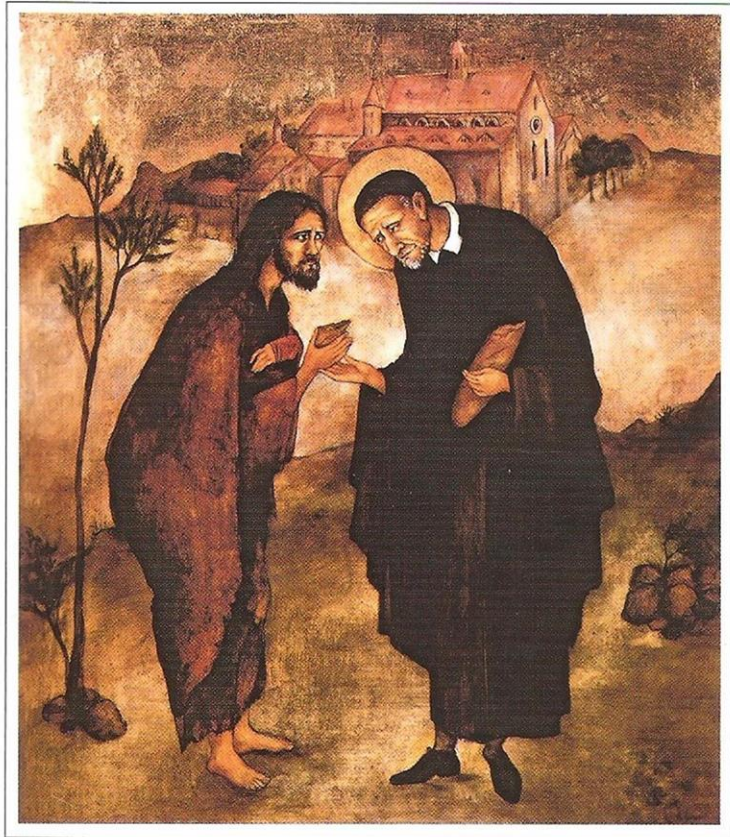


# VINCENTIANA

49<sup>th</sup> YEAR - N. 1

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2005



## A Vincentian Reflection on the Eucharist

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

GENERAL CURIA

# HOLY SEE

**Appointment.** The *Holy Father* has appointed **Fr. David M. O'Connell, C.M.**, as *Consultor for the Congregation of Catholic Education* for five years. The *Holy See* made public this news on 29 January, although **Fr. Thomas McKenna**, *Visitor of the Eastern Province, USA*, had already made it known on 20 January. **Fr. O'Connell** is presently the 14<sup>th</sup> *President of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.* He holds a doctorate in *Canon Law* from the Catholic University of America with a specialization in *Catholic Higher Education*. He has been an open supporter of the *Pastoral Constitution, "Ex Corde Ecclesiae"* of **Pope John Paul II** and its full implementation within the Catholic academy.

**Member of the Congregation for Bishops.** The *Holy See* announced that the **Holy Father** has named **Msgr. Franc Rodé, C.M.**, *Archbishop Emeritus of Ljubljana* and *Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, a member of the *Congregation for Bishops* (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 February 2005).



# GENERAL CURIA

Rome, January 4, 2005  
Feast of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

*To the members of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

This circular has to do with some of the conclusions of our latest *tempo forte* meeting, which was held from 13-17 December, with two additional days on 22 and 23 December.

- 1) We decided to have an **extraordinary council meeting** that will be held from 21-23 February to discuss and reflect on all the matters dealing with our most recent General Assembly: the document itself, the evaluation of the General Assembly, a deeper discussion of the ordinances, postulata that were presented (especially that recommended to the Superior General and his council), etc.
- 2) A date was established for an ordinary council meeting to take a look at the final draft of the **newly revised *Directory for the Directors of the Daughters of Charity***. We discussed the possibility of a training program for new Directors. That matter will be discussed further, after having heard the opinion of the Mother General and her council.
- 3) We also discussed the possibility of **preparing someone as Archivist and Procurator General**, who would eventually replace Fr. Rolando DelaGoza.
- 4) We treated financial matters, with a **full report from the Treasurer General**. Among the things that we studied, reviewed, made recommendations about and approved were the budgets for the Vincentian Family Office, the Vincentian Family Website, the CM UN NGO Representative, the Vincentian Solidarity Office. We also approved the budget for the History of the Congregation that is being prepared by two of our confreres and the budget of SIEV. We also reviewed, made proposals, and

approved the budgets for the international missions of the Solomon Islands and El Alto, Bolivia. We also reviewed the annual Mission Fund Distribution, within the Treasurer General's report, and made the decision that **the presidents of CLAPVI, COVIAM and APVC will be sent a formulary for Mission Fund Distribution**, to help with the meetings of the Visitors themselves and also meetings that have to do with the formation of formators. A letter will be written to each of the presidents explaining this decision.

- 5) Following the Treasurer General's report, other reports were made. The first was from Brother Peter Campbell, who was present from **the Vincentian Solidarity Office**. The Vincentian Solidarity Office is handling more than 15 major projects, submitted from different provinces. Brother Peter made a proposal to the council to begin micro-project grants up to \$5000 with the Vincentian Solidarity Fund. Revenue sources for micro-project grants are the contributions made by confreres, local communities, and provinces to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund in response to the appeal of the Superior General in October of last year. A letter explaining the micro-project grants will be sent to all the confreres, through their Visitors, from the administrator, Brother Peter Campbell. **One of the novelties of these micro-project grants** is that the requests can be submitted **in Spanish, French or English**, the three official languages of the Congregation. This differs from the policy for major Vincentian Solidarity Office projects.
- 6) The council also reviewed **the report of the Vincentian Family website**, submitted by its webmaster, Fr. John Freund. Among the different things discussed was how to encourage provinces, Visitors, confreres to send information to the website so that we can more effectively tell the story of how we are living out our charism in serving the poor. In a later circular I will speak at greater length concerning this issue.
- 7) We also reviewed **the report from the NGO at the United Nations** presented by Fr. Joseph Foley, who is the representative of the Congregation there. The report in itself was extremely interesting and we are asking his permission to publish it on the Vincentian Family website. In summary, advocacy work happens most effectively when it is done in committed working groups, with products that are seen as credible. An individual NGO can rarely have the same impact as an effective committee. You are all encouraged to check out the website that the Congregation has for the NGO with the following address: [www.cm-ngo.net](http://www.cm-ngo.net)
- 8) We received **a full report from SIEV**. The Superior General and his council continue to support SIEV as an instrument for

helping to spread the knowledge of the Congregation of the Mission and its charism among our members and other members of the Vincentian Family. The possibility of inviting one of the members of the CIF team to participate as a member of SIEV was discussed and will be presented to both SIEV and CIF for their consideration.

- 9) Fr. José Antonio Ubillús discussed with us a memorandum with regard to the **CIF program**, where we continue to see its importance for all members of the Congregation. Once again, we encourage all Visitors to take seriously the invitation that their confreres participate in this program of our Vincentian heritage. I will also touch on this matter in a later circular.
- 10) With regard to the **Office of Vincentiana and Nuntia**, we welcomed, for the first time, its new representative, Fr. Alfredo Becerra. Among the things discussed was how to develop a deeper working relationship between the Office of *Vincentiana* and *Nuntia* and the office of the Delegate for the Vincentian Family. We also discussed with Alfredo his role as the link between the Curia and the Vincentian Family website and, in particular, how to develop the Congregation of the Mission piece of that website.
- 11) We then discussed the **missions. The first agenda item in this regard was a study of the responses to the questionnaire** that was sent out to all those who participated in the international missions that were or are at the present moment. Of the 42 questionnaires that were sent, we received 20 responses. The missions included were Tanzania, Bolivia, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Russia. We want to thank all the confreres who participated in this questionnaire. Their responses helped us a great deal in reflecting on the Congregation's work in the international missions. Later on it is hoped that the Assistant General for the Missions, Fr. José Antonio Ubillús, can give us a synthesis of the responses to the questionnaire.
- 12) We next reviewed the documentation with regard to **new volunteers for the missions** and those who responded to the Mission Appeal Letter from the Superior General in October.
- 13) Reports and/or information from the following missions were reviewed: El Alto (Bolivia), Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands. We also discussed a communication from our confrere Humberto Sinka, who is working in Angola, as well as letters received from a bishop in Equatorial Guinea and one in Esmeraldas, Ecuador.

