



The Mystery of Faith:

A PASTORAL LETTER ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST

to the Clergy and Faithful of the
Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of Saint Peter



By

Most Reverend Steven J. Lopes, STD

May 26, 2016 | Solemnity of Corpus Christi



The Eucharist is truly at
the heart of our faith.

INTRODUCTION



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Church celebrates the Solemnity of Corpus Christi after having just completed Lent and Easter, liturgical times whose readings and prayers speak eloquently about the paschal mystery which is the heart of our faith. I was ordained as your bishop just before we began the Lenten pilgrimage, and I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the affectionate welcome you have extended to me. It is truly exciting and humbling to be so intimately connected with the Ordinariate and see the faith and vitality of our parish communities!

As we enter now into Trinitytide, I am taking the occasion of this letter to share some reflections with you on the mystery of the Eucharist. The final Encyclical of Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, dealt with this important topic in a particularly eloquent way and expressed the saintly pope's great desire to rekindle a sense of "amazement" before the great mystery of Christ in the Eucharist. My experience working in Rome reading through the inspiring accounts of our priests who have made the difficult yet rewarding journey into full communion with the Catholic Church was a holy exercise. A common thread running through those accounts was the funeral of Pope John Paul, and this is what prompted me to think of his final Encyclical in the context of our Ordinariate. Many of the priests testified that a crucial moment in their journey was experiencing that funeral and seeing in it something about the communion of the Church. I presume this is true for many lay people in our Ordinariate as well: the funeral of the Bishop of Rome manifested the truth that God's Church is truly one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. And yet, as impressive as that papal funeral was, it was in essence what every Catholic funeral is: an occasion to celebrate the Eucharist for the remission of sins and repose of the soul of a deceased Christian, to accompany a disciple homeward with our prayers. The Eucharist is truly at the heart of our faith.

Pope John Paul penned *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* during his final illness as a parting gift to the Church. It is my hope that his words will inspire us all to deepen our love for this, the greatest of the works of the Lord and so I invite you to read this work in its entirety. Here, I would like to excerpt some key paragraphs and reflect with you on what they say to us as members of the Ordinariate about our identity as Catholic Christians and about our particular mission in the Church.

The very first paragraph of the Encyclical underscores the centrality of Eucharist for our life as Christians:

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 she joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20), but 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 towards 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. "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." Consequently the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of his boundless love.

To say that the Church draws her life from the Eucharist is to affirm that Eucharistic communion is fundamentally a gift of God accomplished in the redeeming self-offering of Christ on the cross. As we turn our gaze to Our Lord present in the Sacrament of the Altar, we can contemplate this reality from diverse perspectives: the Mass as a sacrifice; the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; the Eucharistic banquet; the relationship between the Church and the Eucharist; and finally, the Eucharist and the world around us.



The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass



Early on in his Encyclical, Pope John Paul speaks eloquently about the connection between the Eucharistic celebration and Christ's redemptive death on the Cross:

11. When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord's death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and "the work of our redemption is carried out." This sacrifice is so decisive for the salvation of the human race that Jesus Christ offered it and returned to the Father only *after he had left us a means of sharing in it* as if we had been present there. Each member of the faithful can thus take part in it and inexhaustibly gain its fruits.

12. This aspect of the universal charity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is based on the words of the Savior himself. In instituting it, he did not merely say: "This is my body," "this is my blood," but went on to add: "which is given for you," "which is poured out for you" (Lk 22:19-20). Jesus did not simply state that what he was giving them to eat and drink was his body and his blood; he also expressed *its sacrificial meaning* and made sacramentally present his sacrifice which would soon be offered on the Cross for the salvation of all...

The Church constantly draws her life from the redeeming sacrifice; she

approaches it not only through faith-filled remembrance, but also through a real contact, since *this sacrifice is made present ever anew*, sacramentally perpetuated, in every community which offers it at the hands of the consecrated minister. The Eucharist thus applies to men and women today the reconciliation won once for all by Christ for mankind in every age... 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."

As you know, Protestant reformers challenged the Catholic doctrine of the Mass as a sacrifice, leading Archbishop Cranmer in the Thirty-Nine Articles to state: "Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it was commonly said that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits" (Article 31). The Eucharistic controversies of the sixteenth century led to a suspension of the practice of daily Mass in the Church of England, its place taken by the public recitation of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer (Matins and Evensong), certainly treasures of the Anglican patrimony in and of themselves, but detached from their

proper context of the Eucharistic celebration.

