

69. In considering the importance of eucharistic reservation and adoration, and reverence for the sacrament of Christ's sacrifice, the Synod of Bishops also discussed the question of the proper placement of the tabernacle in our churches. (196) The correct positioning of the tabernacle contributes to the recognition of Christ's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, the place where the eucharistic species are reserved, marked by a sanctuary lamp, should be readily visible to everyone entering the church. It is therefore necessary to take into account the building's architecture: in churches which do not have a Blessed Sacrament chapel, and where the high altar with its tabernacle is still in place, it is appropriate to continue to use this structure for the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist, taking care not to place the celebrant's chair in front of it. In new churches, it is good to position the Blessed Sacrament chapel close to the sanctuary; where this is not possible, it is preferable to locate the tabernacle in the sanctuary, in a sufficiently elevated place, at the centre of the apse area, or in another place where it will be equally conspicuous. Attention to these considerations will lend dignity to the tabernacle, which must always be cared for, also from an artistic standpoint. Obviously it is necessary to follow the provisions of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal in this regard. (197) In any event, final judgment on these matters belongs to the Diocesan Bishop.

70. The Lord Jesus, who became for us the food of truth and love, speaks of the gift of his life and assures us that "if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever" (Jn 6:51). This "eternal life" begins in us even now, thanks to the transformation effected in us by the gift of the Eucharist: "He who eats me will live because of me" (Jn 6:57). These words of Jesus make us realize how the mystery "believed" and "celebrated" contains an innate power making it the principle of new life within us and the form of our Christian existence. By receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ we become sharers in the divine life in an ever more adult and conscious way. Here too, we can apply Saint Augustine's words, in his Confessions, about the eternal Logos as the food of our souls. Stressing the mysterious nature of this food, Augustine imagines the Lord saying to him: "I am the food of grown men; grow, and you shall feed upon me; nor shall you change me, like the food of your flesh, into yourself, but you shall be changed into me." (198) It is not the eucharistic food that is changed into us, but rather we who are mysteriously transformed by it. Christ nourishes us by uniting us to himself; "he draws us into himself."(199)

Here the eucharistic celebration appears in all its power as the source and summit of the Church's life, since it expresses at once both the origin and the fulfilment of the new and definitive worship of God, the *logiké latreía*. (200) Saint Paul's exhortation to the Romans in this regard is a concise description of how the Eucharist makes our whole life a spiritual worship pleasing to God: "I appeal to you therefore, my brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom 12:1). In these words the new worship appears as a total self-offering made in communion with the whole Church. The Apostle's insistence on the offering of our bodies emphasizes the concrete human reality of a worship which is anything but disincarnate. The Bishop of Hippo goes on to say that "this is the sacrifice of Christians: that we, though many, are one body in Christ. The Church celebrates this mystery in the sacrament of the altar, as the faithful know, and there she shows them clearly that in what is offered, she herself is offered." (201) Catholic doctrine, in fact, affirms that the Eucharist, as the sacrifice of Christ, is also the sacrifice of the Church, and thus of all the faithful. (202) This insistence on sacrifice – a "making sacred" – expresses all the existential depth implied in the transformation of our human reality as taken up by Christ (cf. Phil 3:12).

The all-encompassing effect of eucharistic worship

71. Christianity's new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here the intrinsically eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape. The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by

day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace to reflect the image of the Son of God (cf. Rom 8:29ff.). There is nothing authentically human – our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds – that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of God is the living man (cf. 1 Cor 10:31). And the life of man is the vision of God. (203)

iuxta dominicam viventes – living in accordance with the Lord's Day

72. From the beginning Christians were clearly conscious of this radical newness which the Eucharist brings to human life. The faithful immediately perceived the profound influence of the eucharistic celebration on their manner of life. Saint Ignatius of Antioch expressed this truth when he called Christians "those who have attained a new hope," and described them as "those living in accordance with the Lord's Day" (*iuxta dominicam viventes*). (204) This phrase of the great Antiochene martyr highlights the connection between the reality of the Eucharist and everyday Christian life. The Christians' customary practice of gathering on the first day after the Sabbath to celebrate the resurrection of Christ – according to the account of Saint Justin Martyr (205) – is also what defines the form of a life renewed by an encounter with Christ. Saint Ignatius' phrase – "living in accordance with the Lord's Day" – also emphasizes that this holy day becomes paradigmatic for every other day of the week. Indeed, it is defined by something more than the simple suspension of one's ordinary activities, a sort of parenthesis in one's usual daily rhythm. Christians have always experienced this day as the first day of the week, since it commemorates the radical newness brought by Christ. Sunday is thus the day when Christians rediscover the eucharistic form which their lives are meant to have. "Living in accordance with the Lord's Day" means living in the awareness of the liberation brought by Christ and making our lives a constant self-offering to God, so that his victory may be fully revealed to all humanity through a profoundly renewed existence.

