

Session 19: Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice

HYMN: Sing, My Tongue, the Saviour's
Glory



Sing, my tongue, the Saviour's
glory;
of His Flesh the mystery sing —
of the Blood, all price exceeding,
shed by our immortal King,
destined, for the world's
redemption,
from a noble womb to spring.

Of a pure and spotless virgin
born for us on earth below,
He, as Man with man conversing,
stayed, the seeds of truth to sow.
Then He closed, in solemn order,
wondrously, His life of woe.

On the night of that Last Supper,
seated with His chosen band,
He, the paschal victim eating,
first fulfils the law's command;
then, as Food to His apostles,
gives Himself with His own hand.

Word made Flesh, the bread of nature
by His word to Flesh He turns;
wine into His Blood He changes —
what though sense no change
discerns?

Only be the heart in earnest,
faith its lesson quickly learns.

Down in adoration falling,
lo! the sacred Host we hail.
Lo! o'er ancient forms departing,
newer rites of grace prevail —
faith for all defects supplying,
where the feeble senses fail.

(Bow) To the everlasting Father
and the Son, who reigns on high,
with the Holy Ghost, proceeding
forth from each eternally,
be salvation, honour, blessing,
might, and endless majesty. Amen.

PRAYER: See Eph 1:17-19.
Let us pray: O God,
grant us a spirit
of wisdom and insight
to know You clearly.
Enlighten our innermost vision,
that we may know the great hope

to which You have called us,
the wealth of Your glorious heritage
to be distributed among the members
of the Church,
and the immeasurable scope
of Your power
in us who believe.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son,
Who lives and reigns with You
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
— Amen

READING: Jn 6:48-59

The Lord be with you.
— *And with your spirit*
A Reading from the holy Gospel
according to John
— *Glory to You, O Lord*

Jesus said,
"I am the Bread of life.
Your ancestors ate the manna
in the desert, but they died;
this is the Bread
that comes down from Heaven,
so that one may eat it and not die.

"I am the living Bread
that came down from Heaven;
whoever eats this Bread
will live forever;
and the Bread that I will give
is My Flesh,
for the life of the world."

The Jews quarrelled
among themselves,
saying, "How can this Man
give us His Flesh to eat?"
Jesus said to them,
"Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless you eat the Flesh
of the Son of Man
and drink His Blood,
you do not have life within you.

"Whoever eats My Flesh
and drinks My Blood
has eternal life,
and I will raise him
on the last day.
For My Flesh is true food,
and My Blood is true drink.
Whoever eats My Flesh
and drinks My Blood
remains in Me and I in him.

"Just as the living Father sent Me
and I have life
because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on Me
will have life because of Me. —

"This is the Bread
that came down from Heaven.
Unlike your ancestors,
who ate and still died,
whoever eats this Bread
will live forever."

These things He said
while teaching in the synagogue
in Capernaum.
The Gospel of the Lord
— *Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ*

IN BRIEF: WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES

The Sacrament of the Eucharist
is the true Body and Blood
of Jesus Christ,
together with His Soul and divinity,
under the appearances
of bread and wine.

The bread and wine are changed
into the Body and Blood of Christ
by the power of God,
to Whom nothing
is impossible or difficult,
when the words of consecration,
ordained by Jesus Christ,
are pronounced by the priest
at Mass.

Christ has given Himself to us
in the Eucharist
as the life and food of our souls.
He is received whole and entire
under either appearance alone:
under the appearance of bread
or under the appearance of wine.

To receive the Sacrament worthily,
we must be in "a state of grace" —
that is, free from mortal sin
and pleasing to God —
and keep the prescribed fast
from all food
for one hour before Communion.
(Water does not break this fast.)

It is a great sin
to receive Holy Communion
in mortal sin,
"for he who eats and drinks
without recognizing the Body
eats and drinks
a judgement on himself."

The Mass is more than a Sacrament;
it is also a sacrifice,
which is the offering of a victim,
by a priest, to God alone,
in testimony of His being
the sovereign Lord of all things.

The Mass is the sacrifice
of the Body and Blood
of Jesus Christ,
really present on the altar
under the appearances

of bread and wine,
offered to God
for the living and the dead.

It is one and the same sacrifice
with that of the cross,
inasmuch as Christ,
Who offered Himself,
a bleeding victim,
on the cross to His heavenly Father,
continues to offer Himself,
in an unbloody manner,
on the altar,
through the ministry of His priests.

We call the Mass a *memorial*
of Christ's passion and death,
for He told His apostles
at His last supper,
"Do this as a remembrance of Me."

The Church offers
the sacrifice of the Mass to God
for four purposes:

- to give supreme honour and glory
to God;
- to thank Him for all His benefits;
- to be enabled to repent
and satisfy Him for our sins, and
- to obtain all other gifts and
blessings through Jesus Christ.

Bishops and priests
receive their power
to change bread and wine
into Christ's Body and Blood
in the Sacrament of Holy Orders:
the Sacrament by which
bishops, priests, and deacons
are ordained,
receiving power and help
to perform their sacred duties.

Like Baptism and Confirmation,
Holy Orders gives a *character*
to the soul of the recipient:
it imprints a mark or seal
which cannot be effaced.

BIBLE READING

Jer 1-18

This week
you will start reading
the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah.

In this book,
as in other prophetic books,
God uses marital language
to reproach Israel
for having abandoned Him.

Israel has been God's bride,
but she has forsaken her Husband
and gone after other lovers,
like a prostitute.

God's love for His people
is a model for "Matrimony,"
which we will talk about next week.

Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice

Introduction

Some of my students — Hindu, Muslim, Melkite Catholic, and Latin-rite¹ Catholic — were discussing "what you do" in their various religions. The Latin-rite Catholic turned to me and asked, "If you're Catholic, *what do you do?*"

The answer is *go to Mass* — or, better, *participate* in the Mass.

As a Protestant, Scott Hahn went to his first Mass to help him understand early Christian references to "liturgy," "Eucharist," and "sacrifice." He did not want to participate, so he stayed seated, remaining "on the sidelines" with his Bible.

But he began to hear the Bible in the Mass.² When he heard, "This is My Body; this is My Blood," he felt a surge of prayer: "My Lord and My God. That's really You!" And when the priest held up the Host and said, "Behold the Lamb of God," he knew where he was: "in the Book of Revelation," where "Jesus is hailed forever as the Lamb" — "a Lamb that had been slain."³

"I wasn't ready for this, though," he said; "I was at Mass!"⁴

Eucharist

At the heart of the Mass⁵ is the Eucharist,⁶ the third Sacrament of Initiation:⁷ "the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, together with His Soul and Divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine."⁸

At Mass, the bread and wine brought to the priest in the Offertory procession are changed into Christ's Body and Blood "by the action of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit"⁹ when the priest says over them the words of consecration, ordained by Christ Himself: "This is My Body.... This is My Blood."

Wheat bread and *grape wine* over which these words are said by a priest are the *sacramental signs* of the Eucharist. Like all sacramental signs, they are *efficacious*:¹⁰ that is, they accomplish what they signify — in this case, our spiritual nourishment.

However, unlike the other sacramental signs, the Eucharistic signs do not just *accomplish* what they signify; they *actually become* what they signify — namely Christ's Body and Blood, *sacrificed* for us and *given to us as Food and Drink*.

The Eucharist *recapitulates*¹¹ salvation history.¹² Just as, on a clear morning, a dewdrop reflects the whole sky, so the Eucharist reflects the whole of salvation history, for the whole of that history is present in the Eucharist and the Eucharist is present throughout that history — before Christ, as a *foreshadowing*; in Christ's time, as an *event*; and now, as a *Sacrament*.¹³

Foreshadowing

We often call the Eucharist the *Paschal Mystery*. The *Pasch* was the sacrifice God told the Jews to offer Him in Egypt, where they were slaves,¹⁴ about 1300 BC.

Each household had to slaughter an unblemished male lamb or kid on the 14th day of the month of Nisan. During the slaughter, they would drain the body of blood, as God had ordered earlier.¹⁵ Then they had to roast it whole, without

1 See the talk on "Divisions Among Christians."

2 See Appendix 1.

3 See Rv 5:6,8,12-13, 6:1,3,5,7,9,12,16, 7:9-10,14,17, 8:1, 12:11, 13:8, 14:1,4,10, 15:3, 17:14, 19:7,9, 21:9,14,22-23,27, 22:1,3.

4 Scott Hahn: *The Lamb's Supper*, Part 1, 1. Also see Scott Hahn: *The Fourth Cup*, Chapter 12.

5 From the Latin *missa* ("sent"): *Ite, missa est* ("Go; the Mass is" or "Go forth; the Mass is ended").

6 From the Latin *Eucharistia* ("thanksgiving," "thankfulness"), from the Greek *Eucharistia* ("gratitude"), from the Greek *eu* ("good") plus *charizethai* ("show favour"). "Thank you" in modern Greek is *eucharisto*.

7 The others are Baptism and Confirmation.

8 *The Penny Catechism*, 266. The Mass is more than the Sacrament of the Eucharist, for it is also a *sacrifice*. However, we often call it the "Eucharistic celebration" or simply "the Eucharist."

9 CCC 1084. See the talk on "Grace and the Sacraments."

10 See the talk on "Grace and the Sacraments."

11 "Goes over the headings of, summarizes" (Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 4c).

12 See the talks on "The History of Our Salvation," "What is the Catholic Church?" "The Communion Among the Saints in the Body of Christ," and "Grace and the Sacraments."

13 See Raniero Cantalamessa: *The Eucharist*, 1.

14 See Ex 1:1-14.

breaking any of its bones; eat it; and, using a hyssop branch, sprinkle its blood on the doorposts and lintel of the house where it was eaten.¹⁵

That night, God killed the first-born in each Egyptian family, but "passed over" the homes marked by the blood, where the Passover lamb had been sacrificed instead of the first-born. As a result, the Egyptians let the Jews go.¹⁷

From then on, at God's explicit command, the Jews commemorated the *Pasch*, or Passover, every year.¹⁸ That is what Jesus and His apostles¹⁹ were doing at their Last Supper, the night before He died.²⁰

By then, the commemoration had expanded to occupy two days: the lambs were slaughtered in the temple at Jerusalem on the afternoon of 14 Nisan, but eaten during the Passover supper in each family the following night.²¹

Moreover, it now encompassed *all* God's action in Israel's history:²² especially creation,²³ Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac,²⁴ and the Exodus from Egypt,²⁵ but also God's promise of a Messiah.²⁶ Now, therefore, it was not only a *memorial* of the past, but also a *waiting* for the future.²⁷

Event

Christians have always seen the *Pasch* as a foreshadowing of what Jesus did to save us: He sacrificed Himself like the paschal lambs and His blood frees us as the lambs' blood freed the Israelites.²⁸

Jesus began His saving acts at the Last Supper,²⁹ the night before He died. Although it was a Passover meal,³⁰ it differed in several ways from the ritual of the first Pasch³¹ and the Passover ritual of Jesus' time.³²

First: the year Jesus died, 14 Nisan was a Friday. The lambs were slaughtered that day and eaten the next day,³³ Saturday. However, Jesus ate His Last Supper the day *before* He died, Thursday.

Second: the accounts of the Last Supper³⁴ make no mention of a lamb. Instead, "Jesus took bread, blessed³⁵ it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples. 'Take this and eat it,' He said; 'this is My Body.' Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them. 'All of you must drink from it,' He said, 'for this is My Blood, the Blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.'³⁶

Now when Jesus — God the Son — said "This is My Body, given for you"³⁷ and "This is My Blood, shed for you,"³⁸ His words *brought about what they signified*.

15 See Gn 9:4-5; Lv 17:10-14.

16 See Ex 12:3-10, 21-22, 46.

17 See Ex 12-13.

18 See Ex 12:14-20, 24-27.

19 His twelve closest followers, hand-picked by Himself (see Mt 19:2-4; Mk 3:13-19; Lk 6:12-16; Jn 1:35-49).

20 See Lk 22:1-20. Also see the talk on "Liturgy: Public Worship."

21 See Raniero Cantalamessa: *The Eucharist*, 1, 1.

22 Commemorated in the Readings at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night; see the talk on "Holy Week."

23 See Gn 1, 2.

24 See Gn 22:1-18.

25 See Ex 12-14.

26 For example, see Gn 3:15, 22:15-18; Is 7:13-14, 11:1-9, 54:8, 55:3-5; Ez 36:24-28.

27 See Raniero Cantalamessa: *The Eucharist*, 1, 1.

28 See Acts 8:32; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pt 1:18-21; and references to "the Lamb" in the Book of Revelation.

Accordingly, early Christians spoke of the "Pasch of the Crucifixion" and "the Pasch of the Resurrection" (John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Pasch"). "Easter" is *Pasqua* in Italian, *Pascua* in Spanish, *Pâques* in French, *Pasen* in Dutch, *IPhasika* in Zulu. The Easter candle is the "paschal" candle.

29 See Mt 26:17-29; Mk 14:12-25; Lk 22:7-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26.

30 See Lk 22:7-13; Mt 26:17-19; Mk 14:12-16; Jn CCC 1339-1340. See Scott Hahn: *The Fourth Cup*, Chapter 5, "Paschal Wager," and Chapter 10.

31 See Ex 12:1-20.

32 See Brant Pitre: *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 6, "The Shape of the Jewish Passover Meal"; and Scott Hahn: *The Fourth Cup*, Chapter 4, "Seder Rite Words," Chapter 9, "The Cups," and Chapter 12, "Hallel Can You Go?"

33 See Jn 19:31.

34 In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

35 That is, praised and thanked God for it.

36 Mt 26:26-28; see Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:17, 19; 1 Cor 11:23-25. Rather than the paschal lamb, these passages recall God's mysterious "showbread" (Ex 25:23-30; Lv 24:5-9). See Brant Pitre: *The Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, 5, "Jesus and the New Bread of the Presence."

37 See Lk 22:19.

Therefore, what still seemed to be bread and wine³⁹ were no longer bread and wine, but His Body, given for us, and His Blood, shed for us.

In fact, the words for "given" and "shed" in the Greek of Matthew, Mark, and Luke could just as well be translated "is being given" and "is being shed."⁴⁰ From the moment Jesus spoke those words, His Body and Blood were really present, given and shed — separated from each other as in a sacrifice.

Third: the Last Supper did not include the final prescribed cup of wine. In fact, Jesus declared that He would not drink wine again "until the day when I drink it new with you in My Father's reign."⁴¹ Accordingly, He refused the wine offered Him on His way to crucifixion the next day.⁴² Only on the cross — "realizing that everything was now finished" — did He ask for wine, take it, and announce, "Now it is finished." Then He "bowed His head, and delivered over His spirit."⁴³

The Last Supper, then, was not the old Passover according to the prescribed ritual; rather it was the start of the new Passover.⁴⁴ Jesus began the new Passover sacramentally at the Last Supper, under the appearances of bread and wine; but He did not finish it until His "bloody"⁴⁵ death on the cross the next day, for He Himself was the Lamb of the new Passover,⁴⁶ sacrificed for our salvation.

Thus "Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning."⁴⁷ In his Gospel, John notes a number of connections between the old and the new. Jesus, Whom John the Baptist had called the "Lamb of God,"⁴⁸ died at 3 pm on 14 Nisan,⁴⁹ when the slaughter of the paschal lambs began in the temple.⁵⁰ None of His bones was broken,⁵¹ and He accepted wine from a hyssop branch.⁵²

The new Passover — the Last Supper/crucifixion — like the old, comprised a *sacrifice* and a *meal*. The meal revealed the death the next day to be a sacrifice, not an execution,⁵³ while the death revealed the meal to have been a sacrament.

"If we had not had the Last Supper — that is to say, if we had not had the ritual anticipation⁵⁴ of his death — we would have never been able to grasp how the carrying out of His being condemned to death could have been in fact *the* act of perfect worship, pleasing to the Father, the only true act of worship, the only true liturgy. Only a few hours after the Supper, the apostles could have seen in the cross of Jesus, if they could have borne the weight of it, what it meant for Jesus to say, 'body offered,' 'blood poured out.'"⁵⁵

Sacrament

After saying, "Take, eat; This is My Body.... Take, drink; This is My Blood," Jesus added, "Do this as a remembrance of Me."⁵⁶ Accordingly, right from the beginning,

38 See Mt 26:28; Lk 22:20.

39 Otherwise the apostles could not have eaten and drunk them.

40 *Didomenon* and *ekchynnomenon* are both present participles, middle or passive (see www.biblehub.com). In the "New Vulgate" (the Church's official Latin translation of the original-language Bible texts, approved by Pope John Paul II in 1979 and revised in 1986), they are translated *effunditur* ("is poured out") and *datur* ("is given"), as in CCC 610; not *effundetur* ("will be poured out") and *dabitur* ("will be given").

41 See Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:17. Jesus called His passion a "cup" (see Mt 20:22, 26:39,42; Mk 14:36; Jn 18:11). See Scott Hahn: *The Fourth Cup*, Chapter 9, "Cups and Downs."

42 See Mt 27:34; Mk 15:23.

43 Jn 19:28-30

44 Jesus could not carry out the old rituals, for when their time came, He had already died. But He had given His apostles Himself, and thus truly celebrated the Passover with them. He had not "abolished" the old, but simply brought it "to its full meaning." In retrospect, the connection "stood out clearly" and Christians soon came to regard the Last Supper as a Passover meal (See Pope Benedict XVI: *Jesus of Nazareth, Part Two*, 5, 1.) Jesus had not "abolished" the old, but simply brought it "to its full meaning" (see Pope Benedict XVI: *Jesus of Nazareth, Part Two*, 5, 1).

45 CCC 1367

46 See Joseph Ratzinger: *God and the World*, Part II, 14, "INRI—The Passion of the Lord."

47 CCC 1340; see CCC 1339.

48 Jn 1:29,36

49 See Jn 19:31; Mt 26:45-50.

50 "During the evening twilight" (Ex 12:6).

51 See Jn 19:31-37.

52 John also makes the connection by the timing of the new Passover: see Jn 12:1; 13:1; 19:14,31,42.

53 "I lay down My life to take it up again. No one takes it from Me; I lay it down freely" (Jn 10:17-18).

54 See CCC 1340 and Raniero Cantalamessa: *The Eucharist*, 1.

55 Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 7

Christians "devoted themselves" to what they called "the breaking of Bread;"⁵⁷ they still attended the Jewish temple, but they broke Bread "in their homes."⁵⁸

They never regarded it as merely "a representation, however sacred," of the Lord's Supper.⁵⁹ No; the Church has always believed that "the sacrifice of Christ" — the Last Supper/crucifixion — "and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are *one single sacrifice*." In this sacrifice, celebrated sacramentally in the Mass, "the same Christ Who offered Himself once in a bloody manner" on the cross "is contained and is offered in an unbloody manner,"⁶⁰ just as at the Last Supper.⁶¹

The Last Supper/crucifixion is Christ's sacrifice of Himself for us, *once and for all*. It cannot be repeated. However, "a vague memory" of it would be useless to us; we need to be present.⁶²

Accordingly, Jesus left us "a *visible* sacrifice (as the nature of man demands)" which continuously re-presents it to us sacramentally, perpetuating its memory and applying its saving power to the forgiveness of our daily sins.⁶³ To "the eyes of faith,"⁶⁴ that sacrifice becomes visible at the Consecration of the Mass,⁶⁵ when Christ appears on the altar *as sacrificed*; that is, with His Blood (under the appearance of wine) separated from His Body (under the appearance of bread).

Of course, Christ did not remain among the dead; He passed through death⁶⁶ to a glorified life. However, even His transfigured Body bore the marks of His sacrifice, marks that Thomas could see and touch.⁶⁷

In the Mass, "the Body of Christ is sacrificed, and, precisely as sacrificed, is living."⁶⁸ Accordingly, the priest "mingles" Christ's Body with the Blood in the chalice, for "at the moment of Our Lord's Resurrection, His Blood was reunited to His Body, flowing again in His veins as before."⁶⁹

Real Presence

For about 1,500 years, all Christians believed that "Christ becomes present" in the Eucharist "by the *conversion* of the bread and wine" into His Body and Blood.⁷⁰ When the Protestant reformers challenged it, the Church formally restated it.⁷¹

"In the Eucharist, the Body and Blood, together with the Soul and Divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ, is truly, really, and substantially contained."⁷²

"Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly His Body that He was offering under the species"⁷³ — or appearance — "of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance⁷⁴ of the bread into the substance of the Body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His Blood. This change the

56 Lk 22:19

57 Acts 2:42

58 Acts 2:46

59 No one could have even thought of "staging" that "highest moment" in Jesus' life, "especially before the eyes of Mary," His Mother (see Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 9).

60 CCC 1367

61 See Scott Hahn: *The Fourth Cup*, Chapter 9.

62 Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 11

63 See CCC 1366.

64 See the talk on "Faith."

65 See Cyril of Jerusalem: *Mystagogia*, 5, 8.

66 The Jews called it *Sheol*; we say in the Apostles' Creed that "He descended into hell" (with a lower-case "h" — not Hell, "the place of eternal damnation").

67 See Jn 20:24-29. In a vision, St. John sees "a Lamb standing, a Lamb that had been slain" (Rv 5:6).

68 Joseph Ratzinger: *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Part One, 3

69 Vatican Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff: *The Priest in the Communion Rite*, "Extraordinary Form." The Eucharist is "the whole Christ" (see CCC 1374).

70 CCC 1375

71 At the Council of Trent in 1551.

72 CCC 1374

73 Here, "species" means physical characteristics such as size, weight, colour, taste, and odour, which remain exactly the same after the Consecration as before, even to the most scrupulous scientific tests.

