died for us (cf. *1 Cor* 6:19ff; 7:23). Truly, whoever eats of Christ lives for him. The eucharistic mystery helps us to understand the profound meaning of the *communio sanctorum*. Communion always and inseparably has both a vertical and a horizontal sense: it is communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters. Both dimensions mysteriously converge in the gift of the Eucharist. “Wherever communion with God, which is communion with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit, is destroyed, the root and source of our communion with one another is destroyed. And wherever we do not live communion among ourselves, communion with the

²¹⁴ No. 10: AAS 71 (1979), 414-415.

Triune God is not alive and true either.”²¹⁵ Called to be members of Christ and thus members of one another (cf. *1 Cor* 12:27), we are a reality grounded ontologically in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist, a reality that demands visible expression in the life of our communities.

The eucharistic form of Christian life is clearly an ecclesial and communitarian form. Through the Diocese and the parish, the fundamental structures of the Church in a particular territory, each individual believer can experience concretely what it means to be a member of Christ’s Body. Associations, ecclesial movements and new communities – with their lively charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit for the needs of our time – together with Institutes of Consecrated Life, have a particular responsibility for helping to make the faithful conscious that they *belong* to the Lord (cf. *Rom* 14:8). Secularization, with its inherent emphasis on individualism, has its most negative effects on individuals who are isolated and lack a sense of belonging. Christianity, from its very beginning, has meant fellowship, a network of relationships constantly strengthened by hearing God’s word and sharing in the Eucharist, and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality and eucharistic culture

77. Significantly, the Synod Fathers stated that “the Christian faithful need a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and their daily lives. Eucharistic spirituality is not just participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life.”²¹⁶ This observation is particularly

²¹⁵ Benedict XVI, General Audience of 29 March 2006: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 30 March 2006, p. 4.

²¹⁶ *Propositio* 39.

insightful, given our situation today. It must be acknowledged that one of the most serious effects of the secularization just mentioned is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living – “as if God did not exist” – is now evident to everyone. Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church’s life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived “according to the Spirit” (*Rom* 8:4ff.; cf. *Gal* 5:16, 25). It is significant that Saint Paul, in the passage of the *Letter to the Romans* where he invites his hearers to offer the new spiritual worship, also speaks of the need for a change in their way of living and thinking: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (12:2). In this way the Apostle of the Gentiles emphasizes the link between true spiritual worship and the need for a new way of understanding and living one’s life. An integral part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life is a new way of thinking, “so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (*Eph* 4:14).

The Eucharist and the evangelization of cultures

78. From what has been said thus far, it is clear that the eucharistic mystery puts us *in dialogue* with various cultures, but also in some way *challenges* them.²¹⁷ The intercultural character

²¹⁷ Cf. *Relatio post disceptationem*, 30: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 October 2005, p. 6.

of this new worship, this *logiké latreía*, needs to be recognized. The presence of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are events capable of engaging every cultural reality and bringing to it the leaven of the Gospel. It follows that we must be committed to promoting the evangelization of cultures, conscious that Christ himself is the truth for every man and woman, and for all human history. The Eucharist becomes a criterion for our evaluation of everything that Christianity encounters in different cultures. In this important process of discernment, we can appreciate the full meaning of Saint Paul's exhortation, in his *First Letter to the Thessalonians*, to "test everything; and hold fast to what is good" (5:21).

The Eucharist and the lay faithful

79. In Christ, Head of his Body, the Church, all Christians are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own, to declare his wonderful deeds" (1 Pet 2:9). The Eucharist, as a mystery to be "lived", meets each of us as we are, and makes our concrete existence the place where we experience daily the radical newness of the Christian life. The eucharistic sacrifice nourishes and increases within us all that we have already received at Baptism, with its call to holiness,²¹⁸ and this must be clearly evident from the way individual Christians live their lives. Day by day we become "a worship pleasing to God" by living our lives as a vocation. Beginning with the liturgical assembly, the sacrament of the Eucharist itself commits us, in our daily lives, to doing everything for God's glory.

²¹⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 39-42.

And because the world is “the field” (*Mt* 13:38) in which God plants his children as good seed, the Christian laity, by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, and strengthened by the Eucharist, are called to live out the radical newness brought by Christ wherever they find themselves.²¹⁹ They should cultivate a desire that the Eucharist have an ever deeper effect on their daily lives, making them convincing witnesses in the workplace and in society at large.²²⁰ I encourage families in particular to draw inspiration and strength from this sacrament. The love between man and woman, openness to life, and the raising of children are privileged spheres in which the Eucharist can reveal its power to transform life and give it its full meaning.²²¹ The Church’s pastors should unfailingly support, guide and encourage the lay faithful to live fully their vocation to holiness within this world which God so loved that he gave his Son to become its salvation (cf. *Jn* 3:16).

The Eucharist and priestly spirituality

80. The eucharistic form of the Christian life is seen in a very special way in the priesthood. Priestly spirituality is intrinsically eucharistic. The seeds of this spirituality are already found in the words spoken by the Bishop during the ordination liturgy: “Receive the oblation of the holy people to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the

²¹⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 14, 16: AAS 81 (1989), 409-413; 416-418.

²²⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 39.

²²¹ Cf. *ibid.*

mystery of the Lord's Cross."²²² In order to give an ever greater eucharistic form to his existence, the priest, beginning with his years in the seminary, should make his spiritual life his highest priority.²²³ He is called to seek God tirelessly, while remaining attuned to the concerns of his brothers and sisters. An intense spiritual life will enable him to enter more deeply into communion with the Lord and to let himself be possessed by God's love, bearing witness to that love at all times, even the darkest and most difficult. To this end I join the Synod Fathers in recommending "the daily celebration of Mass, even when the faithful are not present."²²⁴ This recommendation is consistent with the objectively infinite value of every celebration of the Eucharist, and is motivated by the Mass's unique spiritual fruitfulness. If celebrated in a faith-filled and attentive way, Mass is formative in the deepest sense of the word, since it fosters the priest's configuration to Christ and strengthens him in his vocation.

The Eucharist and the consecrated life

81. The relationship of the Eucharist to the various ecclesial vocations is seen in a particularly vivid way in "the prophetic witness of consecrated men and women, who find in the celebration of the Eucharist and in eucharistic adoration the strength necessary for the radical following of Christ, obedient,

²²² *The Roman Pontifical, Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests and of Deacons*, Ordination of a Priest, No. 163.

²²³ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 19-33; 70-81: AAS 84 (1992), 686-712; 778-800.

²²⁴ *Propositio* 38.

poor and chaste.”²²⁵ Though they provide many services in the area of human formation and care for the poor, education and health care, consecrated men and women know that the principal purpose of their lives is “the contemplation of things divine and constant union with God in prayer.”²²⁶ The essential contribution that the Church expects from consecrated persons is much more in the order of being than of doing. Here I wish to reaffirm the importance of the witness of virginity, precisely in relation to the mystery of the Eucharist. In addition to its connection to priestly celibacy, the eucharistic mystery also has an intrinsic relationship to consecrated virginity, inasmuch as the latter is an expression of the Church’s exclusive devotion to Christ, whom she accepts as her Bridegroom with a radical and fruitful fidelity.²²⁷ In the Eucharist, consecrated virginity finds inspiration and nourishment for its complete dedication to Christ. From the Eucharist, moreover, it draws encouragement and strength to be a sign, in our own times too, of God’s gracious and fruitful love for humanity. Finally, by its specific witness, consecrated life becomes an objective sign and foreshadowing of the “wedding-feast of the Lamb” (Rev 19:7-9) which is the goal of all salvation history. In this sense, it points to that eschatological horizon against which the choices and life decisions of every man and woman should be situated.

The Eucharist and moral transformation

82. In discovering the beauty of the eucharistic form of the Christian life, we are also led to reflect on the moral energy it

²²⁵ *Propositio* 39. Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (25 March 1996), 95: AAS 88 (1996), 470-471.

²²⁶ Code of Canon Law, can. 663 § 1.

²²⁷ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (25 March 1996), 34: AAS 88 (1996), 407-408.

provides for sustaining the authentic freedom of the children of God. Here I wish to take up a discussion that took place during the Synod about the connection between the *eucharistic form of life* and *moral transformation*. Pope John Paul II stated that the moral life “has the value of a ‘spiritual worship’ (*Rom* 12:1; cf. *Phil* 3:3), flowing from and nourished by that inexhaustible source of holiness and glorification of God which is found in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist: by sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross, the Christian partakes of Christ’s self-giving love and is equipped and committed to live this same charity in all his thoughts and deeds”.²²⁸ In a word, “‘worship’ itself, eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.”²²⁹

This appeal to the moral value of spiritual worship should not be interpreted in a merely moralistic way. It is before all else the joy-filled discovery of love at work in the hearts of those who accept the Lord’s gift, abandon themselves to him and thus find true freedom. The moral transformation implicit in the new worship instituted by Christ is a heartfelt yearning to respond to the Lord’s love with one’s whole being, while remaining ever conscious of one’s own weakness. This is clearly reflected in the Gospel story of Zacchaeus (cf. *Lk* 19:1-10). After welcoming Jesus to his home, the tax collector is completely changed: he decides to give half of his possessions to the poor and to repay fourfold those whom he had defrauded. The moral

²²⁸ Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor* (6 August 1993), 107: AAS 85 (1993), 1216-1217.

²²⁹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 14: AAS 98 (2006), 229.

urgency born of welcoming Jesus into our lives is the fruit of gratitude for having experienced the Lord's unmerited closeness.

Eucharistic consistency

83. Here it is important to consider what the Synod Fathers described as *eucharistic consistency*, a quality which our lives are objectively called to embody. Worship pleasing to God can never be a purely private matter, without consequences for our relationships with others: it demands a public witness to our faith. Evidently, this is true for all the baptized, yet it is especially incumbent upon those who, by virtue of their social or political position, must make decisions regarding fundamental values, such as respect for human life, its defence from conception to natural death, the family built upon marriage between a man and a woman, the freedom to educate one's children and the promotion of the common good in all its forms.²³⁰ These values are not negotiable. Consequently, Catholic politicians and legislators, conscious of their grave responsibility before society, must feel particularly bound, on the basis of a properly formed conscience, to introduce and support laws inspired by values grounded in human nature.²³¹ There is an objective connection here with the Eucharist (cf. *1 Cor* 11:27-29). Bishops are bound to reaffirm constantly these values as part of their responsibility to the flock entrusted to them.²³²

²³⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995): AAS 87 (1995), 401-522; Benedict XVI, Address to the Pontifical Academy for Life (27 February 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 264-265.

²³¹ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life (24 November 2002): AAS 96 (2004), 359-370.

²³² Cf. *Propositio* 46.

The Eucharist, a mystery to be proclaimed

The Eucharist and mission

84. In my homily at the eucharistic celebration solemnly inaugurating my Petrine ministry, I said that “there is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know him and to speak to others of our friendship with him.”²³³ These words are all the more significant if we think of the mystery of the Eucharist. The love that we celebrate in the sacrament is not something we can keep to ourselves. By its very nature it demands to be shared with all. What the world needs is God’s love; it needs to encounter Christ and to believe in him. The Eucharist is thus the source and summit not only of the Church’s life, but also of her mission: “an authentically eucharistic Church is a missionary Church.”²³⁴ We too must be able to tell our brothers and sisters with conviction: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us” (1 Jn 1:3). Truly, nothing is more beautiful than to know Christ and to make him known to others. The institution of the Eucharist, for that matter, anticipates the very heart of Jesus’ mission: he is the one sent by the Father for the redemption of the world (cf. Jn 3:16-17; Rom 8:32). At the Last Supper, Jesus entrusts to his disciples the sacrament which makes present his self-sacrifice for the salvation of us all, in obedience to the Father’s will. We cannot approach the eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart

²³³ AAS 97 (2005), 711.

²³⁴ *Propositio* 42.

of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life.

The Eucharist and witness

85. The first and fundamental mission that we receive from the sacred mysteries we celebrate is that of bearing witness by our lives. The wonder we experience at the gift God has made to us in Christ gives new impulse to our lives and commits us to becoming witnesses of his love. We become witnesses when, through our actions, words and way of being, Another makes himself present. Witness could be described as the means by which the truth of God's love comes to men and women in history, inviting them to accept freely this radical newness. Through witness, God lays himself open, one might say, to the risk of human freedom. Jesus himself is the faithful and true witness (cf. *Rev* 1:5; 3:14), the one who came to testify to the truth (cf. *Jn* 18:37). Here I would like to reflect on a notion dear to the early Christians, which also speaks eloquently to us today: namely, witness even to the offering of one's own life, to the point of martyrdom. Throughout the history of the Church, this has always been seen as the culmination of the new spiritual worship: "Offer your bodies" (*Rom* 12:1). One thinks, for example, of the account of the martyrdom of Saint Polycarp of Smyrna, a disciple of Saint John: the entire drama is described as a liturgy, with the martyr himself becoming Eucharist.²³⁵ We might also recall the eucharistic imagery with which Saint Ignatius of Antioch describes his own imminent martyrdom: he sees himself as "God's wheat" and desires to become in martyrdom "Christ's pure bread."²³⁶ The Christian

²³⁵ Cf. *Mart. Polycarp.*, XV, 1: PG 5, 1039, 1042.

²³⁶ Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad. Rom.*, IV, 1: PG 5, 690.

who offers his life in martyrdom enters into full communion with the Pasch of Jesus Christ and thus becomes Eucharist with him. Today too, the Church does not lack martyrs who offer the supreme witness to God's love. Even if the test of martyrdom is not asked of us, we know that worship pleasing to God demands that we should be inwardly prepared for it.²³⁷ Such worship culminates in the joyful and convincing testimony of a consistent Christian life, wherever the Lord calls us to be his witnesses.

Christ Jesus, the one Saviour

86. Emphasis on the intrinsic relationship between the Eucharist and mission also leads to a rediscovery of the ultimate content of our proclamation. The more ardent the love for the Eucharist in the hearts of the Christian people, the more clearly will they recognize the goal of all mission: *to bring Christ to others*. Not just a theory or a way of life inspired by Christ, but the gift of his very person. Anyone who has not shared the truth of love with his brothers and sisters has not yet given enough. The Eucharist, as the sacrament of our salvation, inevitably reminds us of the unicity of Christ and the salvation that he won for us by his blood. The mystery of the Eucharist, believed in and celebrated, demands a constant catechesis on the need for all to engage in a missionary effort centred on the proclamation of Jesus as the one Saviour.²³⁸ This will help to

²³⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 42.

²³⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 42; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000), 13- 15: AAS 92 (2000), 754-755.

avoid a reductive and purely sociological understanding of the vital work of human promotion present in every authentic process of evangelization.

Freedom of worship

87. In this context, I wish to reiterate the concern expressed by the Synod Fathers about the grave difficulties affecting the mission of those Christian communities in areas where Christians are a minority or where they are denied religious freedom.²³⁹ We should surely give thanks to the Lord for all those Bishops, priests, consecrated persons and laity who devote themselves generously to the preaching of the Gospel and practise their faith at the risk of their lives. In not a few parts of the world, simply going to church represents a heroic witness that can result in marginalization and violence. Here too, I would like to reaffirm the solidarity of the whole Church with those who are denied freedom of worship. As we know, wherever religious freedom is lacking, people lack the most meaningful freedom of all, since it is through faith that men and women express their deepest decision about the ultimate meaning of their lives. Let us pray, therefore, for greater religious freedom in every nation, so that Christians, as well as the followers of other religions, can freely express their convictions, both as individuals and as communities.