The week of 13-17 having concluded, we had to continue the *tempo forte* on Wednesday, the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and Thursday, the 23<sup>rd</sup>. On those days we treated the following material.

- 14) We talked about the **International Meeting of Visitors** which will be held in **2007**. This was just an initial dialogue, at which we considered places and possible dates for that meeting. We decided that a letter would be written to six different provinces, asking them to fill out a questionnaire and, with that information, we will make a decision about the exact place and date of the next International Meeting of Visitors.
- 15) We reviewed the list of new Visitors and possible new Visitors between now and 2006. We determined that the **next session for new Visitors will be in January 2006**. The exact dates will be announced later.
- 16) We discussed **the ordinances promulgated by the former Superior General. It was decided that these ordinances will stand as they are**. This means that, as stated in the ordinance of 1999 with regard to language, **all our students, during their time of formation, will study a second language, English, French or Spanish, with a goal of being able to understand and speak it**. Also the ordinance of 2001 with regard to the **finance committee being established in each province of the Congregation of the Mission** will stand as is. In a later ordinary council meeting, both of these ordinances and related issues will be discussed, but at this time **this is the official announcement that the ordinances stand as they are**.
- 17) The official appointment and their beginning dates and terminating dates were established for the Office of *Vincentiana* and *Nuntia*, as well as the Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family and the official starting date for the new Secretary General, Juan Carlos Cerquera. He has just arrived here at the Curia and attended his first council meeting on 22 December. For the Office of *Vincentiana* and *Nuntia*, the official beginning date for Fr. Alfredo Becerra will be 1 January 2005. His office will be evaluated after three years. With regard to the Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family, Fr. Manuel Ginete, his official date for initiating in this role is 1 January 2005. The recommendation is that it would be for a period up to and including the next General Assembly and evaluated after the first three years. With regard to the new Secretary General, who is presently in a period of transition with the former Secretary General, Fr. José María Nieto, the official date of beginning will be 25 January 2005. His term of office will be according to what is stated in our Constitutions.
- 18) The last point to mention is the Assistants to the Superior General have submitted a partial list of their visits to the provinces which will be studied by the Superior General and discussed with them individually.

It is the intention of the Superior General and his council to present for the review of the members of the Congregation of the Mission matters discussed in our *tempo forte* that have to do with issues related to the Congregation of the Mission in general. The Visitors are encouraged, as with all communication from the Curia, to send to each missionary of their province this circular. To all the members of the Congregation of the Mission, any questions or comments of material read herein can be directed to the Curia, via e-mail: [cmcuria@tin.it](mailto:cmcuria@tin.it)

Thank you very much.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." in a cursive script.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

*Superior General*



Rome, January 7, 2005

*To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

At an ordinary meeting of the General Council, we made the following decisions with regard to the tsunami catastrophe in the area of the Indian Ocean.

1. We will give a donation for concrete projects that have already been presented, with the condition that those receiving the donation will give reports so that we can later inform the donors.
2. We at the General Curia are willing to serve as intermediaries, receiving money from donating provinces and then channeling that money to those projects which are already established or will be established.
3. At the end of January, at the meeting of the heads of the Vincentian Family, I will ask that this topic be discussed so that we might see how we can work together as a Vincentian Family this year and for the next few years, because this will be a long-range project.

I thank each of you who have written to express your concern for the victims of the earthquake and resulting tsunamis and asking how you might help. I know I can count on your aid for all those who are suffering from the effects of this disaster. We continue to keep them in our prayer.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
*Superior General*

Rome, January 25, 2005  
Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul  
Foundation of the Congregation of the Mission

*To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission*

The Visitor is the one who has the primary responsibility that the Vincentian charism — which is revealed as an experience of the Spirit and transmitted from the Founders to their disciples — be lived, safe-guarded, deepened and constantly developed by the confreres of his province in harmony with the Mystical Body of Christ, in a continuous process of growth (*A Practical Guide for the Visitor*, no. 10).

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

This Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, when we celebrate the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission, gives us the opportunity to reflect on our identity. Our recent General Assembly, in July 2004, invited us to look at our Vincentian identity today in light of the Constitutions. Throughout this circular, I will refer indirectly to a number of points from the Final Document, but my main objective is to focus on five aspects dealing concretely with our identity and the need to deepen it.

The first point has to do with a commitment I made personally with the young confreres during the General Assembly. It was the desire on my part, as well as on the part of the delegates who were present, to establish a communication network. I would like to present some of the ideas we discussed in a meeting following the dialogue with the young delegates.

Secondly, I would like to talk a little bit about formation, ongoing formation in general, and, in particular, our CIF program.

Thirdly, I want to speak about our Vincentian Family website and how we might be able to improve it as a way of telling our story and helping one another to discover our identity as it is lived out today.

Fourthly, one of the ways of deepening our identity is through unique experiences, surprising experiences, uncommon experiences and seeing how God uses these to help us discern who we are as Vincentians. In this point I want to highlight the project, which is also open to other members of the Vincentian Family, that our

confreres in the Province of China have carried on for a number of years, that of teaching English in the Chinese universities.

Fifthly, I want to touch on the importance not only of coming to discover our identity, but also of sharing that identity with others, passing it on. Here I would like to focus on passing it on to other members of the Vincentian Family, but especially to our younger members in the Vincentian Marian Youth.

## I. Network with the younger missionaries

With regard to the first point, I would like to establish a contact network with the younger confreres of the Congregation throughout the world. This is a particular concern of mine, both because of my own personal experience as Coordinator of the Mission in Panama and formator, and later as Visitor of the Province of Central America, and also because of what I heard in the meeting with the young delegates at the General Assembly, that is, the need for deepening our identity, our sense of belonging to the Congregation of the Mission.

In provinces that are considered developing provinces, provinces that are growing, provinces that are relatively young, there is a need for, as we heard on a number of occasions throughout the General Assembly, a greater sense of accompaniment. Many times the formators themselves are very young and, being so, it is sometimes difficult for them to give the accompaniment which a young man needs in his time of formation. This is certainly a responsibility of all confreres, especially the Visitor, as is indicated in our Constitutions and in the *Practical Guide for the Visitor*. We must have a special concern for those in formation and that concern should be extended to all younger confreres, those newly ordained or newly professed missionaries. These, when missioned for the first time, often find themselves lost, alone, even unaccompanied. Hopefully this is not because of a lack of concern on the part of the other confreres of the local communities, but perhaps because of overcommitment in their service to the poor. As Superior General, I want to do all that I can to support the young men in formation and even the young missionaries, especially those between one and 15 years of profession or ordination, and to help them deepen their own sense of identity, their sense of belonging to the Congregation of the Mission.

In provinces that are developed and aging, many times young confreres find themselves alone, as was stated by one of the delegates at the General Assembly. He looks back and sees no one behind him in the formation programs and that creates a great sense of solitude. At times too, because personnel numbers are so low, confreres are dispersed in their works and sometimes overworked. This too can make a young confrere feel alone or unaccompanied. My first call is to the Visitors, along with the local superiors, to pay special attention

to young confreres, those newly missioned. Yet I want to do my part as well in that accompaniment.

Concretely, in a meeting that I had with two of the delegates, after my gathering with all the young delegates at the General Assembly, we came up with some ideas to help establish a networking relationship between the Superior General and the young confreres of the Congregation of the Mission.

- 1) We discussed setting up a multi-language website. This website will be created in the Province of Fortaleza. Its contents will focus on ongoing formation: human and psychological formation, vocational promotion, pictures, missions, etc. The website then will be linked to the official website of the Vincentian Family.
- 2) We talked about periodic circulars from the Superior General that would seek to animate, congratulate, inform and support young missionary confreres.
- 3) The following is a proposal for the network of “articulators,” who will later be confirmed with the approval of their Visitors. First there will be the general “articulator,” then five “articulators”: USA, Latin America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and then regional “articulators.” In each region throughout the world, a young missionary would be a representative of his region and would be in contact with a general “articulator,” who, in turn, would have regular, direct contact with the Superior General. I will be making contact with the Visitors of the confreres that we have considered as possible “articulators” of their region.
- 4) Another point that we talked about in the meeting was to publish, in *Nuntia*, a report of the international gathering, held during the Assembly, with the young missionaries. Fr. Alfredo Becerra has already gathered the material to be published at a later date.
- 5) We discussed initiating provincial or regional meetings. We hope too that we would be able to have an international gathering at some point in time.
- 6) One of the final points that we spoke of in the initial meeting was to limit the age of “young” missionaries to 1-15 years of profession for brothers and 1-15 years of ordination for priests.