Daily celebration of the Eucharist has been restored in some Anglican communities, but it has always been and remains an important feature of Roman Catholic worship. I encourage the faithful of our Ordinariate

to take part in the daily celebration of the Eucharist when possible, especially in the seasons of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter, which set forth the mysteries of our redemption in Christ with particularly rich readings, chants, and prayers.



Christ's real presence in the Eucharist

There is an essential link between the sacrifice of the Mass and presence of Jesus Christ, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine. Saint Louis de Montfort observed:

Eternal Wisdom, on the one hand, wished to prove His love for man by dying in his place in order to save him, but on the other hand, he could not bear the thought of leaving him. So he devised a marvelous way of dying and living at the same time, and of abiding with man until the end of time. In order to satisfy his love, he instituted the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and went to the extent of changing and overturning nature itself.¹

It is not surprising, therefore, that after presenting the relationship between the Eucharist and Calvary, Pope John Paul goes on to speak about the presence of the risen, glorified humanity of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* he says:

15. The sacramental re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice, crowned by the resurrection, in the Mass 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." This sets forth once more 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." Truly the Eucharist is a *mysterium fidei*, a mystery which surpasses our understanding and can only be received in faith, as is often brought out in the catechesis of the Church Fathers regarding 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."

25. The *worship of the Eucharist* outside of 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 of wine remain — derives from the celebration of the sacrifice and is directed towards communion, both sacramental and spiritual. It is the responsibility of Pastors to encourage, also by their personal witness, the practice of Eucharistic

There is an essential link between the sacrifice of the Mass and presence of Jesus Christ, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, under the appearances of bread and wine.

¹ Saint Louis de Montfort, *Love of Eternal Wisdom*, n. 71, in *God Alone: The Collected Writings of Saint Louis Marie de Montfort* (Bay Shore, New York: Montfort Publications, 1987), pg. 68.



The Supper of the Lord

adoration, and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in particular, as well as prayer of adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species.

It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple (cf. *Jn* 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. If in our time Christians must be distinguished above all by the “art of prayer,” 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 Most Holy Sacrament? How often, dear brother and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!

I know that many of you have likewise experienced the consolation and support that flow from prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Such prayer allows us to extend

our communion with Christ beyond the liturgical celebration, bringing to him our needs and those of our loved ones. I am happy to see that adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction are part of the devotional life of many of our communities. I encourage this devotion, which in turn nourishes our deeper participation in the Eucharistic liturgy. Spending time in prayer before the Blessed

Sacrament reserved in Catholic churches wherever we happen to be provides a wonderful opportunity to rejoice in the unity of faith and devotion we enjoy with all the members of the Catholic Church throughout the world.

Love for the Eucharistic Lord has been an incentive for many Anglicans to take the road to full communion with the Catholic Church.

Love for the Eucharistic Lord has been an incentive for many Anglicans to take the road to full communion with the Catholic Church. I would like to share with you a short but moving prayer by Blessed John Henry Newman:

I place myself in the presence of Him, in whose Incarnate Presence I am before I place myself there. I adore You, O my Savior, present here as God and as man, in soul and in body, in true flesh and blood. I acknowledge and confess that I kneel before that Sacred Humanity, which was conceived in Mary’s womb, and lay in Mary’s bosom; which grew up to twelve, wrought miracles, and spoke words of wisdom and peace; which in due season hung on the cross, lay in the tomb, rose from the dead, and now reigns in heaven. I praise, and bless, and give myself wholly to Him, who is the true Bread of my soul, and my everlasting joy. Amen.²

I would also commend to you a set of 31 meditations on the Eucharist penned by another notable Anglican convert, Ronald Knox. It was Msgr. Knox’s custom to deliver the sermon on the feast of Corpus Christi every year at the church of the same name in Maiden Lane, and in the opinion of Fr. Philip Caraman, who edited three volumes of Knox’s sermons, these talks present a most valuable and modern treatise on the Blessed Sacrament.³

² This prayer is found at the beginning of Newman’s *Meditations and Devotions*.