The Eucharist, a mystery to be offered to the world

The Eucharist, bread broken for the life of the world

88. "The bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51). In these words the Lord reveals the true meaning of the

²³⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 42.

gift of his life for all people. These words also reveal his deep compassion for every man and woman. The Gospels frequently speak of Jesus' feelings towards others, especially the suffering and sinners (cf. *Mt* 20:34; *Mk* 6:34; *Lk* 19:41). Through a profoundly human sensibility he expresses God's saving will for all people – that they may have true life. Each celebration of the Eucharist makes sacramentally present the gift that the crucified Lord made of his life, for us and for the whole world. In the Eucharist Jesus also makes us witnesses of God's compassion towards all our brothers and sisters. The eucharistic mystery thus gives rise to a service of charity towards neighbour, which “consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, affecting even my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ.”²⁴⁰ In all those I meet, I recognize brothers or sisters for whom the Lord gave his life, loving them “to the end” (*Jn* 13:1). Our communities, when they celebrate the Eucharist, must become ever more conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is for all, and that the Eucharist thus compels all who believe in him to become “bread that is broken” for others, and to work for the building of a more just and fraternal world. Keeping in mind the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, we need to realize that Christ continues today to exhort his disciples to become personally engaged: “You yourselves, give them something to eat” (*Mt* 14:16). Each of us is truly called, together with Jesus, to be bread broken for the life of the world.

²⁴⁰ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 18: AAS 98 (2006), 232.

The social implications of the eucharistic mystery

89. The union with Christ brought about by the Eucharist also brings a newness to our social relations: "this sacramental 'mysticism' is social in character." Indeed, "union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own."²⁴¹ The relationship between the eucharistic mystery and social commitment must be made explicit. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion between brothers and sisters who allow themselves to be reconciled in Christ, who made of Jews and pagans one people, tearing down the wall of hostility which divided them (cf. *Eph* 2:14). Only this constant impulse towards reconciliation enables us to partake worthily of the Body and Blood of Christ (cf. *Mt* 5:23-24).²⁴² In the memorial of his sacrifice, the Lord strengthens our fraternal communion and, in a particular way, urges those in conflict to hasten their reconciliation by opening themselves to dialogue and a commitment to justice. Certainly, the restoration of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness are the conditions for building true peace.²⁴³ The recognition of this fact leads to a determination to transform unjust structures and to restore respect for the dignity of all men and women, created in God's image

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁴² During the Synod sessions we heard very moving and significant testimonies about the effectiveness of the Eucharist in peacemaking. In this regard, *Propositio* 49 states that: "Thanks to eucharistic celebrations, peoples engaged in conflict have been able to gather around the word of God, hear his prophetic message of reconciliation through gratuitous forgiveness, and receive the grace of conversion which allows them to share in the same bread and cup."

²⁴³ Cf. *Propositio* 48.

and likeness. Through the concrete fulfilment of this responsibility, the Eucharist becomes in life what it signifies in its celebration. As I have had occasion to say, it is not the proper task of the Church to engage in the political work of bringing about the most just society possible; nonetheless she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the struggle for justice. The Church “has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper.”²⁴⁴

In discussing the social responsibility of all Christians, the Synod Fathers noted that the sacrifice of Christ is a mystery of liberation that constantly and insistently challenges us. I therefore urge all the faithful to be true promoters of peace and justice: “All who partake of the Eucharist must commit themselves to peacemaking in our world scarred by violence and war, and today in particular, by terrorism, economic corruption and sexual exploitation.”²⁴⁵ All these problems give rise in turn to others no less troubling and disheartening. We know that there can be no superficial solutions to these issues. Precisely because of the mystery we celebrate, we must denounce situations contrary to human dignity, since Christ shed his blood for all, and at the same time affirm the inestimable value of each individual person.

The food of truth and human need

90. We cannot remain passive before certain processes of globalization which not infrequently increase the gap between

²⁴⁴ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* (25 December 2005), 28: AAS 98 (2006), 239.

²⁴⁵ *Propositio* 48.

the rich and the poor worldwide. We must denounce those who squander the earth's riches, provoking inequalities that cry out to heaven (cf. *Jas* 5:4). For example, it is impossible to remain silent before the "distressing images of huge camps throughout the world of displaced persons and refugees, who are living in makeshift conditions in order to escape a worse fate, yet are still in dire need. Are these human beings not our brothers and sisters? Do their children not come into the world with the same legitimate expectations of happiness as other children?"²⁴⁶ The Lord Jesus, the bread of eternal life, spurs us to be mindful of the situations of extreme poverty in which a great part of humanity still lives: these are situations for which human beings bear a clear and disquieting responsibility. Indeed, "on the basis of available statistical data, it can be said that less than half of the huge sums spent worldwide on armaments would be more than sufficient to liberate the immense masses of the poor from destitution. This challenges humanity's conscience. To peoples living below the poverty line, more as a result of situations to do with international political, commercial and cultural relations than as a result of circumstances beyond anyone's control, our common commitment to truth can and must give new hope."²⁴⁷

The food of truth demands that we denounce inhumane situations in which people starve to death because of injustice and exploitation, and it gives us renewed strength and courage to work tirelessly in the service of the civilization of love. From the beginning, Christians were concerned to share their goods (cf. *Acts* 4:32) and to help the poor (cf. *Rom* 15:26). The alms

²⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See (9 January 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 127.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

collected in our liturgical assemblies are an eloquent reminder of this, and they are also necessary for meeting today's needs. The Church's charitable institutions, especially *Caritas*, carry out at various levels the important work of assisting the needy, especially the poorest. Inspired by the Eucharist, the sacrament of charity, they become a concrete expression of that charity; they are to be praised and encouraged for their commitment to solidarity in our world.

The Church's social teaching

91. The mystery of the Eucharist inspires and impels us to work courageously within our world to bring about that renewal of relationships which has its inexhaustible source in God's gift. The prayer which we repeat at every Mass: "Give us this day our daily bread," obliges us to do everything possible, in cooperation with international, state and private institutions, to end or at least reduce the scandal of hunger and malnutrition afflicting so many millions of people in our world, especially in developing countries. In a particular way, the Christian laity, formed at the school of the Eucharist, are called to assume their specific political and social responsibilities. To do so, they need to be adequately prepared through practical education in charity and justice. To this end, the Synod considered it necessary for Dioceses and Christian communities to teach and promote the Church's social doctrine.²⁴⁸ In this precious legacy handed down from the earliest ecclesial tradition, we find elements of great wisdom that guide Christians in their involvement in today's

²⁴⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 48. In this regard, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* has proved most helpful.

burning social issues. This teaching, the fruit of the Church's whole history, is distinguished by realism and moderation; it can help to avoid misguided compromises or false utopias.

The sanctification of the world and the protection of creation

92. Finally, to develop a profound eucharistic spirituality that is also capable of significantly affecting the fabric of society, the Christian people, in giving thanks to God through the Eucharist, should be conscious that they do so in the name of all creation, aspiring to the sanctification of the world and working intensely to that end.²⁴⁹ The Eucharist itself powerfully illuminates human history and the whole cosmos. In this sacramental perspective we learn, day by day, that every ecclesial event is a kind of sign by which God makes himself known and challenges us. The eucharistic form of life can thus help foster a real change in the way we approach history and the world. The liturgy itself teaches us this, when, during the presentation of the gifts, the priest raises to God a prayer of blessing and petition over the bread and wine, "fruit of the earth," "fruit of the vine" and "work of human hands." With these words, the rite not only includes in our offering to God all human efforts and activity, but also leads us to see the world as God's creation, which brings forth everything we need for our sustenance. The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit. Rather, it is part of God's good plan, in which all of us are called to be sons and daughters in the one Son of God, Jesus Christ (cf. *Eph* 1:4-12). The justified concern about threats to the environment present in so many parts of the world is reinforced by Christian hope, which commits us to working responsibly for the protection

²⁴⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 43.

of creation.²⁵⁰ The relationship between the Eucharist and the cosmos helps us to see the unity of God's plan and to grasp the profound relationship between creation and the "new creation" inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ, the new Adam. Even now we take part in that new creation by virtue of our Baptism (cf. *Col* 2:12ff.). Our Christian life, nourished by the Eucharist, gives us a glimpse of that new world – new heavens and a new earth – where the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven, from God, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (*Rev* 21:2).

The usefulness of a Eucharistic Compendium

93. At the conclusion of these reflections, in which I have taken up a number of themes raised at the Synod, I also wish to accept the proposal which the Synod Fathers advanced as a means of helping the Christian people to believe, celebrate and live ever more fully the mystery of the Eucharist. The competent offices of the Roman Curia will publish a *Compendium* which will assemble texts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, prayers, explanations of the Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Missal and other useful aids for a correct understanding, celebration and adoration of the Sacrament of the Altar.²⁵¹ It is my hope that this book will help make the memorial of the Passover of the Lord increasingly the source and summit of the Church's life and mission. This will encourage each member of the faithful to make his or her life a true act of spiritual worship.

²⁵⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 47.

²⁵¹ Cf. *Propositio* 17.

CONCLUSION

94. Dear brothers and sisters, the Eucharist is at the root of every form of holiness, and each of us is called to the fullness of life in the Holy Spirit. How many saints have advanced along the way of perfection thanks to their eucharistic devotion! From Saint Ignatius of Antioch to Saint Augustine, from Saint Anthony Abbot to Saint Benedict, from Saint Francis of Assisi to Saint Thomas Aquinas, from Saint Clare of Assisi to Saint Catherine of Siena, from Saint Paschal Baylon to Saint Peter Julian Eymard, from Saint Alphonsus Liguori to Blessed Charles de Foucauld, from Saint John Mary Vianney to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, from Saint Pius of Pietrelcina to Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, from Blessed Piergiorgio Frassati to Blessed Ivan Mertz, to name only a few, holiness has always found its centre in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

This most holy mystery thus needs to be firmly believed, devoutly celebrated and intensely lived in the Church. Jesus' gift of himself in the sacrament which is the memorial of his passion tells us that the success of our lives is found in our participation in the trinitarian life offered to us truly and definitively in him. The celebration and worship of the Eucharist enable us to draw near to God's love and to persevere in that love until we are united with the Lord whom we love. The offering of our lives, our fellowship with the whole community of believers and our solidarity with all men and women are essential aspects of that *logiké latreía*, spiritual worship, holy and pleasing to God (cf. *Rom* 12:1), which transforms every aspect of our human existence, to the glory of God. I therefore ask all pastors to spare no effort in promoting an authentically eucharistic Christian

spirituality. Priests, deacons and all those who carry out a eucharistic ministry should always be able to find in this service, exercised with care and constant preparation, the strength and inspiration needed for their personal and communal path of sanctification. I exhort the lay faithful, and families in particular, to find ever anew in the sacrament of Christ's love the energy needed to make their lives an authentic sign of the presence of the risen Lord. I ask all consecrated men and women to show by their eucharistic lives the splendour and the beauty of belonging totally to the Lord.

95. At the beginning of the fourth century, Christian worship was still forbidden by the imperial authorities. Some Christians in North Africa, who felt bound to celebrate the Lord's Day, defied the prohibition. They were martyred after declaring that it was not possible for them to live without the Eucharist, the food of the Lord: *sine dominico non possumus*.²⁵² May these martyrs of Abitinae, in union with all those saints and beati who made the Eucharist the centre of their lives, intercede for us and teach us to be faithful to our encounter with the risen Christ. We too cannot live without partaking of the sacrament of our salvation; we too desire to be *iuxta dominicam viventes*, to reflect in our lives what we celebrate on the Lord's Day. That day is the day of our definitive deliverance. Is it surprising, then, that we should wish to live every day in that newness of life which Christ has brought us in the mystery of the Eucharist?

²⁵² *Martyrium Saturnini, Dativi et aliorum plurimorum*, 7, 9, 10; PL 8, 707, 709-710.

96. May Mary Most Holy, the Immaculate Virgin, ark of the new and eternal covenant, accompany us on our way to meet the Lord who comes. In her we find and realized most perfectly the essence of the Church. The Church sees in Mary – “Woman of the Eucharist,” as she was called by the Servant of God John Paul II²⁵³ – her finest icon, and she contemplates Mary as a singular model of the eucharistic life. For this reason, the priest, standing in the presence of the *verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine* on the altar and speaking in the name of the liturgical assembly, says in the words of the canon: “We honour Mary, the ever-virgin mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God.”²⁵⁴ Her holy name is also invoked and venerated in the canons of the Eastern Christian traditions. The faithful, for their part, “commend to Mary, Mother of the Church, their lives and the work of their hands. Striving to have the same sentiments as Mary, they help the whole community to become a living offering pleasing to the Father.”²⁵⁵ She is the *tota pulchra*, the all – beautiful, for in her the radiance of God’s glory shines forth. The beauty of the heavenly liturgy, which must be reflected in our own assemblies, is faithfully mirrored in her. From Mary we must learn to become men and women of the Eucharist and of the Church, and thus to present ourselves, in the words of Saint Paul, “holy and blameless” before the Lord, even as he wished us to be from the beginning (cf. *Col* 1:22; *Eph* 1:4).²⁵⁶

²⁵³ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 53: AAS 95 (2003), 469.

²⁵⁴ *Eucharistic Prayer I (Roman Canon)*.

²⁵⁵ *Propositio* 50.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily (8 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006), 15.

97. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, may the Holy Spirit kindle within us the same ardour experienced by the disciples on the way to Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35) and renew our “eucharistic wonder” through the splendour and beauty radiating from the liturgical rite, the efficacious sign of the infinite beauty of the holy mystery of God. Those disciples arose and returned in haste to Jerusalem in order to share their joy with their brothers and sisters in the faith. True joy is found in recognizing that the Lord is still with us, our faithful companion along the way. The Eucharist makes us discover that Christ, risen from the dead, is our contemporary in the mystery of the Church, his body. Of this mystery of love we have become witnesses. Let us encourage one another to walk joyfully, our hearts filled with wonder, towards our encounter with the Holy Eucharist, so that we may experience and proclaim to others the truth of the words with which Jesus took leave of his disciples: “Lo, I am with you always, until the end of the world” (*Mt* 28:20).

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter’s, on 22 February, the Feast of the Chair of Peter, in the year 2007, the second of my Pontificate.

CANON LAW SECTION

Cases and Inquiries

THE REQUIREMENT OF "HEARING" THE VICAR FORANE BEFORE APPOINTING A PARISH PRIEST

Augustine Mendonça, JCD

There is a longstanding practice in a diocese according to which the bishop makes the appointments to all ecclesiastical offices, including the office of parish priest, after consulting only the Priests' Personnel Board. Someone has recently brought to the attention of the bishop that c. 524 of the present Code requires of him to "hear" the vicar forane before appointing one to the office of parish priest. He has been told that the practice of appointing parish priests without "hearing" the vicar forane is contrary to the law, and consequently, all such appointments hitherto made might be invalid. If this view is correct, all the juridic acts placed by such parish priests, for example, the celebration of marriages assisted by them, might also be invalid. The bishop is worried and, therefore, he is asking the

following questions: First, which vicar forane, of the deanery in which the priest is serving at the time of appointment or of the deanery in which the parish to which he is going to be appointed parish priest is situated, should the bishop consult? Second, does the bishop's failure to "hear" the vicar forane before appointing a parish priest cause the invalidity of his act? If the appointment is invalid, what would be the juridic status of his acts, such as assistance at marriages, singular administrative acts, etc.? If they are invalid, how to sanate them?