74 Here, "substance" means the underlying spiritual reality, which is different after the Consecration. (This is the word's philosophical, not scientific, meaning.)

holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called *transubstantiation*.⁷⁵

Christ is present to His Church in many ways,⁷⁶ but "most especially"⁷⁷ in the Eucharist. There He is present objectively (not just in the believer's mind) and substantially (divinity and humanity).⁷⁸

Accordingly, we call this presence "the Real Presence."⁷⁹ It begins at the Consecration of the Mass and lasts as long as the Eucharistic species — the appearances of bread and wine — last.⁸⁰ After the Consecration, therefore, the priest genuflects or bows deeply before the Host and the chalice.⁸¹

Before the Consecration, the bread and wine are quite ordinary (except that the wine contains no preservatives and the bread no yeast⁸²). But at the Consecration, the substances of bread and wine disappear. From then on, there is a "real absence" of bread and wine, even though their appearances remain. We cannot *sense* the transubstantiation;⁸³ we can grasp it "only by faith," relying on "divine authority."⁸⁴

Zikaron

In faith, let us study Jesus' command: "Do this as a remembrance of Me."⁸⁵

It must have reminded the apostles of God's command to their ancestors: to "celebrate"⁸⁶ the Pasch every year⁸⁷ with "a memorial feast."⁸⁸ However, "remembrance," "celebrate," and "memorial" do not mean to us quite what Jesus' command meant to His apostles or God's command to the ancient Israelites.⁸⁹

In Hebrew, the word is *zikaron*.⁹⁰ The Jews celebrate Passover every year as a *zikaron* of the Pasch, in which "the Exodus events are made present to the memory of believers so that they may conform their lives to them."⁹¹

Similarly, Jews speak of a *zikaron* of creation or a *zikaron* of the Temple — always the making present of a thing or event from "another era." For example, the "seven blessings" of a Jewish wedding invoke the "Garden of Eden" on one hand and "the final redemption" on the other, "collapsing them both into the current

75 CCC 1376. Used first, perhaps, by Archbishop Hildebert of Tours about 1079, the word was common in the 12th century (see *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: "The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, Transubstantiation"). The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) spoke of "the bread and wine having been transubstantiated, by God's power, into [Christ's] Body and Blood" (see Canon 1).

76 For example, in Sacred Scripture; or wherever two or three are gathered to pray together in His name (Mt 18:20); or in the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned (Mt 25:31-46).

77 CCC 1373

78 See John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Real Presence."

79 Not because the other types of presence are not "real," but because the Eucharistic presence "is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and Man, makes Himself wholly and entirely present" (Pope Paul VI: *Mysterium Fidei*, 39).

80 See CCC 1377. A piece of the Host that looks like bread to the naked eye is the Eucharist, but particles so small as to be invisible or indistinguishable from particles of dust are not. On being dissolved in water, a Host is no longer the Eucharist. When the chalice is cleansed after Communion, what remains (if anything) is no longer Christ's Blood.

81 About 1985, when the late Archbishop James Carney of Vancouver was saying Mass at Holy Rosary Cathedral, a man strode up to the altar after the Consecration and flung the chalice on to the marble floor. The archbishop was so upset by the *deseccration* that he left the sanctuary. (Another priest finished the Mass, and, to complete the sacrifice, the Archbishop consumed the small drop of Blood left in the chalice.) Afterward, the whole archdiocese made reparation. The man was found to be mentally unbalanced, but had his act been malicious, the cathedral would have been formally reblessed or rededicated.

82 That is, in the Latin rite. In the Ukrainian Catholic rite, the bread is made with yeast. (See the talk on "Divisions Among Christians.")

83 That is, see, smell, taste, hear, or feel it.

84 "Seeing, touching, tasting/Are in Thee deceived./How says trusty hearing?/That shall be believed./What God's Son has told me,/Take for truth I do;/Truth Himself speaks truly/Or there's nothing true" (Thomas Aquinas: *Adoro Te Devote*). See Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 15 (Appendix 2).

85 Lk 22:19; see also 1 Cor 11:24-25. "The Church has always protected" this command "as its most precious treasure" (see Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 8).

86 Ex 12:14, 17, 13:5

87 See Ex 12:14, 17, 24, 13:3-10.

88 Ex 12:14. The "festival" (Ex 13:6) would be "a sign" and "a reminder" (see Ex 13:9).

89 Jewish Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman notes that even in English, "remembering 9/11" — as we do every year — "is a far cry from remembering where we put our cheque book." In fact, we try to make a distinction "by calling the ordinary sense 'remembering,' and the ritual sense 'remembrance.'" Even irreligious societies practice ritual remembrance; e.g., the Soviet Union and revolutionary France.

90 See Ex 12:14, 13:3, 9, 17:14. "Remember" is *zakar* (see Ex 17:14). See Pope John Paul II: *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 13 (see the talk on "Mary and Joseph," Appendix 2).

91 CCC 1363. See Scott Hahn: *The Fourth Cup*, Chapter 2, "Pasch, Present, and Future."

blissful moment."⁹² In fact, *zikaron* means "rehearsal" as well as "remembrance."⁹³

It can also mean "sign" or "pointer": a connector, across time and space, to something "that might otherwise be lost." Even after the "remembrance" has ended, that connection "attends us wherever we go, deepening our sense of what matters" and committing us to "the lessons that flow from it."⁹⁴

This, then, was Jesus' command to His apostles: "Do this as a *zikaron* of Me."

Anamnesis

In Greek, *zikaron* is *anamnesis*, but *anamnesis* is "practically untranslatable" into English.⁹⁵ *Memorial*, *commemoration*, and *remembrance* all suggest *recollection* of the past,⁹⁶ but *anamnesis* means *making it present*. Accordingly, we supplement *memorial* and *remembrance* with words like *re-presenting*, *re-actualizing*, and *renewing*, which focus on the presence of the event to us, or *re-living*, *participating*, and *celebrating*,⁹⁷ which focus on our presence at the event.⁹⁸

Perhaps the best metaphor is the one Father Vince's mother used. The sun is always shining on the earth. However, every morning, the rotation of the earth "re-presents" the sun to us; alternatively, we "participate anew" in its warmth and light. In an *anamnesis*, "we mysteriously become contemporaries of the event: the event is present for us and we are present at the event."⁹⁹

The Mass, then, is the *anamnesis* of Christ's saving actions:¹⁰⁰ in their "liturgical"¹⁰¹ celebration," they "become in a certain way present and real."¹⁰²

Accordingly, if people ask us where we are going on Sunday morning, we can truly say "to Christ's Last Supper." Afterward, if they ask *Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?* we can truly answer "Yes!"¹⁰³

The Mass is not a "spectacle." As we enter the church, we should think: I am going to participate in Jesus' Last Supper, to see Him crucified on Calvary, to participate in His sacrifice of Himself for me. This is the time "to prepare ourselves for the encounter with Jesus. Silence is so important!"¹⁰⁴

Eat My Flesh

About a year before His death, Jesus miraculously fed "a vast crowd" with only "five barley loaves and a couple of dried fish." There were "about 5,000" men besides women and children, but "twelve baskets" of fragments were left over.¹⁰⁵

The next day, Jesus told them, "I am the Bread of life. Your ancestors ate manna in the desert, but they died."¹⁰⁶ This is the Bread that comes down from Heaven for a man to eat and never die. I Myself am the living Bread come down from Heaven. If anyone eats this Bread he shall live forever; the Bread that I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world."¹⁰⁷

92 <https://blog.lawrenceahoffman.com>, September 11 2011

93 We could say that in a *zikaron*, "real time" is God's time, which has no past or future, but only an *eternal present* (see the talk on "God: Unity and Trinity," Appendix 1). In English, we use the "historical present" to "actualize" a past event, creating an effect of immediacy. For example, a teenager might say, "So I *open* the door and *go* in, and my mom *yells*,..." In eternal life — present "in the midst of time" whenever "we come face to face with God" — "everything flows together into the 'now' of love" (Pope Benedict XVI: *God is Near Us*, My Joy Is to Be in Thy Presence, 2).

94 <https://blog.lawrenceahoffman.com>, September 11 2011

95 <https://blog.lawrenceahoffman.com>, September 11 2011

96 *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, "Anamnesis"

97 See Augustine: *Sermon 220*. For example, in celebrating a birthday, we can be said to re-live the birth.

98 See Augustine: *Sermon 220*.

99 Raniero Cantalamessa: *The Eucharist*, 1

100 See CCC 1341.

101 See the talk on "Liturgy: Public Worship."

102 CCC 1363. Each Eucharistic Prayer contains an *anamnesis*: e.g., in Eucharistic Prayer I, "We celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion, the Resurrection from the dead, and the glorious Ascension into Heaven of Christ." The "memorial acclamation" also includes "the proclamation" (CCC 1363) of Christ's saving work: "when we eat this Bread and drink this Cup," we *proclaim* His death (see 1 Cor 11:26).

103 Raniero Cantalamessa: *The Eucharist*, 1

104 Pope Francis: General Audience, November 15 2017

105 See Jn 6:1-13.

106 See Ex 16.

107 Jn 6:49-51

When the Jews "quarrelled" about it, Jesus added, "Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For My Flesh is true food, and My Blood is true drink. Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood remains in Me and I in him."¹⁰⁸

God had strictly forbidden the Israelites to eat "flesh with its lifeblood still in it,"¹⁰⁹ "since the life of every living body is its blood."¹¹⁰ However, Jesus commanded us not only to eat His Body, but also to drink His Blood, *in order* to possess His life, divine life, *Zoë*.¹¹¹

People read Jesus' words in many different ways, but those who heard them must have understood their plain sense, for they exclaimed, "This sort of talk is hard to endure! How can anyone take it seriously?" And many of them "would not remain in His company any longer."¹¹² However, Jesus made no attempt to get them back by "watering down" what He had said. Evidently, He meant precisely that.

* * * * *

Holy Communion

Like the first *Pasch* and the event it prefigured — Christ's Last Supper/crucifixion — the Mass is a *sacrifice* and a *meal*: "at the same time, and inseparably," the "memorial in which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated, and the sacred banquet of communion with the Lord's Body and Blood."¹¹³

In the Mass, the sacrifice is directed toward our participation in the banquet.¹¹⁴ Our resulting union, or *communion*, with Christ is far more intimate than any other possible union — even that between spouses. Accordingly, we call it *holy communion* and we use "Holy Communion" or "Communion" as a synonym for "the Eucharist."

In giving us His Body to eat and His Blood to drink the night before He died, Jesus made a new and everlasting covenant with us. His words — "this is My Blood, the Blood of the covenant"¹¹⁵ — must have reminded the apostles of what Moses had said as he sprinkled the people at Sinai with the blood of the sacrifices: "This is the blood of the covenant the Lord has made with you."¹¹⁶ They must also have reminded the apostles of God's promise to "make a new covenant" with the Houses of Israel and Judah;¹¹⁷ a covenant that would be "eternal."¹¹⁸

Our reception of Holy Communion at Mass renews and ratifies that new and everlasting covenant in our daily lives, just as sexual intercourse between spouses renews and ratifies their marriage covenant. Just as we do after conjugal intimacy, we should "recollect" ourselves after Communion and "hold loving and fruitful converse" with "our divine Master."¹¹⁹ Guarding this communion with Him after

108 Jn 6:52-57. Throughout, in the Greek, "life" is *Zoë*, or *supernatural* life; "eat" or "feed" is *trogen* ("crunch" or "gnaw") instead of the usual *phagon* ("eat").

109 See Gn 9:4-5.

110 See Lv 17:10-14; Acts 15:20,29.

111 Nowhere in the Bible are we forbidden to eat human flesh; nor does the Church explicitly forbid it. She forbids murder and she commands respect for human bodies after death, but her teaching on "double effect" (see the talk on "God's Will") allows the eating of dead human bodies in cases of necessity.

For example, on October 13 1972, a Uruguayan Air Force plane came down in the Andes. Twenty-nine persons died in the crash and a subsequent avalanche, leaving 16 survivors — all Catholics — who were not rescued for 69 days. To stay alive, they ate parts of the bodies of the dead.

When one of them compared their "cannibalism" to the harvesting of organs from dead bodies in order to keep other people alive — something the Church explicitly encourages (see CCC 2296) — two professors of theology at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers (Monsignor Austin Vaughan and Father William Smith) called their comparison "not unreasonable" and said that "a person is permitted to eat dead human flesh if there is no feasible alternative for survival" (see *The New York Times*, December 28 1972).

There are profound differences between what is usually meant by "cannibalism" and our eating and drinking of Christ's Body and Blood at Mass, but the Church's principal defence against the charge of cannibalism (made even at the beginning) is Jesus' command and her own teaching on the subject.

112 Jn 6:60,66

113 CCC 1382

114 See CCC 1382.

115 Mt 26:26-28; see Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:17,19; 1 Cor 11:23-25.

116 Ex 24:5-8

117 Jer 31:31

118 Jer 32:40

119 Pope Pius XII: *Mediator Dei*, 123

receiving the Holy Eucharist is as important as "devout preparation before."¹²⁰

Amen!

Baptism gives us *the right and the duty* to offer the Mass, with "full, conscious, and active participation."¹²¹ This is the very kernel of *what Catholics do*.

The Church obliges us to participate in the Mass every Sunday and holy day of obligation¹²² and to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, preferably during the Easter Season.¹²³ However, she strongly urges us to receive Communion every time we go to Mass, and to go to Mass often — daily, if we can.

Nevertheless, one "should examine himself first; only then should he eat of the Bread and drink of the cup."¹²⁴ No one may receive the Eucharist "unless he believes that what we teach is true, has received Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and new birth, and lives in keeping with what Christ taught."¹²⁵

Before we may receive Communion, we must be freed from any mortal sin¹²⁶ in the Sacrament of Penance.¹²⁷ We must admit, "Lord, I am not worthy,"¹²⁸ and pray, "Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world; have mercy on us."

Then we must respond "Amen!" when the minister holds up the Host, saying, "The Body of Christ," or presents us with the chalice, saying, "The Blood of Christ."

"Amen"¹²⁹ is usually translated "verily" or "so be it." However, it is not simple agreement, nor even a simple statement of belief. "It is a word of personal and communal commitment and surrender."¹³⁰

Unity of belief about the Eucharist is essential because the Eucharist is the *efficacious sign* of our unity in Christ.¹³¹ We cannot "give Communion to a person who is not baptized or who rejects the full truth of the faith" about the Eucharist.¹³² Unhappily, then, Catholics cannot share Communion with members of "ecclesial communities derived from the Reformation," for these communities have not preserved "the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness."¹³³ Moreover, "so as not to condone an ambiguity about the nature of the Eucharist,"¹³⁴ Catholics "must refrain" from receiving communion in the "celebrations" of these communities.¹³⁵

Respect

The Church is always developing "external signs" that will "promote understanding" of this great Sacrament.¹³⁶ We keep Hosts with great care in a locked tabernacle in a place of honour in the church, and we indicate the Real Presence with a lighted sanctuary lamp, usually red. We carry Hosts in procession and expose them for veneration during Benediction or the annual "Forty Hours Devotion."¹³⁷

120 Thomas à Kempis: *The Imitation of Christ*, Book 4, 12

121 See Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14; CCC 1141.

122 See CCC 2042. In Canada, only two do not always fall on Sunday: Christmas (December 25) and the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God (January 1).

123 See CCC 2042.

124 1 Cor 11:27-28

125 CCC 1355

126 That is, sin that kills *Zoë*. See the talk on "Sin and Forgiveness."

127 See the talks on "Sin and Forgiveness" and "How to Go to Confession."

128 See Mt 8:8.

129 From the Latin *amen*; from the Greek *amen* ("verily"); from the Hebrew *amen* ("so be it"), from *aman* ("to confirm").

130 *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, "Amen"

131 See CCC 1325.

132 Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 38 (Appendix 2).

133 CCC 1400 — "especially because of the absence of the Sacrament of Holy Orders."

134 "While respecting the religious convictions of [our] separated brethren."

135 Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 30 (Appendix 2).

136 Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff: *Communion Received on the Tongue and While Kneeling*, November 17 2009

137 In the third century, Tarsicius, carrying the Eucharist (perhaps to prisoners), was waylaid by a mob. Rather than surrender his burden, he suffered death by stones and clubs. Blessed Fulton Sheen (1895-1979) told of a church in China where the Eucharist had been desecrated. A little girl crept into the church on several nights afterward, each time praying and licking up one Host from the floor. (At that time, lay people could not touch the Host with their hands or receive more than one Host per day.) One night, a soldier followed her and, as she consumed the last Host, shot her dead. If she could thus give her life for the Eucharist, Archbishop Sheen said, surely he could spend one hour a day in adoration.

The Church requires us to fast from food and drink (other than water) for one hour before Communion;¹³⁸ to make our "bodily demeanour" (gestures, clothing) "convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our Guest";¹³⁹ and to kneel or bow deeply before we receive the Host.¹⁴⁰

Currently, in the Archdiocese of Vancouver, we may receive the Host on our tongue or in our hand. The early Christians received It in the hand,¹⁴¹ but practice changed: first, to help avoid dropping Eucharistic particles, and, second, to increase "devotion to the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament."¹⁴²

We may also, occasionally, receive Communion under both species. For various reasons, Catholics stopped receiving Communion from the chalice after the twelfth century, but the practice has been re-introduced for special occasions.¹⁴³

We lose nothing by receiving only the Host. First, "the priest both offers and receives the Blood in the name of all." Second, "the whole Christ is present under either species"¹⁴⁴ and in each part; breaking the Bread "does not divide Christ."¹⁴⁵ For various reasons, then, we may receive only a small part of a Host at Mass.

One of the "external signs" that "promote understanding" of the Eucharist¹⁴⁶ is *language*.¹⁴⁷ We may call Christ's Body "Bread" because He Himself did,¹⁴⁸ but it is wrong to call His Blood "wine." It is wrong to say that His Body and Blood are "in" the bread and wine, that they co-exist "with" the bread and wine,¹⁴⁹ or that the bread and wine are merely "signs" of His Body and Blood. Properly, we should speak of "altar breads" before the Consecration, and "Hosts"¹⁵⁰ only afterward.

"By giving the Eucharist the prominence it deserves, and by being careful not to diminish any of its dimensions or demands, we show that we are truly conscious of the greatness of this Gift."¹⁵¹

Adoration

Communion with Jesus in the Eucharist "reaches its true depths only when it is supported and surrounded by adoration."¹⁵²

"Jesus awaits us in this Sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet Him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offences and crimes of the world."¹⁵³

"Of all devotions," this "is the greatest after the Sacraments, the one dearest to God, and the one most helpful to us."¹⁵⁴

Many chapels and churches are open all day.¹⁵⁵ As my father used to quote: "Whene'er you pass a Catholic church,/don't fail to pay a visit;/and then when you are carried in,/our Lord won't say, 'Who is it?'"¹⁵⁶

138 At first, the fast was *total* and started the previous midnight. In 1953, Pope Pius XII allowed water and medicine, and in 1957, he reduced it to three hours for solid food and alcohol and one hour for other liquids, with water allowed at any time. In 1964, Pope Paul VI reduced the three hours to one.

139 See CCC 1387.

140 See the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 160.

141 See Cyril of Jerusalem: *Mystagogia*, 5, 21, written about 350 AD.

142 Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff: *Communion Received on the Tongue and While Kneeling*, November 17 2009

143 See Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 55.

144 Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 80, a. 12, ad 3, quoted by the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff: *Doctrinal Formation and Communion Under Both Kinds*, June 1 2011

145 CCC 1377

146 Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff: *Communion Received on the Tongue and While Kneeling*, November 17 2009

147 See the talk on "Liturgy: Public Worship."

148 See Jn 6:35,48,51.

149 The heresy of "consubstantiation."

150 From the Latin *hostia* ("victim," "animal slain in sacrifice").

151 Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 61 (Appendix 2).

152 Joseph Ratzinger: *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 4, quoted in the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff: *Communion Received on the Tongue and While Kneeling*, November 17 2009

153 Pope John Paul II: *Domenicae Cenae*, 3

154 Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 25 (Appendix 2).

155 Examples are St. Jude's, St. Anthony's, and Corpus Christi (Vancouver); St. Paul's (Richmond); St. Helen's (Burnaby); St. Luke's (Maple Ridge); Holy Trinity (North Vancouver); and All Saints (Coquitlam). Visitors are usually asked to sign up in advance so that there is always somebody present, to make sure that the Blessed Sacrament is never exposed to insult or injury.

Priesthood

The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life," for it contains "the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ Himself, our *Pasch*."¹⁵⁷ However, at the heart of the Mass there is also another Sacrament: Holy Orders. The Mass, being a sacrifice, cannot be offered without a priest:¹⁵⁸ defined as a "mediator" who is "authorized" to offer sacrifice to God.¹⁵⁹

After the Exodus, God called Aaron¹⁶⁰ and his sons to be His priests.¹⁶¹ Later,¹⁶² He appointed the Levites¹⁶³ to be Aaron's assistants,¹⁶⁴ but He explicitly restricted the priesthood to Aaron and his descendants.¹⁶⁵ All these priests sacrificed animals to God as He commanded,¹⁶⁶ but their sacrifices brought about "only a yearly recalling of sins"; they could never "take sins away."¹⁶⁷

Jesus, instead of offering those same sacrifices "again and again,"¹⁶⁸ made the "one offering"¹⁶⁹ of His own Body and Blood at the Last Supper/crucifixion. "Under the Old Covenant, there were many priests because they were prevented by death from remaining in office; but Jesus, because He remains forever, has a priesthood that does not pass away."¹⁷⁰

Jesus was of the tribe of Judah,¹⁷¹ "none of whose members [had] ever officiated at the altar."¹⁷² He is a priest not by "physical descent" from Aaron, therefore, but by the divine life He has from His Father.¹⁷³ "You are a priest forever," God swore to Him, "according to the order of Melchizedek."¹⁷⁴

Some 700 years before Aaron, "Melchizedek, King of Salem," had brought "bread and wine" to Abraham and, "being a priest of God most high," blessed him.¹⁷⁵ "Melchizedek" means "king of justice." "King of Salem" means "king of peace."¹⁷⁶

And that is all we know of Melchizedek. "Without father, mother, or ancestry, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God, he remains a priest forever."¹⁷⁷ The Church sees in his priesthood "a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ,"¹⁷⁸ and in his offering, a "prefiguring" of her own.¹⁷⁹

Holy Orders

"Only Christ is the true Priest." But just as His one offering is continuously made present in the Mass through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, so His one priesthood is made present for all time and space through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.¹⁸⁰

Christ instituted this Sacrament right after instituting the Eucharist, when He commanded, "Do this as a *zikaron* of Me"¹⁸¹ — a command that is included in the words of consecration at Mass. By these words, Jesus *ordained* His apostles priests, ordering them — and thus giving them the power — to convert bread and wine into His Body and Blood, offer It to God the Father, and give It to us to eat.¹⁸²

156 See Mt 25:11-12.

157 CCC 1324. Our many names for it express its "inexhaustible richness" (see CCC 1328-1332).

158 See the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Sacerdotium Ministeriale*, I, 1; III, 4.

159 See John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Priest."

160 Moses' brother.

161 See Ex 28:1,3,41, 29:44; Heb 5:4.

162 See Ex 32:1-29.

163 Descendants of Levi, Aaron's great-grandfather, who was one of the twelve sons of Jacob.

164 See Nm 3:5-10.

165 See Nm 3:10, 18:1-7.

166 See Lv 1, 3-7.

167 Heb 10:3

168 Heb 10:11

169 Heb 10:14

170 Heb 7:23-24

171 See Lk 2:4, 3:32-33.

172 See Heb 7:13. Judah was brother to Levi, Aaron's great-grandfather, so Jesus was not Aaron's descendant.

173 See Jn 6:57; Heb 5:5, 7:16.

174 See Heb 5:6, 7:17,21; Ps 110:4.

175 See Gn 14:18.

176 See Heb 7:1-3.

177 Heb 7:1-3

178 CCC 1544

179 See CCC 1333, 1350.

180 See CCC 1545.

181 Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24-25

The apostles handed on their priestly powers to their successors by "laying hands"¹⁸² on them, and their successors handed them on in the same way, until the late Archbishop James Carney of Vancouver conferred them on Father Vince.