³ These meditations may be found in Monsignor Ronald Knox, *Pastoral Sermons and Occasional Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002). The whole book is well worth a read.

St. Thomas Aquinas called the Mass the *sacrum convivium*, the sacred banquet. When I was a seminarian in California, I used to enjoy contemplating the beautiful stained glass windows in our chapel at St. Patrick’s Seminary. One of these depicted the risen Christ on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, welcoming his disciples to a warm fire on which bread and fish were being prepared. Beneath the picture was the invitation of Our Lord, “Come and have breakfast” (John 21:12). For two thousand years Christ has invited us to come to him, at times discouraged and tired like those fishermen, to find refreshment.

Pope John Paul writes:

16. The saving efficacy of the sacrifice is fully realized when the Lord’s body and blood are received in communion. The Eucharistic Sacrifice is intrinsically directed to the inward union of the faithful with Christ through communion; we receive the very One who offered himself for us, we receive his body which he gave up for us on the Cross and his blood which he “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (*Mt* 26:28).

We are reminded of his words: “As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me” (*Jn* 6:57). Jesus himself reassures us that this union, which he compares to that of the life of the Trinity, is truly realized. *The Eucharist is a true banquet*, in which Christ offers himself as our nourishment. When for the first time Jesus spoke of this food, his listeners were astonished and bewildered, which forced the Master 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” (*Jn* 6:53). This is no metaphorical food: “My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed” (*Jn* 6:55).

22. Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, especially by that full sharing which takes place in sacramental communion. We can say not only that *each of us receives Christ, but also that Christ receives each of us*. He enters into friendship with us: “You are my friends”



We need this heavenly manna as we make our way through the desert of this life on our way to the Promised Land.

(Jn 15:14). Indeed, it is because of him that we have life: “He who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:57). 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” (Jn 15:4).

We need this heavenly manna as we make our way through the desert of this life on our way to the Promised Land. Pope Francis never tires of underscoring the truth that the Eucharist is not a reward for being good; it is a medicine to make us better. We experience the forgiveness of venial sins when we participate in the Holy Eucharist: communion is about relationships, and Christ’s redemptive death heals our relationships with God, our neighbor, and our own deepest selves.

That being said, a desire to receive Christ should also entail a desire for deeper conversion, and there is no surer path to such conversion than the regular celebration of the sacrament of Penance. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* speaks of the intimate connection between these sacraments:

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 gives rise to a continuous need for conversion, for 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” (2 Cor 5:20). If a Christian’s conscience is burdened by serious sin, then the path of penance through the sacrament of Reconciliation becomes necessary for full participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

I am writing this letter to you during this Jubilee Year of Mercy, and our present Holy Father has repeatedly emphasized the importance of our availing ourselves of God’s mercy in the sacrament of reconciliation. When asked, “What are the most important things that a believer should do during the Holy Year of Mercy?” Pope Francis answered: “He should open up to the Mercy of God, open up his heart and himself, and allow Jesus to come toward him by approaching the confessional with faith.”⁴

I urge all of us, clergy and laity alike, to have frequent recourse to confession. To this end, I want to encourage my brother priests to provide ample opportunities for people to come to confession; apart from the celebration of the Eucharist itself, we have no greater calling than to be ministers of God’s mercy in the sacrament of reconciliation.

⁴ Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy* (New York: Random House, 2016), pg. 97. The second chapter of this book deals with “the gift of confession.”

PART FOUR



The Eucharist and the Church

The sacramental life is both profoundly personal and intimate, and at the same time the greatest expression of our communion with one another. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states quite simply, “The Eucharist makes the Church” (CCC 1396).

Pope John Paul writes as follows:

23. Eucharistic communion also confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ. Saint Paul refers to this *unifying power* of participation in the banquet

of the Eucharist 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” (1 Cor 10:16-17). 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 many grains of wheat, and these, albeit unseen, remain nonetheless present, in such a way that their difference is not apparent since they have been made a perfect whole, so too are we mutually joined to one another and together united with Christ.”

39. Furthermore, given the very nature of ecclesial communion and its relation to the sacrament 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, the community, in receiving the Eucharistic presence of the Lord, receives the entire gift of salvation and shows, even in its lasting visible particular form, that it is the image and true presence of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” 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.