* * * * *

It is for the diocesan bishop to provide for ecclesiastical offices in his own particular church by free conferral. The exercise of this power of the bishop, however, is not absolute. The law can and does attach limitations to the exercise of this power (c. 157). Thus, for example, such limitations may be included in the prescripts that require of the bishop to seek consent or counsel of some person or persons before making an appointment, or determine specific qualities on the part of those to be appointed to particular offices, etc. This circumscription of the exercise of the diocesan bishop's power is obvious in the appointment of a parish priest. On the one hand the present Code recognizes the diocesan bishop as the sole authority to appoint a parish priest (cf. c. 523; *CCEO* c. 284, §1), on the other hand it specifies certain requirements which are to be met for the legitimacy of such an appointment. Canon 524 is a good example of this situation. This canon reads:

A diocesan bishop is to entrust a vacant parish to the one whom he considers suited to fulfill its parochial care, after weighing all circumstances and without any

favoritism. To make a judgment about the suitability, he is to hear the vicar forane and conduct appropriate investigations, having heard certain presbyters and lay members of the Christian faithful, if it is warranted.¹

The first element of this canon that is obvious is the authority who is competent to make the appointment of a parish priest. It is the diocesan bishop. The second element is the *de iure* vacancy of the parish. The appointment of a parish priest to a parish that is not by law (*de iure*) vacant is *ipso facto* invalid (cf. c. 153, §1; *CCEO* c. 943, §1). The third element is the suitability of the candidate for the office of parish priest. Unlike c. 459, §1 of the 1917 Code, which required the diocesan bishop to appoint to the office of parish priest someone who was "*magis idoneus*" (more suitable), the present canon merely states that bishop is to appoint as parish priest one who is, in his judgement, "*idoneus*" (suitable). The general qualities described in c. 521, §§1 and 2 and the particular qualities that could be helpful in effectively carrying out the parochial care in the parish to which the appointment is to be made must be carefully considered by the bishop before appointing a candidate for the office. The fourth element is the means through which this particular suitability is determined, that is, by "hearing" the vicar forane and appropriate investigations and, if necessary, by hearing other priests and lay Christian faithful. The element

¹ Canon 524: "Vacantem paroeciam Episcopus dioecesanus conferat illi quem, omnibus perpensis adiunctis, aestimet idoneum ad paroecialem curam in eadem implendam, omni personarum acceptione remota; ut iudicium de idoneitate ferat, audiat vicarium foraneum aptasque investigationes peragat, auditis, si casus ferat, certis presbyteris necnon christifideles laici." Canon 285, §3 of the Eastern Code (*CCEO*) has a substantially identical norm.

that is the focus of our discussion is the requirement of “hearing” the vicar forane before making the appointment.

The first question that has been raised concerning this element is: *Which vicar forane is to be heard? Of the territory in which the candidate to be appointed resides or of the territory in which the vacant parish to be conferred is situated?*

Although the text of the canon itself is not quite clear, the views of commentators on this issue seem somewhat unanimous. Almost all agree that the vicar forane to be “heard” by the bishop before making the appointment is of the territory in which the parish to be entrusted is situated. F. Coccopalmerio provides a detailed response to this question. He says that the vicar forane of the parish where the candidate resides at the time of appointment can inform the bishop of the person of the presbyter, while the vicar forane of the territory in which the vacant parish is situated can provide information concerning the situation of the vacant parish and about the qualities required of the presbyter to be an effective parish priest in it. “To me – he says – the solution seems to be: the vicar forane of the parish that is vacant should be heard (*audiri debet*). In fact, the purpose of the law (as derived particularly from the text of the 1977 *Schema*: ‘... the bishop is to consider the pastoral needs of the parish ...’ etc. – is so that the bishop knows the needs of the vacant parish.”² Coccopalmerio, while emphasizing the legal requirement of “hearing” the vicar forane of the vacant

² Francisco Coccopalmerio, “Quaestiones de paroecia in novo Codice (Pars III),” in *Periodica*, 77 (1988), p. 232. This view is re-presented verbatim in his book *De paroecia*, Roma, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1991, p. 122.

parish, does envisage the usefulness of “hearing” the vicar of the residence of the candidate.³

The above view is reinforced also by other authors: For example, F. Ramos states: “The vicar forane should be heard (*deve essere sentito*) concerning the needs of the parish which should be provided for [as stated in c. 356, §2 of the 1977 *Schema*]. It is evident, therefore, that it is the vicar forane of the territory in which the parish in question is situated.”⁴ In his commentary on this canon, A. Sánchez-Gil says: “... he must consult the vicar forane and undertake appropriate investigations. Regarding requesting the opinion of the vicar forane – in principle, it is the vicar forane of the place where the vacant parish is found [...].”⁵ According to P. Urso: “The vicar forane to be consulted is the one in whose territory the vacant parish is found; and, in fact, he is the one who can provide valuable information concerning the real situation of the parish and the type of parish priest who is suitable for the appointment.”⁶ M. Morgante states:

³ “Evidenter, vero, ad sibi iudicium efformandum de idoneitate personae (de quo in can. 521, §3) vel de aptitudine huius candidati huic paroeciae (de quo in can. 524), Episcopus audire potest, vel immo debet, vicarium foraneum presbyteri” (Coccopalmerio, *De paroecia*, p. 122).

⁴ See Francisco J. Ramos, *Le Chiese particolari e i loro raggruppamenti*, Roma, Pontificia Università S. Tommaso D'Aquino, 2000, p. 533.

⁵ See Antonio S. Sánchez-Gil, Commentary on c. 524, in Ángel Marzoa, Jorge Miras and Rafael Rodríguez-Ocaña (eds), *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, Prepared under the responsibility of the Martín de Azpilcueta Institute, Faculty of Canon Law, University of Navarre, English language edition, Ernest Caparros (gen. ed.), Montréal, Wilson & Lafleur/Chicago, IL, Midwest Theological Forum, 2004, vol. II/2, p. 1306.

⁶ See Paolo Urso, “La struttura interna delle Chiese particolari,” in *Il diritto nel mistero della Chiesa*, II, 2a ed., a cura del Gruppo italiano docenti di diritto canonico, Roma, Pontificia Università Lateranense, 1990, p. 469.

“The vicar forane should be heard (*deve essere sentito*) by the bishop before appointing the parish priest of a vacant parish (cf. c. 524). The vicar forane mentioned in the canon is the one of the vacant parish; but it is useful for the bishop to seek the opinion also of the vicar forane of the territory in which the candidate for the parish exercises his priestly ministry.”⁷ A. Borrás also expresses the same view: “Canon 524 is not precise if it deals with the dean of the parish to be provided for. Naturally this is to be considered. But the canon does not preclude hearing the dean of the actual parish of the candidate who could give useful information about his subject, having known him during the exercise of his ministry. Where the law does not distinguish, we too should not distinguish...”⁸ D. Brewer expresses a similar understanding of the canon when he writes: “The law directs the bishop to consult the vicar forane, if there is one. The canon does not specify whether the bishop needs to consult the vicar forane where the cleric has been serving or the vicar where the cleric is about to be assigned. The former can advise the bishop about the cleric’s performance, but the latter can indicate to the bishop the particular needs of the parish where a pastor is to be appointed. There is obvious wisdom in consulting both, and, at least on some occasions, the bishop may wish to do so.”⁹ We will evaluate these views later in light of the schematic development of the norm in question.

⁷ See Marcello Morgante, *La parrocchia nel Codice di diritto canonico: commento giuridico-pastorale*, Milano, Edizioni Paoline, 1985, p. 183.

⁸ See Alphonse Borrás, *Les communautés paroissiales: droit canonique et perspectives pastorales*, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1996, p. 116.

⁹ Dexter S. Brewer, “Canon 524 and the Systematic Participation of the Laity in the Selection of Pastors,” in *Studia canonica*, 29 (1995), p. 485.

The second question is: *Does the bishop's failure to "hear" the vicar forane before appointing a parish priest cause the invalidity of his act?*

On this matter there is no agreement among authors. Some standard commentaries refrain completely from offering any opinion on the matter.¹⁰ One commentator, after citing, in a footnote, divergent views on the issue, states: "Whether the bishop's action is valid or not without such consultation, the canon expects him to hear the vicar forane before appointing a pastor. Such consultation is prudent and can prove helpful in clarifying the qualifications of the candidate."¹¹ No definitive view on the validity/invalidity of the act of appointment is expressed in this statement!

Those who express definitive views on the issue may be grouped under two main schools of thought: the first considers the bishop's failure to "hear" the vicar forane before appointing a parish priest would cause the nullity

¹⁰ See, for example, the following commentaries: *Code of Canon Law Annotated*, prepared under the responsibility of the Instituto Martín de Azpilcueta, edited by Ernest Caparros, Michel Thériault (†), Jean Thorn (†), 2nd ed., Ernest Caparros (ed.), Montréal, Wilson & Lafleur Limitée, 2004, pp. 438-439; Pio V. Pinto (ed.), *Commento al Codice di diritto canonico*, 2a ed., Città del Vaticano, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 2001, p. 319. Even the commentaries on CCEO c. 285, §3, the equivalent of CIC 83 c. 524, do not shed any light on this matter. See George Nedungatt (ed.), *A Guide to the Eastern Code: A Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, Kanonika 10, Rome, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2002, p. 243; Pio V. Pinto (ed.), *Commento al Codice dei canoni delle Chiese orientali*, Città del Vaticano, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 2001, pp. 256-257.

¹¹ See John A. Renken, Commentary on c. 524, in John P. Beal, James A. Coriden, Thomas J. Green (eds), *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, commissioned by the Canon Society of America, New York, NY/Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 2000, p. 695.

of the act, and the second maintains that it would not affect the validity of the act. Each opinion is based on their own reasoning. We shall look at these divergent views expressed in a chronological order.

Coccopalmerio deals at length with this issue. He suggests that the purpose of “hearing” the vicar forane is twofold: first to gather information on the concrete circumstances of the parish (What is the situation of the parish? What are its needs? What qualities should the new parish priest have? etc.); second to learn more about possible candidates suitable for the office (Does the vicar forane have some presbyters in mind suitable for the office? What does the vicar forane think about the suitability of presbyters whom the diocesan bishop already has in mind? etc.). Then he goes on to say, “our view [is]: The diocesan bishop is to hear (*audiat*) the vicar forane – and this is an obligation.”¹² Is this a real obligation as Coccopalmerio claims? We shall discuss this point later in this exposition.

To the question: Is the appointment of a parish priest invalid if the vicar forane is not heard? Coccopalmerio’s answer to this question depends solely on the application of c. 127, §2, 2^o to this situation. Therefore, he says “The response is given in c. 127, §2, which reads: ‘When it is established by law that in order to place acts a superior needs the consent or counsel of certain persons as individuals: ... 2^o if the counsel is required, the act of a superior who does not hear those persons is invalid ...’.”¹³

¹² Coccopalmerio, “Quaestiones de paroecia,” p. 231; *De paroecia*, p. 122.

¹³ “Responsio datur a can. 127, §2, qui recitat: ‘Cum iure statuatur ad actus ponendos Superiorem indigere consensu aut consilio aliquarum

After setting the stage for the application of the prescript of c. 127, §2,2^o to this case, Coccopalmerio continues: "However, we ask: does '*is to hear (audiat) the vicar forane*' mean precisely: '*seek his counsel*'? Or, only, seek from him '*the elements of knowledge*'? To me the spontaneous response seems to be: both, hence also his counsel. And because to hear the vicar forane is an obligation, this means that the diocesan bishop 'needs the counsel' of the vicar forane ('counsel is required' as we may use the words of c. 127). Therefore, we can conclude: 'the act of a superior (of the diocesan bishop), who does not hear those persons (the vicar forane) is invalid', to cite again c. 127."¹⁴ It is clear in Coccopalmerio's argumentation that the "hearing" the vicar forane prior to the appointment of a parish priest is an obligation to be fulfilled in accord with the prescript of c. 127, §2,2^o and, therefore, an appointment made without "hearing" the vicar forane is invalid. Is the "hearing" of the vicar forane prior to the appointment of a parish priest equivalent to seeking his counsel or is it only a means to gather the elements of information helpful in determining the suitability of the candidate?

personarum, uti singularum: ... 2^o si consilium exigatur, invalidus est actus Superioris easdem personas non audientis ...'" (Coccopalmerio, "Quaestiones de paroecia," p. 232; *De paroecia*, p. 123).

¹⁴ "Tandem quacrimus: '*audiat vicarium foraneum*' significat praecise: '*consilium exquirat illius?*' an, solummodo, '*elementa cogitationis exquirat ab illo?*' Mihi videtur spontanea responsio: unum atque aliud, proinde etiam consilium. Et quia audire vicarium foraneum est obligatio, hoc significat Episcopum dioecesanum 'indigere consilio' vicarii foranei ('consilium exigitur', ut adhibeamus verba can. 127). Ideoque concludere possumus: 'invalidus est actus Superioris (Episcopi dioecesani) easdem personas (vicarium foraneum) non audientis', ut iterum citemus can. 127" (Coccopalmerio, "Quaestiones de paroecia," pp. 232-233; *De paroecia*, p. 123).

After declaring his view on the juridic consequence of not “hearing” the vicar forane prior to appointing the parish priest, Coccopalmerio raises two interesting questions related to the same requirement: First, in very large dioceses where the appointments of new parish priests are many, even a daily affair, how can the diocesan bishop hear all vicars forane? Can he do this through others, for example, through episcopal vicars of the zones of the diocese?” He answers: “That is certainly possible, but – we believe – with a special mandate.”¹⁵ Second, it is possible that in some large dioceses there may be episcopal vicars placed over the zones which include also vicars forane. In such a situation, can the bishop “hear” directly and only the episcopal vicars of the zones and not the vicars forane? Coccopalmerio’s answer is: “We believe that it is possible, if the necessity so demands, because the norm we are dealing with demands only the knowledge of the situation of the parish. This he could obtain also through hearing the episcopal vicars, provided that these know really well the situation of the parish.”¹⁶ If the bishop “hears” only the episcopal vicar of the zone and not the vicar forane of the deanery of the vacant parish prior to appointing the parish priest, would the act of appointment be valid? Coccopalmerio obviously does not answer this question! A similar case scenario is presented in another view which we will examine below.

R. Pagé’s view is similar to that of Coccopalmerio. Like Coccopalmerio, Pagé considers the “hearing” of the vicar

¹⁵ See Coccopalmerio, “Quaestiones de paroecia,” p. 233; *De paroecia*, p. 123.