Holy Orders is one of the two "Sacraments at the Service of Communion," for it is "directed toward the service of others."¹⁸⁴ Administered by a bishop, its sacramental sign is the imposition of hands and the consecratory prayer. It "configures the recipient to Christ"¹⁸⁵ so that — depending on the bishop's intention and prayer — he may serve the Church as deacon, priest, or bishop.¹⁸⁶

Like Baptism and Confirmation, Holy Orders imprints a special "spiritual character." For a priest, that character consists of "sacramental identification with the eternal High Priest,"¹⁸⁷ giving him "the authority to act in the power and place of the Person of Christ Himself."¹⁸⁸ A priest can never "become a layman again in the strict sense, because the character imprinted by ordination is for ever."¹⁸⁹

"Do this as a *zikaron* of Me," Jesus told His apostles — a *zikaron* of *Himself*. That is the nature of a priest: a "real, living, and faithful image of Christ the Priest":¹⁹⁰ His "sacramental re-presentation,"¹⁹¹ *alter Christus* — "another Christ."

At Mass, therefore, where priests "exercise in a supreme degree their sacred office,"¹⁹² we see not only Christ the Victim under the appearances of bread and wine, but also Christ the Priest under the appearance of the ordained celebrant.

It is this special "spiritual character" that enables a priest not only to make Christ's sacrifice present to us,¹⁹³ but also to unite our offerings to the sacrifice of Christ our Head.¹⁹⁴ We are Christ's Mystical Body, but the Body cannot offer the sacrifice without the Head. If the priest were merely our delegate, like an elected politician, our worship would have no more value than that of a headless Body.¹⁹⁵

Men only

When God the Son took on humanity, He became a Man. At the Last Supper, Christ shared His priesthood with His apostles — also men. And, for His apostles, Christ had chosen "those whom He willed,"¹⁹⁶ "in union with the Father, through the Holy Spirit,"¹⁹⁷ after having spent the night in prayer.¹⁹⁸

Therefore, Christ's choice of men for His Church's foundation¹⁹⁹ — not women, not even His mother — could not possibly have been accidental.²⁰⁰ In fact, nothing He did on earth was merely local or temporary. Repeatedly He refused to conform to custom and tradition — notably in His treatment of women.²⁰¹

Accordingly, the Church takes Christ's example to be binding²⁰² and declares that she has "no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women."²⁰³

182 See CCC 1337. Also see the talk on "Grace and the Sacraments."

183 See Acts 6:6, 13:3; 1 Tim 4:14.

184 CCC 1534. The other one is Matrimony.

185 CCC 1581; see CCC 1585.

186 See CCC 1586-1588. A deacon can preach at Mass, baptize, witness marriages, and administer a parish. A deacon who becomes a priest can also offer Mass, absolve sins, and anoint the sick. A priest who becomes a bishop can also administer the Sacraments of Confirmation and Holy Orders.

187 Congregation for the Clergy: *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 2; also see 5, 8, 10.

188 CCC 1548

189 CCC 1582-1583

190 Congregation for the Clergy: *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 2

191 Pope John Paul II: *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 15

192 CCC 1566

193 See CCC 1548.

194 See CCC 1566.

195 See CCC 1553 and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter Insigniores*, 5.

196 See Mk 3:13-14; Jn 6:70.

197 Acts 1:2

198 Pope John Paul II: *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 2 (Appendix 5). See Lk 6:12.

199 See Rv 21:14.

200 See Pope John Paul II: *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 2 (Appendix 5).

201 Pope John Paul II: *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 26. He cites Mt 5:28, 13:33, 15:28, 19:3-9, 25:1-13, 26:6-13, 28:1-10; Mk 1:30, 5:25-34, 41, 16:9; Lk 7:13, 37-47, 8:1-8, 10:38-42, 13:11, 16, 15:8-10, 18:1-7, 21:1-4, 23:28, 24:8-11; Jn 4:7-27, 8:3-11, 11:5, 20:16-18. Mary, "mother of God and mother of the Church," was not ordained a priest, showing clearly that the non-admission of women to the priesthood does not mean that women are of lesser worth or value (Pope John Paul II: *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 3, Appendix 5).

202 See the talk on "Grace and the Sacraments."

Women's exclusion from the Church's ministerial life "is not a deprivation," Pope Francis stressed; their place in the Church "is much more important."

The role of priests in the Church belongs to the Church's Petrine or "ministerial" dimension,²⁰⁴ he explained. However, "the Church is more than ministry; it is the whole people of God." Her Marian dimension²⁰⁵ is "more important."²⁰⁶

It is much more important to be a Catholic than to be a priest.

"For you, I am a bishop; with you, I am a Christian," St. Augustine told his people. "The first means danger" — the office of bishop can tempt a man to "the sin of pride" — "the second [means] salvation."

The man "who presides over the people ought first of all to understand that he is the servant of many masters," he said. "And let him not disdain this role, because the Lord of lords did not disdain to serve us."²⁰⁷

The Pope is "servant of the servants of God."²⁰⁸ A priest is ordained for service to the people, just as a school principal is appointed for service to the teachers.

Celibacy

In the Latin rite, priests are celibate: they do not marry. In fact, they promise solemnly not to marry. However, celibacy²⁰⁹ is not intrinsic to the priesthood.²¹⁰

The two common objections to priestly celibacy are easy to answer. 1) Celibate priests cannot counsel married people. *Answer:* Priests are primarily *spiritual* counsellors. 2) Priests would commit fewer sexual sins²¹¹ if they could marry. *Answer:* Observation shows that such sins are just as common among married men.

At the 1990 Rome Synod²¹² on the formation of priests, an overwhelming majority of the world's bishops voted to maintain the rule of celibacy.

Many people see it "as a harsh form of self-denial imposed by the Church on those who want to serve as priests," said one bishop. On the contrary, he said, celibacy is the expression of a "dedication" that commits a man so deeply "that no room will be left for a further commitment to marriage and family."

No one should commit himself to celibacy "simply as an act of willful self-denial or as a mere condition of ordination," he said. Nor should he be motivated by "fear of responsibility, aversion to sex, an incapacity to love deeply," or "the mere lack of opportunity" for sex. Rather, he should make "a positive commitment to a goal."

"Defining celibacy only as giving up sex is just as unrealistic as seeing marriage as giving up all other women," he summed up. The truth is that both require "a commitment of love so deep as to cause one to want to give up all else."²¹³

'Heaven on earth'²¹⁴

In Heaven, the Father begets the Son eternally (that is, without beginning or end), pouring out on Him the fullness of His Being. The Son, His perfect image,²¹⁵ offers the fullness of that Being back to Him in thanks and love.²¹⁶

203 Pope John Paul II: *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 4 (Appendix 5). See the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter Insigniores*, 4 (Appendix 4).

204 See the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

205 See the talks on "What is the Catholic Church?" and "Mary and Joseph."

206 Although "we have not developed a theology of women that reflects this" (Pope Francis: Interview published in *America*, November 22 2022).

207 Augustine: *Sermon 340: On the Anniversary of his Ordination*.

208 A title first used by Pope Gregory I (590-604).

209 Celibacy does not *per se* mean refraining from sexual activity. However, sexual activity is forbidden to anyone who is not married.

210 Peter was married (see Mt 8:14). In the Vancouver Archdiocese, Fathers John Jolliffe, Bruce McAllister, and Michael Shier are married, having profited from the Vatican's provisions for clergymen in the Anglican Communion who become Catholics. Men in other Catholic rites (see the talks on "What is the Catholic Church?" and "Divisions Among Christians") may be ordained priests, but men may not marry or re-marry after ordination and married men are not ordained bishops.

211 See the talk on "The Last Seven Commandments."

212 A council or assembly of bishops meeting under the Church's authority; from the Latin *synodus*, from the Greek *sunodos* ("meeting"), from the Greek *sun* ("together") plus *hodos* ("road, way, journey").

213 Bishop Harry J. Flynn of Lafayette Louisiana (May 2 1933 - September 22 2019), Synod of Bishops on Priestly Formation, 1990. See the talk on "Consecrated Life," Appendix 4.

214 Scott Hahn: *The Lamb's Supper*, Part One, One

215 See Jn 10:30; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3.

Now Christ, Who is God the Son, expresses "the divine ways of the Trinity"²¹⁷ in all He does and is as Man. His offering of Himself to His Father at the Last Supper/crucifixion is what He does in Heaven.

That is what the Mass makes present to us on earth.²¹⁸ In the Mass, therefore, Heaven touches down on earth and we "unite ourselves with the heavenly liturgy."²¹⁹

But the Mass is also "the sacrifice of the Church," Christ's Mystical Body, for she not only makes the offering with her Head as Priest, but is also offered with her Head as Victim.²²⁰ At Mass, then, we are sacrificed with — or, rather, *in* — Christ. Our lives — "praise, sufferings, prayer, and work" — are united with His in "His total offering."²²¹ Thus "our whole life gets caught up in the Mass."²²²

As Heaven touches down, therefore, we lift up the whole earth to meet it.²²³ "Lift up your hearts," the priest says, and "we lift them up to the Lord."²²⁴

"In the Mass, you and I have Heaven on earth."²²⁵

Conclusion

"I have earnestly desired²²⁶ to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,"²²⁷ Jesus told His apostles.

Here is the "crevice" through which we can "intuit" the love that the Persons of the Holy Trinity have for us,²²⁸ says Pope Francis. "No one had earned a place at that Supper. All had been invited." Or — better — "all had been drawn there by the burning desire that Jesus had to eat that Passover with them."²²⁹

"Before our response to His invitation — well before! — there is His desire for us." Indeed, "every reception of Communion" was already desired by Him in the Last Supper.²³⁰ And that desire will not be satisfied "until every man and woman" has "eaten His Body and drunk His Blood."²³¹

In May 1994, a man named Eddie Treadway celebrated his 100th birthday by doing what he did every day: walking half an hour to Mass at St. Rose Church in Sacramento California. Asked why, he replied firmly, "To please God. We owe it to God." He paused, and then said again, "To please God."²³²

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216 See the talk on "God: Unity and Trinity."

217 See CCC 470.

218 Moreover, "it anticipates the wedding feast of the Lamb in the heavenly Jerusalem" (Rv 19:6-9).

219 CCC 1326. See Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 19 (Appendix 2).

220 See CCC 1368.

221 CCC 1368

222 Scott Hahn: *The Lamb's Supper*, Part 3, 4

223 Scott Hahn: *The Lamb's Supper*, Part 3, 4

224 Immediately before the Preface, at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer.

225 Scott Hahn: *The Lamb's Supper*, Part 1, 1

226 In Latin, *Desiderio desideravi* (literally "I have desired with a great desire"), a phrase Pope Francis used as the title of an apostolic exhortation dated June 29 2022.

227 Lk 22:15

228 Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 2

229 Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 4

230 Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 6

231 Pope Francis: *Desiderio Desideravi*, 4

232 See *The BC Catholic* July 3 1994.

Appendix 1: Recognizing the Bible in the Mass

As a convinced Protestant, Scripture scholar Scott Hahn went to Mass to try to understand the references to the liturgy he had found in the Bible and other early Christian writings. He vowed not to participate, but merely to observe from the back of the church, for he had been trained to believe that the Mass was idolatry¹ and sacrilege.² "I would stay seated, with my Bible open beside me," he decided.

As the Mass progressed, however, he realized that "my Bible wasn't just beside me. It was before me — *in the words of the Mass!*"³

Here are examples:

- "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." *Mt 28:19*
- "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." *2 Cor 13:13*
- "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
Rom 1:7
- "The Lord be with you." *Ru 2:4; 2 Thes 3:16*
- "And with your spirit." *2 Tim 4:22*
- "Acknowledge our sins." *1 Jn 1:9*
- "Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have sinned against You." *See Ps 41:5.*
- "Show us, O Lord, Your mercy, and grant us Your salvation." *Ps 85:8*
- "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will."
Lk 2:14
- "Only begotten Son" *Jn 3:16*
- "Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world." *See Jn 1:29.*
- "The Holy One." *Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; Jn 6:69; 1 Pt 1:15; 1 Jn 2:20*
- "Amen." *Neh 8:6; Ps 41:14; Rom 16:27; Heb 13:21; Rv 7:12*
- "Alleluia." *Ps 111-118; Rv 19:1-6*
- "Lord, hear our prayer." *See Ps 143:1.*
- "With humble spirit and contrite heart may we be accepted by You, O Lord, and may our sacrifice in Your sight this day be pleasing to You." *See Dn 3:39-40.*
- "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts." *Is 6:3; see Rv 4:8.*
- "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord." *Ps 118:26; Mt 21:9*
- "Hosanna in the highest." *Mt 21:9*
- "Take this ... and eat it; this is My Body." *Mt 26:26*
- "This is My Blood, the Blood of the covenant, to be poured out on behalf of many." *Mt 26:28*
- "Do this in remembrance of Me." *Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24*
- "When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim Your death, O Lord, until You come again." *1 Cor 11:26*
- "Our Father, Who art in Heaven,... but deliver us from evil." *Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4*
- "We await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ."
Ti 2:13
- "For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours." *See Dn 2:37.*
- "Peace be with you." *Jn 20:20-21; Lk 24:36*
- "Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him Who takes away the sins of the world."
Jn 1:29,36
- "Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." *Rv 19:9*
- "Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed." *See Mt 8:8; Lk 7:6.*
- "Go in peace." *Lk 8:48*

1 Worship of false gods, from the Greek *eidolon* ("phantom," "idol"). See the talks on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice" and "The First Three Commandments."

2 Deliberate violation or profanation of a sacred thing: in this case, Jesus' crucifixion. From the Latin *sacrilegium* ("robbing of a temple," "stealing a sacred thing"). See the talk on "The First Three Commandments."

3 Scott Hahn: *The Lamb's Supper*, Part 1, 1

Appendix 2

Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* of Pope John Paul II

On the Eucharist and its Relationship to the Church

Edited for ease of reading

INTRODUCTION

1. The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church.

In a variety of ways the Church joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."¹ However, in the Holy Eucharist, through the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord, she rejoices in this presence with unique intensity.

Ever since Pentecost, when the Church, the People of the New Covenant, began her pilgrim journey toward her heavenly homeland, the divine Sacrament has continued to mark the passing of her days, filling them with confident hope.

The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic sacrifice is "the source and summit of the Christian life."⁽¹⁾

"For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Christ Himself, our Passover and living Bread. Through His own Flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, He offers life to men."⁽²⁾

Consequently, the Church constantly turns her gaze toward her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the altar, where she discovers the full manifestation of His boundless love.

2. During the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I had an opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist in the Cenacle of Jerusalem, where — according to tradition — it was first celebrated by Jesus Himself.

The Upper Room was where this most holy Sacrament was instituted. It is there that Christ took bread, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: "Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is My Body which will be given up for you."² Then He took the cup of wine and said to them: "Take this, all of you and drink from it: this is the cup of My Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting covenant. It will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven."³

I am grateful to the Lord Jesus for allowing me to repeat in that same place, in obedience to His command — "Do this in memory of Me,"⁴ — the words which He spoke two thousand years ago.

Did the apostles who took part in the Last Supper understand the meaning of the words Christ spoke? Perhaps not. Those words would be fully clear only at the end of the *Triduum sacrum* ("the three sacred days"), the time from Thursday evening to Sunday morning. Those days embrace the *Mysterium Paschale* ("the Paschal Mystery"); they also embrace the *Mysterium Eucharisticum* ("the Eucharistic Mystery").

3. The Church was born of the Paschal Mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is the Sacrament of the Paschal Mystery, stands at the centre of the Church's life.

This is already clear from the earliest description of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."⁵ The "breaking of the bread" refers to the Eucharist.

Two thousand years later, we continue to relive that primordial image of the Church. At every celebration of the Eucharist, we are spiritually brought back to the Paschal *Triduum* ("three days") — to the events of the evening of Holy Thursday, to the Last Supper and what followed it. The institution of the Eucharist sacramentally anticipated the events that were about to take place, beginning with the agony in Gethsemane.

Once again we see Jesus as He leaves the Upper Room, descends with His disciples to the Kidron Valley, and goes to the Garden of Olives. Even today that Garden shelters some very

1 Mt 28:20

2 See Mk 26:26; Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24.

3 See Mt 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25.

4 Lk 22:19

5 Acts 2:42

ancient olive trees. Perhaps they witnessed what happened beneath their shade that evening, when Christ prayed, so filled with anguish that "His sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground."⁶

His Blood, which He had just given to the Church as the drink of salvation in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, had begun to be shed. Its outpouring was completed the next day on Golgotha when, "as High Priest of the good things to come," He "entered once for all into the holy place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but His own Blood, thus securing an eternal redemption."⁷

4. *The hour of our Redemption.* Although deeply troubled, Jesus did not flee before His "hour." "And what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour?' No, for this purpose I have come to this hour."⁸

He wanted His disciples to keep Him company, yet He had to experience loneliness and abandonment — "So, could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation."⁹ Only John remained at the foot of the cross, at the side of Mary and the faithful women. The agony in Gethsemane was the introduction to the agony of the cross on Good Friday.

The holy hour, the hour of the Redemption of the world. Whenever the Eucharist is celebrated at the tomb of Jesus in Jerusalem, there is an almost tangible return to His "hour," the hour of His cross and glorification. Every priest who celebrates Mass, together with the Christian community that takes part in it, is led back in spirit to that place and that hour.

"He was crucified, He suffered death and was buried; He descended to the dead; on the third day He rose again."

The words of this profession of faith are echoed by the words of contemplation and proclamation sung by the priest on the afternoon of Good Friday: "This is the wood of the cross, on which hung the Saviour of the world. Come, let us worship."

The Church extends this invitation to everyone. Then, during the Easter season, she takes up her song again: "The Lord is risen from the tomb; for our sake He hung on the cross. Alleluia!"

5. *"Mysterium fidei! — The Mystery of Faith!"* When the priest recites or chants these words, all those present respond, "We announce Your death, O Lord, and we proclaim Your Resurrection, until You come in glory."

In these or similar words the Church, pointing to Christ in the mystery of His Passion, also reveals her own mystery: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* ("Church of the Eucharist").

The Church was born and sent out into the world by the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Nevertheless, the institution of the Eucharist in the Upper Room was certainly a decisive moment in her shaping.

In fact, the whole *Triduum Paschale* ("Paschal three days") is her foundation and wellspring, but the events of those days are, as it were, gathered up, foreshadowed, and "concentrated" forever in the gift of the Eucharist. In this gift, Jesus Christ entrusted to His Church the perennial *making present* of the Paschal Mystery. With it He brought about a mysterious "oneness in time" between that *Triduum* and the centuries that followed.

We contemplate this thought with profound amazement and gratitude. In the paschal events and the Eucharist that makes it perennially present, there is a truly enormous "capacity" that makes all history the recipient of the grace of the Redemption.

Always, this amazement should fill the Church assembled to celebrate the Eucharist. But in a special way it should fill the ordained minister of the Eucharist, for it is he who effects the Consecration, by the authority given him in the Sacrament of priestly ordination.

It is he who says, with the power that comes to him from Christ in the Upper Room, "This is My Body Which will be given up for you; This is the cup of My Blood, poured out for you...."

It is the priest who says these words — or, rather, the priest who puts his voice at the disposal of the One Who spoke these words in the Upper Room, Who desires that they be repeated in every generation by every churchman who shares His ministerial priesthood.

6. By this Encyclical Letter, I would like to rekindle this Eucharistic "amazement" in continuity with the Jubilee heritage I have left to the Church in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* ("At the Beginning of the New Millennium") and its Marian crowning, *Rosarium*

6 See Lk 22:44.

7 Heb 9:11-12

8 Jn 12:27

9 Mt 26:40-41

Virginis Mariae ("The Rosary of the Virgin Mary").

To contemplate the face of Christ, and to contemplate it with Mary, is the "program" I have set before the Church at the dawn of the third millennium, summoning the People of God to put out into the deep with the enthusiasm of a new evangelization.

Contemplating Christ involves recognizing Him wherever He manifests Himself — in all His many forms of presence, but above all in the living Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

The Church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist: she is fed by Him and enlightened by Him. The Eucharist is both a mystery of faith and a "mystery of light."⁽³⁾ Whenever the Church celebrates it, the faithful can, in a way, relive the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him."¹⁰

7. This year, the twenty-fifth of my pontificate, I have proclaimed the Year of the Rosary, wanting to put my anniversary under the aegis of Mary in the contemplation of Christ.

