

## Eucharist and life

To live the Eucharist is to let oneself go, to let oneself be caught by the wave of Christ Jesus and follow it. Let yourself go without your programmes, without the schemes of your itineraries. Don Tonino Bello says: I would like to exhort you, dear brothers, to a more surrendered type of life. Feel yourselves to be free men, men who are not stuck to a system"; we are to be aware of being the body of Christ crucified. The Eucharist is to be lived up to its very depth.

### Final Prayer

Almighty, eternal God, I come to the sacrament of your only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: come close like a patient to the doctor, who restores him to life, like the impure to the fond of mercy, like the blind to the light of the eternal splendour, like the poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. I beg your great and immense generosity so that you may cure my evil, may wash away my stains, may enrich my poverty, may clothe my nakedness, and I may receive the bread of the Angels, the King of kings, the Lord of lords with so much reverence and humility, with so much devotion and contrition, with purity and faith, with such resolutions and good intentions as required for the health of my soul.

Grant me, I beg you, to receive not only the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord, but also the grace and the virtue of the sacrament. O most meek God, grant me to receive the Body of your only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was born from the Virgin Mary, so that I may merit to be incorporated in his mystical body, and to be numbered among his members. O most loved Father, grant me to contemplate finally, with an open face, for eternity, your beloved Son, whom I wish to receive now in my earthly journey under the veils of the mystery. He who lives and reigns with you in the union with the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen

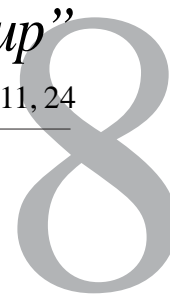
cards of formation



*“every time you eat  
this bread  
and drink this cup”*

Lk 11, 24

To the re-discovery  
of the mystery of the Eucharistic



## To begin...



*“The highest dignity of man consists in his vocation to the communion with God”(GS,19). The relation with God in Christ must reach so much intimacy and depth as to become communion, communication and donation of life.*

*Christian life in its multiple expressions is always and essentially life of communion with God. He who discovers this fundamental truth is like the merchant of the Gospel parable: he sells everything, leaves behind everything, frees himself from all that would be an obstacle for him and sets off in search of the true face of God. He seeks him, and him alone. He loves him, and him alone. God alone can satisfy his hunger and thirst for the truth, for the infinite absolute.*

*The Sacred Scripture, word of God, becomes his favourite and habitual guide, he tries to catch in it the features of the face of his beloved; the silent, prolonged and incessant prayer is its major occupation; in prayer he invokes, begs, shouts his name, and waits for an answer from him whom he seeks night and day.*

*Where to discover the reason of this special vocation if not in contemplating the Eucharist, where the love of God for man is disclosed?“*

## SIGNS and GESTURES

to be re-discovered

### Agape

The Greek word agape means “charity”. As used in the N.T. it is to be understood above all as love that comes from God. It is the fraternal meeting of the original community based on eating together fraternally, generally in relation with the Eucharist. Today we use it to mean a banquet in which the sense of living together in charity prevails.

## To reflect

*From the Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia, by John Paul II*

The Eucharist thus appears as the culmination of all the sacraments in perfecting our communion with God the Father by identification with his only-begotten Son through the working of the Holy Spirit. With discerning faith a distinguished writer of the Byzantine tradition voiced this truth: in the Eucharist “unlike any other sacrament, the mystery [of communion] is so perfect that it brings us to the heights of every good thing: here is the ultimate goal of every human desire, because here we attain God and God joins himself to us in the most perfect union”.

Our longing for the goal of unity prompts us to turn to the Eucharist, which is the supreme sacrament of the unity of the People of God, in as much as it is the apt expression and the unsurpassable source of that unity. In the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice the Church prays that God, the Father of mercies, will grant his children the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that they may become one body and one spirit in Christ. In raising this prayer to the Father of lights, from whom comes every good endowment and every perfect gift (cf. *Jas* 1:17), the Church believes that she will be heard, for she prays in union with Christ her Head and Spouse, who takes up this plea of his Bride and joins it to that of his own redemptive sacrifice.

The banquet of the Christians is the memorial of the Paschal banquet of Jesus. Along the centuries, the supper of the Lord is repeated and renewed. Till which time? What sense does this proclamation of the Lord's death have today? The remembrance of the first coming of the Lord, at the end of which he celebrated the holy supper, leads the Apostle to recall to mind his return. The work begun with Incarnation will one day have its completion. The present time is between the beginning, that has founded the new covenant, and its fulfillment that will see the realization of the promises. The celebration of the Eucharist affirms in its way the character of this condition: it remembers the past coming and announces the future one. It is inseparably both the memory of the death of Christ and the waiting for the glorious manifestation of his kingdom.

This meal, which the community consumes, is an *anàmnesis*, since it refers to that one that Jesus took on the night he was immolated. At the same time it is a repetition, an *actualization*, because even today the Lord consumes it with his own and he continues to donate to them bread and wine. Finally, it is a prophecy, an *anticipation*, since the presence of the Lord in this banquet is veiled to our eyes, while one day it will be manifest and we shall contemplate it in glory. In this sense, the Eucharistic banquet announces the messianic one, in which the community of saints will participate in the kingdom of God. The faithful, therefore, are to put the holy supper in relation with the first one that the Lord celebrated, and at the same time with the last one which he will celebrate with them, once they enter the glory. Here lies the source of the great dignity of the Eucharistic celebration and the demand of a worthy celebration (1 Co, 11).

