

## Pope's Homily at Close of Year of the Eucharist

"We Must Start Again From the Eucharist"



VATICAN CITY, OCT. 23, 2005 ([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)).- Here is the homily Benedict XVI delivered in Italian, Polish, Ukrainian and Spanish during the Mass that closed the Synod on the Eucharist and the Year of the Eucharist, and in which he canonized five new saints.

Venerated Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood!

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

On this 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time, our Eucharistic celebration is enriched for various reasons that impel us to give thanks to God. Concurrently, the Year of the Eucharist and the Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops have come to an end, dedicated to this Eucharistic mystery in the life and mission of the Church, while, shortly, five blessed will be proclaimed saints: the Bishop Jozef Bilczewski, the priests Gaetano Catanoso, Zygmunt Gorazdowski and Alberto Hurtado Cruchaga, and the **religious Capuchin Felice of Nicosia**.

Today is also World Mission Sunday, a yearly appointment that reawakens the impulse for the mission in the ecclesial community. With joy, I greet all those present, first the synodal fathers, and then the pilgrims who have come from various nations, together with their pastors, to celebrate the new saints. Today's liturgy invites us to the contemplation of the Eucharist as the source of holiness and spiritual nourishment for our mission in the world: This supreme "gift and mystery" manifests and communicates the fullness of God's love to us.

The word of the Lord, echoed just now in the Gospel, reminded us that all of divine law is summarized in love. The dual commandment to love God and neighbor encloses the two aspects of a sole dynamism of the heart and of life. Jesus thus achieves the ancient revelation, not in adding an unedited commandment, but by realizing in himself and in his own salvific action the living synthesis of the two great words of the old covenant: "You will love your God the Lord with all your heart ..." and "you will love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).

In the Eucharist, we contemplate the sacrament of this living synthesis of the law: Christ gives us, with himself, the full realization of the love for God and the love for our brothers. And this love of his, he communicates to us when we are nourished by his Body and his Blood. This is when what St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians in today's reading is achieved: "You broke with the worship of false gods and became the servants of the living and true God" (1 Thessalonians 1:9). This conversion is the beginning of the path of holiness that the Christian is called to achieve in his own existence.

The saint is he who is so fascinated by the beauty of God and by his perfect truth to be progressively transformed by it. Because of this beauty and truth, he is ready to renounce everything, even himself. The love of God is enough, which he experiences in the humble and disinterested service to the neighbor, especially to those who cannot give back in return.

How providential, in this perspective, is the fact that today the Church points out to all its members five new saints who, nourished by Christ the living bread, were converted to love and modeled their whole existence to this! In different situations and with different charisms, they loved the Lord with all their heart and the neighbor as themselves to thus become "an example to all believers" (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

St. Jozef Bilczewski was a man of prayer. The holy Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, meditation, the rosary and the other pious practices formed part of his daily life. A particularly long time was dedicated to Eucharistic adoration. Even St. Zygmunt Gorazdowski became famous for the devotion founded on the celebration and adoration of the Eucharist. Living Christ's offering urged him toward the sick, the poor and the needy.

The deep knowledge of theology, faith and Eucharistic devotion of Jozef Bilczewski made him an example for priests and a witness for all the faithful. Zygmunt Gorazdowski, in founding the Association of Priests, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph and other charitable institutions, always let himself be guided by the spirit of communion, which is fully revealed in the Eucharist.

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart. You must love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39). This was the program of life of St. Alberto Hurtado, who wished to identify himself with the Lord and love the poor with his same love. The formation received in the Society of Jesus, consolidated by prayer and adoration of the Eucharist, allowed him to be conquered by Christ, being the true contemplative in action. In love and in the total commitment to God's will, he found the strength for the apostolate.

He founded The Home of Christ for the most needy and for those without a roof, offering them a family atmosphere full of human warmth. In his priestly ministry, he emphasized simplicity and availability toward others, being the living image of the teacher, "docile and humble of heart." At the end of his days, amid the strong pains from his illness, he still had the strength to repeat: "Content, Lord, content," thus expressing the joy with which he always lived.