¹⁶ Ibid.

forane an obligation on the part of the diocesan bishop. He says: "The text makes it obligatory for the bishop to hear (*d'entendre*) the vicar forane before appointing a parish priest; he should do this (*qu'il doit faire*) for the validity of the act according to c. 127, §2,2^o."¹⁷ Having interpreted the text of the canon in this manner, Pagé immediately seems to recognize the problem his interpretation might face. He correctly points out that the vicariate forane, which is headed by the vicar forane, is no longer obligatory in the new Code (a point we will discuss later). In fact, according to c. 374, §2, "To foster pastoral care through common action, several neighboring parishes *can be* joined (*coniungi possunt*) into special groups, such as vicariates forane [emphasis added]." This norm makes the very existence of the vicariate forane, and consequently, the existence of vicars forane in a diocese, optional. Therefore, Pagé asks, what if the diocese is *not* divided strictly into vicariates forane but into pastoral zones or regions, can these be regarded as the equivalents of the vicariate forane and the heads of these entities equivalents of the vicar forane? And, as a consequence, is the diocesan bishop obliged to "hear" them under pain of invalidity of the appointment before appointing someone a parish priest? Pagé responds to his own question as follows: It is possible for one bishop to respond affirmatively and to consult the priest who takes the place of the vicar forane and one presumed to know well the circumstances of persons and

¹⁷ "Le texte fait une obligation à l'Évêque d'entendre le vicaire forain avant de nommer le curé, ce qu'il doit faire pour la validité de l'acte selon le can. 127, §2,2^o" (Roch Pagé, *Les Églises particulières*, Tome II, *La charge pastorale de leurs communautés de fidèles selon le Code de droit canonique de 1983*, Montréal, Éditions Paulines & Médiaspaul, 1989, p. 82).

places of his pastoral zone or region. On the other hand, if the subdivisions of a diocese into regions consist of structures quite different from what the Code means by vicariates forane, the bishop could think that he is not bound by the obligation of consulting (*consulter*) the person responsible for that entity. He is, therefore, free to interpret the text in a strict manner (c. 18).¹⁸ If this were true, what value can we attribute to Pagé's view that the "hearing" of the vicar forane prior to appointing a parish priest is for the validity of the appointment?

In his very brief comments on this issue, Ramos also argues that the appointment of a parish priest without first "hearing" the vicar forane is invalid. He says that c. 524 provides some guidelines for identifying the suitability of a priest to be appointed as a parish priest, and one among these is: "Hear the vicar forane. First of all, we may observe that this is obligatory, 'is to hear ('*senta*')'. The appointment would be invalid if the bishop does not hear the vicar forane in accord with the norm of c. 127, §2,2°."¹⁹ The same view is echoed also by A. Sánchez-Gil: "... he must consult the vicar forane and undertake appropriate investigations. [...] the utilization of the term *audiat* makes

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

¹⁹ "Senta il vicario foraneo. Osserviamo, in primo luogo, che è obbligatorio, 'senta'. La nomina sarebbe invalida se il Vescovo non ha sentito il vicario foraneo, in conformità al can. 127, §2,2°" (Ramos, *Le Chiese particolari*, p. 533). In his commentary on c. 524, G. Read expresses the same view: "The Bishop is required to consult the Vicar forane (or 'dean') in whose vicariate (or 'deanery') the vacant parish is located; such a consultation is necessary if the appointment is to be valid (see Can. 127, §2,2°)" (Gordon Read, Commentary on c. 524, in Gerard Sheehy et al. (eds), *The Canon Law, Letter & Spirit: A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law*, Dublin, Veritas, 1995, p. 290).

one to think, pursuant to canon 127, §2,2^o, that it refers to a necessary requirement for the validity of the appointment.”²⁰

In brief, the above authors, who argue that the appointment of a parish priest made by the diocesan bishop without prior “hearing” of the vicar forane is invalid, base their reasoning on the prescript of c. 127, §2,2^o. Is this approach correct? Is this canon applicable to the case under discussion? Those who oppose this view maintain that c. 127, §2,2^o is not applicable to the requirement of c. 524, and some even argue that the institute of vicariate forane itself is optional in the Code, and hence, there is no obligation on the bishop’s part to “hear” the vicar forane under pain of nullity of his act of appointment of a parish priest. We shall now look at some of these views.

J.-Cl. Périsset states that the suitability of the candidate is not a condition for the validity of the appointment; but the absence of the required qualities, which come to light before taking charge of the office, could lead the bishop to revoke his decision (cf. c. 149, §2). The final judgement, however, falls within the competence solely of the diocesan bishop (c. 524). Then he adds: “The text says that the bishop hears the vicar forane. This consultation, however, is not required for the validity of the appointment and the norm of c. 127, §2,2^o is not applicable here, because c. 524 does not impose on the bishop this consultation under pain of nullity but invites him to do it in order to make a decision with knowledge of the case.”²¹ The question, however, is: Does

²⁰ See Sánchez-Gil, Commentary on c. 524, p. 1306.

²¹ “Le texte dit que l’évêque entendra le vicaire forain. Cette consultation n’est pas requise cependant pour la validité de la nomination et la norme du canon 127, §2,2^o n’est pas applicable ici, parce que le canon 524 ne

the verb “*audiat*” expressed in subjective tense imply a requirement that come within the scope of c. 127, §2,2º, and therefore, must it be interpreted in accord with the norm of that canon?

According to P. Urso: “In order to assess such suitability, the legislator asks that the bishop hear, but not for the validity of the appointment of the parish priest [...], the vicar forane and conduct appropriate investigations [...]”²² But Urso provides no reason why the “hearing” of the vicar forane is not for the validity of the appointment.

D. Brewer argues similarly but he bases his reasoning on the fact that, as stated above, the vicariates forane themselves are optional in the new Code, and hence, too, are vicars forane. For this reason, the requirement of “hearing” the vicar forane prior to the appointment of a parish priest would not affect the validity of such an appointment. He states: “Seeking the counsel of the vicar, however, would not seem to be a requirement for the bishop to act validly.”

prescrit pas à l'évêque cette consultation sous peine de nullité, mais l'invite à la faire en vue de juger en connaissance de cause” (Jean-Claude Périsset, *La paroisse. Commentaire des canons 515-572*, Paris, Éditions Tardy, 1989, p. 79). Although A. Borras does not explicitly state anything about the juridic consequence of not hearing of the vicar forane before the appointment of parish priest, he seems to subscribe to Périsset's view on the matter. See Borras, *Les communautés paroissiales*, p. 116.

²² “Per valutare tale idoneità il legislatore chiede che il Vescovo ascolti, ma non per la validità della nomina del parroco (cf. cann. 10 e 149, §2; ES I, 19, §2; EV 2/797; EI 187; EV 4/2248), il vicario foraneo ed esegua indagini opportune, uditi eventualmente determinati presbiteri, come pure fedeli laici. Il vicario foraneo da consultare è quello nel cui territorio si trova la parrocchia vacante; è lui, infatti, che può offrire elementi significativi sulla realtà della parrocchia e sul tipo di parroco che è opportuno vi venga assegnato” (Urso, “La struttura interna delle Chiese particolari,” p. 469).

In footnote 13 he explains his reason for such an opinion: "Although the wording of the canon is similar to the canons which require that a person or group be listened to for the validity of an act (e.g., c. 494, §2), those canons involve mandatory offices. Canon 553, §2 does not oblige the bishop to name a vicar forane."²³ One should admit that there is some validity in such a reasoning. In essence, in a diocese which has not been divided into vicariates forane the bishop is not obliged to "hear" anyone, and his action would be legitimate nonetheless. Then how can one argue that the requirement of "hearing" the vicar forane stipulated in c. 524 is obligatory? If we admit the validity of this reasoning, then we must ask whether the opinions which question the validity of the act of appointment of a parish priest without first "hearing" the vicar forane correspond to the rules of interpretation stated in c. 17 (*CCEO* c. 1499). In order to clarify the views presented above, we shall briefly examine the context and purpose of the law which is the focus of this counsel.

Canon 459 of the 1917 Code established clear and precise norms on the appointment of a parish priest. But it made no mention of "hearing" the vicar forane prior to making the appointment. Therefore, the requirement of "hearing" the vicar forane prior to appointing a priest to the office of parish priest as stipulated in c. 524 is new in the present Code. But this canon did not appear out of the blue, it developed through several stages. The theological basis underlying the norm of this canon is derived from the conciliar decree *Christus Dominus*, nn. 30 and 31, which,

²³ Brewer, "Canon 524 and the Systematic Participation of the Laity," p. 485.

after explaining how a parish priest should carry out his parochial pastoral ministry in collaboration “both with other parish priests and with those priests who are exercising a pastoral function in the district (such as vicar forane) or who are engaged in works of an extra-parochial nature so that the pastoral work of the diocese may be rendered more effective by a spirit of unity,”²⁴ stated that in forming a judgement concerning the suitability of a priest to assume the care of a parish, “the bishop should take into consideration not only his learning but also his piety, his zeal for the apostolate, and those other gifts and qualities which are necessary for the proper care of souls.”²⁵ But these statements made no reference to any involvement of the vicar forane in the appointment of a parish priest.

It was in the *motu proprio Ecclesiae sanctae* I that Pope Paul VI introduced the utility or opportuneness of involving the vicar forane in the determination of the suitability of the candidate for the office of parish priest. In this *motu proprio*, the vicar forane is seen as a close collaborator with the diocesan bishop in the pastoral care at the supra-parochial level. It is in this context that the *motu proprio* suggests the advisability of “hearing” the vicar forane in the appointment of parish priests in their territory. The document said: “It is advisable [*expedit ut*] that the diocesan bishop hears [*audiat*] them [vicars forane] whenever there is a question of appointing, transferring or removing

²⁴ Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus*, 28 October 1965, in AAS, 58 (1966), n. 30, p. 688; Austin Flannery (gen. ed.), *Vatican Council II*, vol. 1, *The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents* (= Flannery I), New Revised Edition, Northport, NY, Costello Publishing Company/Dublin, Dominican Publication, 1996, p. 581.

²⁵ *CD* n. 31; Flannery I, p. 582.

parish priests residing in the territory over which they preside.”²⁶ Two important points should be noted in this statement. First, no obligation is imposed on the diocesan bishop to consult the vicar forane prior to appointing a parish priest. Second, the vicar forane to be “heard” is one in whose territory the candidate for the appointment resides and not of the territory in which the vacant parish for which the appointment is foreseen. A similar statement is found also in the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops published in 1973 by the Congregation for Bishops. In this Directory we read: “The bishop opportunely hears (*opportune audit*) the vicar when there is an election or transfer or removal of pastors residing in their vicariate forane.”²⁷ The same two points made on the preceding statement are to be noted here. Again, the “hearing” of the vicar forane is in no way seen here in terms of an obligation on the part of the bishop. It is only “opportune” to “hear” the vicar forane in making such an important decision. Of course in both statements we cannot overlook the fact that the documents are not dealing just with the appointment of a parish priest, but they include also his transfer or removal from office. The reference to “hearing” the vicar forane of the territory in which the parish priests to be transferred and removed reside never became part of the canons on

²⁶ “Expedit ut Episcopus dioecesanus illos audiat, quoties de nominatione, translatione aut amotione parochorum agatur, in territorio cui praesunt commorantium” (Paul VI, *Motu proprio, Ecclesiae sanctae*, 19, §2, 6 August 1966, in AAS, 58 [1966], p. 768).

²⁷ “Vicarium opportune audit Episcopus, quoties de parochorum in forania degentium electione vel translatione vel amotione agatur” (Sacra Congregatio pro Episcopis, *Directorium de pastoralis ministerio episcoporum*, In Civitate Vaticana, Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1973, p. 184, n. 187; included here is the reference to CD nn. 29-30 and ES I, 19, §2).

the respective procedures, but the “hearing” of the vicar forane in case of appointment of a parish priest continued to evolve in the drafting of c. 524.

Prior to publishing the 1977 *Schema*, the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law published in gist what would eventually be the content of the present c. 524. The *coetus* drafting canons on “Sacred Hierarchy,” and particularly on individual parish priests, after describing the qualities necessary for the appointment to the office of parish priest, stated that only the diocesan bishop is competent to appoint or install a parish priest. “The diocesan bishop, however, should take into consideration the pastoral needs of the parish, and in order to be able to do this, he should consult (*debet consulere*) the vicar forane and, should he consider it helpful, he can hear (*potest audire*), concerning the needs of the parish and the special qualities of the person necessary to exercise the care of the parish in question, certain other priests, and even lay Christian faithful distinguished for their wisdom.”²⁸ If this formula is looked at very carefully one can identify the following points: First, the bishop should take into consideration the pastoral needs of the parish. Obviously, the parish in question here is the parish for which the provision of a parish priest is to be made. Second, in order to evaluate these needs of the vacant parish, the bishop should (*debet*) consult (*consulere*) the vicar forane. It is quite

²⁸ “Episcopus autem dioecesanus rationem habere debet necessitatum pastoralium paroeciae, et ut hoc facere possit, *debet* consulere vicarium foraneum atque, si id opportunum duxerit, *potest* audire, de necessitatibus paroeciae deque dotibus specialibus personae ad curam in paroecia de qua agitur exercendam, ceteros alios presbyteros, immo vel christifideles laicos sapientia praestantes” (*Communicationes*, 8 [1976], pp. 25-26).

clear here that the *coetus* intended, at this stage of the development of the c. 524, to make it obligatory on the part of the bishop to “consult” the vicar forane in order to be informed of the needs of the parish before the appointment is made. Third, the obligatory nature of this requirement is reinforced by the optional nature of his consultation with certain other priests and lay Christian faithful. These could be “heard” (*potest audire*) in order to determine the needs of the parish and the special qualities of the person necessary for the efficacy of pastoral care of the parish in question. Therefore, at this time of the evolution of c. 524, the *coetus* certainly saw the “consultation” of the vicar forane as an obligatory requirement on the part of the diocesan bishop.

The 1977 *Schema* contained two separate canons, 356 and 359,²⁹ which dealt with the different aspects of this issue and, with appropriate modifications and shifting, eventually became canons 521,³⁰ 523³¹ and 524.³² We shall examine here only what is relevant to our discussion. Canon 356 stated in §1 that it is only the diocesan bishop, and not the vicar general or episcopal vicar (without a special mandate), who is competent to freely make the appointment of parish priests in the diocese. The requirement of “hearing” the vicar forane appeared in c. 356, §2. This prescript read:

²⁹ See Pontificia Commissio Codici Iuris Canonici Recognoscendo, *Schema canonum libri II: De populo Dei* (= 1977 *Schema*), (Reservatum), Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, 1977, pp. 136-138.

³⁰ For the development of c. 521 through the different Schemata, see *Incrementa in progressu 1983 Codicis iuris canonici*, Eduardus N. Peters (Compiler), Montréal, Wilson & Lafleur, 2005, p. 478.

³¹ For the development of c. 523, see *ibid.*, p. 479.

³² For the development of c. 524, see *ibid.*, p. 481.

“The diocesan bishop freely appoints the parish priest [...]; but in designating them (*in iisdem designandis*), the bishop is to take into consideration the pastoral needs of the parish; wherefore (*quare*), he is to consult (*consulat*) the vicar forane and, if he thinks it opportune (*opportunum*), he is to hear (*audiat*) certain presbyters and lay Christian faithful who are distinguished for their wisdom, concerning the needs of the parish and about the special qualities of the person necessary to carry out the pastoral care in the parish under consideration.”

The above draft text reiterates the competence of the diocesan bishop to freely make the decision concerning the appointment of parish priests in his diocese. However, in “*designating*” or selecting the candidate suitable for the office of parish priest of the concrete parish that is vacant, the bishop is to take into consideration the pastoral needs of that parish. Because the parish to be provided for through a new appointment is situated in a particular vicariate forane, the bishop is to “*consult*” the vicar forane of that vicariate concerning the “needs of the parish.” There is nothing in the text to suggest that the bishop is to “*consult*” the vicar forane in order to seek out information about the candidate considered for the office. This distinction, we believe, is important in determining whether the “hearing” of the vicar forane is necessary for the validity of the appointment. Certain other priests and lay Christian faithful may be “heard,” if the bishop considered it “opportune,” concerning the needs of the parish and the qualities the candidate should possess for the efficacy of the pastoral care of the parish. In other words, this “hearing” of certain priests and lay Christian faithful was certainly intended to be an optional requirement. But it seems that the “consultation”

with the vicar forane to ascertain the pastoral needs of the vacant parish prior to making the appointment of a parish priest remained obligatory.

