

The Eucharist, Love Without Measure

‘To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the “programme” which I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning her to put out into the deep on the sea of history with the enthusiasm of the new evangelization.

‘To contemplate Christ involves being able to recognize him wherever he manifests himself, in his many forms of presence, but above all in the living sacrament of his body and his blood. The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened. The Eucharist is both a mystery of faith and a “mystery of light”. (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 6)

This month’s issue of *The Visitation* carries excerpts from the Holy Father’s latest encyclical letter, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. The Pope speaks not only to priests, as is his custom on Holy Thursday, but to the whole church, inviting all into Eucharistic reflection. ‘I cannot let this Holy Thursday 2003 pass,’ he says, ‘without halting before the “Euchaistic face” of Christ and pointing out with new force to the Church the centrality of the Eucharist.’

The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift – however precious – among so many others, but as the *gift par excellence*, for it is the gift of Himself, of His person in His sacred humanity, as well as the gift of His saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past, since “all that Christ is – all that He did and suffered for all men – participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times”.

When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord’s death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and “the work of our redemption is carried out”. This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only *after He had left us a means of sharing in it* as if we had been present there.

Each member of the faithful can thus take part in it and inexhaustibly gain its fruits. This is the faith from which generations of Christians down the ages have lived. The Church’s Magisterium has constantly reaffirmed this faith with

joyful gratitude for its inestimable gift. I wish once more to recall this truth and to join you, my dear brothers and sisters, in adoration before this mystery: a great mystery, a mystery of mercy. What more could Jesus have done for us? Truly, in the Eucharist, He shows us a love which goes “to the end” (cf. Jn 13:1), a love which knows no measure.

This aspect of the universal charity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is based on the words of the Savior Himself. In instituting it, He did not merely say: “This is my body”, “this is my blood”, but went on to add: “which is given for you”, “which is poured out for you” (Lk 22:19-20). Jesus did not simply state that what He was giving them to eat and drink was His body and His blood; He also expressed *its sacrificial meaning* and made sacramentally present His sacrifice which would soon be offered on the Cross for the salvation of all. “The Mass is at the same time, and inseparably, the sacrificial memorial in which the sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord’s body and blood”.

The Church constantly draws her life

from the redeeming sacrifice; she approaches it not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since *this sacrifice is made present ever anew*, sacramentally perpetuated, in every community which offers it at the hands of the consecrated minister. The Eucharist thus applies to men and women today the reconciliation won once for all by Christ for mankind in every age. “The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*”. Saint John Chrysostom put it well: “We always offer the same Lamb, not one today and another tomorrow, but always the same one. For this reason the sacrifice is always only one... Even now we offer that victim who was once offered and who will never be consumed”.

The Mass makes present the sacrifice of the Cross; it does not add to that sacrifice nor does it multiply it. What is repeated is its *memorial* celebration, its “commemorative representation” (*memorialis demonstratio*), which makes Christ’s one, definitive redemptive sacrifice always present in time. The

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Dear Friends of the Priesthood

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Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted!

Do you know what “Tacos Polacos” are? Literally translated they are “Polish Tacos”. They are what Fr. Ray Ratzenberger made for us at Visitation House in Steubenville when we arrived there for our annual Board of Directors Meeting.

Fr. Bob Giardina and I arrived around 8.30 p.m. and for all intents and purposes we had not eaten all day. What a treat!! We were famished. “O.K.” you say, “enough of the chatter, what are those things?” They are chicken tacos. Fr. Ray made the name up because he is half Polish (there was not a trace of kilebasa in them).

Thus began a week of prayer, sharing, planning, budgeting, troubleshooting, discerning, laughing, etc. Since the Fraternity of Priests is a legal, non-profit corporation we need to meet yearly. Our two main goals for the week is to plan the theme of the August Annual Meeting, and to project the budget for the next fiscal year (this is always fun??). What an experience of brotherhood as two priests from Providence, one from Newark, one from Tucson, and one from Trinidad came together.

How blessed we are! Our theme this coming annual meeting is: **“If anyone would come after me...” Discipleship.** The Lord led us to look at this timely invitation, examine its cost, submit to his plan, and to have hope. As we are called to “abide in” Christ, the pledge and awesome gift of Eucharist is there as our ultimate “abiding in” the Lord.

What a tremendous gift and challenge the Lord lays before us. Please pray for us and pray that many Fraternity brothers come to New York in August. In fact, any priest who would like to come is more than welcome. Challenge your parish priest to come (contact for information is in this newsletter).

We also looked at the finances of the Fraternity of Priests. In these tough economic times how do we act as prudent stewards of the resources we have, and with the generous gifts of our benefactors and the tithes of our members? Needless

to say, the new budget is as “bare bones” as we can make it, without impeding our ministry to priests (hopefully). I still am amazed at how generous so many are to us. The notes and prayer requests are heartwarming.

This month Fr. Tim Graff will be returning to Africa, this time to East Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, etc.).

I ask you all to pray for him, these are some of the world's trouble-spots.

Again, thanks to you, our intercessors and benefactors. Be assured that Visitation House is healthy and in good shape, and that our ministry to priests is ever our top priority. We are praying for the Lord to raise up an over-all leader for the Fraternity who will devote his full-time energies to us. With the shortage of priests it is next to impossible to free up a good man. We on the board are all full-time pastors (and busy ones at that). God will continue to provide—he surely has done so richly thus far.

