

"THE EUCHARIST, MYSTERY OF COMMUNION AND CENTRE OF THE CHURCH'S LIFE

- EDITOR'S NOTE -

Pope John Paul II announced that October, 2004 to October, 2005 is the YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST. This article contains excerpts from the official Vatican document "The Eucharist, Light and Life of the New Millennium."

44) The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church's unity, as St Paul proclaims: "*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread*" (1 Cor 10:17). In the prayer that he addressed to the Father for his disciples after having instituted the Eucharist, Christ himself expressed his yearning that all may be one and remain in him, just as he remains in the Father (cf. Jn 17:20-23). The *Acts of the Apostles* bears witness to the coming about of the community of life and attitude, which comes about by the breaking of the bread (cf. Acts 2:42-47). This unity is signified and brought about by the Eucharist.

45) Participation at one table is already itself a symbol of brotherhood and communion of attitudes. The outward sign of the food that is consumed also recalls, as the *Didaché* (9,4) states, that the grains of wheat, which were

dispersed over the hills, become gathered into one loaf as a symbol of the Church's unity, brought together from the ends of the earth. The Fathers since the beginning of the Church have copiously referred to this eucharistic symbolism related to the Church's unity. The Council of Trent recalled this truth when it declared that Christ gave the Eucharist to his Church "as a symbol of his unity and charity, in which he desired that all Christians be united and bonded among themselves" (DH 1628). It went on to see this eucharistic symbolism as referring to that one Body whose head is Christ. Likewise the Second Vatican Council describes the Eucharist as "a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity" (SC 47 – referring to St Augustine).

46) Now, if the Eucharist is the source of unity, it is also the centre of the Church's life. This is because we have in it a unique and transcendent principle. In virtue of this principle what is impossible for people, because of their sinfulness and disunity, can be attained. This same principle of unity is the physical Body of Christ, given up for his Church to build it up as his Mystical Body, of which he is the Head and we are his members.

47) The Church makes the

Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church (cf. RH 20). Because of this fact the Eucharist is the centre of the Church's life and all the other sacraments are ordered to it (cf. SC 7), as are likewise the ecclesial ministries and apostolic works. The Holy Eucharist is the source and summit of the preaching of the Gospel. In the Eucharist the whole spiritual good of the Church is contained, namely, Christ himself, our Passover and the living Bread, through his flesh that is enlivened and life-giving through the Holy Spirit, who gives life to people" (PO 5).

48) It follows that the eucharistic mystery should be also the centre of the local church. Christ's Church is truly present in every legitimate gathering of the faithful united with their pastors; these gatherings are called "churches" in the New Testament. Here the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated so that by means of his Body and Blood the whole brotherhood is united. In these communities even though some are often insignificant and poor, or are scattered about, because of Christ's presence the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is congregated. For participation in the Body and Blood of the Lord enables us to become what we receive. (cf. LG 26).

49) The Eucharist as a mystery of communion is for the salvation

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Please send all articles, comments and photos to the editor, Fr. Bill Cosgrove via e-mail at frbill@optonline.com or fax to 845-227-3951.

Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted!

The other day I was speaking to Fr. Brian Jeffries of the Hartford Fraternity on the phone and we were discussing the growth we were seeing in the Fraternity of Priests throughout the world. We have recently had interest expressed in Zambia, Rwanda and Ethiopia in East Africa, another diocese in Ukraine and several dioceses in India. Fr. Brian asked "You know why this is happening? Because of Fr. Jim Ferry and the others who are interceding for us in heaven."

This was a wonderful reminder to me of the priests who have served the Fraternity of Priests who have died. We trust that they are interceding for us now. We attribute much of our continued expansion and blessings upon not only the sure foundation that they gave us in this life, the example that they were to us, but also the power of their prayers.

This is wonderful to remember during the month of November. In this month we remember in a special way those who have gone before us. We do this on All Saints and All Souls Days but also throughout the month.

Four priests from the Fraternity who immediately came to my mind were Fr. Jim Ferry, Fr. Forest Rouelle, Fr. Richard O'Gorman and Msgr. Irenaeus Songliedong. Fr. Jim was one of the original team members in the mid 1980's and gave many of the Fraternity Conferences that set up many of the American Fraternities. Fr. Forest from the Burlington, Vt. Fraternity took over leadership as Chairman of the Board and served both the Fraternity and his parish so faithfully. His love for priests was enthusiastic and drew many priests into the life of the Fraternity. Fr. Richard from the New York Fraternity served as Leader of the Fraternity and lived in Steubenville for a number of years before returning to New York and continuing his life and ministry in parish life there. He was an inspiration for many to live their priesthood with great love and compassion. Msgr.