From the time I began my ministry as the Successor of Peter, I have marked Holy Thursday, the day of the Eucharist and the priesthood, by a letter to priests. This year, as a way of thanking the Lord for the gift of the Eucharist and the priesthood — "gift and mystery"⁽⁴⁾ — I want to involve the whole Church more fully in that Eucharistic reflection.

Consequently, I cannot let this Holy Thursday 2003 pass without halting before the "Eucharistic Face" of Christ. From the Eucharist, the Church draws her life. From this "living Bread" she draws her nourishment. How could I not feel the need to point out to the Church, with new force, how central the Eucharist is?

8. When I think of the Eucharist and look at my life as priest, bishop, and successor of Peter, I naturally recall the many times and places in which I have celebrated 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 other basilicas and churches in Rome and throughout the world.

I have celebrated Mass in chapels built along mountain paths, on lakeshores, and on seacoasts; I have celebrated it on altars built in stadiums and in city squares.... These variations in the scenario have powerfully impressed me with its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character.

Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the altar of a humble country church, the Eucharist is always, in a way, celebrated on the altar of the world.

The Eucharist unites Heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation. The Son of God became Man to restore it all, in one supreme act of praise, to the One Who made it from nothing.

He, the eternal High Priest Who entered the eternal sanctuary by the Blood shed on His cross, thus gives all creation, redeemed, back to the Creator and Father, to the glory of the most Holy Trinity.

He does it through the priestly ministry of His Church. Truly this is the *mysterium fidei* ("the mystery of faith") accomplished in the Eucharist: that the world, which came forth from the hands of God the Creator, now returns to Him, redeemed by Christ.

9. The Eucharist is Christ's saving presence in the community of the faithful, as well as its spiritual food. As the Church's most precious possession in her journey through history, she has maintained a lively concern for it, which finds authoritative expression in the work of the councils and the Popes.

How can we not admire the doctrinal decrees "on the Most Holy Eucharist" and "on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass" promulgated by the Council of Trent? For centuries those decrees guided theology and catechesis. Indeed, they are still a dogmatic reference point for the renewal and growth of God's People in their faith and love for the Eucharist.

More recently, there are three Encyclical Letters that should be mentioned: the Encyclical *Mirae Caritatis* (on the Holy Eucharist) of Leo XIII, 28 May 1902;⁽⁵⁾ the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* (on the Sacred Liturgy) of Pius XII, 20 November 1947;⁽⁶⁾ and the Encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* ("The Mystery of Faith") of Paul VI, 3 September 1965.⁽⁷⁾

The Second Vatican Council did not devote a document wholly to the Eucharist, but considered it throughout its writings, especially in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* and the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

I myself, during my first years in the Chair of Peter, wrote the Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cenae* ("On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist," 24 February 1980),⁽⁸⁾ in which I

discussed the Eucharist and its importance for the Church. I addressed it to the world's bishops, the ministers to whom the Eucharist is entrusted.

Today I take up the thread of that argument again with even greater emotion and gratitude in my heart — echoing, as it were, the words of the psalmist: "What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord."¹¹

10. The Magisterium's commitment to proclaiming the Eucharistic Mystery has been matched by growth within the Christian community. Certainly the liturgical reform inaugurated by the Second Vatican Council has contributed greatly to a more conscious, active, and fruitful participation by the faithful in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar.

In many places, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament — an inexhaustible source of holiness — is also an important daily practice. The faithful's devout participation in the Eucharistic procession on the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ [*Corpus Christi*] is a yearly source of joy. I could also mention other signs of Eucharistic faith and love.

Unfortunately, besides these lights, there are also shadows. In some places, Eucharistic adoration has been almost completely abandoned. In various places, there have been abuses, leading to confusion about sound faith and Catholic doctrine concerning this Sacrament.

At times, the Eucharistic Mystery is stripped of its sacrificial meaning and celebrated as if it were simply a fraternal banquet. The necessity of the ministerial priesthood, grounded in apostolic succession, is obscured and the sacramental nature of the Eucharist thought of as merely a form of proclamation. Here and there, ecumenical initiatives have been undertaken which, although well intentioned, include practices contrary to the discipline by which the Church expresses her faith.

How can we not express profound grief at all these abuses? The Eucharist is too great a gift for us to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation.

I hope that this Encyclical Letter will help to banish these dark clouds of false doctrine and unacceptable practice, so that the Eucharist will continue to shine forth in all its radiant mystery.

CHAPTER ONE: THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

11. "The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed,"¹² instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and His Blood.

These words of the Apostle Paul take us back dramatically to the setting in which the Eucharist was instituted. The Eucharist is indelibly marked by the events of the Lord's Passion and death. It not only reminds us of those events, but also sacramentally re-presents them: it is the sacrifice of the cross perpetuated down the ages.⁽⁹⁾

In the Latin rite, the assembly expresses this truth in its response to the priest's proclamation of the "Mystery of Faith": "We announce Your death, O Lord."

The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one precious gift among others, but as His gift *par excellence*, for it is the gift of Himself — His Person in His sacred Humanity — as well as the gift of His saving work.

Nor is it a gift confined to the past, for "all that Christ is — all that He did and suffered for all men — participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all time."⁽¹⁰⁾ When the Church celebrates the Eucharist — the memorial of her Lord's death and Resurrection — the central events of our salvation become really present, and "the work of our redemption is carried out."⁽¹¹⁾

This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ did not return to the Father until He had left us a way of sharing in it as if we had been present. Thus each member of the faithful can take part in it and gain its fruits inexhaustibly.

This is the faith in which all generations of Christians have lived. The Church's Magisterium has constantly reaffirmed it with joyful gratitude.⁽¹²⁾ I wish once more to recall it and to join you, my dear brothers and sisters, in adoration before this great mystery of mercy.

What more could Jesus have done for us? Truly, in the Eucharist, He shows us a love that goes "to the end,"¹³ without limits.

¹¹ Ps 116:12-13

¹² 1 Cor 11:23

¹³ See Jn 13:1.

12. The words of our Saviour Himself testify to this truth.

In instituting the Eucharist, Jesus 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."¹⁴

He did not simply state that He was giving them His Body to eat and His Blood to drink: He also expressed the sacrificial meaning of what He was doing. Moreover, He made His sacrifice — soon to culminate on the cross for the salvation of all — present sacramentally.

"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."⁽¹³⁾

The Church draws her life from this redeeming sacrifice continuously. She approaches the sacrifice not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since it is always made present — sacramentally perpetuated — in every community that offers it at the hands of a consecrated minister.

Thus the Eucharist applies to men and women today the reconciliation Christ won once for mankind in every age. "The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice."⁽¹⁴⁾

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."⁽¹⁵⁾

The Mass makes present the sacrifice of the cross; it does not add to that sacrifice, nor does it multiply it.⁽¹⁶⁾ What is repeated is its memorial celebration, its "commemorative representation" (*memorialis demonstratio*),⁽¹⁷⁾ which makes Christ's one, definitive redemptive sacrifice present throughout time.

The sacrificial nature of the Eucharistic Mystery, therefore, cannot be understood as something separate, independent of the cross, or with only an indirect reference to the sacrifice of Calvary.

13. By virtue of its close relationship to the sacrifice of Golgotha, the Eucharist is a sacrifice in the strict sense, not just in a general way, as if it were simply a matter of Christ's offering Himself to the faithful as their spiritual food.

Certainly, His love and obedience to the point of death¹⁵ are given for our sake, and indeed that of all humanity.¹⁶ However, in the first place, they are a gift to His Father: "a sacrifice that the Father accepted, giving, in return for this total Self-giving by His Son — Who 'became obedient unto death'¹⁷ — His own paternal gift; that is to say, the grant of new immortal life in the Resurrection."⁽¹⁸⁾

In giving His sacrifice to the Church, Christ also made her spiritual sacrifice His own: the Church is called to offer herself in union with the sacrifice of Christ. "Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the source and summit of the whole Christian life, [the faithful] offer the divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with it."⁽¹⁹⁾

14. Christ's Passover includes not only His Passion and death, but also His Resurrection, as the assembly recalls in the acclamation after the Consecration: "We proclaim Your Resurrection."

The Eucharistic sacrifice makes present not only the Saviour's Passion and death, but also His Resurrection, which crowned His sacrifice. It is as the living and risen One that Christ becomes, in the Eucharist, the "Bread of life,"¹⁸ the "living Bread."¹⁹

Saint Ambrose reminded the newly initiated that the Eucharist makes the Resurrection present in their lives: "Today Christ is yours, yet each day He rises again for you."⁽²⁰⁾

Saint Cyril of Alexandria also makes it clear that sharing in the sacred mysteries "is a true confession [or profession] and a remembrance that the Lord died and returned to life for us and on our behalf."⁽²¹⁾

15. In the Mass, the sacramental re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice, crowned by the Resurrection, involves a most special presence which — in the words of Paul VI — "is called 'real,' not as a way of excluding all other types of presence as if they were 'not real,' but because it is a presence in the fullest sense: a substantial presence whereby Christ, the God-Man, is wholly and entirely present."⁽²²⁾

14 Lk 22:19-20

15 See Jn 10:17-18.

16 See Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; Jn 10:15.

17 Phil 2:8

18 Jn 6:35,48

19 Jn 6:51

Thus he repeats the perennially valid teaching of the Council of Trent: "The consecration of the bread and wine effects the change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the Body of Christ our Lord, and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His Blood. And the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called this change transubstantiation."⁽²³⁾

Truly the Eucharist is a *mysterium fidei* ("mystery of faith"), a mystery that surpasses our understanding and can be received only in faith, as the Church Fathers often brought out in their catecheses on this divine Sacrament: "Do not see" — Saint Cyril of Jerusalem exhorts — "in the bread and wine merely natural elements, because the Lord has expressly said that they are His Body and His Blood: faith assures you of this, though your senses suggest otherwise."⁽²⁴⁾

With the Angelic Doctor,²⁰ we continue to sing *Adoro te devote, latens Deitas* ("I adore You, hidden Godhead"). Before this mystery of love, human reason experiences its limitations fully. We can understand how, down the centuries, it has stimulated theologians to try to understand it ever more deeply.

These are praiseworthy efforts, which are helpful and insightful to the extent that they join critical thinking to the "living faith" of the Church, grasped especially by the Magisterium's "sure charism of truth" and the "intimate sense of spiritual realities"⁽²⁵⁾ attained above all by the saints.

The boundary indicated by Paul VI remains: "Every theological explanation that seeks some understanding of this mystery, in order to be in accord with Catholic faith, must firmly maintain that in objective reality, independently of our mind, the bread and wine have ceased to exist after the Consecration, so that the adorable Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus from that moment on are really before us under the sacramental species of bread and wine."⁽²⁶⁾

16. The saving efficacy of the sacrifice is fully realized when we receive the Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

The Eucharistic Sacrifice is intrinsically directed to this union of the faithful with Christ. We receive the very One Who offered Himself for us; we receive the Body He gave up for us on the cross and the Blood He "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."²¹

Jesus Himself reassures us that this union, which He compares to that of the life of the Trinity, is truly realized. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me will live because of Me."²²

The Eucharist is a true banquet, in which Jesus offers Himself as our nourishment. When He spoke of this Food for the first time, His listeners were astonished and bewildered, forcing Him to emphasize the objective truth of His words: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no life within you."²³ This food is not merely metaphorical: "My Flesh is Food indeed, and My Blood is Drink indeed."²⁴

17. Through our communion in His Body and Blood, Christ also grants us His Spirit.

"He called the bread His living Body and He filled it with Himself and His Spirit," Saint Ephrem wrote. "He who eats it with faith, eats Fire and Spirit... Take and eat this, all of you, and eat with it the Holy Spirit. For it is truly My Body, and whoever eats it will have eternal life."⁽²⁷⁾

The Church implores this divine Gift — the source of every other gift — in the Eucharistic *epiclesis*.²⁵

In the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, for example, we pray: "We beseech, implore, and beg You: send Your Holy Spirit upon us all and upon these gifts ... that those who partake of them may be purified in soul, receive the forgiveness of their sins, and share in the Holy Spirit."⁽²⁸⁾

And in the Roman Missal, the celebrant prays: "Grant that we who are nourished by His Body and Blood may be filled with His Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ."⁽²⁹⁾

Thus, by the gift of His Body and Blood, Christ increases within us the gift of His Spirit, already poured out in Baptism and bestowed as a "seal" in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

18. The acclamation of the assembly after the Consecration ends appropriately by expressing the

20 Saint Thomas Aquinas

21 Mt 26:28

22 Jn 6:57

23 Jn 6:53

24 Jn 6:55

25 A prayer before the Consecration of the Mass which calls down the Holy Spirit.

Eucharist's eschatological²⁶ thrust:²⁷ "until You come in glory."

The Eucharist points to the goal; in a way, it is a foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ,²⁸ the anticipation of Heaven, the "pledge of future glory."⁽³⁰⁾

In the Eucharist, everything speaks of confident waiting "in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ."⁽³¹⁾ However, those who feed on Christ need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life: they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness that will embrace man in his totality. For in the Eucharist we receive a pledge of our bodily resurrection at the end of the world: "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."²⁹

This pledge comes from the fact that the Flesh of the Son of Man, given as food, is His Body in its glorious state after the Resurrection. With the Eucharist we digest, as it were, the "secret" of the Resurrection.

For this reason Saint Ignatius of Antioch rightly defined the Eucharistic Bread as "a medicine of immortality, an antidote to death."⁽³²⁾

19. The eschatological tension inherent in the Eucharist expresses and reinforces our communion with the Church in Heaven. It is not by chance that the Eastern *Anaphoras*³⁰ and the Latin Eucharistic Prayers honour Mary, the ever-virgin mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God, the angels, the holy apostles, the glorious martyrs, and all the saints.

This is an aspect of the Eucharist that merits greater attention: in celebrating the sacrifice of the Lamb, we are united to the heavenly "Liturgy" and become part of that great multitude, which cries out: "Salvation belongs to our God Who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"³¹

The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of Heaven on earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem, which pierces the clouds of our history and lights up our journey.

20. The eschatological tension of the Eucharist spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us.

Certainly the Christian vision leads to the expectation of "new heavens" and "a new earth,"³² but this increases, rather than lessens, our sense of responsibility for the world today.⁽³³⁾

At the beginning of the new millennium, I wish to reaffirm this forcefully, so that Christians will feel more obliged than ever not to neglect their duties as citizens of this world. They have the task of contributing — in the light of the Gospel — to the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God's plan.

Many problems darken our horizon, giving rise to many tasks. There is an urgent need to work for peace, to base relationships between peoples on solid premises of justice and solidarity, and to defend human life from conception to its natural end.

And what should we say of the thousand inconsistencies of a "globalized" world where the weakest, the most powerless, and the poorest appear to have so little hope? It is in this world that Christian hope must shine forth! For this reason, too, the Lord wished to remain with us in the Eucharist, making His presence in meal and sacrifice the promise of a humanity renewed by His love.

Significantly, in their account of the Last Supper, the Synoptics³³ recount the institution of the Eucharist, while John relates the "washing of the feet," exposing its profound meaning: that Jesus is the Teacher of communion and service.³⁴ For his part, the apostle Paul says that it is "unworthy" of a Christian community to partake of the Lord's Supper amid division and indifference to the poor.³⁵ ⁽³⁴⁾

All who take part in the Eucharist, proclaiming the death of the Lord "until He comes,"³⁶ must be committed to changing their lives and making them, in a way, completely "Eucharistic."

It is this fruit — a transfigured existence and a transformation of the world in accordance with the Gospel — that splendidly illustrates the eschatological tension in the celebration of the Eucharist and the Christian life as a whole: "Come, Lord Jesus!"³⁷

26 Concerning the end of the world.

27 See 1 Cor 11:26.

28 See Jn 15:11.

29 Jn 6:54

30 Corresponding to the Latin-rite Eucharistic Prayers.

31 Rv 7:10

32 Rv 21:1

33 The evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke, whose Gospels are similar.

34 See Jn 13:1-20.

35 See 1 Cor 11:17-22,27-34.

36 1 Cor 11:26

37 Rv 22:20

CHAPTER TWO: THE EUCHARIST BUILDS THE CHURCH

21. The Second Vatican Council teaches that the celebration of the Eucharist is at the centre of the Church's growth.

The Council states that "the Church, as the Kingdom of Christ already present in mystery, grows visibly in the world through the power of God."³⁵ Then, as if in answer to the question: "How does the Church grow?" it adds: "As often as the sacrifice of the cross, by which 'Christ our Pasch is sacrificed,'³⁸ is celebrated on the altar, the work of our Redemption is carried out. At the same time, in the Sacrament of the Eucharistic Bread, the unity of the faithful, who form one Body in Christ,³⁹ is both expressed and brought about."³⁶

The influence of the Eucharist is present in the Church's very origins. The evangelists say specifically that it was "the twelve" — the apostles — who gathered with Jesus at the Last Supper.⁴⁰ This is an important detail, for the apostles "were both the seeds of the new Israel and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy."³⁷

By offering them His Body and Blood as food, Christ mysteriously involved them in the sacrifice that was completed on Calvary. In a close analogy with the Covenant of Mount Sinai, sealed by sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood,³⁸ the actions and words of Jesus at the Last Supper laid the foundations of the new messianic community, the People of the New Covenant.

In the Upper Room, the apostles accepted Jesus' invitation: "Take, eat"; "Drink of it, all of you."⁴¹ Thus, for the first time, they entered into sacramental communion with Him. From that time on, until the end of the age, the Church is built up through sacramental communion with the Son of God, Who was sacrificed for our sake: "Do this in remembrance of Me.... Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."⁴²

22. Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic sacrifice, especially by the full sharing that takes place in sacramental Communion.

We can say that in Communion, not only does each of us receive Christ, but also Christ receives each of us. He enters into friendship with us: "You are My friends."⁴³ It is because of this Communion that we have [supernatural] life:⁴⁴ "He who eats Me will live because of Me."⁴⁵ Eucharistic Communion brings about in a sublime way the mutual "abiding" of Christ and each of His followers: "Abide in Me, and I in you."⁴⁶

By its union with Christ, the People of the New Covenant, far from closing in upon itself, becomes a "sacrament" for humanity,³⁹ a sign and instrument of the salvation achieved by Christ. The Church becomes the light of the world and the salt of the earth⁴⁷ for the redemption of all.⁴⁰

The Church's mission continues the mission of Christ: "As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you."⁴⁸ The Church draws the spiritual power to carry out this mission from the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the cross and her communion with the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is thus both the source and the summit of all evangelization, since its goal is the communion of mankind with Christ and, in Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit.⁴¹

23. Eucharistic Communion also confirms the Church in her unity as the Body of Christ.

Saint Paul refers to this unifying power when he writes to the Corinthians: "The Bread Which we break — is it not a communion in the Body of Christ? Because there is one Bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one Bread."⁴⁹

Saint John Chrysostom's commentary on these words is profound and perceptive: "For what is the Bread? It is the Body of Christ. And what do those who receive it become? The Body of Christ — not many bodies but one Body. For as bread is completely one, though made of up

38 1 Cor 5:7

39 See 1 Cor 10:17.

40 See Mt 26:20; Mk 14:17; Lk 22:14.

41 Mt 26:26-27

42 1 Cor 11:24-25; see Lk 22:19.

43 Jn 15:14

44 What we have called *Zoë*.

45 Jn 6:57

46 Jn 15:4

47 See Mt 5:13-16.

48 Jn 20:21

49 1 Cor 10:16-17

many grains of wheat, and these, although unseen, remain nonetheless present, in such a way that their difference is not apparent because they have been made a perfect whole — so too we are mutually joined to one another and together united with Christ."⁴²

The argument is compelling: our union with Christ, which is a grace for each of us individually, makes it possible for us, in Him, to share in the unity of His Body, which is the Church. The Eucharist reinforces our incorporation into Christ, which took place in our Baptism through the gift of the Spirit.⁵⁰

The joint and inseparable activity of the Son and the Holy Spirit — present in the origin, consolidation, and continued life of the Church — is at work in the Eucharist.

This was clearly evident to the author of the Liturgy of Saint James: in the *epiclesis* of the *Anaphora*,⁵¹ God the Father is asked to send the Holy Spirit upon the faithful and upon the offerings, so that the Body and Blood of Christ "may be a help to all those who partake of it ... for the sanctification of their souls and bodies."⁴³

The Church is fortified by the divine Paraclete through the sanctification of the faithful in the Eucharist.

24. The gift of Christ and His Spirit that we receive in Eucharistic Communion superabundantly fulfils the yearning for fraternal unity that is so deeply rooted in the human heart; at the same time it elevates the experience of fraternity already present in our sharing at the same Eucharistic table, to a degree which far surpasses that of the simple human experience of sharing a meal.

Through our Communion with the Body of Christ, the Church has "the nature of a sacrament; that is, a sign and instrument of intimate unity with God and of the unity of the whole human race."⁴⁴

The seeds of disunity, which daily experience shows to be so deeply rooted in humanity as a result of sin, are countered by the unifying power of the Body of Christ. By building up the Church, the Eucharist creates human community.

25. The worship of the Eucharist outside the Mass is of inestimable value for the life of the Church.

This worship is strictly linked to the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice. The presence of Christ under the sacred species reserved after Mass — a presence which lasts as long as the species of bread and wine remain⁴⁵ — derives from the celebration of the sacrifice and is directed toward communion, both sacramental and spiritual.⁴⁶

It is the responsibility of pastors to encourage, by word and witness, the practice of Eucharistic adoration: that is, adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species,⁴⁷ particularly when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

It is pleasant to spend time with Him, to lie close to His breast like the beloved disciple,⁵² and to feel the infinite love present in His heart.

Christians in our time must be distinguished above all by the "art of prayer."⁴⁸ How can we not feel a renewed need to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Sacrament?