Hopefully the networking of younger missionaries can contribute to a deepening of their belonging to the Congregation of the Mission.

## II. Initial and ongoing formation

The Final Document of the General Assembly is very clear about the importance of offering formation according to the model of Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor. We can deepen the knowledge of our identity as Vincentians through study, through provincial, interprovincial and even international meetings, and through animating confreres to participate in spiritual exercises and retreats (cf. GA 2004 Final Document, III, 1). Each of the Visitors' Conferences at the General Assembly presented specific, concrete measures for coming to a greater knowledge of our identity through ongoing formation, in addition to initial formation.

**As Superior General, I want to encourage all Visitors to continue to promote, among the members of their provinces, participation in our CIF program.** I give the program my full support as a real, concrete way to flesh out who we are as Vincentians in the world today, as I said clearly in our General Assembly during the dialogue session with the Superior General and the new Council.

In addition to the CIF program we also have the opportunity to deepen the knowledge of our own identity as Vincentians, in a personal way, through Vincentian writings, those that are published in *Vincentiana* and elsewhere, and through the investigations and projects that are developed and promoted by **SIEV** (International Secretariat of Vincentian Studies), which exists to animate, inform and promote everything regarding Vincentian studies. It is in contact with the provincial and interprovincial organisms of the Congregation of the Mission and with the entire Vincentian Family.

SIEV is looking into the possibility of helping us come to a better knowledge of the Constitutions, as is hoped for in a number of places in the Final Document of the General Assembly.

On the level of Visitors' Conferences, there are any number of possibilities for ongoing formation that the Conferences or provinces can offer for further education in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul. There is no excuse not to have a better understanding of our Vincentian charism today because of the many opportunities that are presented from ground level all the way up to and including the General Curia. I encourage Visitors to take advantage of these opportunities so that we might be strengthened in our Vincentian identity today.

### **III. The Vincentian Family Website; the CM Section ([www.famvin.org/cm](http://www.famvin.org/cm))**

As you saw in the report from the most recent *tempo forte*, our decision was to continue encouraging Visitors, as well as the different Visitors' Conferences, to send information to the websites, whether in English, Spanish or French. We, as a Council, have made a recommitment to promoting the website. I personally see it as a way of being able to tell our story, to get it out there, and to let people read about it. It can inspire, encourage, animate and even be a way of attracting vocations to help us continue this great heritage that we have received from St. Vincent de Paul. Take a look at the website and see all the new and exciting things that are happening in the Congregation and in the Family. There are many ways that can inspire us to be more committed to our call to be evangelizers of the poor. I repeat: let us get out there and tell the story, acknowledging that the grace of what we do comes from God who has made possible this little Company. Lately, especially in 2004, the persons responsible for the website have made a great effort in developing the Congregation of the Mission section within the general Vincentian Family website. Now I think that it is important and necessary that these efforts be continued with the collaboration of all the provinces. So I invite all Visitors to send information from the provinces, especially that which has to do with the Congregation of the Mission.

### **IV. Program for teaching English in China**

I am speaking primarily to the Visitors of English-speaking provinces. I encourage you to contemplate participating in this unique, "hidden" way of coming to understand our identity. If you want to know more, look at the different issues of the bulletin from the province, *China Sparks*, which contains a number of testimonies as to how our identity is more clearly understood in and through the English program. **Applications for September 2005 must be made by March 2005; contact Thomas Sendlein, CM: [VTPTeach@aol.com](mailto:VTPTeach@aol.com), under subject type: Teach and, in the e-mail please identify yourself.**

### **V. Passing on who we are**

Hopefully we can continue to develop a willingness to share what we know of who we are and pass it on to others, other members of the Vincentian Family, members of the different institutions where we labor. Passing on our identity, not only helps to enrich others, it also helps us come to an even clearer sense of who we are. I would like to put special emphasis on passing that identity on to the younger members of the Vincentian Family. I am speaking

specifically of the Vincentian Marian Youth movement. We do that in a very specific way through the role of moderators. But all the members of the Congregation in general are encouraged to accompany young people, whether it be in our own formation programs or among young missionaries or young members of the different branches of the Vincentian Family. In sharing it, we strengthen it.

## Conclusion

There are many other ways that we can deepen our identity as members of the Congregation of the Mission. Certainly the best way of all is to get out there and walk with the poor and let them evangelize us, for the poor reflect back to us who we are. Once again I encourage each Visitor to send this circular to the members of his province. I, as always, will be happy to receive any comments, opinions, positive criticisms, and, of course, ideas about other ways that we can deepen our identity.

I conclude with a quote from the Final Document of the General Assembly:

*Congregation of the Mission, be who you are! Do not yield to mediocrity! Fan into a flame the fire within! Like St. Vincent, walk passionately in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, Evangelizer of the poor. Give new life to your charism, the gift that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to you. Work tirelessly to go beyond the boundaries of your mission! Full of conviction, give witness to and spread the vitality of your vocation!*

May Mary, the best disciple of Jesus Christ, continue to walk with us and help us to identify ourselves more deeply with her Son, Jesus Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
Superior General

Paris, January 30, 2005

## **INTERNATIONAL VINCENTIAN FAMILY**

To our brothers and sisters in Asia,

Gathered together near the Virgin of the Rue du Bac and the shrine of Saint Vincent de Paul, we, the Heads of the Vincentian Family are united with you in mind, heart and prayer.

How we would like to be side by side with you — Daughters of Charity, members of the Congregation of the Mission, of the AIC, of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, of the Marian Vincentian Youth and of MISEVI — who are living and serving in Asia at this difficult time, doing all you can to help the survivors of the worst disaster of our times!

However, it is not possible for us to come and be with you! Nevertheless, this simple letter is an expression of our desire to join hands with you in the service of these afflicted people.

If any of you, yourselves, have lost dear ones, be assured that we share your sorrow.

Through these simple words of ours may you recognise the burning love that Saint Vincent has placed in our hearts: a courageous, hope-filled love inspiring us to act in a practical, concrete way among the poorest of the poor.

More than ever, your ministry of charity is essential in order to keep alight the little flame of hope. Only Christ, who died on the cross and rose again, can give meaning to a situation that has no meaning. Your hands, reaching out to hold the hands of the disaster victims, will keep that hope alight.

The whole Vincentian Family is with you. May our solidarity be a support for you in the follow-up to the emergency relief, and in whatever ongoing action you have to undertake, with great courage, once the wave of media interest has subsided and the suffering becomes even more acute.

With you we pray, with you we suffer, with you we love.

**Anne Sturm**  
**Marina Costa**

AIC

**Yvon Laroche, rsv**  
**Yvon Sabourin, rsv**

Religious of St. Vincent de Paul



**G. Gregory Gay, C.M.**  
**Benjamín Romo, C.M.**  
**Alfredo Becerra, C.M.**

Congregation of the Mission

**Sr. Evelyne Franc**  
**Sr. Margaret Barrett**

Daughters of Charity

**José Ramón Díaz Torremocha**  
**Marco Betemps**

St. Vincent de Paul Society

**Gladys Abi-Saïd**  
**Edurne Urdampilleta**

JMV

**Charles Shelby, C.M.**  
**Martha Tapia**

Miraculous Medal Association

**David Sanz**  
**Felipe Nieto, C.M.**

MISEVI

**To the members of the Congregation of the Mission  
Messengers of Peace**

*M. Vincent, kneeling down, began this prayer: "O Savior of our souls, who, by your love, willed to die for all people, who in some way left your glory to give it to us and, by this means, make us like gods, rendering us like you as far as that is possible, imprint charity on our hearts that one day we may be able to go and join that beautiful Company of Charity which is in heaven. This is the prayer I offer up to you, O Savior of our souls" (SV X, 474).*

Dear brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

Let this season of Lent be a special time of grace to help us reflect on and deepen our commitment to following Jesus Christ, Evangelizer and Server of the poor. One of the rich traditions to help us live out that reflection and continue our own personal processes of conversion is an exam of conscience. So I would like to make the letter this Lent an examining of conscience based on different aspects of our lives, beginning with the general and working toward the particular.

**The Word of God (Hebrews 4:12-16)**

Do I see the Word of God as dynamic, as an important part of my daily reflection? Do the daily readings of the Eucharist move me to want to change my life? Do they help me to deepen my commitment to following Jesus?