Living the Sunday obligation

73. Conscious of this new vital principle which the Eucharist imparts to the Christian, the Synod Fathers reaffirmed the importance of the Sunday obligation for all the faithful, viewing it as a wellspring of authentic freedom enabling them to live each day in accordance with what they celebrated on "the Lord's Day." The life of faith is endangered when we lose the desire to share in the celebration of the Eucharist and its commemoration of the paschal victory. Participating in the Sunday liturgical assembly with all our brothers and sisters, with whom we form one body in Jesus Christ, is demanded by our Christian conscience and at the same time it forms that conscience. To lose a sense of Sunday as the Lord's Day, a day to be sanctified, is symptomatic of the loss of an authentic sense of Christian freedom, the freedom of the children of God. (206) Here some observations made by my venerable predecessor John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (207) continue to have great value. Speaking of the various dimensions of the Christian celebration of Sunday, he said that it is *Dies Domini* with regard to the work of creation, *Dies Christi* as the day of the new creation and the Risen Lord's gift of the Holy Spirit, *Dies Ecclesiae* as the day on which the Christian community gathers for the celebration, and *Dies hominis* as the day of joy, rest and fraternal charity.

Sunday thus appears as the primordial holy day, when all believers, wherever they are found, can become heralds and guardians of the true meaning of time. It gives rise to the Christian meaning of life and a new way of experiencing time, relationships, work, life and death. On the Lord's Day, then, it is

fitting that Church groups should organize, around Sunday Mass, the activities of the Christian community: social gatherings, programmes for the faith formation of children, young people and adults, pilgrimages, charitable works, and different moments of prayer. For the sake of these important values – while recognizing that Saturday evening, beginning with First Vespers, is already a part of Sunday and a time when the Sunday obligation can be fulfilled – we need to remember that it is Sunday itself that is meant to be kept holy, lest it end up as a day "empty of God." (208)

The meaning of rest and of work

74. Finally, it is particularly urgent nowadays to remember that the day of the Lord is also a day of rest from work. It is greatly to be hoped that this fact will also be recognized by civil society, so that individuals can be permitted to refrain from work without being penalized. Christians, not without reference to the meaning of the Sabbath in the Jewish tradition, have seen in the Lord's Day a day of rest from their daily exertions. This is highly significant, for it relativizes work and directs it to the person: work is for man and not man for work. It is easy to see how this actually protects men and women, emancipating them from a possible form of enslavement. As I have had occasion to say, "work is of fundamental importance to the fulfilment of the human being and to the development of society. Thus, it must always be organized and carried out with full respect for human dignity and must always serve the common good. At the same time, it is indispensable that people not allow themselves to be enslaved by work or to idolize it, claiming to find in it the ultimate and definitive meaning of life." (209) It is on the day consecrated to God that men and women come to understand the meaning of their lives and also of their work. (210)

Sunday assemblies in the absence of a priest

75. Rediscovering the significance of the Sunday celebration for the life of Christians naturally leads to a consideration of the problem of those Christian communities which lack priests and where, consequently, it is not possible to celebrate Mass on the Lord's Day. Here it should be stated that a wide variety of situations exists. The Synod recommended first that the faithful should go to one of the churches in their Diocese where the presence of a priest is assured, even when this demands a certain sacrifice. (211) Wherever great distances make it practically impossible to take part in the Sunday Eucharist, it is still important for Christian communities to gather together to praise the Lord and to commemorate the Day set apart for him. This needs, however, to be accompanied by an adequate instruction about the difference between Mass and Sunday assemblies in the absence of a priest. The Church's pastoral care must be expressed in the latter case by ensuring that the liturgy of the word – led by a deacon or a community leader to whom this ministry has been duly entrusted by competent authority – is carried out according to a specific ritual prepared and approved for this purpose by the Bishops' Conferences. (212) I reiterate that only Ordinaries may grant the faculty of distributing holy communion in such liturgies, taking account of the need for a certain selectiveness. Furthermore, care should be taken that these assemblies do not create confusion about the central role of the priest and the sacraments in the life of the Church. The importance of the role given to the laity, who should rightly be thanked for their generosity in the service of their communities, must never obscure the indispensable ministry of priests for the life of the Church. (213) Hence care must be taken to ensure that such assemblies in the absence of a priest do not encourage ecclesiological visions incompatible with the truth of the Gospel and the Church's tradition. Rather, they should be privileged moments of prayer for God to send holy priests after his own heart. It is touching, in this regard, to read the words of Pope John Paul II in his Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 1979 about those places where the faithful, deprived of a priest by a dictatorial regime, would meet in a church or shrine, place on the altar a stole which they still kept and recite the prayers of the eucharistic liturgy, halting in silence "at the moment that corresponds to the transubstantiation," as a sign of how "ardently they desire to hear the words that only the lips of a priest can efficaciously utter." (214) With this in mind, and considering the incomparable good which

comes from the celebration of the Eucharist, I ask all priests to visit willingly and as often as possible the communities entrusted to their pastoral care, lest they remain too long without the sacrament of love.