I know I am preaching to the choir here: many of you have borne heavy crosses for the sake of coming into full communion with Christ’s Catholic Church. You cherish what many cradle Catholics might take for granted: Eucharistic fellowship with believers throughout the world in union with the Bishop of Rome, the Successor of St. Peter. The very name of our Ordinariate proclaims the importance of this communion with the Chair of St. Peter. Not surprisingly, Pope John Paul touches on this theme, as well:

39. The ecclesial communion of the Eucharistic assembly is a communion with its own *Bishop and with the Roman Pontiff*. The Bishop, in effect, is the visible principle and the foundation of unity within his particular Church. It

would therefore be a great contradiction if the sacrament *par excellence* of the Church’s unity were celebrated without true communion with the Bishop. As Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote: “That Eucharist which is celebrated under the Bishop, or under one to whom the Bishop has given this charge, may be considered certain.”

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,”

communion with him is intrinsically required for the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Hence the great truth expressed which 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 case of the Christian Churches separated from Rome.”

Finally, as concerns the relationship between the Eucharistic Body of Christ and the Mystical Body of Christ, it is good to recall that we are most intimately united with the saints and the faithful departed during the Eucharistic celebration. John Paul writes:

19. The eschatological tension kindled by the Eucharist *expresses and reinforces our communion with the Church in heaven*. It is not by chance that the Eastern Anaphoras and the Latin Eucharistic Prayers honor 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 which 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!” (Rev 7:10). The Eucharist is truly a glimpse of heaven appearing on earth. It is a glorious ray of the heavenly Jerusalem which pierces the clouds of our history

and lights up our journey.

This is why every effort should be made to have beautiful churches and solemn, joyful music. Here I must tell you that you, the members of the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, may be guilty of leading some of my brother priests and bishops to commit the sin of envy: so many of them have told me of how moved they were by the beauty of the liturgical celebrations surrounding my ordination on Candlemas!

Even as we rejoice in a foretaste of Heaven, we also offer the sacrifice of the Mass for the souls of the faithful departed who undergo their final purification before entering the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. This beautiful expression of a charity that is not impeded by death itself was lost sight of in the Reformation. Not only were great centers of holiness, charity, and learning destroyed; so also were chapels dedicated to offering the Eucharist to assist those who had died. No doubt there were elements of superstition and avarice that had corrupted the practice (as the Council of Trent itself acknowledged), but it is a shame that the impulse to extend Eucharistic charity to those who have gone before us in faith was stifled. Even as we rejoice in the assistance of the saints, let us offer our prayerful assistance to our deceased sisters and brothers by having Masses said for the forgiveness of their sins and blessed repose of their souls.

PART FIVE



The Eucharist and the Priesthood

As we contemplate this truly Catholic understanding of the Eucharistic liturgy, allow me to address some words to my brother priests. Pope John Paul’s Encyclical exhorts priests to a “Eucharistic way of life” as a way of describing priestly spirituality. The bond between the Eucharist and the priesthood is very profound indeed. Its

liturgical expression in the Eucharistic sacrifice must be undergirded with a Eucharistic way of life lest we fall into a functionalism that ultimately undermines the Church’s faith and reduces the celebration of Mass to one of many obligations that clamor for our attention in daily ministry. Saint John Paul II addresses this in a poignant passage from *Ecclesia de*

Eucharistia:

31. If the Eucharist is the center and summit of the Church’s life, it is likewise the center 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, which effectively came into being at the moment of the institution of the Eucharist.”

Priests are engaged in a wide variety of pastoral activities. If we also consider the social and cultural conditions of the modern world it is easy to understand how priests face the very real *risk of losing their focus* amid such a great number of different tasks. The Second Vatican Council saw in pastoral charity the bond which gives unity to the priest’s life and work. This, the Council adds, “flows mainly from the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is therefore the center and root of the whole priestly life.” We can understand, then, how important it is for the spiritual life of the priest, as well as for 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.” In this way priests will be able to counteract the daily tensions which lead to a lack of focus and they will find in the Eucharistic Sacrifice — the true center of their lives and ministry — the spiritual strength needed to deal with their different pastoral responsibilities. Their daily activity will thus become truly Eucharistic.