1 Co 11, 27-32: Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

He who does not receive the bread and the cup as the body and blood of Christ, who donates them, partakes in the Eucharist unworthily: he who comes to eat at the banquet of the Lord just as at any other banquet, and does not recognize the value of an efficacious sign of this bread and this cup, evidently profanes them. He who does not see in it the sign of sacrifice of the Lord, opposes himself to the will and the divine design and is associated to those who have opposed Jesus to the extent of making him die. This is what St. Paul wants to say by stating that he who partakes unworthily to the Eucharistic banquet is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; he crucifies once again the Son of God (Hebrew 6, 6:10, 29). The faithful, therefore, is to test himself, namely he is to examine his feeling; let him judge himself, so that he may not be judged and condemned by the Lord. He who eats and drinks unworthily, betrays the Lord. He eats and drinks his own condemnation.

## The Word of God

1Co 10:16

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing 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. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

### REFLECTION

“Our soul is the bride of the immortal bridegroom. The sacraments are the nuptial union: in fact when we eat his body and drink his blood, He is in us and we in him”.  
(*St. Efrem*).

## Self Formation

### The supper of the Lord according to St. Paul- II part

The bread and the wine, distributed by the Lord on the night in which he was immolated, were the prophetic and efficacious sign of what the redeeming will of God was just going to realize, once for all, in the history of his Son. The Mass that is prepared in his memory has the same meaning.

After the saving event of Christ, the bread and the wine keep the meaning they had before the event, in a prophetic and anticipated way; they are the visible and efficacious signs of redemption and of the new covenant. To participate in the bread and in the cup offered by Christ at his banquet, means to open oneself to the richness of redemption, so that they may become personal to each faithful; it means to open oneself to the action of the Holy Spirit, who takes possession of and renews salvation in each one. Bread is, thus, the sign of the body of Christ offered for our sins. By eating it the believer places himself in the redeeming design that the death of Christ has manifested and realized, and the Holy Spirit works in him a real communion with Christ, immolated for the salvation of men. Paul can tell the Corinthians: "Isn't the bread we break the communion with the body of Christ?" As he states, it is the bread that we break, since the bread is not a communion with the body of Christ if not for those who break it according to his intentions, and it is a saving sign only for those who go close to his table in the interior attitude of a disciple.

In its turn, the cup is truly the sign of the blood of the covenant, that Christ has founded with his death. By partaking in the cup, the Christian inserts himself in God's plan of salvation, that spares the sinners and restores them to the happiness of his kingdom. The Spirit works in them a real communion with Christ elevated in glory. Paul can say, "Isn't the cup of the blessing with which we render thanks, communion with the blood of Christ?"

This cup, in fact, is the sign of the new covenant, for the reconciled sinner introduced to the new covenant, instituted thanks to the blood of Christ; it is an efficacious sign because to it the action of God corresponds in the faithful through the Holy Spirit. The cup of blessing is, thus, really communion with the blood

## SIGNS and GESTURES

### KOINONIA

The koinonia (communion) is the unity of the Christian community in faith, in preaching, in the sacraments, in prayer, in the service to the poor, in fraternal life.

### UNITY

The supreme value concerning deeply the Christian community. The church of Christ is *one and unique*, because he instituted only one church and, consequently, all his followers are called to live united around the same head. Paul speaks of this unity and compares it to a body made up of different members (1 Co 12, 12-29). It concretises in a particular way around the Eucharist (1Co 10,17).

of the new covenant. "The sharing in the blood of Christ consists in having part with all that his blood operates".

This interpretation, however, must be deepened in the light of the doctrine of the real presence contained in the words of Paul. The Eucharistic cup and the broken bread are "communion" with the body and with the blood of Christ. Now, "the word *communion (koinònia)* indicates that all that the bread and the cup communicate is not a means to enter communion, but the object itself with which we enter communion". In the Eucharist we nourish ourselves with Christ, who, if in his glorious aspect is definitely present before God, in his Eucharistic aspect He can really communicate himself to the faithful.

a) "A unique body"- The reality of the communion with Christ is still more evident, if we consider its consequences on the plan of the relation among the believers. If the multitude of the members of the Church form one body, it is because the numerous members are constituted in unity by their communion with the unique body, who is Christ. This, in fact, is the effect of the Eucharist: it turns a multitude into one body" (1 Co 10).

1 Co 10, 17: As there is one loaf, so we, although there are many of us, are one single body: for we all share in the one loaf.

Paul does not limit himself in considering the symbolism of a unique bread on the table, whose parts are distributed to all. He deepens the image by going back to the One whom the symbol manifests: behind the parts of the distributed bread, he sees God who distributes them, The fact that there is only one bread means that there is only one Lord to welcome to his banquet, and only one banquet where the body of Christ is offered to the faithful. The multitude of those who partake in the supper of the Lord, partakes in the same bread as a sign of the same sacrifice. This multitude is unified by the redeeming work of Christ and by his love. He has given his blood for it. He has acquired the people of the believers and has aggregated it to himself, constituting it in unity, since it joins all of them to himself as to the unique redeemer. One man only has died for all, and only one bread signifies this unique sacrifice: one bread only, one Lord, one church. It is, therefore absurd that the believers of Corinth may partake in the banquet of idols: this would cause the fracture of the communion with Christ and of the unity of the church. To approach the banquet of the devils means to deny Christ as Lord and the church as community.

In conclusion, the Eucharist symbolizes and actuates *the unity of the church*: all the faithful and each of them are in communion with the unique body of Christ, and all united among themselves, they form altogether that unique body.

d) *Eschatological sacrament.* - St. Paul makes another important statement about the Eucharist: by sharing the Eucharistic banquet, we announce the death of the Lord, until he comes (1 Co, 11).

1 Co 11,26: Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes in glory.