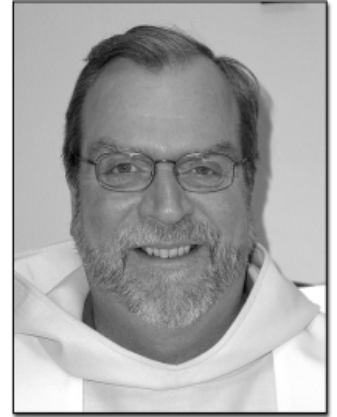
Thank you for your continued prayer and support. Without you our task would be impossible. Know that the Mass promised for your intentions in the April newsletter was celebrated by us, the board, at Visitation House on May 8th. Again, please pray for your parish priest. (Invite him to the annual meeting!)

May the Lord's choicest blessing be yours, and may you and yours have a safe and restful summer.

In Christ,

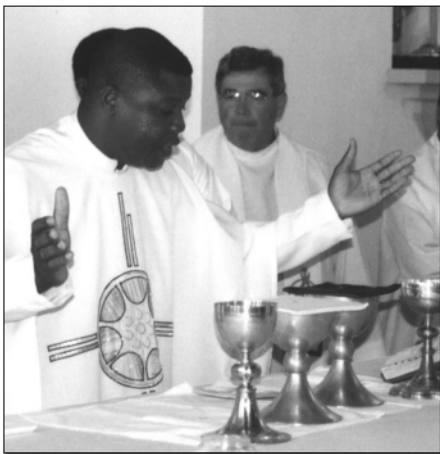


Fr. John



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sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic mystery cannot therefore be understood as something separate, independent of the Cross or only indirectly referring to the sacrifice of Calvary (11, 12).



It is their (the priests') responsibility to preside at the Eucharist *in persona Christi* and to provide a witness to and a service of communion not only for the community directly taking part in the celebration, but also for the universal Church, which is a part of every Eucharist.

It must be lamented that, especially in the years following the post-conciliar liturgical reform, as a result of a misguided sense of creativity and adaptation there has been a number of *abuses* which has been a source of suffering for many. A certain reaction against "formalism" has led some, especially in certain regions, to consider

the "forms" chosen by the Church's great liturgical tradition and her Magisterium as non-binding and to introduce unauthorized innovations which are often completely inappropriate.

I consider it my duty, therefore to appeal urgently that the liturgical norms for the celebration of the Eucharist be observed with great fidelity. These norms are a concrete expression of the authentically ecclesial nature of the Eucharist; this is their deepest meaning. Liturgy is never anyone's private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated.

The Apostle Paul had to address fiery words to the community of Corinth because of grave shortcomings in their celebration of the Eucharist resulting in divisions (*schismata*) and the emergence of factions (*haireseis*) (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). Our time, too, calls for a renewed awareness and appreciation of liturgical norms as a reflection of, and a witness to, the one universal Church made present in every celebration of the Eucharist.

Priests who faithfully celebrate Mass according to the liturgical norms, and communities which conform to those norms, quietly but eloquently demonstrate their love for the Church. ... No one is permitted to undervalue the mystery entrusted to our hands: it is too great for anyone to feel free to treat it lightly and with disregard for its sacredness and its universality (52).

Earth Unites with Heaven

When I think of the Eucharist, and look at my life as a priest, as a Bishop and as the Successor of Peter, I naturally recall the many times and places in which I was able to celebrate it. I remember the parish church of Niegowic, where I had my first pastoral assignment, the collegiate church of Saint Florian in Krakow, Wawel Cathedral, Saint Peter's Basilica and so many basilicas and churches in Rome and throughout the world.

I have been able to celebrate Holy Mass in chapels built along mountain paths, on lakeshores and seacoasts; I have celebrated it on altars built in stadiums and in city squares... This varied scenario of celebrations of the Eucharist has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation.

The Son of God became man in order to restore all creation, in one supreme act of praise, to the One who made it from nothing. He, the Eternal High Priest who by the blood of his Cross entered the eternal sanctuary, thus gives back to the Creator and Father all creation redeemed. He does so through the priestly ministry of the Church, to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. Truly this is the *mysterium fidei* which is accomplished in the Eucharist: the world which came forth from the hands of God the Creator now returns to him redeemed by Christ (8).

REMINDER!

Fraternity Conference 2003!

Cardinal Spellman Retreat House, overlooking the Hudson River, New York, is the venue for this year's Fraternity Conference, taking place from August 3 to 8.

Register ONLINE at <http://www.fraternityofpriests.org>

Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

O Jesus, Eternal High Priest, live in (name of priest), act in him, speak in and through him. Think your thoughts in his mind, love through his heart. Give him your own disposition and feelings. Teach, lead and guide him always. Correct, enlighten and expand his thoughts and behavior. Possess his soul, take over his entire personality and life. Replace him with yourself. Incline him to constant adoration and thanksgiving; pray in and through him. Let him live in you and keep him in this intimate union always.

O Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mother of Jesus and Mother of priests, pray and intercede for (.....). Amen.

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