How often, dear brother and sisters, have I drawn from this Sacrament strength, consolation, and support! Eucharistic adoration, repeatedly praised and recommended by the Magisterium,⁴⁹ is endorsed by the example of many saints.

Particularly outstanding in this practice was Saint Alphonsus Liguori, who wrote: "Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the [other] Sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us."⁵⁰

The Eucharist is a priceless treasure. Not only by celebrating it, but also by praying before it outside Mass, we make contact with the very wellspring of grace.

A Christian community that desires to contemplate the Face of Christ in the spirit I proposed in the Apostolic Letters *Novo Millennio Ineunte* ("At the Beginning of the New Millennium") and *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* ("The Rosary of the Virgin Mary") cannot fail to persevere in Eucharistic worship, which prolongs and increases the fruits of our communion in the Body and Blood of the Lord.

⁵⁰ See 1 Cor 12:13,27.

⁵¹ The Eastern-rite name for the Eucharistic Prayer.

⁵² John. See Jn 13:25.

CHAPTER THREE: THE APOSTOLICITY OF THE EUCHARIST AND THE CHURCH

26. If, as I have said, the Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist, it follows that there is a profound relationship between the two, so much so that we can apply to the Eucharistic mystery the words of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed,⁵³ in which we profess the Church to be "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."

The Eucharist, too, is one and catholic. It is also holy; indeed, it is the most holy Sacrament. But now we must consider how it is apostolic.

27. In explaining how the Church is apostolic — founded on the apostles — the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sees three meanings in this expression.

First, the Church "was and remains built on 'the foundation of the apostles,'⁵⁴ the witnesses chosen and sent on mission by Christ Himself."⁽⁵¹⁾

The Eucharist, too, has its foundation in the apostles. Certainly, it originated in Christ Himself, but He entrusted it to the apostles, who handed it down to their successors and thence to us. Through the centuries, the Church has celebrated the Eucharist in obedience to the Lord's command, in continuity with the practice of the apostles.

The second sense in which the Church is apostolic, the *Catechism* points out, is that "with the help of the Spirit dwelling in her, the Church keeps and hands on the teaching, the 'good deposit,' the salutary words she has heard from the apostles."⁽⁵²⁾

The Eucharist, too, is apostolic, for it is celebrated in conformity with the faith of the apostles. At various times in her two-thousand-year history, the Church's Magisterium has defined her teaching on the Eucharist more precisely — for example, its proper terminology — in order to safeguard the apostolic faith with respect to this sublime mystery. This faith remains unchanged, and it is essential for the Church that it remain unchanged.

28. Lastly, the Church is apostolic in the sense that she "continues to be taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles until Christ's return, through their successors in pastoral office: the College of Bishops assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the Church's supreme pastor."⁽⁵³⁾

Apostolic succession — essential to the Church's nature — necessarily entails the Sacrament of Holy Orders: that is, the uninterrupted sequence, from the very beginning, of valid episcopal ordinations.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The Eucharist, too, is apostolic, for, although "the faithful join in the offering of the Eucharist by virtue of their royal priesthood,"⁽⁵⁵⁾ it is nevertheless the ordained priest who, "acting in the Person of Christ, brings about the Eucharistic Sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people."⁽⁵⁶⁾

For this reason, the Roman Missal prescribes that only the priest should recite the Eucharistic Prayer, while the people participate in faith and silence.⁽⁵⁷⁾

29. "The ministerial priest, acting *in the Person of Christ*, brings about the Eucharistic sacrifice."⁽⁵⁸⁾ The expression in italics, repeatedly employed by the Second Vatican Council, was firmly rooted in papal teaching from the very beginning.⁽⁵⁹⁾

As I have pointed out on other occasions, acting *in Persona Christi* ("in the Person of Christ") "means more than offering 'in the name of' or 'in the place of' Christ. *In Persona* means *in specific sacramental identification* "with the eternal High Priest Who is the Author and principal Subject of this sacrifice — a sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take His place."⁽⁶⁰⁾

In the economy of salvation — chosen by Christ — the ministry of ordained priests makes it clear that the Eucharist they celebrate is a gift radically transcending the power of the assembly. It is not the assembly, but their priestly ministry, that validly links the Eucharistic Consecration to the sacrifice of the cross and the Last Supper. If the assembly gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist is to be truly Eucharistic, it absolutely requires the presence of an ordained priest as its president.

But, by itself, the community is incapable of providing an ordained minister. The minister is a gift that the assembly receives through episcopal succession going back to the apostles. It is the bishop who makes a new presbyter,⁵⁵ through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, conferring upon him the power to consecrate the Eucharist. Consequently, "the Eucharistic mystery cannot be celebrated in any community except by an ordained priest, as the Fourth Lateran Council expressly taught."⁽⁶¹⁾

53 Creed said at Mass, usually called simply "Nicene."

54 Eph 2:20

55 That is, a priest.

30. In recent decades, the Catholic Church's teaching on the Eucharist and its relationship to priestly ministry has been the subject of a fruitful ecumenical dialogue. Thanks to the Blessed Trinity, there has been significant progress and convergence, which lead us to hope for a full sharing of faith in the future.

Nonetheless, the Council's observations about the "ecclesial communities separated from us," which arose in the West from the sixteenth century onward, remain fully pertinent:

"When they commemorate the Lord's death and Resurrection in the Holy Supper, they profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and they await His coming in glory." However, they "lack that fullness of unity with us which should flow from Baptism, and we believe that, especially because of the lack of the Sacrament of Orders, they have not preserved the genuine and total reality of the Eucharistic mystery."(62)

The Catholic faithful, therefore, while respecting the religious convictions of their separated brethren, must refrain from receiving the communion distributed in their celebrations, so as not to condone an ambiguity about the nature of the Eucharist. If they did, they would fail in their duty to bear clear witness to the truth and slow the progress being made toward full visible unity.

Similarly, it is unthinkable to replace Sunday Mass with ecumenical celebrations of the word or services of common prayer with Christians from the aforementioned ecclesial communities, or even to participate in their liturgical services. Such celebrations and services prepare us for full communion, including Eucharistic communion, but they cannot replace it, however praiseworthy they may be in certain situations.

The fact that the power of consecrating the Eucharist has been entrusted to bishops and priests alone does not in any way belittle the rest of the People of God, for in the communion of the one Body of Christ which is the Church, the gift of this power redounds to the benefit of all.

31. The Eucharist — the centre and summit of the Church's life — is likewise the centre and summit of priestly ministry.

For this reason, with a heart filled with gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ, I repeat that the Eucharist "is the principal and central *raison d'être* of the Sacrament of priesthood,⁵⁶ which effectively came into being at the moment of the institution of the Eucharist."(63)

Priests engage in a wide variety of pastoral activities. If we consider the social and cultural conditions of the modern world, we can understand how they face a very real risk of losing their focus.

The Second Vatican Council saw pastoral charity as the bond that gives unity to a priest's life and work. This bond, the Council adds, "flows mainly from the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is therefore the centre and root of the whole priestly life."(64)

We can understand, then, how important it is for the spiritual life of the priest — as well as the good of the Church and the world — that priests follow the Council's recommendation to celebrate the Eucharist daily: "For even if the faithful are unable to be present, it is an act of Christ and the Church."(65)

In this way, priests will be able to counteract the daily tensions which blur their focus. They will find in the Eucharistic sacrifice — the true centre of their lives and ministry — the spiritual strength they need to shoulder their various pastoral responsibilities. Their daily activity will become truly Eucharistic.

If the Eucharist is central in the life and ministry of priests, it must also be central in the pastoral promotion of priestly vocations. It is in the Eucharist that prayer for vocations is most closely united to the prayer of Christ the eternal High Priest.

The diligence of priests in carrying out their Eucharistic ministry — together with the conscious, active, and fruitful participation of the faithful in the Eucharist — provides young men with a powerful example and an incentive to respond generously to God's call. Often it is the example of a priest's fervent pastoral charity that the Lord uses to sow and bring to fruition the seed of a priestly calling in a young man's heart.

32. All of this shows how distressing and irregular it is when a Christian community does not have a priest to lead it, despite having sufficient numbers to form a parish.

Parishes are communities of the baptized who express and affirm their identity above all through the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice. But this requires the presence of a presbyter,⁵⁷ the only one qualified to offer the Eucharist *in Persona Christi* ("in the Person of

56 Purpose; that which accounts for Christ's institution of the priesthood. French for "reason of being."

57 That is, a priest.

Christ").

When a community lacks a priest, it rightly attempts to remedy the situation so that it can continue its Sunday celebrations, and religious and laity who lead their brothers and sisters in prayer exercise the common priesthood of all the faithful — based on the grace of Baptism — in a praiseworthy way. But such solutions must be considered merely temporary, while the community awaits a priest.

The sacramental incompleteness of these celebrations should, above all, inspire the whole community to pray with greater fervour that the Lord will send labourers into His harvest.⁵⁸ It should also be an incentive for the community to mobilize the resources needed to promote vocations to the priesthood pastorally, without lowering the standards that priesthood candidates must meet.

33. When non-ordained members of the faithful share in the pastoral care of a parish because of the scarcity of priests, they should bear in mind that "no Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and centre in the celebration of the most holy Eucharist,"(66) as the Second Vatican Council teaches.

Non-ordained leaders, therefore, have a responsibility to keep alive in the community a genuine "hunger" for the Eucharist, so that no opportunity for the celebration of Mass will ever be missed, and that every advantage will be taken of the presence of a priest who is not impeded by Church law from celebrating Mass.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EUCHARIST AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

34. The Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1985 saw "ecclesiology of communion" as the central and fundamental idea of the Second Vatican Council documents.(67)

During her earthly pilgrimage, the Church is called to maintain and promote communion with the Triune God⁵⁹ and communion among the faithful. For this purpose, she possesses the word and the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, by which she "constantly lives and grows"(68) and in which she expresses her very nature. It is not by chance that the term "communion" has become one of the names given to this sublime Sacrament.

The Eucharist is the culmination of all the Sacraments in perfecting our communion with God the Father by identification with His only begotten Son through the working of the Holy Spirit.

With discerning faith, a distinguished writer of the Byzantine tradition said that in the Eucharist, "unlike any other Sacrament, the mystery [of communion] is so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing; here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins Himself to us in the most perfect union."(69)

For this reason, it is good to cultivate in our hearts a constant desire for the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This was the origin of the practice of "spiritual communion," a practice that has happily been established in the Church for centuries and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life.

Saint Teresa of Jesus wrote: "When you do not receive Communion and you do not attend Mass, you can make a spiritual communion, which is a most beneficial practice; by it the love of God will be greatly impressed on you."(70)

35. However, the celebration of the Eucharist cannot be [merely] the starting-point for communion; it presupposes that communion already exists, a communion that it consolidates and brings to perfection.

As an expression of this bond of communion, the Sacrament has two dimensions. In its invisible dimension, it unites us to the Father and among ourselves, in Christ and through the working of the Holy Spirit. In its visible dimension, it entails communion in the teaching of the apostles, in the Sacraments, and in the Church's hierarchical order.

The profound relationship between the invisible and the visible elements of ecclesial communion makes the Church the *sacrament of salvation*.(71) Only in the Church can there be legitimate celebration of the Eucharist and true participation in it. Consequently, it is an intrinsic requirement of the Eucharist that it be celebrated in communion, keeping the various bonds of that communion intact.

58 See Mt 9:38.

59 The Holy Trinity, "Three in One."

36. Invisible communion is, by its nature, always growing, but it presupposes the life of grace — by which we become "partakers of the divine nature"⁶⁰ — and the virtues of faith, hope and love. Only in this way do we have true communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

However, faith is not sufficient; we must also persevere in sanctifying grace and love, remaining within the Church "bodily" as well as "in our heart."⁽⁷²⁾ What is required, in the words of Saint Paul, is "faith working through love."⁶¹

Keeping these invisible bonds intact is the moral duty of every Christian who wishes to participate fully in the Eucharist by receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.

The apostle Paul warned of this duty when he said, "Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the Bread and drink of the Cup."⁶²

Similarly, Saint John Chrysostom exhorted the faithful with his stirring eloquence: "I, too, raise my voice; I beseech, beg and implore that no one draw near to this sacred table with a sullied and corrupt conscience. Such an act, in fact, can never be called 'communion,' not even were we to touch the Lord's Body a thousand times over, but [must be called] 'condemnation,' 'torment,' and 'increase of punishment.'"⁽⁷³⁾

Along the same lines, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* rightly stipulates that "anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to Communion."⁽⁷⁴⁾

I desire to reaffirm, therefore, that in the Church there remains in force, now and in the future, the rule by which the Council of Trent gave concrete expression to the apostle Paul's stern warning: that, in order to receive the Eucharist in a worthy manner, "one must first confess one's sins, when one is aware of mortal sin."⁽⁷⁵⁾

37. The two Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance are very closely connected.

Because the Eucharist makes present the redeeming sacrifice of the cross, perpetuating it sacramentally, it naturally points to the need for continuous conversion, a personal response to the appeal made by Saint Paul to the Christians of Corinth: "We beseech you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."⁶³ If a Christian's conscience is burdened by serious sin, then the path of penance through the Sacrament of Reconciliation is necessary for full participation in the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Obviously, only the person involved can judge his state of grace, since only he can judge his conscience.

However, in cases where outward conduct is seriously, clearly, and steadfastly contrary to the moral norm, the Church, in her pastoral concern for the good order of the community and out of respect for the Sacrament, cannot fail to feel directly involved.

The Code of Canon Law refers to this situation — an obvious lack of proper moral disposition — when it states that those who "obstinately persist in manifest grave sin" are not to be admitted to Eucharistic communion.⁽⁷⁶⁾

38. Ecclesial communion, as I have said, is also visible, and finds expression in the series of "bonds" listed by the Council: "They are fully incorporated into the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her whole structure and all the means of salvation established within her, and within her visible framework are united to Christ, Who governs her through the supreme pontiff and the bishops, by the bonds of profession of faith, the Sacraments, ecclesiastical government, and communion."⁽⁷⁷⁾

As the supreme sacramental manifestation of communion in the Church, the Eucharist demands to be celebrated in a context where the outward bonds of communion are intact, as well as the inward.

The Eucharist is, "as it were, the summit of the spiritual life and the goal of all the Sacraments,"⁽⁷⁸⁾ so it requires in a special way that the bonds of communion in the Sacraments, particularly in Baptism and priestly orders, be real.

It is not possible to give communion to a person who is not baptized or who rejects the full truth of the faith about the Eucharistic mystery. Christ is the truth and He bears witness to the truth;⁶⁴ the Sacrament of His Body and Blood does not permit duplicity.

39. Furthermore, given the very nature of ecclesial communion and its relation to the Sacrament

60 2 Pet 1:4

61 Gal 5:6

62 1 Cor 11:28

63 2 Cor 5:20

64 See Jn 14:6, 18:37.

of the Eucharist, it must be recalled that "the Eucharistic sacrifice, while always offered in a particular community, is never a celebration of that community alone. In fact, in receiving the Eucharistic presence of the Lord, the community receives the entire gift of salvation and shows — even in its own lasting, visible, particular form — that it is the image and true presence of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church."(79)

From this it follows that a truly Eucharistic community cannot be closed in upon itself, as though it were somehow self-sufficient; rather it must persevere in harmony with every other Catholic community.

The ecclesial communion of the Eucharistic assembly is a communion with its own bishop and with the Roman pontiff. In effect, the bishop is the visible principle and the foundation of unity within his particular Church.(80) It would therefore be a great contradiction to celebrate the Eucharist — the Sacrament *par excellence* of the Church's unity — without true communion with the bishop.

As Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote: "That Eucharist that is celebrated under the bishop, or under one to whom the bishop has given this charge, may be considered certain."(81)

Likewise, since "the Roman pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity of the bishops and of the multitude of the faithful,"(82) communion with him is intrinsic to the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

This is the great truth that the Liturgy expresses in a variety of ways: "Every celebration of the Eucharist is performed in union not only with the proper bishop, but also with the Pope, with the episcopal order, with all the clergy, and with the entire people. Every valid celebration of the Eucharist expresses this universal communion with Peter and with the whole Church — or, objectively, calls for it, as in the Christian churches separated from Rome."(83)

40. The Eucharist creates communion and fosters communion. Saint Paul wrote to the faithful of Corinth explaining how their divisions, reflected in their Eucharistic gatherings, contradicted what they were celebrating — the Lord's Supper. The apostle⁶⁵ then urged them to reflect on the true reality of the Eucharist in order to return to the spirit of fraternal communion.⁶⁶

Saint Augustine, after recalling the apostle's⁶⁷ words, "You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it,"⁶⁸ effectively echoed this call: "If you are His Body and members of Him, then you will find set on the Lord's table your own mystery. Yes, you receive your own mystery."(84)

And from this observation he concluded: "Christ the Lord ... hallowed at His table the mystery of our peace and unity. Whoever receives the mystery of unity without preserving the bonds of peace receives not a mystery for his benefit, but evidence against himself."(85)

41. The Eucharist's particular effectiveness in promoting communion is one of the reasons why Sunday Mass is important.

In my Apostolic Letter on the sanctification of Sunday *Dies Domini* ("The Lord's Day"),(86) I dwelt on this and other reasons that make Sunday Mass fundamental for the life of the Church and of individual believers. There I recalled that the faithful have the obligation to attend Mass, unless they are seriously impeded, and that pastors have the corresponding duty to see that it is practical and possible for everyone to fulfil this precept.(87)

More recently, in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* ("At the Beginning of the New Millennium"), I set forth the pastoral path which the Church must take at the beginning of the third millennium with respect to the Sunday Eucharist, emphasizing its effectiveness for building communion.

"It is the privileged place where communion is ceaselessly proclaimed and nurtured," I wrote. "Through sharing in the Eucharist, the Lord's Day also becomes the Day of the Church, when she can effectively exercise her role as the sacrament of unity."(88)

42. The safeguarding and promotion of ecclesial communion is a task of each member of the faithful, for the Eucharist, as the sacrament of the Church's unity, is an area of special concern. More specifically, however, it is the responsibility of the Church's pastors, each according to his rank and ecclesiastical office.

For this reason the Church has drawn up norms that both foster the frequent and fruitful access of the faithful to the Eucharistic table and determine objectively the conditions under which Communion may not be given. The care with which these norms are promoted and

65 Saint Paul.

66 See 1 Cor 11:17-34.

67 Saint Paul's.

68 1 Cor 12:27

faithfully observed is a practical way of showing love for the Eucharist and the Church.

43. In considering the Eucharist as the Sacrament of ecclesial communion, there is one subject which, because of its importance, I must not overlook: the relationship of the Eucharist to ecumenical activity.

We should all thank the Blessed Trinity for the many faithful throughout the world who have felt an ardent desire for unity among Christians. The Second Vatican Council, at the beginning of its Decree on Ecumenism, saw this desire as a special gift of God.(89) It was an efficacious grace that inspired us all to set forth on the path of ecumenism: both the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church and our brothers and sisters from other churches and ecclesial communities.

Our longing for unity prompts us to turn to the Eucharist, which, as the supreme Sacrament of the unity of the People of God, is the apt expression and the unsurpassable source of that unity.(90)

In the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the Church prays that God, the Father of mercies, will grant His children the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that they may become one Body and one Spirit in Christ.(91) In raising this prayer to the Father of lights, from Whom comes every good endowment and every perfect gift,⁶⁹ the Church believes that she will be heard, for she prays in union with Christ her Head and Spouse, Who takes up the plea of His Bride and joins it to that of His own redemptive sacrifice.

44. The Church's unity — which the Eucharist brings about through the Lord's sacrifice by communion in His Body and Blood — absolutely requires full communion in the bonds of the profession of faith, the Sacraments, and ecclesiastical governance. Accordingly, it will not be possible to celebrate the same Eucharistic liturgy together until those bonds have been fully re-established.

Any such concelebration would be an invalid way of attaining full communion. Indeed, it might well prove to be an obstacle, by weakening the sense of how far we are from this goal and by introducing or exacerbating ambiguities with respect to one truth of the faith or another. Only in truth can the path toward full unity be undertaken.

In this area, the prohibitions of Church law leave no room for uncertainty,(92) for they are faithful to the moral norms laid down by the Second Vatican Council.(93)

Nonetheless, I would like to reaffirm what I said in my Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint* ("That They All May Be One") after acknowledging the impossibility of Eucharistic sharing: "And yet we do have a burning desire to join in celebrating the one Eucharist of the Lord, and this desire itself is already a common prayer of praise, a single supplication. Together we speak to the Father and increasingly we do so 'with one heart.'"(94)

45. While it is never legitimate to concelebrate in the absence of full communion, the Eucharist may be administered, under special circumstances, to individual persons belonging to churches or ecclesial communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

In these cases, the Church's intention is to meet a grave spiritual need for the eternal salvation of an individual believer, not to bring about intercommunion — which remains impossible until the visible bonds of ecclesial communion have been fully re-established.

This is the approach taken by the Second Vatican Council in its guidelines for responding to Eastern Christians who, in good faith, are separated from the Catholic Church; who spontaneously ask to receive the Eucharist from a Catholic minister; and who are properly disposed.(95) Both Codes⁷⁰ ratify this approach, taking into account — with necessary modifications — non-Eastern Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.(96)

46. In my Encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* ("That They All May Be One"), I expressed my own appreciation of these norms, which make it possible to provide for the salvation of souls with proper discernment:

"It is a source of joy that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases, to administer the Sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these Sacraments, freely request them, and manifest the faith of the Catholic Church with respect to them. Conversely, in specific cases and in particular circumstances, Catholics, too, can request these same Sacraments from ministers of churches in which these Sacraments are valid."(97)

These conditions, from which no dispensation can be given, must be carefully respected,

69 See Jas 1:17.

70 Codes of Canon Law for both the Latin-rite Church and the Eastern-rite Church.

even though they deal with specific individual cases, because a person's denial of any truth of the faith regarding these Sacraments — including the necessity of the ministerial priesthood for their validity — renders him improperly disposed to receive them legitimately. And the opposite is also true: Catholics may not receive communion in those communities that lack a valid Sacrament of Orders.(98)

The faithful observance of these norms(99) is both a manifestation and a guarantee of our love for Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; for our brothers and sisters of different Christian confessions, who have a right to our witness to the truth; and for the promotion of unity itself.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE DIGNITY OF THE EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

47. Reading the account of the institution of the Eucharist in the Synoptic Gospels, we are struck by the simplicity and the "solemnity" with which Jesus, on the evening of the Last Supper, instituted this great Sacrament.