A eucharistic form of Christian life, membership in the Church

76. The importance of Sunday as the *Dies Ecclesiae* brings us back to the intrinsic relationship between Jesus' victory over evil and death, and our membership in his ecclesial body. On the Lord's Day, each Christian rediscovers the communal dimension of his life as one who has been redeemed. Taking part in the liturgy and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ intensifies and deepens our belonging to the one who died for us (cf. 1 Cor 6:19ff; 7:23). Truly, whoever eats of Christ lives for him. The eucharistic mystery helps us to understand the profound meaning of the *communio sanctorum*. Communion always and inseparably has both a vertical and a horizontal sense: it is communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters. Both dimensions mysteriously converge in the gift of the Eucharist. "Wherever communion with God, which is communion with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit, is destroyed, the root and source of our communion with one another is destroyed. And wherever we do not live communion among ourselves, communion with the Triune God is not alive and true either." (215) Called to be members of Christ and thus members of one another (cf. 1 Cor 12:27), we are a reality grounded ontologically in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist, a reality that demands visible expression in the life of our communities.

The eucharistic form of Christian life is clearly an ecclesial and communitarian form. Through the Diocese and the parish, the fundamental structures of the Church in a particular territory, each individual believer can experience concretely what it means to be a member of Christ's Body. Associations, ecclesial movements and new communities – with their lively charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit for the needs of our time – together with Institutes of Consecrated Life, have a particular responsibility for helping to make the faithful conscious that they belong to the Lord (cf. Rom 14:8). Secularization, with its inherent emphasis on individualism, has its most negative effects on individuals who are isolated and lack a sense of belonging. Christianity, from its very beginning, has meant fellowship, a network of relationships constantly strengthened by hearing God's word and sharing in the Eucharist, and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

Spirituality and eucharistic culture

77. Significantly, the Synod Fathers stated that "the Christian faithful need a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and their daily lives. Eucharistic spirituality is not just participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life." (216) This observation is particularly insightful, given our situation today. It must be acknowledged that one of the most serious effects of the secularization just mentioned is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living – "as if God did not exist" – is now evident to everyone. Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived "according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:4ff.; cf. Gal 5:16, 25). It is significant that Saint Paul, in the passage of the Letter to the Romans where he invites his hearers to offer the new spiritual worship, also speaks of the need for a change in their way of living and thinking: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). In this way the Apostle of the Gentiles emphasizes the link between true spiritual worship and the need for a new way of understanding and living one's life. An integral part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life

is a new way of thinking, "so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14).

The Eucharist and the evangelization of cultures

78. From what has been said thus far, it is clear that the eucharistic mystery puts us in dialogue with various cultures, but also in some way challenges them. (217) The intercultural character of this new worship, this *logiké latreía*, needs to be recognized. The presence of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are events capable of engaging every cultural reality and bringing to it the leaven of the Gospel. It follows that we must be committed to promoting the evangelization of cultures, conscious that Christ himself is the truth for every man and woman, and for all human history. The Eucharist becomes a criterion for our evaluation of everything that Christianity encounters in different cultures. In this important process of discernment, we can appreciate the full meaning of Saint Paul's exhortation, in his First Letter to the Thessalonians, to "test everything; and hold fast to what is good" (5:21).

The Eucharist and the lay faithful

79. In Christ, Head of his Body, the Church, all Christians are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people he claims for his own, to declare his wonderful deeds" (1 Pet 2:9). The Eucharist, as a mystery to be "lived", meets each of us as we are, and makes our concrete existence the place where we experience daily the radical newness of the Christian life. The eucharistic sacrifice nourishes and increases within us all that we have already received at Baptism, with its call to holiness, (218) and this must be clearly evident from the way individual Christians live their lives. Day by day we become "a worship pleasing to God" by living our lives as a vocation. Beginning with the liturgical assembly, the sacrament of the Eucharist itself commits us, in our daily lives, to doing everything for God's glory.