Song from the Wa Diocese in Ghana introduced the Fraternity to Africa and laid the foundation for the immense growth we have experienced there.



I am sure that there are others priests who come to mind as we think of those who have gone before us.

Please remember those priests who were important to you in your prayers during this special month. Pray for all members of the Fraternity who have died.

Thank you again for all that you do. Your prayers and financial help make our ministry possible.

In Christ,

Fr. Timothy Graff

Fraternity Financial Report

One of the objectives for the Fraternity of Priests is to inform our donors about the ongoing financial health and details of the organization. We're providing this information to help communicate our specific need and to thank those many faithful benefactors who help make our service possible. Thank you!

Monthly Donation Budget: **\$6,300.00**

Actual Donations: **\$7,751.00**

Budget Surplus (shortage) **\$1,451.00**

Current as of September 30, 2004.

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of the world. Despite what is defective in them the separated Churches and communities, as the Second Vatican Council states, “means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church” (UR 3). These Churches do not enjoy that unity that Christ conferred on his Church, because they do not benefit from the fullness of the means of salvation with which Christ enriched it. Among the various means of salvation, the celebration of the Eucharist holds a particular importance because this celebration symbolises and realises the unity of all believers in Christ.

50) The Eastern Churches, as the same Vatican Council states, have maintained the sacrament of Orders and the same eucharistic faith as we have (cf. UR 15). On the other hand, the separated Churches in the West have not preserved the proper and integral nature of the eucharistic mystery, since they lack above all the sacrament of Order, “nevertheless, when they commemorate the Lord’s death and Resurrection in the Holy Supper, they profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and await his coming in glory (UR 22). For this reason the celebration of the sacrament of unity itself spurs us on to discover the positive values existing in the Churches and ecclesial communities that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, and to guide them to their fulfilment in an approach that recognises that unity, just as the

Eucharist, is God’s work, in which we are called to co-operate actively and responsibly “with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility” (UR 11).

51) A living parish means that it is a eucharistic community: “No Christian community, however, is built up unless it has its basis and centre in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist; from this, therefore, all education to the spirit of community must take its origin” (PO 6). Therefore, the planning and realisation of pastoral programmes must be begun by and properly related to the Eucharist as celebrated and contemplated in adoration, in order to bear fruits, especially in the field of the vocation apostolate.

3. THE EUCHARIST, NEED FOR SHARING

52) “The authentic sense of the Eucharist becomes of itself the school of active love for one’s neighbour.” (Dominicae Cenae, 6). We understand the relation between the Eucharist and Light in keeping with the Apostle John’s statement: “He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still” (1 Jn 2:9).

53) To offer Christ’s sacrifice truly implies that we continue this same sacrifice in a life committed to others. Just as he is offered in sacrifice under the form of bread and wine, so too we must give ourselves in fraternal and humble service to our brothers and sisters, taking into account of their needs rather than whether they are deserving of our help, and offering them bread, that is, the basic necessities for a living in a way befitting human dignity.

54) The notions of food or

banquet for religious rituals pre-date Christianity. These are basic elements and vital needs pertaining to human existence. The richness of their significance is shown not so much in the physical act of eating and drinking, but rather in the experience of communicating, sharing and fraternal exchange. For Christians, who are aware of being members of Christ’s Mystical Body, the opportunity for celebrating the “eucharistic Banquet” is a privilege, but also a challenge. The bread and wine that we present at the altar refer us to the food or drink that should be on the table of every human being. For there are many people who are unable to enjoy such a basic human right, either because they do not have food or because they do not have someone with whom to share it. This is a sign of outrageous injustice!

55) Such a situation is radically opposed to that which Jesus spoke about and realised during his life, and also which the primitive Christian community paid attention to and lived in accordance with Christ’s teachings. Hence, when it is celebrated and shared as a banquet, the Eucharist invites us to realise the coherence between the breaking of bread and the following human dimensions: a sharing of material goods (cf. Acts 2:42.44; 4:34); a collection taken up for the benefit of those in need (cf. Acts 11:29; 12:25); service of the tables (cf. Acts 6:2); an overcoming of all divisions and discrimination (cf. 1 Cor 10:16; 11:18-22; Ja 2:1-13). All these dimensions have direct implications concerning evangelisation in the world and, concretely, in developing countries.

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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