The daily celebration of Mass, along with the prayer of the Divine Office, give orientation and depth to the priestly life. It is the engine which drives not only personal prayer, devotions, and holiness, but also ministry, pastoral care, and evangelism. Eucharistic prayer is the prayer of Christ and the Church, Bridegroom and Bride, in which we are privileged to participate.⁵ If we do not allow

⁵ While Mass is offered “for” the people present and is therefore by its nature pastoral, it is also a participation in the prayer of Christ and the Church. As Pope John Paul affirms, its value is not diminished even if the faithful are unable to participate. Priests offer Mass for the intentions of the living and deceased, so we should not limit the horizon of our vision to those persons present in the pews. The spiritual welfare of the priest himself is also a motivation for daily celebration. Note that there is a provision in *Divine Worship: The Missal* for the celebration of Mass without a congregation, even in Catholic churches that are not part of the Ordinariate.

the Lord to nourish us regularly with his Word and Body, how are we to nourish our people with a lively sense of the Lord’s presence and action? Rather, the vision put forth in the Encyclical proposes that a Eucharistic way of life, lived authentically and joyfully, will do more to deepen faith in the Real Presence and in the sacred institution of the priesthood than any tract or catechism.

A Eucharistic way of life is also open to the universality of Christ’s Church in addition to the particularity of individual parishes and communities. When you stand at the altar, you are the visible link between your congregation and the other communities of our Ordinariate, and with me as the bishop of this flock. Our communion with the universal Church is expressed by my association with the worldwide College of Bishops, with and under Peter. This is why it is customary to mention both the supreme pastor of Christ’s Church and the Ordinariate’s own particular pastor during the Eucharistic Prayer.

Given the geographical challenges we face in our far-flung diocese, it is essential that we use every means at hand to deepen a sense of the solidarity of the *presbyterium* of the Ordinariate — an awareness that you form a College of priests around your bishop. As in other matters, profound truths such as this one have their liturgical expression. It is in this context I would like to reflect upon the practice of *concelebration*.

As you well know, the concelebration of Holy Mass was restored to the Latin Rite of the Church by the Second Vatican Council precisely to express this solidarity of the *presbyterium*. The logic underlying this restoration is underscored by the fact that certain liturgical celebrations by their very nature prescribe concelebration among priests. These include the Ordination of a bishop and of priests, the blessing of an abbot, and the Chrism Mass.⁶ At the same time, the practice of concelebration has not sat

⁶ Cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 199.

A Eucharistic way of life, lived authentically and joyfully, will do more to deepen faith in the Real Presence and in the sacred institution of the priesthood than any tract or catechism.



easily in the experience of the Church in the years following the Council. For many years, concelebration was rather vociferously opposed by the Church's more progressive voices who, misunderstanding the nature of Sacred Orders, took offence at this concrete manifestation of "clericalism." In recent years, the Church's more traditional voices have raised objections, arguing that the practice somehow obscures the orientation of the sacrificial offering. Perhaps particularly in larger liturgical celebrations, the intimate connection between the concelebrating priest and the gifts offered on the altar is less immediate.

I do not come to these reflections as a passive observer. For 11 years of my priesthood I served as residential secretary to a bishop and in academic environments, which effectively meant I concelebrated Mass nearly every day except Sundays. While there were moments of great beauty and spiritual consolation in this practice, on the whole this was not at all an easy experience for me and prompted deep reflection on the theological, spiritual, and canonical foundations of concelebration. I conclude that there is indeed great wisdom to the logic of concelebration as articulated by the Council, that is, the manifestation of the communion of the Order of Presbyters with the bishop. The challenge is in the careful application of this logic, understanding thereby when concelebration is appropriate or beneficial, and when perhaps not.

We have already noted those moments when the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which also governs *Divine Worship*, requires concelebration. Applying the logic of the unity of the *presbyterium*, concelebration is also strongly recommended at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday, the funeral Masses of clergy, conventual Masses of monasteries and religious orders, and Masses at meetings/assemblies of clergy when the bishop is the principal celebrant. "Recommended" means recommended: as a general rule, priests should feel welcome — even encouraged — to concelebrate at certain celebrations. At the same time priests should not feel themselves obligated to concelebrate, but in making that choice they should also be attentive to any possible confusion between the clerical and lay states both in their dress and manner of participation in the Mass.⁷ Balance and a good liturgical sense is needed to understand the nature of a given celebration, recalling that the unity of the *presbyterium* is a good in itself and an eloquent witness to the community of the Church.