An episode which, in a way, serves as its prelude is the anointing at Bethany. A woman, whom John identifies as Mary the sister of Lazarus, pours a flask of costly ointment over Jesus' head, which provokes from the disciples — and from Judas in particular⁷¹ — an indignant response, as if this act, in light of the needs of the poor, represents an intolerable "waste."

Jesus' own reaction is completely different. While in no way detracting from the duty of charity toward the needy, for whom the disciples must always show special care — "the poor you will always have with you"⁷² — He looks toward His imminent death and burial, and sees this act of anointing as an anticipation of the honour which His Body will continue to merit even after His death, indissolubly bound as it is to the mystery of His Person.

In the Synoptic Gospels, the accounts continue with Jesus' charge to the disciples to prepare carefully the "large upper room" needed for the Passover meal,⁷³ and then with His institution of the Eucharist.

The story reflects — at least in part — the Jewish rites of the Passover meal leading up to the singing of the *Hallel*.⁷⁴ Even in its variants, it presents, with sobriety and solemnity, the words spoken by Christ over the bread and wine, which He made into concrete expressions of the handing over of His Body and the shedding of His Blood.

All these details were recorded by the evangelists in light of a *praxis* ("practice") of the "breaking of the Bread" already well established in the Church at the time they wrote.

From the time of Jesus on, the commemoration of the Holy Thursday event manifested visible traces of a liturgical "sensitivity" shaped by Old Testament tradition, but open to Christian reshaping in a way consonant with the new content of Easter.

48. Like the woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany, the Church has never feared "extravagance," but always devoted the best of her resources to expressing her wonder and adoration before the unsurpassable gift of the Eucharist.

Like the first disciples charged with preparing the "large upper room," the Church has felt the need — through all centuries and all encounters with different cultures — to celebrate the Eucharist in a setting worthy of so great a mystery.

The Christian liturgy was built on the ritual heritage of Judaism, in light of Jesus' own words and actions. In that liturgy, the Church accepts the Self-gift of the divine Bridegroom to His Bride, the Church; brings the sacrifice He offered once and for all on the cross to successive generations of believers; and gives His Body and Blood to the faithful as nourishment. Could there ever be an adequate way of expressing these realities?

Though the idea of a "banquet" naturally suggests familiarity, the Church has never trivialized this "intimacy" with her Spouse by forgetting that He is also her Lord and that the "banquet" is sacrificial, marked by the Blood shed on Golgotha.

The Eucharistic banquet is truly a "sacred" banquet, in which the simplicity of the signs conceals the unfathomable holiness of God: *O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur!* ("O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received!")

The Bread broken on our altars, offered to us as wayfarers in the world, is *panis angelorum*,

71 See Mt 26:8; Mk 14:4; Jn 12:4.

72 Mt 26:11; Mk 14:7; see Jn 12:8.

73 See Mk 14:15; Lk 22:12.

74 Prayer from Ps 113-118 recited on Jewish feasts, including Passover. From the Hebrew for "praise." (See Mt 26:30; Mk 14:26.)

the bread of angels, which cannot be approached except with the humility of the centurion in the Gospel: "Lord, I am not worthy to have You come under my roof."⁷⁵

49. With this sense of high mystery, we understand how the faith of the Church in the Eucharist has — as a matter of history — been expressed not only by interior devotion, but also in outward forms meant to evoke and emphasize the grandeur of the event being celebrated. This has led progressively to regulation of the Eucharistic liturgy, although with due respect for the various legitimate ecclesial traditions.

On this foundation, a rich artistic heritage has also developed. Architects, sculptors, painters, and musicians, moved by the Christian mystery, have found great inspiration in the Eucharist, both directly and indirectly.

For example, take the transition of architecture from the *domus* or "homes" of Christian families, to the solemn basilicas of the early centuries, to the imposing cathedrals of the Middle Ages, and to all the churches that sprang up throughout Christian lands. Even the designs of altars and tabernacles were often motivated not simply by artistic inspiration, but also by a clear understanding of the mystery.

The same could be said for sacred music: think of the inspired Gregorian melodies and the many, often great, composers who tried to do justice to the liturgical texts of the Mass.

And we cannot overlook the fine craftsmanship and authentic works of art in Church furnishings and vestments used for the celebration of the Eucharist.

It can be seen that the Eucharist, while shaping the Church and her spirituality, has also powerfully affected culture, especially the arts.

50. In their efforts to adore the mystery by ritual and aesthetic, Western and Eastern Christians have entered into a certain "competition."

How could we not give particular thanks to the Lord for the contributions of the Greco-Byzantine tradition and the Slav culture?

In the East, sacred art has preserved a remarkable sense of mystery, by which artists see their efforts to create beauty not simply as expressing their own talents, but also as genuinely serving the faith. Passing well beyond mere technical skill, they have shown themselves docile and open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The architectural and mosaic splendours of the Christian East and West are a heritage for all believers; they contain a hope, and even a pledge, of the desired fullness of communion in faith and celebration.

The fulfilment of this desire demands a profoundly Eucharistic Church, as in Rublëv's famous depiction of the Trinity. There the mystery of Christ in the broken Bread is, as it were, immersed in the ineffable unity of the three divine Persons, making the Church herself an "icon" of the Trinity.

In considering art that aims at expressing all the elements of the Eucharist in accord with the Church's teaching, we must pay attention to the norms regulating the construction and decor of sacred buildings.

As history shows — and as I emphasized in my Letter to Artists,(100) — the Church has always left artists ample room for creativity. But, above all, sacred art and music must express the Church's mystery according to the fullness of her faith and her pastoral guidelines.

51. Sacred art and liturgical discipline are now developing on continents where Christianity is young, as they did in the first Christian lands.

Accordingly, the Second Vatican Council addressed the need for sound and proper "inculturation." In my numerous pastoral visits, I have seen the great vitality of Eucharistic celebrations marked by the forms, styles, and sensibilities of new Christian cultures. By adapting to time and place, they offer sustenance not only to individuals, but also to entire peoples, shaping cultures inspired by Christianity.

However, this important work of adaptation must be carried out in full awareness of the ineffable mystery. The "treasure" is too important and precious for us to risk impoverishment or compromise through practices that have not been carefully reviewed by the appropriate Church authorities.

Any such review must be undertaken in close association with the Holy See. As I wrote in my Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* ("The Church in Asia"), "this co-operation is essential because the Sacred Liturgy expresses and celebrates the one faith professed by all and, being the heritage of the whole Church, cannot be determined by local churches in

⁷⁵ Mt 8:8; Lk 7:6

isolation from the universal Church."(101)

52. All this makes clear the great responsibility priests have to preside at the Eucharist *in Persona Christi* ("in the Person of Christ") — witnessing to, and serving, the communion not only of the community directly taking part in the celebration, but also of the universal Church, which is present at every Eucharist.

It must be lamented that abuses resulting from a misguided sense of creativity and adaptation — especially in the years after the post-conciliar liturgical reform — have caused much suffering.

A reaction against "formalism" has led some, especially in certain regions, to think that the "forms" chosen in the Church's great liturgical tradition and promulgated by her Magisterium are non-binding, and to introduce unauthorized innovations that are often completely inappropriate.

I consider it my duty, therefore, to urge that the liturgical norms for the celebration of the Eucharist be observed with great fidelity. Their deepest meaning is to give concrete expression to the ecclesial nature of the Eucharist. Liturgy is never anyone's private property — neither the celebrant's nor the community's.

The apostle Paul had to address fiery words to the Corinthians about grave shortcomings in their celebration of the Eucharist, which resulted in divisions (*schismata*) and factions (*haireseis*).⁷⁶

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 observe these norms and communities which conform to them demonstrate their love for the Church, quietly but eloquently.

In order to bring out more clearly the deeper meaning of liturgical norms, I have asked the appropriate offices of the Roman Curia to prepare a more specific document, including juridical prescriptions, on this very important subject. 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 or universality.

CHAPTER SIX: AT THE SCHOOL OF MARY, "WOMAN OF THE EUCHARIST"

53. To rediscover in all its richness the profound relationship between the Church and the Eucharist, we turn to Mary, mother and model of the Church.

In my Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* ("The Rosary of the Virgin Mary"), I called the Blessed Virgin Mary our teacher in contemplating Christ's Face. Among the mysteries of light, I included the institution of the Eucharist.(102) Mary can guide us toward this most holy Sacrament because she herself has a profound relationship with it.

At first, the Gospel seems to be silent on this subject. The evangelists make no mention of Mary in their accounts of the institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday.

Yet we know that she was present with the apostles in the community that prayed "with one accord"⁷⁷ in expectation of Pentecost after the Ascension. Certainly she must have been present at the Eucharistic celebrations of the first Christians, who devoted themselves to "the breaking of Bread."⁷⁸

Moreover, we can see Mary's relationship with the Eucharist from her interior disposition. In her whole life, she is a "woman of the Eucharist." The Church, which looks to her as a model, is called to imitate her in this respect.

54. *Mysterium fidei!* ("O mystery of faith!")

The Eucharist is a mystery of faith. It so greatly transcends our understanding that it calls for sheer abandonment to the word of God. In our development of this disposition, Mary can support and guide us as no one else can.

In obedience to Christ's command — "Do this in memory of Me!" — we repeat what He did at the Last Supper. In obedience to Mary's invitation — "Do whatever He tells you"⁷⁹ — we obey Him without hesitation.

With the maternal concern she showed at the wedding feast of Cana, Mary seems to say, "Do

76 See 1 Cor 11:17-34.

77 See Acts 1:14.

78 Acts 2:42

79 Jn 2:5

not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If He was able to change water into wine, He can also turn bread and wine into His Body and Blood, and through this mystery bestow on believers the living memorial of His Passover, thus becoming the 'Bread of life.'"

55. In a sense, Mary lived her Eucharistic faith even before Christ's institution of the Eucharist, by the very fact that she offered her virginal womb for the Incarnation of God's Word.

The Eucharist, a commemoration of the Passion and the Resurrection, has a certain continuity with the Incarnation. At the Annunciation Mary conceived the Son of God in the physical reality of His Body and Blood, thus anticipating within herself what happens sacramentally, to some degree, in every believer who receives the Lord's Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine.

Accordingly, there is a profound analogy between Mary's *Fiat* ("Let it be") to the angel, and the believer's *Amen* when he receives the Body of the Lord.

Mary was asked to believe that the One Whom she conceived "through the Holy Spirit" was "the Son of God."⁸⁰ In the Eucharistic mystery we are asked to believe that the same Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, becomes present in His full humanity and divinity under the appearances of bread and wine.

"Blessed is she who believed."⁸¹ In the mystery of the Incarnation, Mary anticipated the Church's Eucharistic faith. At the Visitation,⁸² she bore in her womb the Word made Flesh, becoming a "tabernacle" — the first in history — in which the Son of God, still invisible to human gaze, allowed Himself to be adored by Elizabeth, radiating His light through the eyes and the voice of Mary, as it were.

And surely Mary's unparalleled love, as she cradled the newborn Christ in her arms and contemplated His Face with enraptured gaze, should inspire us every time we receive Eucharistic Communion!

56. Mary made the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist her own, not only on Calvary, but throughout her life at Christ's side.

When she brought the Child Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem "to present Him to the Lord,"⁸³ she heard the aged Simeon announce that the Child would be a "sign of contradiction" and that a sword would pierce her heart.⁸⁴ Thus he foretold the tragedy of her Son's crucifixion and foreshadowed, in a sense, her *Stabat Mater* (literally, "the mother stood") at the foot of the Cross.

In her daily preparation for Calvary, Mary experienced a kind of "anticipated Eucharist" — one might say a "spiritual communion" of desire and oblation. It culminated in her union with her Son in His Passion. It found expression after Easter in her participation in the Eucharist, celebrated by the apostles as the memorial of that Passion.

What must Mary have felt as she heard from Peter, John, James, and the other apostles the words her Son had spoken at the Last Supper: "This is My Body Which is given for you"⁸⁵?

The Body given up for us — the Body now made present under sacramental signs — was the same Body she had conceived in her womb! For Mary, receiving the Eucharist must somehow have meant welcoming once more into her womb that Heart which had beat in unison with hers, and reliving what she had experienced at the foot of the cross.

57. "Do this in remembrance of Me."⁸⁶

In the "memorial" of Calvary, all that Christ accomplished by His Passion and death is present. Consequently, all that He did for our sake with respect to His mother is also present. To her He presented the beloved disciple and, in him, each of us: "Behold, your son!" To each of us He says: "Behold your mother!"⁸⁷

Experiencing the memorial of Christ's death in the Eucharist means accepting — like John — the one who is given to us as our mother.

It also means committing ourselves to be conformed to Christ, putting ourselves in the school of His mother and allowing her to accompany us.

As the Church's mother, Mary is present at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. Just as the Church and the Eucharist are inseparably united, so are Mary and the Eucharist.

80 Lk 1:30-35

81 Lk 1:45

82 See Lk 1:39-56.

83 Lk 2:22

84 See Lk 2:34-35.

85 Lk 22:19

86 Lk 22:19

87 See Jn 19:26-27.

This is one reason why, since ancient times, the commemoration of Mary has always been part of the Eucharistic celebrations, in both Eastern and Western Churches.

58. In the Eucharist, the Church is completely united to Christ and His sacrifice, and she makes the spirit of Mary her own.

This truth can be understood more deeply by re-reading the *Magnificat* in light of the Eucharist. Like the Eucharist, the Canticle of Mary is first of all praise and thanksgiving. When Mary exclaimed: "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour," she was already carrying Jesus in her womb. She praised God *through* Jesus, but she also praised Him *in* and *with* Jesus. This is *per se* the true "Eucharistic attitude."

At the same time Mary recalled the wonders worked by God in salvation history — fulfilling the promise He had made to her fathers⁸⁸ — and proclaimed the wonder that surpasses them all, the redemptive Incarnation.

Finally, the *Magnificat* reflects the eschatological tension of the Eucharist. Every time the Son of God comes again to us in the "poverty" of the sacramental signs of bread and wine, the seeds of that new history — wherein the mighty are "put down from their thrones" and "those of low degree are exalted"⁸⁹ — take root in the world. Mary sings of the "new heavens" and the "new earth," which find in the Eucharist their anticipation and, in a sense, their program and plan.

The *Magnificat* expresses Mary's spirituality, and there is nothing better to help us experience the mystery of the Eucharist. The Eucharist has been given to us so that our life, like that of Mary, may become completely a *Magnificat*!

CONCLUSION

59. *Ave, verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine!* ("Hail, true Body born of the Virgin Mary!")

Several years ago I celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of my priesthood. Today I have the grace of offering the Church this Encyclical on the Eucharist on the Holy Thursday which falls during the twenty-fifth year of my Petrine⁹⁰ ministry.

As I do so, my heart is filled with gratitude. For over a half century, every day — beginning on 2 November 1946 when I celebrated my first Mass in the Crypt of Saint Leonard in Wawel Cathedral in Krakow — my eyes have gazed in recollection upon the Host and the Chalice, where time and space "merge," so to speak, and the living drama of Golgotha is re-presented, revealing its mysterious "contemporaneity."

Each day, by faith, I have been able to recognize in the consecrated bread and wine the divine Wayfarer, Who joined the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, opening their eyes to the light and their hearts to new hope.⁹¹

Allow me, dear brothers and sisters, to share, with deep emotion, as a way of accompanying and strengthening your faith, my own testimony of faith in the Most Holy Eucharist.

Ave verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine, vere passum, immolatum, in cruce pro homine! ("Hail, true Body born of the Virgin Mary, which truly suffered, offered up on the cross for humans!")

Here is the Church's treasure, the heart of the world, the pledge of the fulfilment for which each man and woman yearns, even though unconsciously — a great and transcendent mystery, which taxes our minds' ability to pass beyond appearances.

Here our senses fail us. In the hymn *Adoro Te Devote* ("I Adore You With Devotion"), we sing *visus, tactus, gustus in Te fallitur* ("seeing, touching, tasting, are in Thee deceived"). Nevertheless, faith alone, rooted in the word of Christ handed down to us by the apostles, is sufficient for us.

Allow me, like Peter at the end of the Eucharistic discourse in John's Gospel, to say once more to Christ, in the name of the whole Church and each of you: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."⁹²

60. At the dawn of this third millennium, we, the children of the Church, are called to undertake the journey of Christian living with renewed enthusiasm.

88 See Lk 1:55.

89 See Lk 1:52.

90 That is, as a successor of Peter, the first Pope.

91 See Lk 24:13-35.

92 Jn 6:68

As I wrote in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* ("At the Beginning of the New Millennium"), "it is not a matter of inventing a 'new program.' The program already exists, the same as ever: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ Himself, Who is to be known, loved, and imitated, so that in Him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with Him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem."(103)

The renewal of impetus in Christian living passes through the Eucharist. Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church's mission, every work of pastoral planning must draw its strength from the Eucharistic mystery and be directed to that mystery as its culmination.

In the Eucharist we have Jesus; we have His redemptive sacrifice; we have His Resurrection; we have the gift of the Holy Spirit; we have adoration, obedience, and love of the Father. Were we to disregard the Eucharist, how could we supply our own deficiency?

61. The mystery of the Eucharist — sacrifice, presence, banquet — does not allow for reduction or exploitation; it must be experienced and lived in its integrity, both in its celebration and in the intimate converse with Jesus that takes place after Communion, or in a prayerful moment of Eucharistic adoration after Mass.

These are times when the Church is firmly built up, and what she truly is becomes clear — one, holy, catholic, and apostolic — the people, temple, and family of God; the Body and Bride of Christ, enlivened by the Holy Spirit; the universal sacrament of salvation; and a hierarchically structured communion.

The Church's path in these first years of the third millennium is a path of renewed ecumenical commitment. The final decades of the second millennium, culminating in the Great Jubilee, have spurred us along this path; they call for all the baptized to respond to the prayer of Jesus "*ut unum sint*" "that they all may be one."⁹³

The path itself is long and strewn with obstacles greater than our human resources alone can overcome. However, we have the Eucharist, and in its presence we can hear in the depths of our hearts, as if they were addressed to us, the words heard by the Prophet Elijah: "Arise and eat, else the journey will be too great for you."⁹⁴

The treasure of the Eucharist, which the Lord places before us, impels us toward the goal of full sharing with all our brothers and sisters to whom we are joined by our common Baptism. But if we are not to squander this treasure, we must respect its demands, which arise from its being the sacrament of communion in faith and apostolic succession.

By giving the Eucharist the prominence it deserves, and by being careful not to diminish any of its dimensions or demands, we show that we are truly conscious of the greatness of this gift.

We are urged to do so by the uninterrupted tradition — from the first centuries on — that has made the Christian community vigilant in guarding this "treasure."

Inspired by love, the Church is eager to hand on to future generations of Christians, without loss, her faith and teaching with respect to the Eucharist. There can be no danger of excess in our care for this mystery, for "in this Sacrament is recapitulated the whole mystery of our salvation."⁹⁵(104)

62. Let us take our place, dear brothers and sisters, at the school of the saints, who are the great interpreters of true Eucharistic piety. In them the theology of the Eucharist takes on all the splendour of a lived reality; it becomes "contagious" and, in a way, it "warms our hearts."

Above all, let us listen to Mary, the most holy, in whom the mystery of the Eucharist appears, more than in anyone else, as a mystery of light. Gazing upon Mary, we come to know its transforming power. In her we see the world renewed in love. Contemplating her, assumed body and soul into Heaven, we see opening up before us the "new heavens" and "new earth" that will appear at the second coming of Christ.⁹⁵ Here below, the Eucharist represents their pledge, and, in a way, their anticipation: "*Veni, Domine Iesu!*" ("Come, Lord Jesus!")⁹⁶

Under the humble appearances of bread and wine that have been changed into His Body and Blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, enabling us to become witnesses of hope for everyone.

In the presence of this mystery, reason experiences its limits. However, the heart, enlightened

93 Jn 17:11

94 1 Kg 19:7

95 See Is 65:17; Rv 21:1.

96 Rv 22:20

by the grace of the Holy Spirit, clearly sees the response that is demanded, and bows low in adoration and unbounded love.

Let us make our own the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas — an eminent theologian and an impassioned poet of Christ in the Eucharist — and turn in hope to the contemplation of that goal to which our hearts aspire in their thirst for joy and peace:

*Bone pastor, panis vere,
Iesu, nostri miserere...*
"Come then, good Shepherd, Bread divine,
Still show to us Thy mercy sign;
O feed us, still keep us Thine;
So we may see Thy glories shine
in fields of immortality.
O Thou, the wisest, mightiest, best,
Our present Food, our future rest,
Come, make us each Thy chosen guest,
Co-heirs of Thine, and comrades blest
With saints whose dwelling is with Thee."

*Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's,
on 17 April, Holy Thursday, in the year 2003,
the twenty-fifth of my Pontificate,
the Year of the Rosary.*

IOANNES PAULUS II

ENDNOTES

- 1 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 11.
- 2 Vatican II: *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5.
- 3 See John Paul II: *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 21.
- 4 This is the title I gave to an autobiographical testimony issued for the fiftieth anniversary of my priestly ordination.
- 5 Leo XIII: *Mirae Caritatis*.
- 6 Pius XII: *Mediator Dei*.
- 7 Paul VI: *Mysterium Fidei*.
- 8 Pope John Paul II: *Dominicae Cena*.
- 9 See Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 47.
"Our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood, in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout time, until He should return."
- 10 CCC 1085.
- 11 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 3.
- 12 See Paul VI: *Solemn Profession of Faith*; John Paul II: *Dominicae Cena*, 12.
- 13 CCC 1382.
- 14 CCC 1367.
- 15 John Chrysostom: *In Epistolam ad Hebraeos Homiliae*, Hom. 17, 3.
- 16 See Trent, Session XXII: *Doctrina de Sanctissima Missae Sacrificio*, Chapter 2. "It is one and the same Victim here offering Himself by the ministry of His priests, Who then offered Himself on the Cross; it is only the manner of offering that is different."
- 17 Pius XII: *Mediator Dei*.
- 18 John Paul II: *Redemptor Hominis*, 20.
- 19 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 11.
- 20 Ambrose: *De Sacramentis*, V, 4, 26.
- 21 Cyril of Alexandria: *In Ioannis Evangelium*, XII, 20.
- 22 Paul VI: *Mysterium Fidei*.
- 23 Trent: Session XIII, *Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist*, Chapter 4.
- 24 Cyril of Jerusalem: *Mystagogical Catecheses*, IV, 6.
- 25 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 8.
- 26 Paul VI: *Solemn Profession of Faith*
- 27 Ephrem: *Sermo IV in Hebdomadam Sanctam*: 182, 55.
- 28 Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, Anaphora.
- 29 Eucharistic Prayer III.
- 30 Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, Second Vespers, Antiphon to the Magnificat.
- 31 *Missale Romanum*, Embolism following the Lord's Prayer.
- 32 Ignatius of Antioch: *Ad Ephesios*, 20
- 33 See Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 39.
- 34 "Do you wish to honour the Body of Christ? Do not ignore Him when He is naked. Do not pay Him homage in the temple clad in silk, only then to neglect Him outside where He is cold and ill-clad. He Who said: 'This is My Body' is the same Who said: 'You saw Me hungry and you gave Me no food,' and 'Whatever you did to the least of My brothers you did also to Me' ...What good is it if the Eucharistic table is overloaded with golden chalices when your brother is dying of hunger? Start by satisfying his hunger and then with what is left you may adorn the altar as well" (St. John Chrysostom, *In Evangelium S. Matthaei*, hom. 50:3-4). See John Paul II: *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 31.
- 35 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 3.
- 36 *Ibid.*

- 37 Vatican II: *Ad Gentes*, 5.
- 38 "Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said: 'Behold the blood of the Covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words'" (Ex 24:8).
- 39 See Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 1.
- 40 See *ibid.*, 9.
- 41 See Vatican II: *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5. The same Decree, in No. 6, says: "No Christian community can be built up which does not grow from and hinge on the celebration of the most holy Eucharist."
- 42 John Chrysostom: *In Epistolam I ad Corinthios Homiliae*, 24, 2; see *Didache*, IX, 4; Cyprian, *Epistle LXIII*, 13
- 43 Liturgy of Saint James: *epiclesis* of the *Anaphora*.
- 44 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 1.
- 45 See Trent, Session XIII: *Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist*, Canon 4.
- 46 See *Rituale Romanum: De sacra communione et de cultu mysterii eucharistici extra Missam*, 36.
- 47 See *ibid.*, 38-39.
- 48 John Paul II: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 32.
- 49 "In the course of the day the faithful should not omit visiting the Blessed Sacrament, which in accordance with liturgical law must be reserved in churches with great reverence in a prominent place. Such visits are a sign of gratitude, an expression of love and an acknowledgment of the Lord's presence" (Paul VI: *Mysterium Fidei* 19).
- 50 Alphonsus Liguori: *Visite al Santissimo Sacramento e a Maria Santissima*, Introduction. CCC 857.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Sacerdotium Ministeriale*, III.2.
- 55 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 10.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 See *Institutio Generalis: Editio typica tertia*, 147.
- 58 See Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 10, 28; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2.
- 59 "The minister of the altar acts in the Person of Christ inasmuch as He is Head, making an offering in the name of all the members" (Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*). See also Pius X: *Haerent Animo* and Pius XI: *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*.
- 60 John Paul II: *Dominicae Cena*, 8.
- 61 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Sacerdotium Ministeriale*, III.4. See Lateran IV: *Firmiter Credimus*, Chapter 1.
- 62 Vatican II: *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 22.
- 63 John Paul II: *Dominicae Cena*, 2.
- 64 Vatican II: *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 14.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 13; See *Code of Canon Law*, 904; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 378.
- 66 Vatican II: *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6.
- 67 Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 1985: Final Report, *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 10 1985, 7.
- 68 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 26.
- 69 Nicolas Cabasilas: *Life in Christ*, IV, 10.
- 70 Teresa of Avila: *Camino de Perfección*, Chapter 35.
- 71 See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Communio Notio*, 4.
- 72 See Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 14.
- 73 John Chrysostom: *Homiliae in Isaiam*, 6, 3
- 74 CCC 1385. See *Code of Canon Law*, 916; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 711.
- 75 Address to the Members of the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary and the Penitentiaries of the Patriarchal Basilicas of Rome (30 January 1981). See Trent: Session XIII, *Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist*, Chapter 7 and Canon 11.
- 76 *Code of Canon Law*, 915; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 712.
- 77 Vatican: *Lumen Gentium*, 14.
- 78 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 73, a. 3c.
- 79 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Communio Notio*, 11.
- 80 See Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 23.
- 81 St. Ignatius of Antioch: *Ad Smyrnaeos*, 8.
- 82 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 23.
- 83 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Communio Notio*, 14.
- 84 Augustine: *Sermo* 272.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 1248.
- 86 John Paul II: *Dies Domini*, 31-51
- 87 See *ibid.*, 48-49.
- 88 John Paul II: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 36.
- 89 Vatican II: *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1.
- 90 See Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 11.
- 91 "Join all of us, who share the one Bread and the one Cup, to one another in the communion of the one Holy Spirit": *Anaphora* of the Liturgy of St. Basil.
- 92 See *Code of Canon Law*, 908; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 702; Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Ecumenical Directory, March 25 1993, 122-125, 129-131; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Ad Exsequendam*, May 18 2001.
- 93 "Divine law forbids any common worship which would damage the unity of the Church, or involve formal acceptance of falsehood or the danger of deviation in the faith, of scandal, or of indifferentism" (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 26).
- 94 John Paul II: *Ut Unum Sint*, 45
- 95 Vatican II: *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 27.
- 96 See *Code of Canon Law*, 844 §§3-4; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 671 §§3-4.
- 97 John Paul II: *Ut Unum Sint*, 46.
- 98 See Vatican II: *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 22.
- 99 *Code of Canon Law*, 844; *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, 671.
- 100 John Paul II: *Letter to Artists*, 1999
- 101 John Paul II: *Ecclesia in Asia*, 22
- 102 John Paul II: *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 21.
- 103 John Paul II: *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 29
- 104 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 4c.

Appendix 3

Pange Lingua - In Plain English

Sing, my tongue, the Saviour's glory,
 Sing the mystery of His Flesh,
 And of the Blood, exceeding all price,
 Shed by our immortal King,
 Who was destined to spring from a noble womb
 For the redemption of the world.

Born for us on earth below
 Of a pure and spotless virgin,
 He, a Man, conversing with men,
 Stayed with us to sow the seeds of truth.
 Then, wondrously, in solemn order,
 He closed His life of woe.

On the night of that Last Supper,
 Seated with His chosen band,
 He first fulfilled the Jewish Law's command
 By eating the Paschal lamb.
 Then He gave Himself to His apostles
 With His own Hand.

By His word, He, the Word made Flesh,
 Turned natural bread into His Flesh
 And wine into His Blood. What does it matter
 That our senses cannot discern the change?
 If our hearts are in earnest,
 We will soon learn and believe the truth.

Falling down in adoration,
 We hail the sacred Host.
 The rites of Christ's Passover prevail
 Over the rites of the ancient Passover,
 With our faith supplying what is lacking
 In what our senses perceive.

To the everlasting Father
 And the Son, Who reigns on high
 With the Holy Spirit, proceeding
 From them both, eternally,
 We acknowledge salvation, honour, blessing,
 Might, and endless majesty.

Appendix 4

Declaration Inter Insigniores

On the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood

Edited for ease of reading

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in modern society and the Church

Among the characteristics of our present age, Pope John XXIII pointed out "the part that women are now taking in public life."

This development is happening most quickly among Christian nations, he said, but it is also happening extensively in nations with "different traditions" and "a different culture."(1)

When the Second Vatican Council spoke of discrimination affecting human rights that must be overcome and eliminated as contrary to God's plan, it gave first place to discrimination based on sex.(2)

Recently, Pope Paul VI stated that if men and women continue to contribute from their own resources and dynamism, recognition of their equality will help build a world that is harmonious and unified, not leveled out and uniform.(3)

As history shows, women have played decisive roles and accomplished outstanding tasks in the life of the Church herself. We can point to the foundresses of the great religious families, such as Saint Clare and Saint Teresa of Avila. Saint Catherine of Siena and Saint Teresa have left writings so rich in spiritual doctrine that Pope Paul VI has included them among the Doctors of the Church.

Moreover, great numbers of women have consecrated themselves to the Lord for the exercise of charity or the spread of the Gospel. Christian wives have had profound influence on their families, particularly in passing on the faith to their children.

But the Second Vatican Council charged women to do more: "Since women in our time have an ever more active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they also participate more widely in the various sectors of the Church's apostolate."(4)

Thus the Council set in motion in the Church a whole process of change, which has not yet reached maturity.

As Pope Paul VI remarked,(5) many Christian communities are already benefiting from these changes. Women are being called to diocesan or parish councils set up for pastoral reflection. The Apostolic See has brought women into some of its working bodies.

For some years now, Christian communities stemming from the sixteenth-century Reformation have been admitting women to pastoral offices on a par with men. Some members of these communities are asking that this admission be made general; others are protesting the initiative.

As can be expected, the Catholic Church has been asked whether she, too, can modify her discipline to admit women to the ordained priesthood. A number of Catholic theologians have even posed the question publicly, evoking studies not only in exegesis, patrology, and Church history, but also in sociology, psychology, and the history of institutions and customs.

The Church has critically examined the various arguments being made, but, as classical theology scarcely addressed them, there is a risk that her answers will be neglected in the current debate.

All this constitutes a problem for ecumenism. Accordingly, in obedience to a mandate from the Holy Father, and echoing the declaration he made in his letter of 30 November 1975,(6) the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith judges it necessary to state again that the Church, in fidelity to the example of her Lord, does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination.

Nevertheless, the Sacred Congregation deems it appropriate and opportune to explain the Church's position. In the short term, perhaps, this explanation will cause pain, but in the long run its value will become apparent as it helps to deepen understanding of the roles of men and women.

1. The Church's constant tradition

The Catholic Church has always held that priestly or episcopal ordination cannot be validly conferred on women.

In the first centuries of Christianity, a few heretical sects — especially the Gnostics — entrusted the exercise of the priestly ministry to women, but the Fathers¹ immediately noticed and condemned this innovation as unacceptable.(7)

It is true that in the writings of the Fathers, one undeniably finds prejudice unfavourable to women, but that prejudice had hardly any influence on the Fathers' pastoral activity and still less on their spiritual direction of others.

However, over and above any consideration inspired by the spirit of the times, we find — especially in the canonical documents of the Antiochian and Egyptian traditions — the following essential argument: that by calling only men to the priestly order and ministry in its true sense, the Church intended to be faithful to the type of ordained ministry willed by the Lord Jesus Christ and carefully maintained by the apostles.(8)

The same conviction animated medieval theology,(9) in spite of the fact that the Scholastic doctors, in their desire to clarify the data of faith by reason, often presented arguments on this point that modern thought would admit only with difficulty or even rightly reject.

Since that period, the question has not been raised again, for the practice of ordaining only men has had a peaceful and universal acceptance.

The Church's tradition in the matter has been so firm that the Magisterium has not felt the need to formulate a principle that was not being attacked, or to defend a law that was not being challenged. Nevertheless, each time the tradition had occasion to manifest itself, it witnessed to the Church's desire to conform to the model left to her by the Lord.

The same tradition has been faithfully safeguarded by the Churches of the East. Their unanimity on this point is all the more remarkable, since in many other questions their discipline admits great diversity. Indeed, at present, these Churches refuse to associate themselves with any request directed toward securing the accession of women to priestly ordination.

2. The attitude of Christ

Jesus Christ did not call women to be part of the Twelve. He did not act in this way in order to conform to the customs of His time, for His attitude toward women was quite different from that of His contemporaries; in fact, He deliberately and courageously broke with them.

For example, to the great astonishment of His own disciples, Jesus conversed publicly with a Samaritan woman;² ignored the legal impurity of the woman who had suffered from hemorrhages;³ allowed a sinful woman to approach Him in the house of Simon the Pharisee;⁴ and, by pardoning the woman taken in adultery, showed that we must not be more severe on a woman than on a man in this respect.⁵ Nor did He hesitate to depart from the Mosaic Law in order to affirm that men and women had equal rights and duties with regard to the marriage bond.⁶

In His itinerant ministry, Jesus was accompanied not only by the Twelve, but also by a group of women: "Mary, surnamed the Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out; Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza; Susanna; and several others, who provided for them out of their own resources."⁷

In contrast with the Jewish mentality — which did not accord great value to the testimony of women, as Jewish law attests — it was women who had the privilege of seeing the risen Lord first, and it was they whom Jesus charged to take the first paschal message to the apostles⁸ in order to prepare them to become the official witnesses to the Resurrection.

It is true that these observations do not settle the matter. That is not surprising, for the questions posed by the word of God go beyond the obvious. A purely historical exegesis of the Bible cannot suffice to give us the ultimate meaning of Scripture or of Jesus' mission.

1 Saintly writers whom the Church recognizes as special witnesses of the faith because they lived not long after Christ.

2 See Jn 4:27.

3 See Mt 9:20-22.

4 See Lk 7:37-50.

5 See Jn 8:11.

6 See Mt 19:3-9; Mk 10:2-11.

7 Lk 8:2-3

8 See Mt 28:7-10; Lk 24:9-10; Jn 20:11-18.

However, we must recognize a number of convergent indications in the observations cited, which make it all the more remarkable that Jesus did not entrust the apostolic charge⁽¹⁰⁾ to women.

Even His mother, who was so closely associated with the mystery of her Son, and whose incomparable role is emphasized by the Gospels of Luke and John, was not invested with the apostolic ministry.

Accordingly, the Fathers presented Mary as the exemplar of Christ's will in this domain. As Pope Innocent III repeated later, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, "The Blessed Virgin Mary surpassed in dignity and in excellence all the apostles, but it was not to her, but to them, that the Lord entrusted the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven."⁽¹¹⁾

3. The practice of the apostles

The apostolic community remained faithful to Jesus' attitude toward women.

Although Mary occupied a privileged place among those gathered in the Upper Room after the Lord's Ascension,⁹ she was not called to enter the College of the Twelve at the time of the election to replace Judas. Two disciples whom the Gospels have not even mentioned until then were put forward, and the choice fell to Matthias.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled them all, men and women,¹⁰ yet only "Peter and the Eleven"¹¹ officially proclaimed that Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies.

When Paul, Peter, and the others went beyond the Jewish world, their preaching of the Gospel and the Christian life to the Greco-Roman civilization impelled them to break with Mosaic practices,¹² sometimes regretfully. At this point they could, therefore, have envisaged conferring ordination on women, had they not been convinced of their duty to remain faithful to the Lord on this point.

In the Hellenistic world,¹³ the cults of a number of pagan divinities were entrusted to priestesses. However, in spite of the fact that Greek philosophers taught the inferiority of women, the Greeks did not share Jewish ideas. Historians note emphatically the existence of a movement for the advancement of women during the Imperial period.¹⁴

In fact, we know from the Bible's Letters and the Acts of the Apostles that certain women worked for the Gospel with Saint Paul.¹⁵ Paul gratefully lists their names in the final salutations of his Letters. Some of them had important influence on conversions: Priscilla, Lydia, and others — especially Priscilla, who took it on herself to complete the instruction of Apollos;¹⁶ and Phoebe, in the service of the Church of Cenchreae.¹⁷

All these facts manifest a considerable evolution *vis-a-vis* Jewish customs within the apostolic Church.¹⁸ Nevertheless, there was never a question of conferring ordination on women.

In fact, in Paul's Letters, exegetes have noted a difference between two of his formulas. He calls both men and women who have helped him in his apostolate "my fellow-workers,"¹⁹ but he reserves the title "God's fellow-workers"²⁰ for Apollos, Timothy, and himself: men set apart specifically for the apostolic ministry and the preaching of the word of God.

In spite of women's important role on the day of the Resurrection, Saint Paul did not extend their collaboration to encompass the official and public proclamation of the message, for that proclamation belongs exclusively to the apostolic mission.

4. Permanent value of the attitude of Jesus and the apostles

The behaviour of Jesus and His apostles has been considered normative by the whole of Church Tradition up to our own day. Could the Church today prescind from it?

People advance various arguments for a positive reply to this question. Let us examine them. In particular, they claim that the attitude of Jesus and the apostles is due to the influence of

9 See Acts 1:14.

10 See Acts 1:14, 2:1.

11 Acts 2:14

12 See Acts 15:5-29.

13 Imbued with Greek culture, but not necessarily using the Greek language.

14 When the Greek peninsula was part of the Roman Empire, 146 BC - 330 AD.

15 See Rom 16:3-12; Phil 4:3.

16 See Acts 18:26.

17 See Rom 16:1.

18 That is, the early Church: the Church in the time of the Apostles.

19 Rom 16:3; Phil 4:2-3

20 1 Cor 3:9; see 1 Thes 3:2.

the times and the milieu. They suggest that Jesus did not entrust to women — not even His mother — the ministry He assigned to the Twelve because historical circumstance did not allow Him to do so.

No one, however, has ever proved — and it is obviously impossible to prove — that Jesus' attitude was due to social and cultural reasons *only*. As we have seen, the Gospels show clearly that, on the contrary, Jesus broke with the prejudices of His time, widely contravening the common discrimination against women.

Therefore, we cannot maintain that simple expediency guided Jesus as He called men to be apostles. Even less can we argue that social and cultural conditioning held back the apostles working in the Greek milieu, where the same forms of discrimination did not exist.

Another argument people advance in favour of ordaining women priests is based on the "transitory" and "difficult" character they perceive in some of Saint Paul's proscriptions concerning women.

Some of these ordinances refer to disciplinary practices of minor importance, such as the obligation for women to wear a veil over their hair.²¹ Probably inspired by the customs of the period, they no longer have normative value.

However, the apostle's statement that women should not "speak" in the assemblies²² is different. Nowhere does Paul oppose the right of women to prophesy in the assembly;²³ indeed, he recognizes explicitly that women possess this charism. Rather, his prohibition is directed solely toward *teaching officially* in the Christian assembly. For Paul, this proscription is part of the divine plan of creation:²⁴ it is not just an expression of his culture.

In asking and allowing women to collaborate with him in his apostolate, Saint Paul put great trust in them. In fact, he wrote one of the most vigorous texts in the New Testament on the fundamental equality of men and women as children of God in Christ.²⁵

All these arguments in favour of ordaining women have been taken from apostolic history. However, those who urge the legitimacy of change also cite the Church's practice in her sacramental discipline.

They note — especially in our day — that even though the Sacraments were instituted by Christ, the Church claims power over them. She has used this power to determine their signs and the conditions of their administration, as in recent decisions of Popes Pius XII and Paul VI.(12)

First, we must emphasize that this power, which is real, has well defined limits. As Pope Pius XII recalled: "The Church has no power over the substance of the Sacraments; that is to say, over what Christ the Lord — as the sources of Revelation bear witness — determined should be maintained in the sacramental sign."(13)

The Council of Trent had already said the same. "In the Church there has always existed this power: that in the administration of the Sacraments, provided their substance remains unaltered, she can lay down or modify what she considers more fitting, either for the benefit of those who receive them, or for respect toward those same Sacraments, according to varying circumstances, times, or places."(14)

Second, we must not forget that sacramental signs are not conventional signs. In many respects, they are natural signs, because they use the deep symbolism of actions and things. However, they are more: principally, through the Bible's wealth of pedagogy and symbolism, they link persons of all periods to the supreme event of salvation history so that we can know the grace they signify and produce.

For example, the Sacrament of the Eucharist is not only a fraternal meal, but at the same time the memorial which makes Christ's sacrifice and its offering by the Church present and actual. The ministry of a priest is not just a pastoral service; his functions and powers are those entrusted by Christ to the apostles.

Accordingly, no adaptation of a Sacrament according to civilization or time can abolish, on essential points, the reference of the Sacrament to Christ and the constitutive events of Christianity.

In the final analysis, it is the Church, through the voice of her Magisterium, who decides what can change and what is immutable in these various domains.

21 1 Cor 11:2-6

22 See 1 Cor 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:12.

23 See 1 Cor 11:5.

24 See Gn 2:18-24; 1 Cor 11:7.

25 See Gal 3:28.

When the Church judges that she cannot accept certain changes, it is because she knows she is bound by Christ's manner of acting. Despite appearances, therefore, she is being not archaic, but faithful.

The Church makes pronouncements in virtue of the Lord's promise to her²⁶ and His gift of the Holy Spirit,²⁷ in order to proclaim better the mystery of Christ and to safeguard and manifest the whole of its rich content. Her behaviour cannot be truly understood except in this light.

The Church's practice, then, has a normative²⁸ character. Her restriction of priestly ordination to men is based on Christ's example. She has observed it throughout her history as an unbroken tradition, universal in both East and West. Alert to repress abuses immediately, she continues to observe it because it conforms to God's plan for His Church.

5. The ministerial priesthood in the light of the mystery of Christ

We will now reflect theologically on the profound "fitness" between the Sacrament of Holy Orders — with specific reference to the mystery of Christ — and the fact that only men are called to priestly ordination.

Here we do not try to present a demonstrative argument, but merely to clarify the fact by the analogy of faith.