**Prayer and Meditation (Hosea 2:16)**

"So I will allure her, I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart." Our time for private prayer and meditation is a time in the desert, as are these 40 days of Lent. Do I see it as an opportunity to deepen my communion with God? Am I sensitive to God's presence in that moment of prayer? Do I let God speak to my heart? Do I understand that private prayer is a privileged place, a space to discern the movement of God in my life? In my prayer, am I humble

before God? Do I let go and trust in God? Do I allow God's mercy to purify my heart? (Paraphrasing a remark from Bishop Oscar Romero, martyr of El Salvador: Personal prayer is the process by which God takes us into the deepest part of our being, deep down into our hearts and there God speaks to us of his love for us).

**The Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist (John 6:48-58) and Reconciliation (Luke 15:11-32)**

In this year in which we are celebrating in a special way the Eucharist, our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, invites us to reflect on its significance in our lives, and so the following questions: Do I participate actively in the Eucharist or am I often distracted? Do I listen attentively to God's Word during the Eucharist and allow God's Word to confront my own life before I approach the altar of the Lord to receive Communion? Do I open my heart up to the Lord's mercy and forgiveness? Do I receive the Lord in the Eucharist with fervor? Do I see the Eucharist as food for the journey? Do I allow it to nourish me in order that I might carry out my mission? Do I truly understand the Eucharist as a communal celebration? Do I see the Eucharist as a privileged place of evangelizing or has it become for me just a matter of routine, lifeless and dull?

With regard to Reconciliation, the scripture text is the parable of the loving father (prodigal son). When was the last time I took advantage of receiving God's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Do I prepare myself for this sacrament? Do I at times keep hidden some of my more serious sins? As a minister of God's mercy, am I compassionate and understanding or am I at times stern, or even worse, indifferent in hearing the sins of others?

**Characteristic Virtues: Humility, Simplicity, Meekness, Mortification, Apostolic Zeal**

Humility (Luke 18:9-14)

Do I recognize my dignity as a son of God, having the humility to see the gifts God has given me and do I use those gifts for his glory or for my own vanity? Am I able to recognize my own limits, my weaknesses, my shortcomings, my failings before others? Am I able to forgive others and ask forgiveness for my offenses?

Simplicity (Luke 18:15-17)

Is my heart only for God? Am I transparent, sincere in my dealings with others? Do I seek the truth or do I sometimes hide the truth so that my real nature will not be known?

Meekness (Matthew 11:25-30)

Am I gentle in my dealings with others or am I aggressive and offensive? Am I easily approachable or do I shut the door of my heart to others? Am I truly compassionate, able to suffer with others?

Mortification (John 12:24-28)

Am I willing to die to myself? Am I willing at times to forget about my needs and sacrifice myself for others? Do I at times do for others in a begrudging manner?

Apostolic Zeal (Matthew 5:13-16)

Am I enthusiastic in my apostolic works? Do I inspire hope in others and for others? Is my action refreshed with contemplation or do I fall into activism? Am I showing signs of burnout and an indifference in my dealings with others? Do I truly see the poor as my “Lords and Masters,” treating them with love and all due respect or do I fall into the trap of treating them like objects, as stepping stones to “my own greater honor and glory”?

**Apostolic Life** (Luke 4:18-19)

We are members of a Society of Apostolic Life.

Do I see my apostolic works and mission as part of the great whole of bringing about the Kingdom of God, which is a Kingdom of justice, peace, love and reconciliation? Am I faithful in the commitments that I have made in my mission? Do I follow through on these commitments or are they only lived out halfheartedly? Do I see evangelization and service of the poor at the heart of my apostolic life, even though I might not be involved directly in the service of the poor? Do I nourish my apostolic life with contemplation of the experiences I have with the poor? Do the poor really reflect to me the face and love of Christ? Do I have a true passion for Christ and at the same time a passion for humanity, especially the poor?

**Relationship to the Local Church** (1 Corinthians 12:12-28a)

Do I consider myself an active part of the local Church, as a collaborator of the bishop? Do our apostolic plans coincide with the apostolic plans of the local Church where I am located or at times are my apostolic activities and those of my community carried out in a parallel fashion with the activities of the local Church?

### **The Vincentian Family (Luke 4:18-19 and 2 Corinthians 5:14a)**

Do I know members of other branches of the Vincentian Family? Do I even care to know them? Do I encourage the members of my own community to collaborate with other branches of the Vincentian Family? Do I reflect seriously on what our Constitutions say about collaboration with and knowledge of the Vincentian Family, as well as other documents that have been written? From time to time do I reflect on the first callings that we received from Fr. Maloney, seeing ourselves as a Vincentian Family, a great army that can harness its forces to do wonderful things for the poor? Do I recognize the autonomy of each of the branches of the Vincentian Family? Do I at times tend to think that my branch is better than others? Where tensions exist among the different branches of the Family, do I make an effort to work toward reconciliation?

### **Relationship with the Youth (Luke 24:13-35)**

The Vincentian Family has highlighted and made this year for us the “Year of Youth.” Do I make an effort to reach out to young people, making attempts to understand them, to listen to them, to share with them my faith, to share with them my hopes? Do I make an effort to invite young people into the life of my community or am I too wrapped up in doing my own thing and not having any time to give, especially to young people?

### **Relationship to the World (Matthew 5:1-12)**

In the society in which we live, as well as direct service to the poor, do I make efforts at changing structures, especially those unjust structures which oppress the poor? Do I allow the attitudes of the world, such as nationalism, racism, and other discriminations, affect my way of dealing with God’s people? Do I show a willingness to want to work with other groups that struggle for justice, work for peace? Do I believe in might makes right or do I truly think that an essential aspect of an evangelical way of living is the non-violent way? Do I see myself as a citizen of the world, as being more important than a citizen of any particular country?

### **The Vows: Stability, Chastity, Poverty, Obedience**

#### Stability (Matthew 7:21-29)

Does my life reflect a faithfulness for life to the Vincentian charism in the Congregation of the Mission? Do I make every effort at deepening my belonging to the Congregation of the Mission? Am I dedicated to achieving the ends of the Congregation of the Mission of

following Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor, all the days of my life? Do I foster a spirit of dialogue and friendship with my brothers in community? Am I willing to collaborate with others committed to working with the poor? Do I take time to study and come to know the traditions of the Congregation of the Mission?

#### Celibacy (Luke 10:25-28)

Do I see the gift of celibacy as a special way of loving the poor? Would I consider my relationship with Christ an intimate relationship? Would I consider my first and best friends to be members of the Community? Do I have healthy relationships with women? At times do I presume on my own strength, reflecting a sense of self-love, selfish love for myself? Am I honest in my relationships with others or, even beyond that, am I honest in confession with regard to my relationships with others? Do I see loneliness as an enemy, rather than as someone I can befriend, coming to know better myself and then the God who lives deep within my being?

#### Poverty (Luke 12:32-34)

Can I usually be detached from my goods or do my goods possess me? Have I grown comfortable in my lifestyle? Would my lifestyle be scandalous to the poor to whom I am called to give witness and serve? Do I share with others the possessions I do own? Am I generous in what I have in giving it to the poor, sharing it with the poor? Do I know well the teachings of the Congregation with regard to the vow of poverty? Have I accumulated personal wealth without the knowledge of the competent authorities? Do I understand that all the goods of the Congregation are the patrimony of the poor? Have I ever shown a lack of respect for that patrimony?

#### Obedience (Luke 22:39-44)

Jesus, ever obedient to the Father, is the inspiration for our obedience. Do I consider my relationship sufficiently intimate with Christ as to know clearly God's will for me? Do I take time to listen to God as he speaks to me in the different events that occur in my daily life? Am I attentive to the signs of the times, clearing understanding that God reveals himself in all the different events that occur in the world in which we live today? Am I concerned about studying and doing social analysis of the reality that surrounds me and of this world in which we live? Am I open in my dialogue in community so that together as brothers we can come to discern God's will for us in our service of the poor? Do I actively participate in community projects and planning as well as in meetings and communications with the competent authority? Am I willing to sacrifice my own personal desires for the good of the mission and the needs of the poor, after a process of discernment and decisions have

been made, even though my opinion may be contrary to that of the competent authority? Am I willing to obey? Do I show a willingness to obey with regard to assignments, where I may be asked to move from one place to another? Do I make myself available?

