

RECTOR'S LETTER

August 8, 2021

Sacramentum Caritatis

Dear Friends in Christ:

Anh chị em thân mến trong Chúa Kitô:

Estimados Amigos y Amigas en Cristo:

While I will share my own reflections in my preaching, during these five weeks of reflection on the Eucharist in the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John, also known as the Bread of Life Discourse, I would like to take the opportunity to share from the wisdom of Pope Benedict XVI on the sacred topic of the Eucharist and its place at the heart of Catholic life. Last week, I shared some reflections from Pope St. John Paul II and his letter Dominicae Cena. In 2007, Pope Benedict's 2007 promulgated a Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation titled Sacramentum Caritatis ("Sacrament of Charity"). In this excerpt, which begins with a reflection on John 6:51 as we hear at the end of today's Gospel, Pope Benedict speaks of the Eucharist as a mystery to be offered to the world:

"The bread I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51). In these words the Lord reveals the true meaning of the gift of his life for all people. These words also reveal his deep compassion for every man and woman. The Gospels frequently speak of Jesus' feelings towards others, especially the suffering and sinners (cf. Mt 20:34; Mk 6:34; Lk 19:41). Through a profoundly human sensibility he expresses God's saving will for all people – that they may have true life. Each celebration of the Eucharist makes sacramentally present the gift that the crucified Lord made of his life, for us and for the whole world. In the Eucharist Jesus also makes us witnesses of God's compassion towards all our brothers and sisters. The eucharistic mystery thus gives rise to a service of charity towards neighbour, which 'consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, affecting even my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ.' In all those I meet, I recognize brothers or sisters for whom the Lord gave his life, loving them 'to the end' (Jn 13:1). Our communities, when they celebrate the Eucharist, must become ever more conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is for all, and that the Eucharist thus compels all who believe in him to become 'bread that is broken' for others, and

to work for the building of a more just and fraternal world. Keeping in mind the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, we need to realize that Christ continues today to exhort his disciples to become personally engaged: 'You yourselves, give them something to eat' (Mt 14:16). Each of us is truly called, together with Jesus, to be bread broken for the life of the world.

The union with Christ brought about by the Eucharist also brings a newness to our social relations: 'this sacramental mysticism is social in character.' Indeed, 'union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own.' The relationship between the eucharistic mystery and social commitment must be made explicit. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion between brothers and sisters who allow themselves to be reconciled in Christ, who made of Jews and pagans one people, tearing down the wall of hostility which divided them (cf. Eph 2:14). Only this constant impulse towards reconciliation enables us to partake worthily of the Body and Blood of Christ (cf. Mt 5:23-24). In the memorial of his sacrifice, the Lord strengthens our fraternal communion and, in a particular way, urges those in conflict to hasten their reconciliation by opening themselves to dialogue and a commitment to justice. Certainly, the restoration of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness are the conditions for building true peace. The recognition of this fact leads to a determination to transform unjust structures and to restore respect for the dignity of all men and women, created in God's image and likeness. Through the concrete fulfilment of this responsibility, the Eucharist becomes in life what it signifies in its celebration. As I have had occasion to say, it is not the proper task of the Church to engage in the political work of bringing about the most just society possible; nonetheless she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the struggle for justice. The Church 'has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper.' (88-89)

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, we place all our trust in You. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



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Rector & Parish Administrator