The Church's constant teaching — repeated and clarified by the Second Vatican Council, the 1971 Synod of Bishops, and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its Declaration of 24 June 1973 — is that a bishop or priest, in the exercise of his ministry, does not act in his own name (*in persona propria*). He represents Christ, Who acts through him: "the priest truly acts in the place of Christ," as St. Cyprian wrote in the third century.⁽¹⁵⁾ It is this representation of Christ that Saint Paul considered to be the essence of his apostolic function.²⁹

The supreme expression of this representation is found in the celebration of the Eucharist — the source and centre of the Church's unity, the sacrificial meal in which the People of God are associated in the sacrifice of Christ.

In the Eucharistic sacrifice, the priest — the only one who has the power to offer it — acts not only through the power conferred on him by Christ, but *in Persona Christi* ("in the Person of Christ")⁽¹⁶⁾, assuming the role of Christ to the point of being His very image when he pronounces the words of consecration.⁽¹⁷⁾

The Catholic priesthood, therefore, has a sacramental nature. The priest is a sign whose supernatural efficacy comes from his ordination. To be sacramental, that sign must be perceptible to the senses;⁽¹⁸⁾ the faithful must be able to recognize it with ease.

In fact, the whole sacramental economy³⁰ is based on natural signs: symbols imprinted on the human psychology. Saint Thomas Aquinas says that "sacramental signs represent what they signify by natural resemblance."⁽¹⁹⁾

Now the same "natural resemblance" required for sacramental things is also required for sacramental persons. When Christ's role in the Eucharist is expressed sacramentally, then, a "natural resemblance" must exist between Christ and His minister. This resemblance would not exist — or, at least, would be difficult to see — if the minister were not a man, for Christ Himself was, and remains, a Man.

Of course, Christ is the first-born of all humanity, both women and men. The unity that He re-established after sin did away with distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female: all are one in Christ Jesus.³¹

Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, the Incarnation of the Word took place in the male sex. This fact does not imply any natural superiority of man over woman, but it cannot be eliminated from the economy³² of salvation. Indeed, it is in harmony with the whole of God's plan as God Himself revealed it, with the mystery of the Covenant³³ as its nucleus.

Starting with the Old Testament prophets, the salvation God offered men and women, the union with Him that He called us to — in short, the Covenant — took on the form of a nuptial

26 See Mt 16:13-19.

27 See Jn 14:25-26, 16:12-14.

28 Establishing a standard or norm, especially of behaviour.

29 See 2 Cor 5:20; Gal 4:14.

30 The process by which the Church distributes, dispenses, or communicates supernatural life to us.

31 See Gal 3:28.

32 That is, "management."

33 The Covenant between God and man, both Old and New.

mystery, in which God saw His Chosen People as His ardently loved Spouse.

Both Jewish and Christian tradition have discovered the depth of this loving intimacy in the Song of Songs — the divine Bridegroom remains faithful even when the Bride betrays His love; God is faithful even when Israel is not.³⁴

Then, in the "fullness of time,"³⁵ the Word, the Son of God, took on flesh in order to establish and seal the new and eternal Covenant with His Blood, shed for many so that sins might be forgiven.³⁶ From His pierced side the Church was born, like Eve from the side of Adam.

At that instant, the nuptial mystery proclaimed and hymned in the Old Testament is accomplished. Christ, the Bridegroom, takes the Church as His beloved Bride. He has gained her by His Blood and made her glorious — holy and without blemish. Henceforth He is inseparable from her.

This nuptial theme — developed in the Letters of Saint Paul³⁷ and the writings of St. John³⁸ — is also present in the Synoptic Gospels:³⁹ the Bridegroom's friends must not fast as long as He is with them;⁴⁰ the Kingdom of Heaven is like a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding.⁴¹

Through this Scriptural language, all interwoven with symbols expressing and affecting man and woman in their profound identity, the mystery of God and Christ is revealed to us — a mystery that would otherwise be unfathomable. Accordingly, we can never ignore the fact that Christ is a Man.

Therefore — unless we are willing to disregard the importance of this symbolism in the economy of Revelation⁴² — we must admit that, when Christ Himself, the Author of the Covenant, the Bridegroom and Head of the Church, is represented exercising His ministry of salvation, He must be represented by a man.

The minister ordained to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, therefore, must be a man — not because of any personal superiority that could be attributed to men, but from a difference of fact on the level of functions and service.

Some people argue that, since Christ is now the Man of Heaven, it is henceforth a matter of indifference whether He be represented by a man or by a woman — especially since "at the resurrection men and women do not marry."⁴³

But this text does not mean that the distinction between man and woman, insofar as it determines a person's identity, is suppressed in the glorified state.

The sex of a human being exercises an important influence on the person — much deeper than ethnic qualities, for example. The difference between the sexes is ordained both for the communion of the persons and the generation of children, and it is willed by God from the beginning: "male and female he created them."⁴⁴

In Heaven, we will still be male or female; and what holds for us holds also for Christ.

Some people object further that the priest represents the Church, as well as Christ, when he presides in liturgy or Sacrament — that he acts in her name, with "the intention of doing what she does." Is it not possible, then, for this representation to be carried out by a woman?

In more formal language, theologians of the Middle Ages said that the minister acts not just *in persona Christi* ("in the Person of Christ"), but also *in persona Ecclesiae* ("in the name of the Church"). Quite apart from the physical participation of the faithful who are present at a liturgical ceremony, the priest certainly celebrates the action in the name of the whole Church; he prays in the name of all; in the Mass he offers the sacrifice of the whole Church and the whole Church offers the sacrifice of Christ through His ministry.

And could not a woman represent the Church?

It is true that the priest represents the Church, which is Christ's Body. But he does so *precisely because* he represents Christ, Who is the Church's Head.

To complete the expression *in persona Christi* and make it more precise, the Second Vatican

34 See Jer 2; Hos 1-3.

35 Gal 4:4

36 See Mt 26:26-28.

37 See 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:22-23.

38 See especially Jn 3:29; Rv 19:7,9.

39 Those written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

40 See Mk 2:19.

41 See Mt 22:1-14.

42 The process by which God has revealed Himself.

43 Mt 22:30

Council(21) called Christ "Head and Shepherd of the Church." It is according to Christ as Head that the priest presides over the Christian assembly and celebrates the Eucharistic sacrifice, even though in it "the whole Church offers and is herself wholly offered."(22)

If we do justice to these reflections, we will understand better how well founded the Church's practice is. We will see the controversy over the ordination of women as a pressing invitation to meditate on the mystery of the Church, to study the meaning of the episcopate and the priesthood in greater detail, and to rediscover the place of the priest in the community of the baptized. In that community, he is indeed a member, but he is distinguished from the others because his ordination — with all the efficacy of a Sacrament — makes him the image and symbol of Christ Himself, calling us, forgiving us, and accomplishing for us the sacrifice of the Covenant.

6. The ministerial priesthood illustrated by the mystery of the Church

Problems of sacramental theology, especially when they concern the ministerial priesthood, cannot be solved except in the light of Revelation. The human sciences, however valuable their contribution in their own domain, cannot grasp the realities of faith; the supernatural content of these realities is beyond their competence. The Church is a society different from all other societies, in nature and structure.

The charge Christ gave His Church — "If you love Me, feed My sheep"⁴⁵ — is a charge of service and love. This pastoral⁴⁶ charge is normally linked to the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Accordingly, authority in the Church is different from authority in a secular state. It is not backed by military might or granted by the people's spontaneous choice.

Even when it involves election, it is the laying on of hands and the prayer of a successor of the apostles that guarantee God's choice. It is the Holy Spirit, received at ordination, Who grants participation in the ruling power of the Supreme Pastor, Christ.⁴⁷

Therefore, it is not possible to ground the admission of women to the priesthood on personal human rights. In those rights, men and women are equal; as Saint Paul said, there is no distinction between men and women in Christ; all are called to divine filiation⁴⁸ through Baptism.

But here the apostle was not talking about ministry. Baptism does not confer any personal right to public ministry in the Church. To think of the ministerial priesthood as a human right is to misjudge its nature completely. "You did not choose Me," Christ said; "no, I chose you, and I commissioned you...."⁴⁹ The priesthood is a totally gratuitous vocation, conferred for the service of God and the Church, not the honour or advantage of the recipient.

Nevertheless, some women still feel that they have a vocation⁵⁰ to the priesthood, for it attracts them as an occupation for which they think they are fitted.

But it is not this attraction, however noble and understandable, that makes the priesthood a genuine vocation. Attraction can be purely subjective; a true vocation is objective.

All the baptized are called to exercise their *universal priestly vocation* by offering their lives to God and bearing witness to Him always.

But Christ gave the Church charge and control of the priesthood as a ministry, so a vocation to the ministerial priesthood becomes real only when the Church authenticates it by the laying on of hands and the consecratory prayer. That authentication is a constitutive part of the vocation to the priesthood. Christ chose "those He wanted"⁵¹ when He was here on earth and He still chooses them today, through His Church.

Women who want to be ordained priests are doubtless motivated by the desire to serve Christ and the Church. In an era when they are becoming more aware of the negative discrimination they have suffered, it is not surprising that they should desire the ministerial priesthood.

But the priestly office cannot be the goal of social advancement; no merely human progress — of society or of individuals — can secure access to it. It is of another order.

There is no way in which equality means identity. The Church is a differentiated Body, in which each member is different, like the organs of a body.

44 Gn 1:27

45 See Jn 21:15-17.

46 That is, having to do with a shepherd.

47 See Acts 20:28.

48 That is, "sonhood" or "daughterhood."

49 Jn 15:16; see Heb 5:4.

50 That is, a "calling." The word comes from the Latin *vocare*, *vocatio*, meaning "to call."

51 Mk:13

The roles of men and women in the Body of Christ are distinct and must not be confused. They do not make men superior to women or provide an excuse for jealousy; the only better gift, Saint Paul said, is love,⁵² which can and must be desired. The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are not the ordained ministers, but the saints.

The Church urges Christian women to become fully aware of the greatness of their mission. Today their role is of capital importance, both for the renewal and humanization of society and for believers' rediscovery of the true face of the Church. It remains, therefore, for all of us to meditate deeply on the real equality of the baptized, which is one of the great affirmations of Christianity.

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
October 15 1976

ENDNOTES

- 1 Pope John XXIII: *Pacem in Terris*, 41
- 2 See Vatican II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 29.
- 3 See Pope Paul VI: Address to the members of the Study Commission on the Role of Women in Society and in the Church and the Committee for International Women's Year, April 18 1975.
- 4 Vatican II: *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 9
- 5 See Pope Paul VI, Address to the members of the Study Commission on the Role of Women in Society and in the Church and the Committee for International Women's Year, April 18 1975.
- 6 See Paul VI: Response to Dr. F.D. Coggan, Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, November 30 1975.
- 7 See St. Irenaeus: *Adversus Haereses*, 1, 13, 2; Tertullian: *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 41, 5; Firmilian of Caesarea, in St. Cyprian: *Epistles*, 75; Origen: *Fragmentum in 1 Corinthians*, 74; St. Epiphanius: *Panarion* 49, 2-3; 78, 23.
- 8 *Didascalia Apostolorum*, Chapter 15; *Constitutiones Apostolicae*, Book 3, Chapter 6, 1-2; Chapter 9, 3-4; St. John Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio* 2, 2.
- 9 St. Bonaventure, *In IV Sententiarum*, Distinction 25, Article 2, Quaestio 1; Richard of Middleton, *In IV Sententiarum*, Distinction 25, Article 4, 1; John Duns Scotus, *In IV Sententiarum*, Distinction 25; *Opus Oxoniense*, Volume 19, p. 140; *Reportata Parisiensis*, vol. 24, pp. 369-371; Durandus of St. Pourcain: *In IV Sententiarum*, Distinction 25, Quaestio 2.
- 10 There are some who wished to explain this fact by a symbolic intention of Jesus: the Twelve were to represent the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. (See Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30). But in these texts it is only a question of their participation in the eschatological judgement. The essential meaning of the choice of the Twelve should rather be sought in the totality of their mission (see Mk 3: 14): they are to represent Jesus to the people and carry on His work.
- 11 See Pope Innocent III, *Epistles to the Bishops of Palencia and Burgos*, December 11 1210. See also *Glossa in Decretalium*, Book 1, Title 33, Chapter 12; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, *Quaestio* 27, a. 5-3; Pseudo-Albert the Great: *Mariale*, *Quaestio* 42.
- 12 See Pope Pius XII: *Sacramentum Ordinis*; Pope Paul VI: *Divinae Consortium Naturae* and *Sacram Unctionem*.
- 13 Pope Pius XII: *Sacramentum Ordinis*, 1
- 14 Session 21, Chapter 2
- 15 St. Cyprian, *Epistles*, 63, 14
- 16 Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 33; *Lumen Gentium*, 10; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2, 13. See also the 1971 Synod of Bishops: *De Sacerdotio Ministeriali*, I, 4; and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Declaratio Circa Catholicam Doctrinam de Ecclesia*, 6.
- 17 See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, *Quaestio* 83, Article I, ad 3, 2.
- 18 "For since a sacrament is a sign, there is required in the things that are done in the sacraments not only the res but the signification of the res," recalls St. Thomas, precisely in order to reject the ordination of women: *In IV Sententiarum*, Distinction 25, *Quaestio* 2 Article 1, *quaestiuncula* 1a corp.
- 19 St. Thomas, *In IV Sententiarum*, Distinction 25, *Quaestio* 2, *quaestiuncula* 1a ad 4um.
- 20 See Council of Trent, Session 22, Chapter 1.
- 21 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 28; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2, 6. See Pope Pius XII: *Mediator Dei*, 39; the 1971 Synod of Bishops: *De Sacerdotio Ministeriali*, I, 4.
- 22 Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, 57

52 See 1 Cor 12:27 - 13:13.

Appendix 5

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis of Pope John Paul II

On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone

Edited for ease of reading

Venerable brothers in the episcopate:

1. The office of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the faithful, entrusted by Christ to His apostles, is handed on by priestly ordination. From the beginning, it has been reserved to men alone, both in the Catholic Church and in the Oriental Churches.

When the question of the ordination of women arose in the Anglican Communion, Pope Paul VI reminded Anglicans of the Church's position, acting in fidelity to his office of safeguarding the apostolic tradition, and also with a view to removing a new obstacle placed in the way of Christian unity:

"She holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include the example recorded in the sacred Scriptures of Christ's choosing His apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority, which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan for His Church."¹

But since the question was also being debated by theologians and in certain Catholic circles, Paul VI directed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to set forth and expound the teaching of the Church on this matter. Hence the declaration *Inter Insigniores*, which the supreme Pontiff approved and ordered to be published.²

2. That declaration recalls and explains the fundamental reasons for the Church's teaching, expounded by Paul VI, and concludes that the Church "does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination."³

Besides these fundamental reasons, the declaration sets forth other theological reasons that illustrate the appropriateness of the divine provision. Moreover, it shows clearly that Christ's actions were not based solely on the sociology or culture of His time.

As Paul VI later explained the "real reason" why the Church does not ordain women priests: "that in giving the Church her fundamental constitution, the theological anthropology — according to which she lived from then on — Christ established things in this way."⁴

In my apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, I wrote, "In calling only men as His apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner. In doing so, He exercised the same freedom with which — in all His behaviour — he emphasized the dignity and the vocation of women, without conforming to the prevailing customs or the traditions sanctioned by the legislation of the time."⁵

In fact, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles attest that He called the apostles according to God's eternal plan: Christ chose those whom He willed (see Mk 3:13-14; Jn 6:70), and He did so in union with the Father, "through the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:2), after having spent the night in prayer (see Lk 6:12).

Therefore, in granting admission to the ministerial priesthood,⁶ the Church acknowledges as a perennial norm the way her Lord acted when He chose the twelve men whom He made the foundation of His Church (see Rv 21:14).

He did not give these men merely a function that any member of the Church could exercise from then on; rather, He passed on to them, specifically and intimately, His own mission as the Incarnate Word (see Mt 10:1,7-8; 28:16-20; Mk 3:13-16; 16:14-15).

1 Paul VI: Response to Dr. F.D. Coggan, Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, November 30 1975

2 See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter Insigniores* (see Appendix 4).

3 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter Insigniores*.

4 Pope Paul VI: *Address on the role of women in the plan of salvation*, January 30 1977. See also Pope John Paul II: *Christifideles Laici*, 51; and CCC 1577.

5 Pope John Paul II: *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 26

6 Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 28; Vatican II: *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2b

The apostles did the same when they chose fellow-workers⁷ who would succeed them in their ministry.⁸ In choosing their own immediate successors, they also chose those who would carry on their mission of representing Christ the Lord and Redeemer throughout the Church's history.⁹

3. The Church notes that the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God and mother of the Church, was not admitted to the ministerial priesthood or given the mission proper to the apostles. It is clear, then, that the Church's understanding of priestly ordination does not mean that she thinks women have lesser value than men, or that she is discriminating against women. Rather, she is faithfully observing the plan that she ascribes to the wisdom of the Lord of the universe.

In fact, the presence and the role of women in the life and mission of the Church remain absolutely necessary and irreplaceable, even although they are not linked to the ministerial priesthood.

As she said in her declaration *Inter Insigniores*, "the Church urges Christian women to become fully aware of the greatness of their mission. Today their role is of capital importance, both for the renewal and humanization of society and for believers' rediscovery of the true face of the Church."¹⁰

The New Testament and the subsequent history of the Church give ample evidence of the action of women in the Church as true disciples, as witnesses to Christ in the family and society and in total consecration to the service of God and the Gospel.

"By defending the dignity of women and their vocation, the Church has honoured and shown gratitude for those women who — faithful to the Gospel — have shared in every age in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God." They include "the holy martyrs, virgins, and the mothers of families" who brought up their children "in the spirit of the Gospel."¹¹

The hierarchical structure of the Church is ordered to the holiness of the faithful. As the declaration *Inter Insigniores* recalls, "The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven are not the ministers, but the saints."¹²

4. The reservation of priestly ordination to men has been preserved by the Church's constant and universal Tradition and firmly taught by her Magisterium in its most recent documents. Nevertheless, some people consider it to be still open to debate, or to have a merely disciplinary force.

In order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (see Lk 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgement is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.

Invoking an abundance of divine assistance upon you, venerable brothers, and upon all the faithful, I impart my apostolic blessing.

From the Vatican, on May 22, the solemnity of Pentecost, in the year 1994, the sixteenth of my pontificate.

Joannes Paulus II

7 See 1 Tim 3:1-13; 2 Tim 1:6; Ti 1:5-9.

8 See CCC 1577.

9 See Vatican II: *Lumen Gentium*, 20, 21.

10 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter Insigniores*, 6 (Appendix 4)

11 See *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 27.

12 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Inter Insigniores*, 6 (Appendix 4)

Presentation Note Accompanying *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*

Edited for ease of reading

With the apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, dated May 22 1994, the solemnity of Pentecost, the supreme Pontiff Pope John Paul II expressly intends to fulfil his office as successor of Peter.

By virtue of his apostolic ministry, he confirms the teaching that the Church does not have the authority to confer priestly ordination on women, and he declares that this teaching is to be definitively held by all the faithful.

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis gives the fundamental reasons for the Church's teaching: they are to be found in the example of Christ, Who chose the twelve apostles from among men; in the apostolic tradition; and in the Church's Magisterium.

The Holy Father recalls that the Church has reserved priestly ordination to men from the beginning. This teaching, therefore, is based on the Church's constant and universal Tradition.

It was authoritatively presented and explained by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its declaration *Inter Insigniores* ("On the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood"), published on October 15 1976 by order of Pope Paul VI and with his approval. It has also been taught in other, more recent, magisterial documents: the apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 26; the postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 51; and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1577.

The non-ordination of women is not merely a disciplinary matter that could be changed. Rather, it is an expression of the truth, according to which Jesus Christ conferred on the apostles and their successors the power of handing on the ministerial priesthood to men only.

The ministerial priesthood is an essential element of the Church's structure. It involves a Sacrament, not a form of social organization. Accordingly, it can be understood only in the light of Christ's revelation, handed down in Scripture and interpreted by the Church's Tradition.

Therefore, the question of who can receive priestly ordination "pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself" (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, No. 4).

Accordingly, no one — not even the supreme authority in the Church — can fail to accept this teaching without contradicting the will and example of Christ Himself, as well as denying the economy of revelation.

That economy includes Sacred Tradition, for it "is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity," in such a way that "not only words, but also deeds, are sources of revelation and become words in the living memory of the Church" (Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* No. 2).

Nevertheless — as *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* notes — some people still think of the teaching as debatable or merely disciplinary.

This uncertainty, which is widespread, explains and justifies the intervention of the Magisterium of the supreme Pontiff — made explicit so "that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance." (No. 4)

Ordinatio Sacerdotalis formally declares that the nature and the definitive force of the teaching it proclaims are derived from the will of Christ and the practice of the apostolic Church. It thus confirms a certainty that has been constantly held and lived by the Church, the fruit of listening to the word of God and obeying the Lord on the path of truth.

It proclaims not a new dogmatic formulation, but a doctrine taught for centuries by the ordinary papal Magisterium in a definitive way; that is, proposed and taught not as a prudential teaching, nor as a more probable opinion, nor as a mere matter of discipline, but as certainly true.

Since the doctrine is not open to dispute, it requires the full and unconditional assent of the faithful. To teach the contrary is to lead consciences into error.

In *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, Pope John Paul II shows himself fully mindful of the need, felt especially strongly today, to avoid all discrimination between men and women in the Church.

The presence and responsibility of women in the Church are not linked to the ministerial priesthood, but the Pope calls them "absolutely necessary and irreplaceable."

He notes that the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God and mother of the Church, "received

neither the mission proper to the apostles nor the ministerial priesthood." Therefore, he concludes, "the non-admission of women to priestly ordination cannot mean that women are of lesser dignity" than men, or that the Church discriminates against them (No. 3).

The publication of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, far from constituting an obstacle to ecumenical dialogue — which is a dialogue in the truth — is an opportunity for all Christians to deepen their understanding of the origin and the theological nature of the episcopal and priestly ministry conferred by the Sacrament of Orders.