

“I WANT YOU TO BE EUCHARISTIC MISSIONARIES”

LECTIO

(what does the Word in itself say)

1 Corinthians 11:23-30

²³This is the tradition of the Lord that I received and that in my turn I have handed on to you: the Lord Jesus, on the night that he was delivered up, took bread and, ²⁴after giving thanks; broke it, saying: “This is my body which is broken for you; do this in memory of me.” ²⁵In the same manner, taking the cup after the supper, he said, “This cup is the new Covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do it in memory of me.”

²⁶So, then, whenever you eat of this bread and drink from this cup, you are proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes.

²⁷Therefore, if anyone eats of the bread or drinks from the cup of the Lord unworthily, he sins against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let each one, then, examine himself before eating of the bread and drinking from the cup. ²⁹Otherwise, he eats and drinks his own condemnation in not recognizing the Body. ³⁰This is the reason why so many among you are sick and weak and several have died.

“THE MASS IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MOMENT OF OUR LIVES” (VS 499)

* “Life is suspended between two peaks: the Word and the Eucharist. The Word of God is the point of departure, a Word which calls, which invites, which personally questions, as happened to the apostles. When a person is reached by the Word, obedience is born, that is the listening which changes life. At the height of this praying experience is the Eucharist, the other peak indissolubly tied to the Word in so far as a place in which the Word makes itself flesh and blood” (OL 10). The world renews itself departing from the Eucharist which contains “the whole mystery of salvation” (Saint Thomas).

“Missionary activity, with the word of the preaching and with the celebration of the sacraments, of which the Holy Eucharist is the center and peak, makes Christ present” (AG 9). “All of the sacraments, just like all of the ecclesiastical ministries and the works of apostolate, are strictly united to the Holy Eucharist and are ordered to it. The Eucharist presents itself as a source and culmination of all of evangelization” (PO 5).

“The Eucharistic sacrifice turns out to be the center and the root of the presbyter’s whole life, so that the priestly spirit endeavors to reflect what is carried out upon the altar” (PO 14). “It isn’t possible for a Christian community to form itself if not by assuming as its root and as its pivot the celebration of the holy Eucharist, from which any education tending to form the spirit of community must start” (PO 6).

EUCHARIST: HEART OF LIFE

** Eucharist: God calls.*

The Eucharist contains a triple movement: God calls from dispersion, introduces into the mystery of love by giving a new life, takes back into ordinary life transformed, in order to tell everybody about it!

The initiative belongs to God: God seeks man. Jesus gives his own life in order “to gather the dispersed sons of God in unity” (John 11:51).

Jesus is the center of the disciple’s life: “They gathered themselves together in front of Jesus” (Mark 6:30ff). He’s the master: “The first bread which he gives is his word. The banquet of the Word precedes that of the bread. Without that, it isn’t known, and therefore, neither desired nor welcomed for what it is” (S. Fausti).

In the Eucharist we’re formed and built up like God has always thought us out to be: sons and brothers.

** Eucharist: God transforms.*

The covenant takes place on the mount of the Eucharist.

“This is my body, this is my blood for the new and eternal covenant”: this blood unites God and men in a family, and it’s for everybody, for forgiveness of sins. Jesus knows that he’s going to die, he accepts it and transforms it into a gift. Death doesn’t keep him from remaining in our midst as He who loves us. Man, by eating the Eucharist, enters into communion with God.

“Making memory” is equal to bringing about the presence of the crucified and risen Christ, always alive in his Church. It’s continuing salvation today in the Church: one enters into salvation, one doesn’t only remain a spectator!

** Eucharist: sacrament of communion.*

Here there are three definitions of communion:

“Whoever eats my body and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him” (John 6:56). “It’s no longer I who live, it’s Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). This is the law of nutrition: in order for it to exist, an element has to disappear, and allow itself to be assimilated. In the case of material food, it’s up to the bread to be assimilated in order to become vital energy; in the communion between man and Jesus, it’s up to man to disappear: “It’s not you who changes me in you, but it’s I who changes you in me” (Saint Augustine).

“When we go to Communion we become what we receive” (Saint Leo the Great).

Communion is “the fusion of existences” (not confusion!) (Card. Ratzinger).

** Communion: eating the bread, the body of Christ.*

The body of Christ is Jesus who’s inseparable from the Persons of the Trinity: “You’re my God” affirms Saint Augustine referring himself to Jesus. The Eucharistic bread is the real icon of the Trinity: in the communion we’re called to become divine.

The body of Christ is all of humanity: “You’re the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27): the body of Christ is a unique reality, without exclusions. Receiving the body of Christ is even receiving others: it’s a splendid but even an uncomfortable revelation, because the unity passes through the crucible of the cross. Communion renews people, the community, the world. In the unity of Christ new relationships of friendship are born.