During the session held on 8 May 1980, canons 356 and 359 of the 1977 *Schema* were discussed at length by the *coetus*. What came out of this discussion was the text crafted out of these two canons (as c. 356 bis), which read: "A diocesan bishop is to entrust a vacant parish to the one whom he considers suited to fulfill its parochial care, after weighing all the circumstances and without any favoritism. To make a judgment about suitability, he is to hear (*audiat*) the vicar forane and conduct appropriate investigations, having heard certain presbyters and lay members of the Christian faithful, if it is warranted."³³ After this text was approved by all members of the *coetus*, the text remaining constant (with only two very minor stylistic changes) until its promulgation in the 1983 Code, the Relator proposed the introduction of a second paragraph to the canon in order to specify the qualities necessary in the candidate to be the future parish priest of the vacant parish. The Secretary considered such a specification unnecessary because: "The bishop knows the needs of the parish and, consequently, knows what sort of qualities are necessary in a future parish priest."³⁴

Was there any significant change in the above draft text of c. 524? The new draft reaffirms the bishop's compe-

³³ "Vacantem paroeciam Episcopus dioecesanus conferat illi, quem, omnibus perpensis adiunctis, aestimet idoneum ad paroecialem curam in eadem implendam, omni personarum acceptione exclusa; ut de idoneitate iudicet, audiat vicarium foraneum aptasque investigationes peragat, auditis, si casus ferat, certis presbyteris necnon christifidelibus laicis" (*Communicationes*, 13 [1981], p. 274).

³⁴ See *ibid.*

tence to freely confer the office of parish priest on a priest whom he considers "*idoneus*" (suitable) to fulfill the parochial care of the parish to be entrusted to him. He must make this decision after "weighing all the circumstances," that is, of both the vacant parish and the candidate to be appointed as its parish priest. In order to determine the "suitability" of the candidate for the office, the bishop "*audiat*" and not "*debet consulere*" or "*consulat*" the vicar forane. One notices a deliberate change in the use of the verb from "*consulat*" to "*audiat*." No explanation of this change is found in the reports on the deliberations of the *coetus*. From the tenor of the change we understand that the bishop is invited to "hear" the vicar forane solely to gather necessary information on the situation of the vacant parish, that is, the pastoral needs of the parish, and on the personal and pastoral qualities of the candidate or candidates he has in mind for the office. In other words, the bishop "hears" the vicar forane not for making the appointment *per se*, but for obtaining information concerning the parish and the candidate. Therefore, in our considered opinion, the verb "*audiat*" in its subjunctive tense is to be understood in an "advisory" or "optional" sense.

This conclusion may be strengthened also by Brewer's argument based on the optional nature of "vicariate forane" itself. Canon 217 of the 1917 Code made the constitution of deaneries in a diocese obligatory. If, due to concrete circumstances, such a division was impossible or ill-advised, the bishop was to consult the Holy See. But this obligatory nature of the vicariate forane seems to have changed after the Second Vatican Council. The reason for this change was the possibility of having divisions of a diocese into vicariates forane, districts, zones or regions, and even groups. This became canonically evident in different drafts

of the present c. 374, which deals with the establishment of deaneries in a diocese. In two draft canons, namely cc. 223 and 224 of the 1977 *Schema*, different forms of divisions of a diocese were foreseen: “deaneries,” “territorial parts” and “diocesan districts” (groupings of deaneries).³⁵ The draft canons were consistent in reiterating the optional nature of the deaneries. The decision to divide the diocese into these parts depended on the pastoral activities of each diocese. This is clearly reflected in c. 374, §2 (cf. *CCEO* c. 276, §2), which reads: “To foster pastoral care through common action, several neighboring parishes *can be (possunt)* joined into special groups, such as vicariates forane [emphasis added].”³⁶ Does the optional nature of deaneries have any relevance to our discussion? Definitely yes! If a diocese has no vicariates forane, or has only “territorial parts” with one of the elder parish priests as the coordinator of pastoral activities of each, or vicariates forane headed by deans, which are grouped into “diocesan districts,” with episcopal vicars leading their pastoral activities, naturally the question does arise as to whom is the bishop to “hear” in the case of appointment of a parish priest? No one can deny these realities and no one can simply dismiss the argument that when these realities are optional, “hearing” the vicar forane prior to appointing a parish priest to a vacant parish cannot be regarded as obligatory.

³⁵ See 1977 *Schema*, p. 95. Also see *Communicationes*, 12 (1980), p. 284.

³⁶ For the development of this canon through different drafts, see *Incrementa in progressu 1983 Codicis iuris canonici*, pp. 327-328. For a recent study on this theme, see Victor G. D’Souza, “The Office of Vicar Forane: Fidelity in Newness and Newness in Fidelity,” in *Studies in Church Law*, 1 (2005), pp. 269-313, here at pp. 280-282.

The trajectory of the development of c. 524, and especially of the verb "*audiat*," could be traced in the following direction: from "*expedit ... ut audiat*" – "*opportune audiat*" – "*debet consulere*" – "*consulat*" – "*audiat*." As interpreters of law, we should be able to decipher the changes in this trajectory. Did the legislator really intend to inject some specific meaning into these verbs in their different forms? If we look carefully at the context in which these verbs and their forms evolved, we cannot but attribute some significance to the differences between them. It seems to us that the verb "*consulere*" has been deliberately avoided in this development. Moreover, the tense used in expressing that action is present subjunctive, which can have the connotation of "may," indicating "discretion," or "shall," signifying "obligation." These variations in the use of the specific verb "audire" in its mildest form "*audiat*" only compels us to conclude that the legislator really did not want to create one more *invalidating* requirement in the process of appointing a parish priest. Multiplicity of invalid acts is odious to the law! Therefore, even if the text of c. 524 could be read in accord with the prescript of c. 127, §2,2º, as some interpreters have done, we believe that c. 127, §2,2º is not to be applied to the situation we are presently dealing with.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the verb "*audiat*" of c. 524 simply means that the diocesan bishop is invited or advised or exhorted even strongly by law to hear primarily the vicar forane or the head of any supra-parochial division of the diocese in order to gather information on the pastoral needs of the vacant parish and on the candidate or candidates who are being considered for the office of parish priest of that parish. This requirement

is not for the validity of the act of appointment. Therefore, should the diocesan bishop fail to "hear" the vicar forane before appointing one the parish priest of a vacant parish, the appointment is valid. Because the legal norm is intended for the pastoral well-being of the particular church, the bishop is not to disregard this requirement. The vicar forane to be "heard" is the one in whose territory the vacant parish is situated. It might be helpful or useful to "hear" the vicar forane where the candidate resides at the time of appointment. But this is not possible in many concrete instances, for example, when a religious priest, a seminary professor or any priest who has never been in parish ministry in the diocese, etc., is appointed as a parish priest; in these or in similar situations there may not be any vicar forane for such a "hearing." Therefore, in a strict sense, the vicar forane mentioned in c. 524 is the one of the territory in which the vacant parish is situated. He can provide relevant information on the situation of the parish as well as the kind of parish priest best suited for the efficacy of its pastoral activities.

In conclusion, the authors who have expressed their views on c. 524 agree that the vicar forane whom the diocesan bishop is required by law to "hear" prior to making an appointment to the office of parish priest is that of the territory in which the vacant parish is situated and not of the territory in which the candidate resides. But there is no agreement among authors in their response to the question whether the appointment of a parish priest without "hearing" the vicar forane is valid or not. Some hold that the act of appointment is *invalid* if the vicar forane is not "heard" prior to making the appointment, while others argue that the "hearing" the vicar forane required by in c. 524 is of an

optional nature (it is advisable, opportune, useful, etc.), therefore, the failure on the part of the diocesan bishop to hear the vicar forane would *not* affect the *validity* of the appointment. This divergence in opinions gives rise to several consequences in law with respect to the applicability of c. 524. First, there arises a positive and probable doubt about the meaning of the law. Therefore, in accord with c. 14 (*CCEO* c. 1496), when there is a positive and probable doubt about a law, no obligation arises from it. Therefore, technically the diocesan bishop does not have to abide by the doubtful law. Therefore, his action would be valid. Second, according to c. 144, §1 (*CCEO* c. 994), in “factual or common error,” the Church supplies executive power of governance for both the external and internal forum. If the appointment of the parish priest is invalid and the people of the parish believe that the one appointed is truly their parish priest, they may be in factual or legal common error. Therefore, all acts involving executive power, including the celebrations of the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Marriage, carried out by such a parish priest, are valid because the Church supplies the necessary faculty in situations of factual or legal common error. Third, there is, in this case, also a positive and probable doubt of law because of divergent interpretations of the law. This is also a reason for the Church to supply executive power of governance (cf. c. 144; *CCEO* c. 995). Therefore, in light of all these arguments, and in the absence of an authentic interpretation on this issue from the Supreme Legislator (i.e., from the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts), one can safely assume that the acts placed by the parish priest whose appointment to the office was done without “hearing” the vicar forane are certainly valid. And valid acts do not need sanation!

April – May ‘07

Sunday Homilies

PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD’S PASSION –
Lk 23:1-49 (April 1, 2007)

The Preview

The Sunday introducing the Holy Week has a curious name: *Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion*. After a hindsight, it is not amazing to see why Palm Sunday is at the same time Passion Sunday. The triumphant entry of Jesus to Jerusalem highlighted the universal meaning of palm branches as a symbol of victory. Jesus entered Jerusalem accompanied by a crowd of “fans” waving palm branches to express their jubilation in the presence of their king. It must be an interesting sight for Jesus. It must be fun or should we say funny. But it hurts when we laugh. This same crowd would be there in his crucifixion, if not to stand as his accusers, as indifferent onlookers, to say the least. Jesus riding on a

colt watched over the heads of his ecstatic well-wishers and found in their midst an initial feeling of doom. Ah! The glory of the world, how ephemeral, how fleeting, how like a balloon, exploding when pricked and shrinking as fast as it expands!

Jesus was no politician and undoubtedly did not trust the popularity chart. Those momentary “fans” did not really know him. At most, they accepted him to be a political king. That was not a compliment at all. It was as though they were putting Jesus not in the Hall of Fame but in the Hall of Frames – pictures of humans with a crown without a head! Jesus kept his head whole and entire as he moved through the crowd. He knew better. He treated the scenario going before him as though a trailer of a movie. He was having a preview of his passion as he listened to the cheers of the crowd. That’s it: a preview! The Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion rehearses for us year in and year out this introduction to a series of events which will focus on Jesus as our one and only Savior. Let us follow these events during this Holy Week not as indifferent onlookers but as empathetic participants. For if we will not join Jesus on the cross, how can we claim the victory of his resurrection?

HOLY THURSDAY – Jn 13:1-15

(April 5, 2007)

When Bending Down Means Growing Up

There is no moment when a man can really display his height as when he bends down to the ground. Only tall man can stoop. Small man hides his shortness by strutting along with high head and chin up. We can imagine the Father leaning down to the earth to scoop a handful of soil to form out of it the first man (Gen 2:7). Jesus crouching down to wash the feet of his apostles on that first Holy Thursday was indeed a superlative reenactment of this creation of man. It was a “re-creation” in a genuine sense. And why not? After all, was not the salvation wrought by Jesus the restoration of creation? Through this humble gesture, Jesus revealed the greatness of the Father. Bending down to reach out for the earth, both Jesus and his Father showed their unity in humility and as a consequence, destroyed the image of God as an arrogant deity. Nowhere in the folklores of the world can we find a god as humble as the Judeo-Christian God. Even the relatively sophisticated mind of the Greeks was not able to conceive a god humble enough as Jesus and his Father. For the Greeks never considered humility as a virtue. Humility to them was rather a weakness. It was a paralysis since humility disabled man from aiming high and thus, condemned him into a life of utter inferiority. Thus, Zeus was the Greek paragon of divinity: powerful to the point of arrogance, self-willed to the point of capriciousness. Zeus will never bow down for

such is the position of a slave. Zeus is a god and cannot by any extension of imagination serve.

The Judeo-Christian God is a scandal to the Greeks. He serves. From the Father's creation to the Son's re-creation, the history of salvation is a veritable story of service. God humbled himself so that in service he could open heaven once closed to us through sin. In God humility is inseparably united with service and in this unity, humility finds its redemption. It ceases to be weakness, it becomes strength – a strength powerful enough to open heaven. Thus, Jesus came to serve, not to be served (Mk 10:45) precisely for this reason: to open heaven to us. Service to open is a strategy which even the most secular corporation acknowledges and employs. In starting a business establishment, a commercial company advertises with a loud streamer in its building "Open to serve you!" "Closed to serve you!" is indeed a contradiction in terms and projects a self-destructive enterprise right from the start. God's wisdom cannot tolerate this contradiction. Thus, in opening heaven once again to us, the Son of Man entered this world as a humble servant.

Holy Thursday commemorates the Lord's Supper. Here, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Eucharist where he perpetuates his service. There, he does not only serve at the Eucharistic table; there, he himself is served. In every Eucharistic consecration, Jesus becomes food for us. His body and blood become our strength to sustain us in our journey back to the Father's home: heaven. To ensure that this Holy Eucharist is celebrated at all times throughout the world, Jesus also instituted the Sacrament of Priesthood on Holy Thursday. During the washing of the feet, Jesus

reminded the Apostles and the priests following them, to be humble as he was humble in service. Priests, perpetuating Jesus' humble service in the Eucharist may well remember this lesson from their Master. During the Eucharistic consecration, as they raise the sacred host and chalice high enough to cover their face, they remind themselves that their priesthood is essentially ministerial. They are ordained to be servants not masters. As they hide their face behind the elevated sacred host and chalice, they in their priestly lives, should not aim at worldly fame and adulation but in a hidden life of humble service. All in all, Jesus must increase while they must decrease.

GOOD FRIDAY – Jn 18-19:42
(April 6, 2007)

Vampires No More!

We are all vampires. We are all afraid of the cross. For the cross is the stage where Jesus forced us to confront our real self: absolutely weak, helpless and ugly. Our lives are totally spent to deny this human reality. We unceasingly pretend we are strong, powerful, wealthy and pretty. Why these pretensions? We want to be loved and we know no fellow human will love us unless we possess those endearing qualities. Our love is pure seduction or should we say bribery since without those “incentives”, will anybody love us? But until when shall we remain in power, beauty, health and wealth?

Jesus was crucified on the cross to display to us the naked and brutal truth that our humanity is simply nothing: without power, without wealth, without beauty. Still we are lovable. For the simple reason that it is precisely in our nothingness that God loves us. For if God loves us because we are powerful, wealthy and beautiful, how long will that love last? Human power, wealth and beauty are as fleeting as the grass. Based on these motives, love for humanity will then have the splendor of the grass: today, it is here, tomorrow, no longer. This absolutely does not befit God. God is love (1 Jn 4:16). His love is as eternal as himself.

Jesus approached us from the vantage point of weakness. For, if he encountered us with all his godly power,

wealth and beauty, chances are, we will not love him for himself, that is, we will not love him for love but something else other than love itself – power, beauty or wealth. On the cross, Jesus taught us to love God in all his ungodliness – weak, powerless, ugly, totally helpless. Yet, if in spite of this ungodliness, we still love this God hanging on the cross, we at that very moment will begin to love ourselves. For the humanity of that God is our own – weak, powerless, ugly and helpless. The love that we will give to Jesus will then be the love we will give to ourselves and to every man for that matter. We will love everyman not for anything else but for God himself, that is, for love, for God himself is love.