⁷ Even when not concelebrating, the ontological nature and dignity of the priesthood is the overarching context for the priest's participation in the Eucharistic celebration. A priest participating at Mass but not concelebrating should wear appropriate choir dress. Choir dress includes wearing the priestly stole for the reception of Holy Communion or for any other manner of direct participation in the celebration (preaching, assisting in the distribution of Holy Communion, etc.). Non-concelebrating priests should be seated together in a designated location and avoid simply taking a place in the pews amongst the lay faithful.

PART SIX



The Eucharist and the World

The Eucharistic celebration inspires us to "seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1), but it also urges us make Christ present in the world around us. In a manner of speaking, the roof of the church disappears

during the Canon of the Mass and we commune in heavenly realities. At the end of the celebration the doors and walls disappear too as we tell our faithful to "depart" so that the mystery celebrated might become the truth and joy proclaimed to a waiting world. The theme

of our going out to encounter and evangelize has certainly been a leitmotif of the papacy of Pope Francis as he often speaks of going to the margins. But his predecessors have also urged us to do this; and in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul teaches:

20. A significant consequence of the eschatological tension inherent in the Eucharist is also the fact that it 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" (*Rev* 21:1), but this increases, rather than lessens, *our sense of responsibility for the world today*. I wish to reaffirm this forcefully at the beginning of the new millennium, so that Christians will feel more obliged than ever not to neglect their duties as citizens in this world. Theirs is the task of contributing with the light of the Gospel to the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God's plan.

And again:

22. By its union with Christ, the People of the New Covenant, far from closing in upon itself, becomes a "sacrament" for humanity, a sign and instrument of the salvation achieved by Christ, the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. *Mt* 5:13-16), for the redemption of all. The Church's mission stands in continuity with the mission of Christ: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (*Jn* 20:21). From the perpetuation of the sacrifice of the Cross and her communion with the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church draws the spiritual power needed to carry out her mission. The Eucharist thus appears as 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.

Just as we recognize the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and respond in faith, so we see him in others and respond in charity. This was at the heart of the remarkable life of Mother

Teresa of Calcutta, who combined ardent devotion to the Eucharist with heroic service to the poorest of the poor.

This association extends all through the centuries of the Church's life. Near the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament in the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption in San Francisco where I was ordained to the priesthood there is a plaque containing the words of Cardinal Newman I quoted earlier. On the opposite wall is another plaque, which reads:

FOR THE POOR

Do you want to honor Christ's body?
Then do not scorn Him in His nakedness,
nor honor him here in church with silken
garments
while neglecting Him outside where He is cold
and naked.
For He who said: This is my body,
and made it so with His words, also said:
You saw Me hungry and did not feed Me.
What we do here in the church requires a pure
heart:

what we do outside requires great dedication.
SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Share with your neighbor whatever you have,
And do not say of anything, this is mine.
If you both share an imperishable treasure,
how much more must you share what is what
perishable.

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS

"If you both share an imperishable treasure, how much more must you share what is perishable." The Eucharist is the infinitely-renewable source of energy for the Church's efforts for justice and charity. We call this liturgy by many names, but the characteristic title in the West has been the Mass, from the Latin word *missa* — to be sent out. It is not ourselves alone who are missioned: it is Christ himself, whom we receive in the Eucharist, and whom, like Mary, we carry to others.

Just as we recognize the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and respond in faith, so we see him in others and respond in charity.



As we leave the joyful season of Easter, let us do so with the conviction that the risen Christ is with us until the end of age (Mt 28:20). He is with us in many ways, but above all in the precious gift of his very Body and Blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist. I hope that this letter will in some way encourage you to reflect on the gift of God in the Holy Eucharist so that you might truly be amazed by the graciousness and abundance of that gift. This is, after all, why the dying Pope John Paul wrote his final Encyclical. Let us together heed his gracious and stirring invitation:

60. Every commitment to holiness, every activity aimed at carrying out the Church's mission, every work of pastoral planning, must draw the strength it needs from the Eucharistic mystery and in turn 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 overcome 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 which takes place after receiving communion or in a prayerful moment of Eucharistic adoration apart from Mass. These are times when the Church is firmly built up and it becomes clear what she truly is: 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.