St. Gaetano Catanoso was a worshipper and apostle of the Holy Face of Christ. "The Holy Face," he said, "is my life. He is my strength." With joyful intuition he fostered this devotion to Eucharistic piety. He would express himself with these words: "If we wish to adore the Real Face of Jesus ... we can find it in the divine Eucharist where, with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the face of our Lord is hidden under the white veil of the Host."

Daily Mass and frequent adoration of the Sacrament of the Altar were the soul of his priesthood: With ardent and untiring pastoral charity he dedicated himself to preaching, to catechesis, to the ministry of confession, to the poor, to the sick, to the care of priestly vocations. To the Veronican Sisters of the Holy Face, which he founded, he transmitted the spirit of charity, of humility and of sacrifice, which enlivened his entire existence.

St. Felice of Nicosia loved to repeat during all joyous or sad circumstances: "Be it for the love of

God." Thus we can well understand how intense and concrete in him was the experience of the love of God revealed to men in Christ. This humble Capuchin Friar, illustrious son of the land of Sicily, austere and penitent, faithful to the most genuine expressions of the Franciscan tradition, was gradually modeled and transformed by the love of God, lived and realized in the love for the neighbor. Father Felice helps us to discover the value of the little things that make our lives more precious, and he teaches us to grasp the meaning of family and of service to the brothers, showing that true and lasting joy, which every human being's heart desires, is the fruit of love.

Dear and venerated synodal fathers, for three weeks we lived together in a climate of renewed Eucharistic fervor. Now I would like, with you and in the name of the entire episcopacy, to send a fraternal greeting to the bishops of the Church in China.

With deep sadness we felt the lack of their representatives. I would like to assure all the Chinese priests that we are close with prayer to them and to their priests and faithful. The suffering path of the communities, entrusted to their pastoral care, is present in our hearts: This will not remain fruitless, because it is a participation in the paschal mystery, to the glory of the Father.

The synodal work allowed us to deepen the salient aspects of this mystery, given to the Church from the beginning. Contemplation of the Eucharist must urge all members of the Church, in the first place the priests, ministers of the Eucharist, to revive their commitment of faith. The celibacy that the priests received as a precious gift and the sign of the undivided love toward God and the neighbor is founded upon the Eucharistic mystery, celebrated and adored.

Eucharistic spirituality must also be the interior motor of any activity for the lay persons, and no dichotomy is admissible between faith and life in their mission of spreading the spirit of Christianity in the world.

While the Year of the Eucharist is coming to an end, how can we not give thanks to God for the many gifts given to the Church during this time? And how can we not take up, once again, the invitation by the beloved Pope John Paul II to "start again from Christ"? Just as the disciples of Emmaus who, with hearts warmed by the words of the Risen One and illuminated by his living presence, recognized in the breaking of the bread, without pause returned to Jerusalem and proclaimed Christ's resurrection, we too must take up the path again, animated by the fervent desire to give witness to the mystery of this love that gives hope to the world.

In this Eucharistic perspective, today's World Mission Sunday is well situated, to which the venerated Servant of God John Paul II gave as a theme for reflection: "Mission: Bread broken for the life of the world."

The ecclesial community, when celebrating the Eucharist, especially on the Lord's Day, is always more conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is "for many" (Matthew 26:28) and the Eucharist urges the Christian to be the "broken bread" for others, to commit oneself for a more just and more brotherly world. Even today, faced with the crowds, Christ continues to exhort his disciples: "Give them something to eat yourselves" (Matthew 14:16) and, in his name, the missionaries proclaim and witness the Gospel, at times even to the sacrifice of life.

Dear friends, we must start again from the Eucharist. May Mary help us, a Eucharistic woman, to be in love with it, help us to "remain" in the love of Christ, to be intimately renewed by him. Docile to the action of the Spirit and attentive to man's needs, the Church then will be a greater beacon of light, of true joy and hope, achieving fully her mission as the "sign and instrument of the unity of the whole human race" ("Lumen Gentium," No. 1).

[Original text: multilingual. Translation issued by the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. Slightly adapted here.]

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