Beside the cross, we stand secure. There, we find our salvation. There, we are freed from the selfishness with which the other tree – the tree in Adam's paradise – poisoned our humanity. The tree of the cross totally reversed the course of human history. With Jesus' crucifixion, we are restored to our original image: the image of God. Now, we are free to love with a love only God knows how. For indeed only God is love!

EASTER SUNDAY – Jn 20:1-9
(April 8, 2007)

Pardon Me for My Good Friday Smile

Once upon a time, there lived a Dominican missionary in the town of Calayan, the capital of the Babuyan Islands, at the northernmost tip of the Philippines. Carrying out in the most zealous way his missionary vocation, he found approval and appreciation of the islanders. Everything went well in the parish until one day during the meeting of the Parish Pastoral Council to plan for that year's Holy Week celebration, the parishioners reported to the parish priest their ardent desire to have a procession of *Santo Entierro* (the procession of the image of Jesus' corpse) similar to the one solemnly held in the parish of Aparri, the first big town in mainland Luzon nearest to Calayan. With the interest and enthusiasm shown by his parishioners, how could the parish priest answer them "no"? He had no courage to tell them though the very reason why for so long he dared not lead any procession of *Santo Entierro* in the parish. The fact was first they had no statue of *Santo Entierro*, and second, they had no funds big enough to secure one. What was lacking in material resources, the parish priest supplied with his splendid creative imagination. He got a secret but brilliant plan. In the sacristy, he kept a life size statue of the Risen Lord. He thought to himself: "Ah! If I lay down the Risen Lord in the supine position, wrap it with a blanket, who will suspect that it is not

Santo Entierro?" He did just that and on with the Good Friday procession. The people could not believe that after long years of longing and waiting, now they had the procession of *Santo Entierro* just like the one in Aparri. But after looking intently with their lighted candles at their *Santo Entierro*, they recognized there was indeed a distinctive character which made it so different from Aparri's *Santo Entierro*. Their *Santo Entierro* had a wide smile in its face and because the parish priest was not able to wrap it so well with a blanket wide enough to cover it fully, its right hand was showing. Out of the blanket, the right hand flashed its fingers making the victory sign. "Why *Padre* our *Santo Entierro* is not like the one in Aparri which looks so somber and sepulchral?" "Oh!" the parish priest exclaimed, "Jesus had a happy death. When he was crucified on the cross, he was sure he was going to resurrect. So, the smile you observed in the face of our *Santo Entierro* is a proof that the life of our Lord did not permanently end on Good Friday. You saw the fingers of our *Santo Entierro* flashing the victory sign? That is perfectly understandable. Even on Good Friday, Jesus was already anticipating the victory of his resurrection."

Clever answer! Smart priest! Yes, that explains why even if the Church commemorates Jesus' crucifixion and death on Good Friday, it does not recommend any fanatical, hysterical display of morbidity. No to actual, bloody re-enactment of crucifixion! Jesus' crucifixion is enough. There is no need for us to replicate it exactly as it happened in Golgotha. Our daily crosses in terms of difficulties and inconveniences undergone for the love of Christ and neighbor are enough participation in Jesus' crucifixion. In

fact, we have to thank God that Good Friday is only one day, and Jesus' agony only for a few hours. Thank God the rest is Easter. And Easter is forever! Now, you know why you have to pardon me for my Good Friday smile? I am looking beyond the cross. I am anticipating the Lord's Resurrection – our resurrection!

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER – Jn 20:19-31
(April 15, 2007)

Thomas' Amazing Journey of Faith

The “doubt” of Thomas the Apostle has laid down the testing ground to detect the firmness of our faith. Is our faith reasonable or not? Paradoxically, the rationality of Thomas’ doubt went beyond reason itself. It transcended logic. How reasonable could it get to demand as a motive of one’s faith the tangibility of Jesus’ wounds? Thomas did touch Jesus’ wounds and thereby, professed his faith. Touch the wounds and assert one’s faith are surely not a perfect match at all. But Thomas did just that. Jesus likewise did the incredible: he retained those wounds notwithstanding the glorious state of his risen body. Would it not stand more to reason if he rose from the dead with absolutely no wounds? Flawless, his body would indeed inspire adoration. But no, Jesus after his resurrection revealed himself as a wounded Lord still. Amazing! And wonder of wonders, Thomas the Apostle fell splendidly into Jesus’ direction of this drama of faith.

Now, we understand what faith is all about. It is not the strength which thrives in everything rosy but, on the contrary, it is the power to act in the midst of thorns and pain. This kind of faith leads to hope which cannot be paralyzed by fear but endures unto the end even if it confronts situations which contradict all of one’s bright expectations. Indeed, this was Thomas’ faith: a light which

enabled him to see hope behind the grim reality of death. Bring in the wounds and we will see God! Amazing faith that defies reason but in so doing, strengthens it even more! This faith helps us live in an imperfect “body” – call it the Church – which for being human is full of weaknesses or “wounds”. Living in this “wounded Church”, we will not abandon this “body” for it is not somebody else’s. This body is mine, this body is yours, this body is Christ’s, this body is ours! Whatever pain it suffers due to these wounds is not yours or mine alone. Jesus suffers with us and bearing our wounds, he will bring them all into ultimate healing. The presence of these wounds in us, in this “body” we call the Church, will never scandalize us. It will never make us regard the Church as a sinking ship and ourselves, as rats abandoning ship for pure self-preservation. Our Church is not a perfect church all right – it is a church of sinners, of fallen clergy and laity, of unfaithful religious and married couples – but still, we will overcome. The body is wounded, it is true, but the head remains whole and healthy. Jesus will prevail. Thus, seeing these wounds – ourselves – in Jesus’ body, we will not despair but instead, with faith in our hearts, we will kneel down and pray: “My Lord and my God!”

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER – Jn 21:1-19
(April 22, 2007)

From Marshmallow to Rock

When Jesus met him, Simon was just a body of hubris. He would explode at times with glorious declarations but Jesus credited not him but his Father who was behind all that astounding revelation (Mt. 16:17). Soon after, the real Simon would come out: a fisherman who one might think could brave the stormy winds only to find in the thick of the squall, a child terribly afraid of his first swim (Mt. 16:22). He proclaimed at one time with direct frankness that Jesus was indeed the Son of God but as soon as he made this admirable profession of faith, he belied this heavenly revelation and joined the ranks of the fallen angels. Jesus called him “Satan” for who else would dissuade the Son of God to abandon the plan of the Father but the prince of darkness (Mt 16:23)? Thus, Simon showed that his enthusiasm was not genuine. It was not the meaning of the original Greek word for “enthusiasm” – an inspiration from God – which burns within the heart of Simon during those moments of brave proclamations. Plain hubris! Simon’s enthusiasm was sheer bushfire: quick to start, quick to die out. In the heat of the day, the brave heart that was Simon would melt like marshmallow. Before the cock crowed, he disowned Jesus thrice exactly as predicted (Mt 26:69-75). Yet, this same marshmallow was the rock on which Jesus intended to found his Church against which the gates of Hades would never prevail (Mt 16:18). A miracle, indeed, the one who denied

Jesus thrice was the same man who willingly submitted his body for crucifixion on the Vatican Hill as a testimony of his undying love for Jesus.

Jesus must have seen the transformation way ahead of Peter's martyrdom, right at the start, when he called Simon away from his nets so that he may become Peter the Fisherman – no longer of fish but of men. The training for Peter to become the supreme fisher of men was a preparation for martyrdom. It could not be otherwise. Love is everything. And if one is resolute to win love, he must be ready to give up all – even his life. So, the three questions which Jesus addressed Peter in today's Gospel-Reading were the final examination to test the love of Peter. In the first examination, Peter flunked miserably. This time, he was resolute to prove his mettle. As the Shepherd of the Church, he would feed the flock of Jesus, not with a sentimentality which is sheer product of a brushfire, but with an enthusiasm which only a heart burning with grace can bestow. Yes, indeed, the marshmallow has turned into the Rock. Another miracle of Jesus! That miracle is ours for the asking: we only have to pray that although we may not follow Peter's fate on the Vatican Hill, we also may endure the martyrdom of everyday living unto the end.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – Jn 10:27-30
(April 29, 2007)

Listening with the Heart

Quite a metaphor – the sheep of Jesus hear his voice – an equivalent phrase to indicate that the genuine followers of Jesus listen with the heart, in one word: “obey!” Obedience even in its original Latin derivation means simply that: “to listen” (*ob-audire*, whence the Spanish nouns familiar to Filipino usage, *audiencia*, *obediencia*). Those who truly obey Jesus possess a listening heart and, therefore, single-hearted. Metaphorically, they joined their two ears together, and in the process, formed the shape of a heart attuned to only one direction: Jesus. They are single-hearted and equivalently what one of the Beatitudes describes as “the pure in heart” (Mt 5:8).

What did Jesus promise to the pure in heart? “They will see God.” Might it not be the reason why today the world seems to be blind to the presence of God. Not that God is not around. He never abandons the world. He still dwells in the world of man since he is veritably the Emmanuel: “God is with us” (Mt. 1:23). The fault rests on man himself who succeeded in building up a culture outside the plan of God. Instead of abiding with God, obeying his word, following the light, living in truth, he constructs for himself a world of darkness, a culture of lies. Thus, he turns out the very opposite of single-heartedness which The Beatitudes envisions him to become. Out of the culture of

lies, he came out a cheating heart, trying to serve both God and mammon. The result is the acute bifurcation of his vision. He ceases to be a pilgrim resolved to follow just one direction: Jesus, the only way to the Father. Cross-eyed, he directs his sails to two opposite rivers, an impossible enterprise which, for obvious reason, defeats all his efforts for a joyful homecoming.

Yet, the solution to man's blindness is so easy. It is readily at hand. Return to the light: Jesus the Way. Man creates shadows – terrifying shadows – only when he turns his back against the light. When he faces the light, the shadows all disappear, he returns to normal: the world of truth, the world of Jesus. Thus, his place is no longer a dark dungeon. Finally, it is home.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – Jn 13:31-35
(May 6, 2007)

Love: Jesus' Way

There is from Jesus a new commandment to love (Jn 13:34). Based on a new standard, this love no longer thrives on “self” as its core. It goes beyond loving the neighbor as oneself (Lev 19:18). Now, the standard of loving is the love itself of Jesus. Now, one cannot love without Jesus for Jesus alone can provide us with the grace to love this much: love that goes beyond oneself. But why not stick to the old standard? With Jesus’ crucifixion, God has revealed to us how much he loves us. Creating us may suffice to show God’s loving care for us but dying on the cross is another thing. Indeed, no love is greater than this: that a man dies for his friends (Jn 15:13). From creation to “re-creation” is a way from the unimaginable to the unbelievable. But we better believe for although Jesus’ love defies all logic, it is extremely reasonable.

St. Catherine of Siena with a logic which only a mystic possesses tells us the reason why our love to be worthy of God cannot but be inseparably united with love of neighbor. She writes that God so loved us that he died for us. In other words, the love of God for us is an absolute self-giving. To be fair, such love should be reciprocated with the same absoluteness whereby it was given. Can we as finite creatures do God’s love? Of course not! We always fall back into our finitude which limits our response to

God whose love is as infinite as his very own self. After all, only God is love (1 Jn 4:8) Indeed, we have to be God to love God. That is why love for us, Christians, is not just a moral imperative. It is a religious imperative: an absolute self-offering, a holocaust! God, however, knows that even if we burn ourselves into ashes, such self-offering is still no match to his Son's self-sacrifice. But God is exceedingly understanding. He is pleased with what we can afford. If we cannot love him as much as he deserves, we can love him with a love within our ability to express: love our neighbor the Jesus' way. Loving man to man the Jesus' way, we will be able to love God man to God, the Jesus' way also. God does not command the impossible. When Jesus gave us a new commandment (Jn 13:34), he provides us with the power to fulfill it. Thanks to Jesus the Way. Now we know why God so loved the world that he became man: that man may be able to love God. A mystery so reasonable indeed!

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – Jn 14:23-29
(May 13, 2007)

The Spirit of Peace

There is something unusual about the Jewish understanding of man. It is so down-to-earth that it is so spiritual. The spirit of God plays an indispensable role in the nature of man that without it, man himself will be reduced into nothing. Only in the Spirit will man find his salvation. That is why Jesus always promised and indeed, fulfilled, to send his spirit to us. Otherwise, we will never experience salvation: no longer death but life eternal.

In us, we experience dying day by day. We are composed of body and soul, it is true, but such composition is more a principle of disintegration than of unity. The seed of conflict is within us. Now, do we still wonder why in this world we do not enjoy peace? We ourselves, by ourselves, within ourselves, bring the reason behind all conflicts in the world. The body in us is earth-bound while the soul in us is sky-bound. Can one ever imagine a picture of conflict more graphically than that? Just in one glance, one can see how an identity such as man, possesses no unity at all! Man in himself is a self-destroying identity! Water and oil – can one imagine what sort of combination such will result? It is not a combination at all. It is a self-made contradiction. So is man.

Only a miracle can restore unity in man whose identity is conflict itself. That miracle happened in the creation itself

of man. In a touching drama, God paused in a reflective mood, then, scooped up dust from the earth, and molding man out of it, breathed on it his own spirit (Gen 2:7). The result is a living being: man. Man became alive due to God's spirit. Minus this spirit, man returns to dust whence he originated. This is the reason why today mankind is dying: It no longer recognizes the role of God's spirit in his humanity. Thus, the body and soul in man pursue their direction all on their own, without the unifying principle that is the spirit of God himself. Torn between two opposite directions, man experiences conflict within himself, which for being so intense cannot help but overflow to others. Now, the conflict goes out of the confines of the individual to become global and thus, creates a chaos of terrifying proportion. Only when the spirit of God returns to man that creation will experience the original peace which God bestows on it in the beginning of time: when the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters (Gen 1:2). To have peace with us is indeed to have the spirit of God within us! Let us welcome the spirit of God: Come Oh Holy Spirit!

ASCENSION SUNDAY – Lk 24:46-53
(May 20, 2007)

Jesus Did It First!

The Ascension of Jesus is the absolute fulfillment of Jesus' promise to be the Way. No one knows the road to the Father except Jesus alone (Jn 14:6). His Ascension is not just his homecoming but ours too. By entering heaven first, he dissipated all our despair over our human nature, which for being dressed in lowly flesh, is not worthy to dwell in heavenly abode. Have we not always made our fleshly nature as an excuse for not trying hard enough to be holy? "We are just human", we tell to ourselves and to everyone, in order to justify our failure which is actually an outcome of our despair more than a result of plain weakness of our flesh. We can never imagine how a man – body and soul – one day could knock at the portal of heaven and for doing so, gain an entrance there. In heaven – we imagine – everything is immaculately clean. How can a lump of mud like us be allowed to enter when all it can do there is to dirty the whole place? Man is dust and to dust it will surely return, period!

This is precisely the reason why Jesus has to ascend into heaven: to destroy all traces of hopelessness in us. True, God molded man out of clay but let us not forget that God also breathed into him his own spirit (Gen 2:7). Because of God's spirit, human body is not just plain clay and purely earthly. There is indeed a principle most holy

in our body – the Holy Spirit – and for this reason, human body is not just the natural abode of the soul but more than this, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Being the vessel of grace that we are, why can we not enter heaven? This title of grace which comes from Jesus' affinity with the divine nature empowers man's bodily form to become the vessel of grace and consequently, a beneficiary likewise of the promise of grace: heaven. So, when our own time comes to go to heaven, let us not doubt even for a moment that we have a rightful place there. Jesus, our Brother has gone ahead of us not just in his divine form but in the complete human nature – body and soul! There is no reason why we should be embarrassed to muddy heaven. Jesus did it first!