† Steven J. Lopes

Bishop of the Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter

May 26, 2016

Solemnity of Corpus Christi

Liturgical Guidelines for Concelebration

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, Chapter IV, Section II (paragraphs 199-251) provides detailed instruction for priests on the “how” of concelebration. This is to ensure a proper celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and provides rubrical consistency so that the unity of the *presbyterium* is highlighted by concelebration, not undermined by it. Some “translation” of the *General Instruction* is needed in applying it to the particular situation of *Divine Worship: The Missal*. It begins with two general principles:

217. After the *Sanctus* (*Holy, Holy, Holy*), the concelebrating priests continue the Eucharistic Prayer in the way described below. Only the principal celebrant makes the gestures, unless other indications are given.

218. The parts pronounced by all the concelebrants together and especially the words of Consecration, which all are obliged to say, are to be recited in such a manner that the concelebrants speak them in a low voice and that the principal celebrant's voice is heard clearly. In this way the words can be more easily understood by the people.

It is a praiseworthy practice for the parts that are to be said by all the concelebrants together and for which musical notation is provided in the Missal to be sung.

As regards the Roman Canon, the *General Instruction* says:

219. In Eucharistic Prayer I, or the Roman Canon, the *Te igitur* [*Therefore, most merciful Father*] is said by the principal celebrant alone, with hands extended.

220. It is appropriate that the commemoration (*Memento*) of the living and the *Communicantes* [*In communion with those*] be assigned to one or other of the concelebrating Priests, who then pronounces these prayers alone, with hands extended, and in a loud voice.

221. The *Hanc igitur* [*We beseech thee then, O Lord*] is said once again by the principal celebrant alone, with hands extended.

222. From the *Quam oblationem* [*Vouchsafe, O God we beseech thee*] up to and including the *Supplices* [*We humbly beseech thee, Almighty God*], **the principal celebrant alone makes the gestures**, while all the concelebrants pronounce everything together, in this manner:

- the *Quam oblationem* [*Vouchsafe, O God we beseech thee*] with hands extended toward the offerings;
- the *Qui pridie* [*Who the day before he suffered*] and the *Simili modo* [*Likewise, after supper*] with hands joined;
- the words of the Lord, with each extending his right hand toward the bread and toward the chalice; and at the elevation looking toward them and after this **bowing profoundly** (not genuflecting);
- the *Unde et memores* [*Wherefore, O Lord, we thy servants*] and the *Supra quae* [*Vouchsafe to look upon them*] with hands extended;
- for the *Supplices* [*We humbly beseech thee, Almighty God*] up to and including the words *at this partaking of the altar* bowing with hands joined; then standing upright and crossing themselves at the words *may be filled with every heavenly benediction and grace*.

223. It is appropriate that the commemoration (*Memento*) of the dead and the *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* [*To us sinners also, thy servants*] be assigned to one or other of the concelebrants, who pronounces them alone, with hands extended, and in a loud voice.

224. At the words *To us sinners also, thy servants*, all the concelebrants strike their breasts.

225. The *Per quem haec omnia* [*Through Jesus Christ our Lord; through whom*] is said by the principal celebrant alone.

Regarding the Alternative Eucharistic Prayer, the *General Instruction* indicates:

226. The part *Truly thou art Holy, O Lord* is pronounced by the principal celebrant alone, with hands extended.

227. In the parts from *Make holy, therefore, these gifts* to the end of *Humbly we pray*, all the concelebrants pronounce everything together as follows:

- the part *Make holy, therefore, these gifts*, with hands extended toward the offerings;
- the parts *At the time he was betrayed* and *Likewise with hands* joined;
- the words of the Lord, with each extending his right hand toward the bread and toward the chalice, if this seems appropriate; and at the elevation looking toward them and after this **bowing profoundly**;
- the parts *Therefore, as we celebrate* and *Humbly we pray* with hands extended.

228. It is appropriate that the intercessions for the living, *Remember, Lord, thy Church*, and for the dead, *Remember also our brethren*, be assigned to one or other of the concelebrants, who pronounces them alone, with hands extended, and in a loud voice.



The Mystery of Faith:

A PASTORAL LETTER ON THE HOLY EUCHARIST



www.ordinariate.net

www.facebook.com/CSPOrdinariate | media@ordinariate.net | 713.609.9292