### **Conclusion**

This time of Lent is a time to open ourselves up to God's mercy, but at the same time to be aware of our own limitations and our own sinfulness. It is true that we think and act in ways contrary to the Gospel. Anyone who says he is in no need of conversion, being without sin, is a liar, as St. John clearly states, or even worse yet, is blind to his own situation. The season of Lent is a time when God, in his mercy, forgives us his children for having strayed from our own identity as Vincentians. Let us be willing to share with the Lord our failings and sins and at the same time acknowledge God's mercy.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
*Superior General*

Rome, February 11, 2005  
Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes

*To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

At a meeting of the International Coordinating Council of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, held in Paris, France, from 31 January to 2 February, I announced the appointment of a new International Coordinator for the Association. He is Fr. Benjamín Romo, someone well known to all of us in the Vincentian Family, and presently the National Director for the Vincentian Family in Mexico. Fr. Benjamín replaces Fr. Charles Shelby, who has served as the first International Coordinator for the past several years.

I take this opportunity to thank Fr. Benjamín for accepting this position. I know that he will contribute well to the continued growth of the Association of the Miraculous Medal at the international level because of the wealth of experience that he brings to this as the former Delegate of the Superior General to the Vincentian Family.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing International Coordinator, Fr. Charles Shelby, for his years of service. I ask the Lord's blessing too on Fr. Shelby as he continues to show his love for God in the new service that the Congregation of the Mission, Midwest Province USA, has assigned to him at DePaul University, Chicago. Certainly his experience of service and his love for the Blessed Mother have contributed tremendously to the growth of the AMM on the international level in recent years. His contributions, and those of his Coordinating Council, have led to the increased number of Associations around the world, the development of formation programs on the AMM website, and a new and deeper understanding of the role of the apostolate, service of the poor, in the Association of the Miraculous Medal.

The other members of the Coordinating Council, Fr. Janusz Zwolinski, Sr. Marie-Yonide Midi, and Miss Martha Tapia will continue in their roles as members of the International Coordinating Council until June 2006.

Fr. Benjamín Romo assumed his responsibility as the International Coordinator during the meeting that was held in Paris. Fr. Charles Shelby will assist him in a supporting role as they make



the transition from now and until the international meeting of the Association of the Miraculous Medal.

The second point that I would like to mention in this message to you is that, during the meeting in Paris of the International Coordinating Council, we planned the Second International Meeting of the AMM. The meeting will be held in Rome, from 24-28 October 2005, with arrival on 23 October and departure on 29 October. The Casa Maria Immacolata of the Daughters of Charity, on Via Ezio, will host the meeting.

By way of conclusion, I would just like to say that, in my new role as Director General of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, I found the first meeting of the International Coordinating Council to be a delightful experience, as well as an inspiring one. After having heard the reports of the different member associations throughout the world, I certainly see growth for the Association of the Miraculous Medal. This means a deepening love of our Blessed Lady, who leads us to a deeper faith commitment with her Son, Jesus Christ. It also means committing ourselves in a special way to the service of Jesus Christ, especially in our brothers and sisters, the poor. Fr. Charles Shelby, the former International Coordinator, will shortly send out a detailed report of the activities of the AMM. After that, the new International Coordinator, Fr. Benjamín Romo, will send you information about the upcoming international meeting and other matters.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
*Superior General*

# FEATURE:

## *A Vincentian Reflection on the Eucharist*

### Presentation

by Alfredo Becerra Vázquez, C.M.

*Editor of Vincentiana*

Through the initiative of Pope John Paul II, a man who had a great love for the Eucharist, we are now celebrating the Year of the Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> There is a moral obligation to study and know the two documents that the Pope wrote on this theme: the Encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*,<sup>2</sup> and the Apostolic Letter, *Mane nobiscum Domine*.<sup>3</sup>

John Paul II said that in order to evangelize the world it is necessary to have “expert” witnesses who are able to celebrate, adore and contemplate the Eucharist because *the Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist*.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the mission of the Church is a continuation of the mission of Christ and the Church obtains her spiritual power in the communion with his Body and his Blood. The goal of the Eucharist *is the communion of mankind with Christ and in him with the Father and the Holy Spirit*.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Year of the Eucharist began on 17 October 2004 at the conclusion of the 48<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress (Guadalajara, Mexico, 10-17 October 2004) and will conclude on 19 October 2005 during the 11<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of Bishops that will deal with the theme of the Eucharist (Vatican City, 2-29 October 2005).

<sup>2</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17 April 2003.

<sup>3</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 7 October 2004.

<sup>4</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

In this edition of *Vincentiana* we offer you a series of articles on the Eucharist which we hope will serve as a “Vincentian reflection on the Eucharist.” You will see profound and varied reflections, written by our confreres and offered to us as the result of their missionary experience.

We begin this edition with an article by Fr. Erminio Antonello, *The Centrality of the Eucharist in the Vincentian Vocation*. He reminds us that the Vincentian vocation is centered on the Eucharist. Mission and charity are two significant expressions that sum up the thought process, the life and the actualization of the personality of the Vincentian missionary and layperson. In the Eucharist, Vincentians find strength for their missionary and charitable work. St. Vincent exhorted the missionaries to live, internalize and celebrate the Eucharist. We follow Christ to the degree that we dwell in Christ. To be a missionary is to reflect the life of Christ.

*The Eucharist and the Formation of the Clergy* is an article written by Fr. Nicola Albanesi. He affirms the fact that today seminary formation offers “criteria, guidelines, and inspiring principles that allow the candidates to develop their own identity as priest-pastor.” He insists on the formation of the future pastors so that they might live and “worthily” celebrate the Eucharist. He presents the distinct figures and theological concepts of the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council. According to Trent, the priest was a “mediator” between God and the community. He was a man of the “sacred” and the Eucharist was “the sacrament of sacraments.” Vatican II views the priest as the animator of the community. Thus the priest is a “moderator” and the Eucharist is the sacrament of “unity.” Today, we insist on the formation of the assembly so that our Eucharistic celebrations might truly be a time of prayer and reflection and coming together to celebrate community. The priest today is called to be a “teacher of prayer,” a guide and one who gives witness to an encounter with the living Jesus.

Fr. Andrés Motto, in his article, *Eucharist, mission and evangelization*, tells us that the Eucharist is the source that enables us to carry out our mission. The Eucharist is an essential element in the evangelization process. He invites us to make our Eucharistic celebrations moments of true *festivity*, moments of *fraternal encounter*, moments in which we celebrate our *daily lives* and moments during which *we reflect on the Word of God* and thus commit ourselves to transform our environment for the good of our brothers and sisters, especially the poorest and those who live on the margins of society.

Two confreres, missionaries in Japan and Indonesia, offer us their personal reflections on the Eucharist. Their reflection revolves around *The Eucharist and non-Christians*. The first reflection is

entitled, *The Java Rite of Slametan*. Fr. Rafael Ishiarianto compares the Java Rite and the Eucharistic celebration. He affirms that there are various analogous aspects between both: the dimension of memorial, the community and thanksgiving. He concludes by saying that “the Last Supper of Jesus clarifies the values that from ancient times have existed in the Java Rite.” Fr. Victoriano C. Torres, in the second reflection entitled, *Celebrating the Eucharist in Japan*, delineates some of the religious values of Japanese culture: fidelity, perseverance, an intensity of faith and the clear influence of the Eucharist on the life of the individual, as well as on the family and the community.

Fr. John McKenna in his article, *Theology of Adoration*, provides us with a brief description of the practice of Communion and the origin of devotions outside of the Eucharist. He presents us with the theological roots of Eucharistic adoration and the challenge that this presents. Eucharistic devotions outside of Mass had their origins in the Liturgy. He invites us to value these Eucharistic devotions: reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, processions, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, Forty Hours, etc. The author states that all of these help us to receive more deeply the Paschal Mystery of the Eucharist and in turn to share this Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ with the people.

*Eucharist, Charity and Social Justice* is an article written by Fr. Gilson Cezar de Camargo. This article examines the thought of St. Vincent and the theological and ecclesiological problems of France during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is an attempt to make these ideas contemporaneous; that is, he attempts to interpret and apply the Vincentian doctrine to our time. He presents some key elements of St. Vincent’s doctrine on the Eucharist (frequency, dispositions, and effects of communion), his recommendation to the Daughters of Charity and the missionaries and examines the pastoral and social implications of all of this for a strong Eucharist life.