PENTECOST SUNDAY – Jn 14:15-16, 23-26
(May 27, 2007)

The Gift that is the Holy Spirit

Pentecost is the story of gift-giving. The Holy Spirit is that gift without which grace is to us out of reach. As gift, this grace which is the Holy Spirit is free but not cheap. It was born out of Jesus' death. Jesus' death is the ultimate self-offering. There, he commended his spirit to the Father (Jn 23:46). Dying, Jesus released the Holy Spirit as though from its imprisonment. When he breathed his last, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom (Mt 27:51; Mk 15:38) signaling as though a new era in the history of redemption. The presence of the Holy Spirit is no longer restricted to the confines of the Holy of Holies. As in the beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters (Gen 1:2), sanctifying everything it touched. Jesus' death made possible the re-enactment of what originally happened in the beginning of time. Today's Gospel-reading speaks of Jesus' offering his spirit to the Father, and the Father in turn sending the same spirit to us in Jesus' name (Jn 14:26). Enlivened by the Spirit that bonded together the Father and the Son in a substantial love, the world becomes the Temple of God; there, nothing is profane or as its original Latin root signifies "outside the temple". Pentecost indeed marked a new era in the history of redemption. Through the Holy Spirit the world was made clean and as Jesus told Peter, from then on, no

one should call anything in it dirty (Acts 10:15). Except sin, everything in this world is open to sanctification, and therefore, worth offering to God.

Pentecost perfected the worship of God. Because God is spirit, humans should worship God in spirit and truth (Jn 4:24). The Holy Spirit made all this possible through his advocacy. As the Advocate, he is the teacher. He opens up what was once our dark mind to light. As Jesus told his disciples, the Holy Spirit will correct the world in his error about sin and righteousness (Jn 16:8-11). With the Holy Spirit, the world will be continuously cleansed and cease to be the arena for perdition and instead become the stage for salvation. This continuing Pentecost will realize a new world where conflicts will end, beginning from the human heart which will experience the harmony of body and soul once torn apart by opposite directions, but now, focused to just one end: God. "Come, Oh Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful!" Indeed, the adorers of the Holy Spirit will be God's agents of unity and peace. For living in the Holy Spirit, they are possessed by love. This love is not just an earthly love but God himself as love (Jn 4:8). God himself as love is the Holy Spirit who brings together the Father and the Son into a unity which defies our human comprehension: the unity of God – one divine nature in three distinct persons! The Holy Spirit which is God's love himself will bring the reflection of this trinitarian love to the world: unity in diversity. Differences in the world will cease to be the reason behind division but instead, the motive for unity and harmony. Humans will love each other not because they are exactly the same. God, after all, created each man so unique that he

cannot be mistaken and treated as the zerox copy of another. Creating man into God's image does not mean mass zeroxing of man. It means that God breathed on man his spirit which will make man live and stand for what belongs essentially to God: unity in diversity, harmony in distinction. Pentecost indeed completes the cycle of our Easter celebration by bringing us to the most profound understanding of God's trinitarian nature. Understanding God, we now have a better appreciation of man. For without the mystery of God, man becomes more mysterious to himself. But thanks to the Holy Spirit, the love of God enlightens our minds and brings to a glorious end our journey from shadows to light.

FR. ENRICO GONZALES, O.P.

June – July ‘07

Sunday Homilies

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| <p>SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY – Jn 16:12-15 (June 3, 2007)</p> |
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Teachings:

1. The Reading is part of John's "Book of Glory" wherein one finds "The Last Supper discourses"; it is part of the "Consolation of the disciples"; its main message is that the Paraclete will guide the disciples into all truth.

2. The Reading does not tell us about the "interior life" of the Trinity (as dogmatic treatises on it tell theology students). Nevertheless, it gives us an idea of the intimacy of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. "Everything that the Father has is mine," Jesus says. From this "mine" of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will "take" and clarify it to the disciples. So, it is not the whole "mine" that is made clear but only what would be of help to the disciples. No human

mind can grasp the totality of that-which-is-God. No human mind can grasp that which the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit share.

3. V. 13 “The Spirit of Truth... will declare to you the things that are coming.” It is not a question here of prophesying what will happen in the future. The Spirit of Truth will interpret to the disciples the meaning of what has already occurred or of what had already been said.

4. What the Holy Spirit will declare to the disciples is what is enough to glorify Jesus.

Values. (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing can be done on these points*).

1. V. 12-13. “I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when the Spirit comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth.” Value of what theologians call “the homogenous development of dogma.” This means that Christian teaching is clarified by the Holy Spirit working within the disciples according to the need of their situation (*Sitz im leben*). At first it was enough for Christian liturgy to use a Trinitarian formula for baptism, see Mt 29: 19 and for St. Paul to use “Trinitarian formulas” in his letters as in 1 Cor 6:11; 2 Cor 13:13.

Later, the relations between Father, Son and Holy Spirit were clarified by the early Ecumenical Councils, until the standard formulation was reached in the Council of Constantinople II in 553. – One should note that the Holy Spirit not only helps Bishops and priests to know “all truth” necessary for salvation but all the faithful. <> Have you experienced being guided by the Holy Spirit in your search

for the truth that saves? Has the Holy Spirit helped you get a better understanding of the Blessed Trinity?

2. V. 14. "He (the Holy Spirit) will glorify me (Jesus)." Value of glorifying Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit. This is one of the things being done by those in the Charismatic movement. <> Share your experience about glorifying Jesus, moved by the Holy Spirit. Has this helped you relate your life to all the three persons of the Blessed Trinity?

***Sample Homily:* THREE IN ONE – IN MY LIFE TOO**

When I use my cell-phone to talk to you and you use yours to answer me, we have communication. And if we are talking about love, we have, at least in a certain sense, communion!

Let's try to analyze that. There's you, there's me. We use words. We express love. All that is possible because of a gadget we call a cell-phone or a mobile phone. And a cell-phone works because there is such a thing as "cyber-space" which is harnessed by the science of electronics.

An exchange of love-words between you and me with the help of a cell-phone can lead us to a better understanding of the Most Blessed Trinity. The Father is like me, the Son is like you, and the Holy Spirit is like that complex combination of words, cell-phone, cyberspace and electronics. A theologian of a much earlier time, St. Augustine, expressed the Three Persons of the Trinity as Lover, Beloved and Love. Pardon me for being somewhat irreverent, but I think that today, we can re-formulate that by thinking of Me, You and our Cellphones!

More seriously, Pope Benedict XVI said that a good analogy of the Trinity is the family because “it is called to be a community of love and life, in which differences must come together to become a parable of communion.”

Today, let us think of the Blessed Trinity when we use our cell-phones. Or better still, when we are with our family.

**SOLEMNITY of the BODY and BLOOD of CHRIST –
Lk 9:11-17 (June 10, 2007)**

Teachings:

1. The Reading is part of a section in the Gospel according to Luke where he asks, “Who, really, is this man?” – 9:7-56. In today’s reading, the partial answer to that question is that Jesus is the one who provides (miraculously) for the needs of God’s people. The miraculous bread that comes from Jesus is not only the loaves that he multiplied to feed 5,000 men, but also (as made clear in Jn 6:51) the bread of his broken body with which he sacramentally provided for the faithful of all generations to come by instituting the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper.

2. The New Jerome Bible Handbook outline designates this reading as “Jesus’ gift of food is linked to his cross (9: 10-17)”. A few verses later, Jesus makes his first prediction of his Passion (see Lk 9:22).

3. When Christian artistic tradition connects the Eucharist with loaves and fish the artists see a close connection between the Last Supper (where there was no fish) and Jesus’ miraculous feeding of 5,000 men (where “two fish” are mentioned in vv. 13 & 16).

Values. *(In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing can be done on these points).*

1. V. 11b. “He received (the crowds) and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and he healed those who needed

to be cured.” The crowds were already hungry but Jesus attended first to their need for doctrine and cure. Here one can see the value of prioritizing the help one extends to people. If one wants to imitate the example of Jesus, one should first attend to people’s need for sound teaching and for bodily wellness, before attending to their hungry stomachs. <> Share your experience of helping others get sound teaching and bodily wellness, as well as food. You can’t do it alone. You have to do it acting as a community.

2. V. 13. “‘Give them some food yourselves.’ They replied, ‘Five loaves and two fish are all we have...’” Here one can see the value of personal sacrifice when helping others. The disciples offer “(the little) that they have” upon the prodding of Jesus.

Sample Homily: **THE EUCHARIST INSIDE AND
OUTSIDE THE CHURCH**

In Rome, the Feast of Corpus Christi is still celebrated on the Thursday after the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, and a solemn procession is its highlight. Last year, Pope Benedict XVI presided over the procession from the Basilica of St. John Lateran to the Basilica of St. Mary Major.

On the following Sunday, at the Angelus Message from his room overlooking St. Peter’s Square, the Pope explained the significance of having a procession with the Blessed Sacrament. He said: “By carrying the Eucharist through the streets and squares, we wish to submerge the bread descended from heaven in the everyday of our lives; we want Jesus to walk where we walk; to live where we live. Our world, our lives, must become his temple.”

The Holy Father further said: "From communion with Christ arises the charity that transforms our lives and supports all in the journey toward the heavenly homeland."

It's a pity that in our parish we do not have a procession of the Blessed Sacrament to mark the feast of Corpus Christi. But then, again, we can leave things that way, as long as we bring Christ to our needy brothers and sisters through our works of charity. That, really, is the more significant way of celebrating the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

11th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Lk 7:36 – 8:3

Today is Father's Day, see Ordo p. 106;

"Prayer of Blessing on Father's Day," p. 189

(June 17, 2007)

Teachings:

1. In Luke's plan of his Gospel, today's Sunday Gospel Reading is part of a section that shows Jesus' kingdom message to be for men and women and shatters the boundaries of clean and unclean (7:1 – 9:6).

2. In the New American Bible (NAB) 7:36-50 is designated as "The Pardon of the Sinful Woman" and 8:1-3 as "Galilean Women Follow Jesus."

3. Since Mary Magdalene is named in 8:2 as among "some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities," she has been presumed, from ancient times, to be the same woman mentioned in the immediately preceding episode as being sinful, a prostitute. But clearly the logic behind this is faulty. Why not also label Joanna and Susanna as prostitutes? They, too, were cured of evil spirits and infirmities! Mary Magdalene should not be tagged as a prostitute but as among the women who "provided for (Jesus and the apostles) out of their resources" (Lk 8:1-3) and in particular as the woman who met the Risen Christ at the vicinity of the Empty Tomb and was commissioned to announce the Resurrection of Christ to his own disciples (see Jn 20:17-18).

Values. (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing can be done on these points*).

1. V. 36-38; 44b-46. The sinful woman supplied and exceeded the acts of hospitality that Simon should have shown to Jesus. One finds here the value of making up for the deficiencies of others. <> Have you had such an experience? What was the personal benefit to you when you made up for the deficiencies of others?

2. One may say that the sinful woman showed excessive devotion to Jesus. But Jesus condones the excess. Hence one can see the value of condoning excessive devotion when it serves a good purpose (in this case, a lesson on God's mercy). <> You can adopt this value when you condone the excesses of popular religiosity.

3. V. 48. "Your sins are forgiven." Clearly, we have here the value of having one's sins forgiven. But one should not miss the value of overwhelming gratitude for having one's many sins forgiven. <> What do you think is the best way of showing gratitude to God for forgiving so many sins you have committed?

***Sample Homily:* WHAT TO DO WITH POPULAR RELIGIOSITY**

What the repentant sinful woman did to Jesus – bathe his feet with her tears, wipe them with her hair, perfume them with precious ointment – are excesses comparable to the excesses that people show in popular religiosity. Some people, like Simon the Pharisee, condemn these excesses and want Jesus to reject them. But Jesus instead praises the woman and points out the shortcomings of the Pharisee,

and gives salvation to the excessively sentimental woman: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Following Jesus, the bishops of Asia, in a number of documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), accept people's popular religiosity as something that can work for the salvation of people, although bishops must always be watchful lest there be abuses. At the International Congress on Mission held in Manila in 1979, the Congress message said: "We would like to stress once again that popular piety and folk religiosity must be taken seriously, examined and fostered."

Another FABC document says: "Taking account of widespread popular religiosity down to the grassroots of Asian society seems more important in view of discerning the Holy Spirit at work, not only because our faithful bring with them into the Church this religiosity (sentiments expressed in customs and behavior), but also because among Christians, day to day life in faith, particularly at the level of faith instinct takes on the form of popular religiosity. There is, however, an area of religious syncretism to be carefully assessed in the process of inculturation of Christian faith."

The Catechism for Filipino Catholics adopts the viewpoint of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II): "PCP II called for 'a renewal of popular piety' that involves 'the critical and fervent use of popular religious practices.' It praised these as 'rich in values'. X x x But the Council also expressed the need 'to foster these popular religious practices in such a way that they do not become distortions of religion or remain superficial forms of worship, but become rather true expressions of faith.' It warned that

‘our pastoral practice must ensure that the Catholic religion does not become saint or Mary-centered, but that it always remains Christ-centered.’ This can be done if popular religious practices ‘lead to the liturgy and are vitally related to Filipino life by serving the cause of full human development, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.” See Catechism for Filipino Catholics, 1535-1536.

Instead of being like Simon the Pharisee, let us be like the Merciful Jesus who tells people to go in peace because their faith has saved them.

Since today is Father’s day, one could point out that it’s about time we transform it into an expression of popular religiosity. Right now it is a civic celebration on which commercial establishments cash in. It can become part of popular religiosity when we make it a special day of prayer for fathers. Our Ordo for 2007 has sample prayers for this on p. 189 (English) and 190 (Tagalog).

**SOLEMNITY OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN
THE BAPTIST – Lk 1:57-66, 80.**

(June 24, 2007) *Six months before Christmas*

Teachings:

1. Why do we celebrate the birth of John the Baptist on June 24? The answer is: that's nine months after his conception. How do we know? We know because the Annunciation to Mary is celebrated on March 25, and the Gospel Reading of that feast says that Elizabeth was on her sixth month (Lk 1:36). Add three more months and you have 9, the number of months for a baby's gestation, and so you get the date for the birth of Elizabeth's child, June 24, today.

2. The New American Bible tells us: "The birth and circumcision of John above all emphasize John's incorporation into the people of Israel by the sign of the covenant (Gn 17:1-12). The narrative of John's circumcision also prepares the way for the subsequent description of the circumcision of Jesus in 2:21. At the beginning of his two-volume work Luke shows those who play crucial roles in the inauguration of Christianity to be wholly a part of the people of Israel."

Values. *(In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing can be done on these points).*

1. V. 57-58. "... she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives... rejoiced with her." Here we have the value

of rejoicing at the birth of a son. One should also rejoice at the birth of a daughter but in many cultures, it is the birth of the first son that is the cause of great rejoicing. The son is the sign of hope that the lineage will continue. <> Did you ever rejoice at the birth of a son? Why? <> By contrast, some women today are sad when they find out they are pregnant. Having a baby, for them, is a problem. So many babies today are born unwanted. This is an area, indeed, that needs evangelization!