And because the world is "the field" (Mt 13:38) in which God plants his children as good seed, the Christian laity, by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, and strengthened by the Eucharist, are called to live out the radical newness brought by Christ wherever they find themselves. (219) They should cultivate a desire that the Eucharist have an ever deeper effect on their daily lives, making them convincing witnesses in the workplace and in society at large. (220) I encourage families in particular to draw inspiration and strength from this sacrament. The love between man and woman, openness to life, and the raising of children are privileged spheres in which the Eucharist can reveal its power to transform life and give it its full meaning. (221) The Church's pastors should unfailingly support, guide and encourage the lay faithful to live fully their vocation to holiness within this world which God so loved that he gave his Son to become its salvation (cf. Jn 3:16).

The Eucharist and priestly spirituality

80. The eucharistic form of the Christian life is seen in a very special way in the priesthood. Priestly spirituality is intrinsically eucharistic. The seeds of this spirituality are already found in the words spoken by the Bishop during the ordination liturgy: "Receive the oblation of the holy people to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's Cross." (222) In order to give an ever greater eucharistic form to his existence, the priest, beginning with his years in the seminary, should make his spiritual life his highest priority. (223) He is called to seek God tirelessly, while remaining attuned to the concerns of his brothers and sisters. An intense spiritual life will enable him to enter more deeply into communion with the Lord and to let himself be possessed by God's love, bearing witness to that love at all times, even the darkest and most difficult. To this end I join the Synod Fathers in recommending "the daily celebration of Mass, even when the faithful are not present." (224) This recommendation is consistent with the objectively infinite value of every celebration of the Eucharist, and is motivated by the Mass's unique spiritual fruitfulness. If celebrated in a faith-filled and

attentive way, Mass is formative in the deepest sense of the word, since it fosters the priest's configuration to Christ and strengthens him in his vocation.

The Eucharist and the consecrated life

81. The relationship of the Eucharist to the various ecclesial vocations is seen in a particularly vivid way in "the prophetic witness of consecrated men and women, who find in the celebration of the Eucharist and in eucharistic adoration the strength necessary for the radical following of Christ, obedient, poor and chaste." (225) Though they provide many services in the area of human formation and care for the poor, education and health care, consecrated men and women know that the principal purpose of their lives is "the contemplation of things divine and constant union with God in prayer." (226) The essential contribution that the Church expects from consecrated persons is much more in the order of being than of doing. Here I wish to reaffirm the importance of the witness of virginity, precisely in relation to the mystery of the Eucharist. In addition to its connection to priestly celibacy, the eucharistic mystery also has an intrinsic relationship to consecrated virginity, inasmuch as the latter is an expression of the Church's exclusive devotion to Christ, whom she accepts as her Bridegroom with a radical and fruitful fidelity. (227) In the Eucharist, consecrated virginity finds inspiration and nourishment for its complete dedication to Christ. From the Eucharist, moreover, it draws encouragement and strength to be a sign, in our own times too, of God's gracious and fruitful love for humanity. Finally, by its specific witness, consecrated life becomes an objective sign and foreshadowing of the "wedding- feast of the Lamb" (Rev 19:7-9) which is the goal of all salvation history. In this sense, it points to that eschatological horizon against which the choices and life decisions of every man and woman should be situated.

The Eucharist and moral transformation

82. In discovering the beauty of the eucharistic form of the Christian life, we are also led to reflect on the moral energy it provides for sustaining the authentic freedom of the children of God. Here I wish to take up a discussion that took place during the Synod about the connection between the eucharistic form of life and moral transformation. Pope John Paul II stated that the moral life "has the value of a 'spiritual worship' (Rom 12:1; cf. Phil 3:3), flowing from and nourished by that inexhaustible source of holiness and glorification of God which is found in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist: by sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross, the Christian partakes of Christ's self-giving love and is equipped and committed to live this same charity in all his thoughts and deeds" (228). In a word, "'worship' itself, eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented" (229).

This appeal to the moral value of spiritual worship should not be interpreted in a merely moralistic way. It is before all else the joy-filled discovery of love at work in the hearts of those who accept the Lord's gift, abandon themselves to him and thus find true freedom. The moral transformation implicit in the new worship instituted by Christ is a heartfelt yearning to respond to the Lord's love with one's whole being, while remaining ever conscious of one's own weakness. This is clearly reflected in the Gospel story of Zacchaeus (cf. Lk 19:1-10). After welcoming Jesus to his home, the tax collector is completely changed: he decides to give half of his possessions to the poor and to repay fourfold those whom he had defrauded. The moral urgency born of welcoming Jesus into our lives is the fruit of gratitude for having experienced the Lord's unmerited closeness.