Finally, Fr. Luigi Nuovo, in his article, *Giuseppe Alloati (1857-1933). An Apostle of the Eucharistic Cult*, offers us a brief overview of Giuseppe Alloati. He was a Vincentian missionary from Italy who dedicated his life to the Catholic mission in Bulgaria. He, together with his sister, founded the Sisters of the Eucharist. It can be said that he was truly in love with the Eucharist.

Dear readers, we hope that you enjoy this edition of our magazine. The Pope said that we could feel truly satisfied if, during this Year of the Eucharist, we achieved two objectives: **value the Eucharistic celebration**, especially the Sunday celebration, and **intensify our adoration of the Eucharist**. He hoped that this would enable the faithful to discover “*the gift of the Eucharist as light and*

*strength for our daily lives in the world, in the exercise of our respective professions amid so many different situations.”*

We hope that we are able to renew our love, respect and adoration of the daily Eucharist and that this in turn enables us to adore Jesus in the person of the poor. May God grant our communities and provinces the grace to become Eucharistic communities and provinces. If we achieve this, the Congregation will also be a Eucharistic Congregation. Let us live the Eucharist!

(CHARLES PLOCK, C.M., translator)

# The Central Place of the Eucharist in the Vincentian Vocation

by Erminio Antonello, C.M.

*Province of Turin*

Charity and mission are modalities which express the intimate feeling, living and working of the personality of the Vincentian missionary. His vocation moves between the two fundamental dimensions of charity and mission. Charity refers to *the very principle of his existence* and mission is an *expression of his charity in action*. In other words: what makes the Vincentian missionary act? Charity. What animates him interiorly in the evangelization of the poor? Mission. Charity and mission are not two terms next to each other, which could be examined theoretically, like leaves separated from the branch. They do not express two words of classification of a meritorious institution. They express rather a movement which operates on the level of personal consciousness. There is a vital dynamism between charity and mission, in such a way that in a person charity without mission is incomplete and activity which is not illuminated by charity runs the risk of paralysis. The keeping alive of this supernatural dynamic refers to a source which surpasses the intellect, the will and the feelings of our very humanity. It transcends it without destroying it, but embraces it and takes to letting itself be animated by the event which brings it into movement. This hidden and transcending source is the event of Jesus Christ who becomes active in us thanks to the grace of the Holy Spirit. Here the Vincentian missionary encounters the source from which he draws the Eucharistic mystery, and to which the Constitutions refer:

*Our life should be directed towards the daily celebration of the Lord's Supper as towards its summit, for from the Eucharist, as from a living source, flows the power of our apostolic activity and fraternal communion. Through the Eucharist, the death and resurrection of Christ are made present, we become in Christ a living offering, and the communion of the People of God is signified and brought about (C 45, 1).*

## St. Vincent's thinking about the Eucharist

The references to the Eucharist in the writings of St. Vincent — although they are spread out here and there — are quite rich and vast. But above all we may say that the fundamental climate of his thinking is anchored in the Eucharist, because it is simultaneously strongly Christological and ecclesiological. We find a confirmation of this in the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission, where the Eucharist occupies an absolutely central place in the life of the missionary. The observation becomes clear if one refers to a draft earlier than the definitive Common Rules, i.e. the draft contained in the so-called Codex Sarzana. Here the reference to the Eucharist is functional to introduce in the missionary's believing conscience the certitude of the nearness of Christ in his life, encouraging him to practice certain acts of practical devotion, which keep the consciousness of his Presence alive:

*Because the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar contains in synthesis all the mysteries of our faith and our salvation and in a certain sense the well-being of the Church depends on the veneration of that sacrament, the Congregation reserves for it a respect which never decreases and, with full and continuous attention, occupies itself in order that all turn to this sacrament with faith and reverence, at least with those usual acts of veneration. Among them are: first, making frequent visits to the Most Holy Sacrament; second, wherever we find ourselves, when we hear the sound of the bell ring when the Sacrament is being transferred, we kneel down to adore it and, if possible, we accompany it; third, every time its holy name is being pronounced, we take off our berretta; fourth, when we pass a church we take off our hats and we say: Praised be the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar; finally, we take care that others are instructed about this sacrament, that they believe in such a great mystery and how they must venerate it, in order that, as far as possible, nothing happens with it that is not respectful or out of order.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *Et quoniam, sanctissimum Altaris sacramentum in se veluti summam omnium mysteriorum nostrae fidei continet, et ex cultu illi debite reddito nostra salus, et totum ecclesiae bonum aliquatenus dependet, eximium, et indeficientem honorem erga illud profitebitur Congregatio, et mente sollicita, et indefessa sataget, ut ab omnibus tanto huic sacramento debitus honor et reuerentia tribatur, ijs saltem obsequijs quibus illud colere solita est quae inter caetera sunt haec. – Primo illud frequenter uisitare, – secundo, ubicumque fuerimus dum deferture uel deferri campanulae sono admonemur, flexis genibus adorare, ac si fieri possit, concomitari. – Tertio, quoties eius sacrum nomen pronunciat, caput reuerenter aperire. – Quarto, ecclesias praetereundo haec uerba capite etiam aperto dicere, Laudetur sanctissimum Altaris Sacramentum.*

In the definitive text of the Common Rules, still in Chapter X § 3, the text assumes a major theological citation, in so far as the Eucharist is tied to the complex of the principal mysteries of faith, the Trinity and the Incarnation.

*There can be no better way of paying the best honor possible to these mysteries than proper devotion to, and use of, the Blessed Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. It includes, as it were, all the other mysteries of faith and, by itself, leads those who receive Communion respectfully, or celebrate Mass properly, to holiness and, ultimately, to everlasting glory. In this way God, unity and trinity, and the Incarnate Word, are paid the greatest honor. For these reasons, nothing should be more important to us than showing due honor to this sacrament and sacrifice. We are also to make a great effort to get everyone else to pay it similar honor and reverence. We should try, to the best of our ability, to achieve this by preventing, as far as we can, any lack of reverence in word or act, and by carefully teaching others what to believe about so great a mystery, and how they should honor it.*

St. Vincent encourages the missionary as priest to immerse himself into the sacrament he celebrates, in order that this sacramental conformation impress on him the same sentiments of Christ.

*It is not sufficient that we celebrate the Mass, but we must also offer this sacrament with the greatest possible devotion, according to the will of God, conforming ourselves, in as far as this depends on us, with his grace, to Jesus Christ, offering himself, when he was on earth, as a sacrifice to his eternal Father. Let us thus try, Fathers, to offer our sacrifices to God in the same spirit that our Lord offered his and also as perfectly as our poor and miserable nature allows us.<sup>2</sup>*

For the missionary, the relationship to Christ must, therefore, become a daily fact. For this St. Vincent fought against the rigorist tendency of the Jansenists who suggested not approaching the Eucharist frequently. For St. Vincent, abandoning the Eucharist is the cause of decadence in the spiritual life.

*... speaking to his community, he said that they should ask God to give them the desire of receiving communion often;*

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– Quinto, et praecipue alios quod de hoc tanto misterio credere; et quomodo venerari debeant, instruere et ne circa illud aliquid irreverenter et inordinate agatur pro viribus impedire (Codex Sarzana, pp. 24-25, cap X, 3).

<sup>2</sup> COSTE XI, 93.



*that there was reason to groan before God and to be sad in seeing that this devotion was declining among Christians, due in part to the new opinions (i.e., Jansenism).... Nevertheless the Eucharist was the daily bread which Our Lord wanted us to ask for: the first Christians were used to receiving Communion every day, but the innovators made a great number of people stay away.<sup>3</sup>*

As a synthesis, the Eucharist is presented by St. Vincent as a strategy of the infinite love of Jesus to “prevent his absence from making us cool or making us forget” his face; and, moreover, to bring to completion the work of the Incarnation, “serving us as food and drink, claiming, by this means, that the same union and likeness which is made between nature and substance also is made spiritually in every person.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, with passionate language, St. Vincent recommends that the missionary enter into an intimate relation with Jesus Christ, who gives himself in the Eucharist.

With these brief reflections on St. Vincent’s thought, we will try now to deepen the significance of the Eucharist for the Vincentian missionary.

### **The Eucharist introduces a relationship of intimacy with Christ to make the missionary message effective**

“*Without me, you can do nothing,*” Jesus said to the Apostles; and in that way he posed in all seriousness the problem of each person. But he did not limit himself to exposing the inadequacy, he repaired it by accepting it and accompanying it. “*Stay with me,*” he repeated, almost at the top of his voice, to the apostles at the Last Supper, not because he needed them, but because they had an absolute need of him. And they did not realize it. Staying with him means life, eternal and true life. And to realize this relationship, *he gave himself in the way of love*, which in the giving does not decrease nor deteriorate. Christ wanted to give himself, totally, repeatedly, in order to meet us daily, so that each person might mature together with Him, in a relationship ever more solid and ever more vital.