2. V. 60, 63. "John is his name." See Lk 1:13. John means "Yahweh has shown favor." It shows the child's role in salvation history, see Lk 1:76-78a: "And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God..." <> If your name is Juan Bautista (The Italians use Giovanni Battista; the French, Jean Baptiste; the Germans Johannes Baptista) ask yourself if you have been faithful to the meaning of your name. <> If one has the name of a good Biblical personage, one should try to do – at least in some way – what that good person has done. In general, if one has the name of a saint, one should emulate that saint. <> Maybe we could also remind people to give their children names that they could live up to – not Monica Lewinski or Bin Laden.

Sample Homily: JOY AND HOPE (*Gaudium et Spes*)

John the Baptist was a man who gave Joy and Hope – *Gaudium et Spes* – to Zechariah and Elizabeth, their relatives and neighbors, and indeed to the whole people of

Israel. So, it is but fitting to speak of *Gaudium et Spes* on today's feast of the birth of John the Baptist.

Gaudium et Spes was a document of the Second Vatican Council. It was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, the last of the 16 Second Vatican Council documents. The council concluded the following day. Dr. Michael Downey, a theologian, thinks of the document as "the last will and testament of the fathers of the Second Vatican Council. All the other documents of the council should be read through the lens of *Gaudium et Spes*."

In the document's opening sentence, the bishops affirmed that the concerns of the people of the world, especially the poor, are also the concerns of the Catholic Church: "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."

The document caused enormous enthusiasm and excitement when it was released. It said the church is not against the modern world. It wants to put itself at the service of the modern world in three ways: First, rather than focus primarily on the church and the inner life of the church, *Gaudium et Spes* sets our focus on Christ in relation to history and to WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE WORLD.

Secondly, the document created a new openness on the part of the church to engage in DIALOGUE with people of other faiths and with other perspectives, even non-religious perspectives. A Catholic must cooperate with others in whatever is good, true and beautiful in human life.

Thirdly, the document proclaimed its CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE. Jesus “assures those who trust in the charity of God that the way of love is open to all men and that the effort to establish a universal brotherhood will not be in vain... The Spirit makes free men, who are ready to put aside love of self and integrate earthly resources into human life, in order to reach out to that future day when mankind itself will become an offering accepted by God” (GS, 38).

What John the Baptist did for the people of Israel, the Second Vatican Council, through its document *Gaudium et Spes*, did for all humankind: give it JOY AND HOPE.

13th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Lk 9:51-62
Pontifical Work of St. Peter the Apostle (July 1, 2007)

Teachings:

1. Today's Gospel Reading is the start of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in the scheme of Luke's gospel. In this part of his gospel Luke inserts sayings of Jesus and sayings about him not found in Mark. They come from the literary source called "Q," which Luke shares with Matthew (but Matthew distributes the material in his own way). Luke also adds material from traditions he does not share with anyone else.

2. VV. 51-56. Just as the Galilean ministry of Jesus began with a rejection of Jesus in his hometown, so too the travel narrative begins with the rejection of Jesus by the Samaritans. In this episode Jesus disassociates himself from the attitude expressed by his disciples that those who reject him are to be punished severely.

3. VV. 57-62. In these sayings Jesus speaks of the severity and unconditional nature of Christian discipleship. Even family ties and filial obligations, such as burying one's parents, cannot distract one no matter how briefly from proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Values. (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing can be done on these points*).

1. V. 51. "He resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem." <> Value of being steadfast in one's resolve to

fulfill one's mission. Today the Church in the Philippines has to be steadfast not only in proclaiming the Good News of Salvation but also in removing the biggest obstacle to this Good News, which is the poverty of the people. Are you steadfast in these two endeavors?

2. VV. 54-56. Jesus was not in favor of a severe punishment for those who did not want to give him hospitality. He preferred to move on "to another village."
<> Value of making the best out of adversity. When your projects (supposedly for God's glory) are not welcomed by others, do you get angry? Why not follow the example of Jesus and just look for better disposed people who can benefit from your work?

3. VV. 57-62. Jesus taught his disciples the urgency of preaching the Kingdom of God. This urgency applied to himself in the first place, because he had less than one year of ministry left before his "exodus" (see Lk 9:31). The Apostles, too, will just have about thirty to forty years of ministry. If one thinks of ministry to the Jews, one should remember that little time was really allotted to them. By the year AD 45 Paul and Barnabas will start preaching the Good News to Gentiles in Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia and Lycaonia – that's just 15 years after the death of Jesus.
<> Value of urgency in the proclamation of the Good News. Today we need not be so strict to missionaries and say no when they ask permission to bury their dead parents. But we still have to **FEEL THE URGENCY OF PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS**. Before we know it, the world will change and not listen to us anymore. There are "post-modern" people who say that all religion should be abolished, because, after all, there is no God.

***Sample Homily:* S.O.S. – PREACH THE GOOD NEWS!**

St. Paul said, “Woe to me, if I do not preach the Good News” (1 Cor 9:16). For him it was a very urgent duty. There was so little time to do it. By comparison, most of us take it easy. We think there is a lot of time for the conversion of the world!

But in fact, the world is changing very rapidly. Think of it. In my life-time the typewriter became obsolete. I remember when I longed for the day when I would have a portable typewriter of my own. Then, after a few years, it was an electric typewriter that I wanted. Now that electric typewriter has no more ribbon. It has been dormant for I think ten or fifteen years. Why? Because now I use a computer! I remember saving money to have my own camera with so many accessories: a light meter, telescopic lens, wide angle lens, etc. Then came the smart cameras. No need for a light meter. No need to change lenses. Then came the digital camera. You can have it on your mobile phone!

A few weeks back, I read an article saying that some philosophers think religion to be a thing of the past. Atheism, for them, is now the “in” thing.

Sad to say, many young people seem to be drifting that way. God? Forget about him. Just enjoy life!

Just think about it, my friend. If we don’t preach the Good News now – urgently – how long will our faith last? Jesus already said it: “When the Son of Man comes, will there be faith in the world?” (Lk 18:8)

14th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Lk 10:1-9
(July 8, 2007)

Teachings:

1. As Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem, he starts teaching his disciples about doing missionary work.

2. One can distinguish the task of being missionaries entrusted to the Twelve Apostles (and in future ages to their successors, the Bishops) and a similar task entrusted to “seventy-two others.” In reality, the task of doing missionary work is entrusted to the whole Church. Indeed, missionary work is to be supervised by church leaders, but “every Christian is a missionary” by virtue of his or her baptism.

Values. *(In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing can be done on these points).*

1. V. 1b. “He sent them ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit.” <> Value of a COMMUNITARIAN work of preparing people for the coming of Jesus Christ. It is not just the individual who is to work as a missionary. A missionary TEAM should work representing a CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY that sends them (in the name of Jesus). <> Every kind of truly missionary work has the value of preparing for the coming of Jesus Christ.

2. V. 2b. “Ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.” – Value of laboring to bring in

the harvest whether you are a Bishop, priest, Sister or Brother or LAY PERSON. One is not downgrading the work of Bishops, priests and persons with vows, for they are necessary to any mission. But people have customarily ignored the role of lay people as gatherers of the harvest. Maybe the Lord is lessening the number of Bishops, priests and religious persons so that more lay people will work as harvesters in the Lord's field.

***Sample Homily:* LAY PEOPLE ARE
HARVESTERS TOO**

When we read in the Bible that we should pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers to his harvest, most people think we have to pray so that we would have more Bishops, priests, Sisters and Brothers. But if we read the Bible more carefully, we should realize that the laborers need not be restricted to people with these qualifications. They can be lay people too!

We can learn from the example of evangelization in Korea. The first evangelizers – both Protestant and Catholic – were lay people. Lay missionaries continue to be very effective in Korea. So effective are they that in more or less 50 years, Korea will become a Christian nation.

China, a country with more than 1.3 billion people, will never have enough Bishops, priests, Sisters and Brothers. But one of the surprises God is preparing is that lay people will convert many more Chinese in our time than all the Bishops, priests, Sisters and Brothers ever did from the 13th century (when the Franciscans came to China) until the takeover of China by the Communists in 1949.

15TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Lk 10:25-37
(July 15, 2007)

Teachings:

1. Lk 10:25-28 is parallel to Mt 22:34-40 and Mk 12:28-31. All these passages report the question of a Jewish lawyer on what the law requires from someone who wants to inherit eternal life (or as Mt and Mk put it, what is the greatest or the first commandment). Luke formulates his question in such a way that, for him, what is important is not the law, but the person who complies with the law. Jesus answers that one has to love God and neighbor.

2. When the lawyer asks, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus answers with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This story is found only in Luke. In this parable, the one who complies with the law is not the Jewish priest nor the Levite, but a Samaritan who would legally be “impure” because he helps a beaten, bloodied man. Note, also, that the parable although indirectly answering the lawyer’s question, “Who is my neighbor?” (He is anyone who is in need) is more an illustration of Jesus’ own query, “Who showed himself to be a neighbor to the robbers’ victim?” Samaritans are neighbors too. Jews must love them too. For non-Jewish readers like us, the more important lesson is that we are to be like the good Samaritan.

Values. (*In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing can be done on these points*).

1. V. 25. "What must I do...?" <> Value of wanting to know what to do to inherit eternal life. I have to be honest with myself. Do I really want to know the way to eternal life?

2. V. 26. "What is written in the law?" <> Value of knowing the law. Note, however, that the Parable of the Good Samaritan shows that one must understand the law in relation to real life, not abstractly.

Sample Homily: GAWAD KALINGA SHOWS THE WAY

When one reads the daily newspapers, one should be prepared to read senseless political news, violence, accidents, and the gossip about people in the entertainment industry. Hence it is really Good News, refreshing news, almost a surprise, to read about people going out of their way to help poor people. That is the news that has appeared in our newspapers a number of times now, thanks to *Gawad Kalinga* or *GK*. It is a project of a made-in-the-Philippines renewal group known as Couples for Christ – I'm sure you have heard of them.

They are building low-cost homes for the poor, relying on volunteer workers, and the contribution of the poor themselves, so that the cost of the homes could be very affordable to the poor. Usually the land has been donated by a well-to-do group. The ones who will own the house and lot have to pay for it so that seed money could be raised

for the next project. Then, other volunteers will teach the new community what to do in terms of entrepreneurship so that they could get into the train going to self-sufficiency and even prosperity.

This is truly good news. We have had enough bad news about government projects that did not succeed. Now the private sector – the Couples for Christ – are showing the way. Truly, there is hope for the poor people of the world.

16th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Lk 10:38-42
(July 22, 2007)

Teachings:

1. The passage for today's Gospel, (about Martha and Mary) is not just a nice story to answer the question, What kind of people were the friends of Jesus? More than that, the reading answers the question, Are there different ways of being disciples of Jesus – whether one is a man or woman?

2. Yes, there are different ways of being disciples of Jesus, different ways of loving him. One can be like Martha, who complies with the requirements of hospitality by providing food and drink. One can also be like Mary, whose priority is to listen to the Lord.

3. The admonition not to be anxious and worried about many things is actually directed to all disciples, see Lk 12:22-31; Mt 6:25-34.

Values. *(In Bibliarasal groups, Sharing can be done on these points).*

1. V. 38. "A woman whose name was Martha welcomed him." <> First, one sees here the value of welcoming Jesus, or as some people like to say today, accepting him as one's Lord and Savior. <> Secondly, one sees here the value of women being more practical than men in their service to Jesus. One can add that they are also more tender and self-sacrificing.

2. V. 39. "Mary sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak." V. 42b, "Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her." <> Value of being still (or setting aside a "quiet time") to listen to the Lord. Share on whether or not you have appreciated this value.

***Sample Homily:* LISTEN TO HIM**

At Mt. Tabor, during the Transfiguration of Christ, the voice from heaven had just one message for Peter, James and John: This is my Son, my Chosen. LISTEN TO HIM!

It is striking that a woman, Mary of Bethany, did just that, without being told by a voice from heaven. She is certainly a model of a true disciple of Jesus.

17th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – Lk 11:1-13
Fil-Mission Sunday (July 29, 2007)

Teachings:

1. Today's Gospel Reading is the Shorter Our Father (or Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer). We are reminded that the gospels do not give us *ipsissima verba Christi* (Christ's own exact words, nothing added, nothing subtracted). What we have are Christ's words as molded by tradition. We usually use the "ecclesiastical tradition" of Matthew. It is the one which, from the time of the Apostles, was used in community worship. We can call the version Luke gives as the "didactic tradition". It is meant to teach us each and every Christian (even when alone) how to pray.

2. So, even when alone a Christian must pray not only for his or her individual need but for five needs of the Church (Matthew mentions seven): (1) the need to hallow God's name; (2) the need to desire the coming of his Kingdom; (3) the need for daily bread; (4) the need to forgive as we are forgiven; and (5) the need not to be led into temptation (hard testing). To these needs of the Church one could incorporate one's individual needs.

Values. (*In Bibliarasal groups. Sharing can be done on these points*).

1. V. 1, "He was praying in a certain place, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray...'" <> One can see here the power of Christ's example. SHARING: have you ever been moved by the power of Christ's example?

2. V. 2b-4. Only five needs are mentioned in this prayer. They remind us that Christian prayer must avoid litanies of so many needs. <> Have you appreciated the value of brevity in prayer? Have you ever been struck by the brevity of the prayers at Holy Mass?

***Sample Homily:* K. I. S. S.**

A lay speaker, a married man, had already exceeded by 10 minutes the time allotted to him. His wife, who was at the lecture, put up a sign which said: K. I. S. S. The man cut his lecture short so that he could immediately go to kiss his wife – because that is what he thought she wanted him to do. Imagine his surprise when he learned that K. I. S. S. was supposed to mean, Keep It Short, Stupid!

We must learn to keep our prayers short. When I was a novice, I learned from my Novice Master that one could take the prayers at Mass as models of short but very meaningful prayer. For example at today's Mass, this is how our opening prayer goes:

God our Father and protector,
Without you nothing is holy,
Nothing has value.
Guide us to everlasting life
By helping us to use wisely
The blessings you have given to the world.

Today being Fil-Mission Sunday, let us say even just a little prayer for our Filipino Missionaries who now work in so many parts of the world.

FR. EFREN O. RIVERA, O.P.

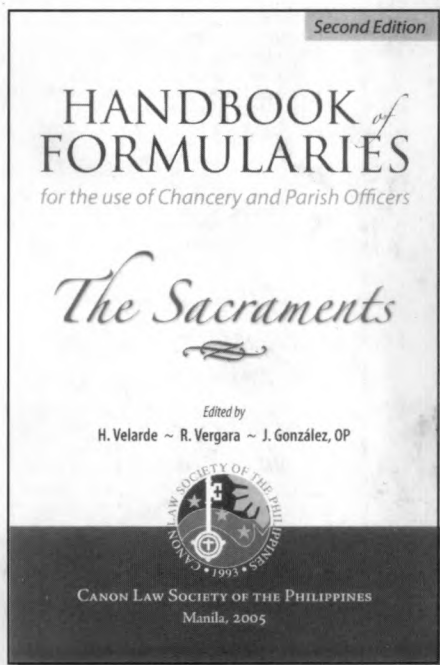
ATTENTION: Chancellors and Parish Priests

Do you need to prepare various forms and documents, like:

- ☐ Certificate of Baptism ...
- ☐ Permission to Baptize in a private house ...
- ☐ Authorization to correct or change entry in baptismal registry ...
- ☐ Declaration of parenthood by an unwed mother or father ...
- ☐ Appointments to / Removal from Offices ...
- ☐ Transfer of Parish Priest ...
- ☐ Profession of Faith / Oath Taking ...
- ☐ Penal Procedures ...
- ☐ Other prescribed forms for the different Sacraments ...?

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