The body of Christ is the "*Christus totus*": all of the heavens with the Trinity, all of the earth with humanity.

When we pronounce "Amen" we understand that we're receiving the body of Christ, affirming "I know who you are", "I know what's happening!". It's marvel and wonder: I receive "the gift", I allow Christ to change me, I don't have any resistance to put up, it's my "blank signature" to Christ, it's my answer to love. The "Amen" is joy: the Trinity comes to me. The "Amen" is thanks: can I have a greater gift? The "Amen" is faith: do I discern the body of Christ!

The possibility to fail even exists: "Do you know why many of you are weak and some die?" (cf. v. 30)... do you know why you don't make yourself a saint, why nothing happens in your life? Because you don't know how to discern the body of Christ. We can't not receive Communion because this is our vocation, but it's necessary to discern, to say "Amen", to know what happens.

EUCCHARIST: HEART OF MISSION

* Eucharist: God sends.

"Ite Missa est": Go yes, but... where, how, to do what? When the Eucharist is over everyday life begins with its worries and problems. But it's exactly this everyday life that is faced in the name of the Lord by whoever has listened to the Word and has celebrated the Eucharist. The Word of God, the new covenant, communion become a style of life, a criteria of choice and of behavior.

The Eucharist lived out doesn't get along with an idea of a tranquil life, because nobody meets Jesus Christ and remains like before. "Ite Missa est" therefore means that "the Eucharist isn't over, the Eucharist is to be completely lived out: go, your mission now begins, living what you have celebrated, what Jesus the Father's missionary has done: to bring everybody to the banquet of God the holy Trinity". Eucharist intertwines life and mission. The Eucharist is an hour of celebration and twentythree hours of mission, because it becomes a continuous and real presence of God which never "dismounts" from mission.

MEDITATIO

(what does the Word say to me)

* "The missionary's life is "a Eucharistic life". Being "Eucharistic missionaries" means for us making the Eucharist the source and the peak of evangelization, the center to which all of the individual's and community's life tends, and, as a result, the profound reason for living in continuous thanksgiving" (Const. 12). Is this my spiritual and missionary style of life?

* "Eucharistic missionaries": it's the program of life that the Father Founder wanted for every missionary.

"I want Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament to especially be your advisor, your comfort, your help in the missions. Whenever there's some misery, even some sin, turn to the Blessed Sacrament" (VS 677).

“May the tabernacle be the center of your community”: this is the true corrective in order to face the problems which present themselves in the life of the missions with realism and to find the most appropriate solutions.

* The Eucharist is the road of renewal for the missionary, the reason for mission, the reality which makes unity grow. The Eucharist is the everything which requires the maximum.

* Communion is the apex of the day, because we become what we receive. The Founder would advise us to begin right from the waking up in the morning to prepare ourselves for the encounter with this grandiose event which is “God in me and I in Him”.

* Is my Communion even my mission?

ORATIO

(what does the Word make me say)

Reparation:

“A missionary who would think that he could absolve his ministry with many trips and with a lot of trafficking, would be wrong. No, no, we have to be Sacramentines!

I want you to be Sacramentines, that is affectionate sons of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament” (VS 677).

Lord, have mercy!

Thanksgiving:

“In the morning, at the sound of the alarm clock, let us picture the Lord saying to us like he said to Zaccheus: “Come down quickly, because I have to stop at your home today”. The Lord has this desire to come into us, but even we have to desire it, long for it” (VS 664).

Thank you!

Spirit's request:

“Give the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that we become one only body and one only Spirit in Christ” (III Eucharistic Prayer).

CONTEMPLATIO

(“The Lord speaks and everything is done, commands and everything exists” (Psalm 32:9)

* “Oh, that we could have perpetual Adoration! Not a few Institutes have it...” (VS 677).

* “As you have sent me into the world, so I too have sent them into the world” (John 17:18): mission departs from the Eucharist.

* “The Church is a sign taken amongst the peoples for the salvation of all” (Saint Irenaeus).

COMMUNICATIO

(first and only addressee of the Word is the people of God)

* When Blessed Allamano said to his missionaries “I want you to be Sacramentines”, he knew very well that he was addressing himself to people immersed in the apostolate and in every kind of social activity. For him prayer served in multiplying action. He in fact said that more is done in a quarter of an hour after having prayed than in two hours without prayer. That quarter of an hour enjoys divine fecundity and even gushes forth from an ordered mind and from energies put at full disposition.

* The stories of our first missionaries, authentic pioneers, who rooted the Church in Africa with so much prayer, right to the point of at times waking up in the morning still upon the altar’s platform, have always edified me a lot. Brother Thomas had built his carpentry shop on purpose behind the church’s presbytery, so that his work be a continuation of the mass and adoration.