The Eucharist therefore leads us to consider the missionary in his relationship with Christ, and thus it brings us to the centre of our vocation. “Vocation” means *relationship with Christ*, or better a *relationship with him*, in such a way that our identity assumes *its form* thanks to this lasting relationship with him in faith. From this

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpt reported by Abelly and not by Coste; cf. DODIN, *Entretiens Spirituels de Saint-Vincent de Paul*, 1960, n. 26, p. 96; taken from ABELLY, Book III, chapter 1, pp. 77-78.

<sup>4</sup> COSTE XI, 146.

point of view the Eucharist is the prolongation of the Incarnation of the Son of God, who continues to be present in history and, thus, becomes accessible at any time. When we enter into a Eucharistic relationship with Christ it is possible at any time to become *co-bodies with Christ* — according to the phrase of Pascasio Radberto — and thus to be contemporaries with him. Avoiding the sentimental aspect which can lie in these words, we can say that in a certain way in the Eucharist it is still possible to hear, to speak with, to listen to Jesus. For St. Vincent, the living relationship with Christ is source of life signified by existence:

*The children of Israel wanted Moses to speak to them and not you [my God]; they feared that the splendor of your majesty would annihilate them; we, on the contrary, we beg you to speak to us, in order that we might live, and that we might live of the life of Jesus Christ.*<sup>5</sup>

If Christ speaks with us, then we live. We always live of the word which illuminates our consciousness and our activity. The word of the Gospel is not only an indicative and exemplary word. It is rather a *revealing word*, in the sense that it discloses the contents of its being. When we hear Jesus tell us: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, remains in me and I in him. Just as... I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me” (John 6:56-57), he expresses the ultimate meaning of the condition of the disciple, and thus of the missionary, of being totally referred to him. The reference to Christ is not only by way of imitation. In imitation we remain external to the one whom we imitate. The “to follow,” instead, implies entering into a relationship of familiarity or, to use an expression typically Johannine, to stay and  *dwell with him*. And that is exactly where the Eucharist leads us. Indeed, this sacrament, by putting us into contact with Christ sacrificed out of love, makes our humanity assimilated to the manner of Jesus’ being, or rather to a life offered in love for our brothers and sisters. Missionary life can only be a reflection of Christ’s life, otherwise it is not missionary. Mission is the proclamation of another in us, and not speaking of oneself. Without the living relationship with Christ, our life may be a good, just and meritorious life, but being missionary brings as a particular characteristic a prolongation of Christ’s love toward this world’s poor. The poor in fact, in encountering our humanity, are put in the condition of meeting Christ. This may appear presumptuous. But Jesus has chosen this logic of the incarnation, and not another way, for example, mystic or spiritualistic, to have us meet him. “Who hears

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<sup>5</sup> COSTE XII, 201-202.

you,” he said to his disciples, “hears me!” Our humanity is the place where he makes himself present to people. But how can our fragility sustain such a great obligation? From this we understand how essential sacramental life is on the path of grace. In frequenting the Eucharist, the missionary forms his conscience as believer, modeling it and assimilating it to Jesus and, in this way, Jesus’ presence becomes the *beginning* of the activity which he carries out. That is a criterion reaffirmed many times by St. Vincent: to assume the life of Christ in our life in order to be like him in the world. To confirm this, let us read this excerpt of a letter addressed to Claude Dufour, whom St. Vincent had assigned to Madagascar:

*I never had any doubt about your entire submission to God and his orders, nor about the trust with which you honor me and of which I would be unworthy if I did not refer it, as I do, to God, who has given it to you. It is for his greater glory and your own sanctification that I dedicate to him your life and zeal as often as I do my own. I lovingly invoke his Holy Spirit upon you so that, animated by it, you will be able to pour his light and fruits into souls deprived of the assistance priests owe to them. Without this the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ would be ineffectual for them. Therefore, Monsieur, nurture carefully the charity he gives you for them. Be inflamed with zeal for their salvation, and keep alive your determination to go in search of the lost sheep in the Indies. This is a great grace of God, and I thank him for it.<sup>6</sup>*

### **From the sacrifice of the Cross to charity**

The itinerary of Jesus’ life finds its synthesis in his Passion and Cross. The Eucharist is the sacrament which is perennially put at the disposal of our history, in order that we may identify ourselves with that itinerary. God does not teach us to love our brothers and sisters by telling them it, but *by carrying it out* in our own person.

Jesus crucified, of whom the Eucharist is the memory, shows the loving tenderness of the Father for his creature. Indeed, that the Son of God, who became man, should go the way of the cross is not at all taken for granted. On the contrary, to our reasoning it seems rather strange. Everything would lead to thinking that, faced with man’s sin, God would have shown his own divine truth in the form of a punitive power. We keep an ancestral remainder of this in our consciousness when, faced with another’s mistake, we play the judge, saying: “Did you make a mistake? Then you pay now!” The truth of God should manifest itself in the power of justice which keeps order in this

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<sup>6</sup> COSTE IV, 112, Letter 1289; English IV, 118.

world. If God manifests himself in an irresistible and indisputable power, he would totally confirm his truth. In our eyes, fascinated as we are by the flattery of the old snake, God appears always as a power that is able to affirm itself. And it is to this that the Pharisees and Jews at the foot of the cross instigated the humanity of Jesus: "If you are God, come down from the cross and we will believe you!" Jesus did not yield to the blackmail. He remained faithful to his nature of Son, renouncing his own power in order to remain fully devoted to the Father, with whom He constituted a loving reciprocity without limits. It is the fidelity to this communion that saves man: the love of the Son for the Father. This is the theological principle of the redemption which turns all our mental categories upside down.

While man might be led to bow before the power of God, even by sacrificing the other, his brother, if this were necessary, as if God needed a sacrifice from someone to be satisfied, in reality, Revelation brings us to consider things in another way: "If anyone says: 'I love God,' but hates his brother, 'he is a liar'" (1 John 4:20a). The love of God and the love of the neighbor constitute only one thing. If the people urge Jesus to show his power against the other, Jesus avoids it: "Whom do you seek?" — Jesus asks in the Garden of Gethsemane the night of his Passion — "If you are looking for me, let these men go" (cf., John 18:7-8). He did not burden others with his suffering, but he assumes it himself in the first person taking it away from man. In such a way the cross is the sign par excellence of love which sacrifices itself for others and in this it *expresses the truth of God as love*.

The Eucharist, when it is celebrated and lived, initiates a pedagogical way of constant approach toward this love of charity, expressed by the crucified humanity of the Lord Jesus. The Eucharist, being Christ, "bread given for" and "blood poured in favor of," forms the believing conscience by transforming it from its innate egoism to a condition of life in charity. This is a supernatural operation, because nothing would be capable of making us enter into the subtleness of charity if grace did not help us. Because charity is demanding. Because continuous charity is difficult to realize. Because the fear of losing oneself in the gift of oneself is stronger than the desire of giving oneself to one's brother or sister. Nevertheless that is the imperative for the Christian.

*Charity puts in us that which is in the other.... In the measure in which things exist, they act; and acting they make us suffer. Accepting this passion, receiving it actively, means to make exist in us that which is in the other — said M. Blondel in L'Action<sup>7</sup> —.... Only charity has this extraordinary privilege*

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<sup>7</sup> M. BLONDEL, *L'Action*, part IV, chapter III, § II.

*through which, without depriving anyone of that which belongs to him/her and participating with the simple intention of the wellbeing of others, it makes its own all that they have on the level of life and of action. It is necessary to arrive at that love which embraces the characteristics so often irritating in an individual.*

Charity demands a real change in oneself, in the sense of a mutation of one's own personal character, of one's sensitivity, of one's way of listening and speaking; even of one's way of using intellect and liberty. For that it is necessary to follow the same path of Jesus' abasement, of whom the Eucharist is the *representation*, to be able to have one's own person shaped by charity.

Too many times and in an ingenuous manner we reduce charity to works of charity, forgetting that it is first of all a theological virtue. This oversight does not favour the service of the poor, but damages it, because it takes the soul away. The pragmatism of charity may be satisfying and could even receive the world's praise; but the life of charity is hidden and humble. Without doubt, perhaps, if not the most recurring thought in St. Vincent, it is at least among the most recurrent ones. This charity, acquired in the school of the Eucharist, will be the universal language which every poor person understands.

### **Eucharist and mission**

The Eucharist, by its nature, expresses the insuperable level of God's sharing with our humanity. In this Christ's sacrifice, whose strength is in fidelity to the Father's love, is "transubstantiated" — to use a theological term. The Eucharistic mystery makes perpetually present in the fragmentary nature of our history the supreme nearness of Trinitarian love, which made itself a sharer in the humanity of Jesus: "He loved his own in the world and he loved to the end" (John 13:1). The Greek term used to indicate "to the end" is the word *tèlos*, which indicates the terminal point of a dynamism. Now this peak of life is expressed by Jesus at the moment before he gave up his spirit, when he said: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Here too a word is used in which the noun *tèlos*, end, is implied. Jesus does not hold anything back, he gives everything, "to the end." He gives himself totally to us. He does not keep some space in reserve. One must consider attentively this dynamism of Jesus Christ to keep nothing for himself. He loves "to the end," so that in his giving of himself he also makes each of us, or rather, every person, the one destined for his love. One must enter into it, sense in it the repercussion in the soul, in order to be able, in turn, to allow our humanity to reflect the disconcerting love of Jesus for every person, because missionary activity, that is, the act of being among poor

people to announce the Gospel, lives from the reflection of Jesus' love for humanity. By continuously breathing this supreme love, we too, poorly, joyously, a bit at a time, become persuaded to stand in front of others with the same availability. Mission is done in that way.

This happens, according to the thinking of St. Vincent, through an osmotic process, thanks to which the missionary puts what he has accumulated in relationship with Christ in contact with others. This is the dynamics of the mission expressed in so many thoughts of St. Vincent:

*We must be full reservoirs in order to let our water spill out without becoming empty, and we must possess the spirit with which we want them to be animated, for no one can give what he does not have. So, let us ask this earnestly of Our Lord and give ourselves to him to study how to conform our leadership and actions to his. Then your seminary will diffuse sweetness within the diocese and outside of it, causing it to increase in number and blessings. On the contrary, trying to act as masters with those under our care, or to neglect or disedify them, would be a great hindrance to that good. This would happen if we were too anxious to be sophisticated, well-treated, esteemed, and honored, to amuse and spare ourselves and have too much contact with people outside. We must be firm but not rough in our guidance and avoid an insipid kind of meekness, which is ineffective. We will learn from Our Lord how our meekness should always be accompanied by humility and grace so as to attract hearts to him and not cause anyone to turn away from him.<sup>8</sup>*

And once again: how is it possible to “be reservoirs of (supernatural) water,” if we are not being touched in our humanity by the daily presence of Christ in our believing conscience? The Gospel is proclaimed through life and words which express our life as it is converted by the words which we pronounce as missionaries.

The assimilation with Christ, truth and life, of the Eucharist itself leads every missionary to have a vision of the mission rather diverse from the simple “doing” or “preaching,” even if it is about the religious and evangelical contents. The witnessing force of a word or an action depends on the intimate coherence of the missionary's life with the word he proclaims: but this — said to avoid misunderstanding — is not guaranteed by an irreproachable morality, nor by an unassailable discourse. The pious Pharisee also appealed to those elements, but with little success (cf., Luke 18:8-14). The missionary coherence is not blessed by an irreproachable morality (although

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<sup>8</sup> COSTE IV, 597, Letter 1623; English IV, 570-571.

“the force of coherence” must not be underestimated), nor by a perfect theory, or rather by an intellectual concept expressed in a complete and precise manner (even if the “saying” has its importance). Morality and theory at the most can arouse admiration, but they do not easily constitute a motive for supporting the person; i.e., a reason which attracts to conversion. In our time, the existential motive for adhering to Christianity is given by *a certain type of presence filled with proclamation*, which gives itself in the pleasantness of a person who has let him/herself be formed slowly by a constant and objective reference to Christ.

Therefore, in the experience learned by a lived and loving proximity with the Eucharist, one becomes ever more transparent of Jesus’ very presence. We could say that the centre of the mission is this transparency or reflection. The mission, above all in our times where ideals have fallen, is carried out that way.

### **Eucharist and community**

One last element remains to be highlighted. The missionary’s life is solidly anchored to life in community: first space of charity and fraternity. Here too we find back the essentiality of the Eucharist. Indeed, “the Eucharist builds the Church,” as John Paul II reminded us in *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (n. 26). It builds it by attracting to itself persons in the communion and by rescuing them from the temptation of each for him/herself. When we are faithful in living the Eucharist, we are brought into the heart of fraternity. We cannot consciously live the Eucharist and maintain divisions in “the mystical body of Christ.” Or better, one can do it, but maintaining a bad conscience. If we observe the way with which the redemptive force of Christ’s Passover is revealed, of which the Eucharist is the sacrament, we see that it consists in the passage from a disintegration of community toward the resumption of unity among persons. It is symptomatic how the process which accompanies Jesus’ passion, in the soul and in the experience of the disciples, is a disintegrating process. Judas betrays. Peter, James, and John fall asleep. Peter is incapable of acknowledging him in front of a maidservant. All leave. Flee. Christ’s passion is also the break-up of the community. But see that, on Easter morning, the Risen Lord’s task is to return to correct the disciples in order to bring them back to faith in him, even to making of them, in the gift of his Spirit of love, a *united body*, capable of confronting history; capable of giving their life for him. The Easter miracle is that the disciples find unity again. And that is also the result of every Eucharist celebrated and lived in faith. This same miracle happens again. If we do not perceive it, it is only because our conscious is distracted, dissipated, elsewhere.

Allow me a personal memory from the time of my youth. Sometimes small things illuminate the profound truths much more than many words. I was a philosophy student and could not bear a companion because of his arrogant way of acting. A subtle resentment clouded my feelings toward him. I talked about this with my spiritual director, who encouraged me to start a way of conversion. I made superhuman efforts to control myself in a dignified attitude with him, but my irritated sensitivity did not show signs of calming down. After several months, the affair started to preoccupy my spiritual director, who suddenly changed course. He told me: tomorrow see if your companion receives communion. I could not believe it! My spiritual director's request made me self-confident, because I had just been entrusted an authority of supervising one who seemed so insupportable to me. The next morning I observed and immediately I could go to my spiritual director bearing the result of my observation. Well, yes, he too had received communion. To which my spiritual director made a simple remark. Is the Jesus whom you love, to whom you submit your existence, whom you received in the Eucharist, different from the one your companion received this morning? I was dumbfounded. I could only reply truthfully. And in the following days this truth kept coming back to me. I found myself in the position either to deny the impact of Christ in me or to change my attitude toward that companion. In short, everything worked out. And that not by effort but simply by a renewed act of faith toward that Lord from whom my companion and I received food every morning.

So, the Eucharist really builds the community, because it heals from that all that is a source of division in relationships. And we know how St. Vincent insisted on the unity of the company as a condition for the mission. St. Vincent does not allude only to a unity of a moral kind, which is the result of human effort to live in communion. He says that only a *communion generated by the sacrifice of Christ* has the capacity of resisting all forces of division which sin instigates continuously in us.

*Be united, and God will bless you, but this union must be the love of Jesus Christ within you. Any other source of harmony, not being cemented by the blood of Jesus Christ, will not endure. It is in Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ that you must be united with one another. The spirit of Jesus Christ is a spirit of union and peace. How could you expect to attract other souls to Jesus Christ if you were not united among yourselves? This cannot happen. Have the same sentiments, therefore, the same will, or else you will be like those horses pulling a plow who pull in opposite directions. They spoil everything. God calls you to work in this vineyard.*



*Go therefore, having but a single heart and a single intention, and in this way you will bear much fruit.*<sup>9</sup>

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist, which as missionaries we celebrate together, cannot remain a formal and ritual act, without the felt participation in the sacrament which is being accomplished. Instead it can represent a vital jolt to our missionary communities. It can awaken in them forced fraternity which at times makes them boring. The condition is that we pay greater attention to his Presence. Because he is really among us. The Eucharist is precisely that staying with us and in us of his beloved person, very near, beyond all expectations. But we must stay near him, because too often our conscious is numbed and needs to be reawakened to a simpler and more sincere faith. The Lord wanted to let himself really be touched, so that our concrete humanity might be enveloped in his redeeming strength.

(VICTOR BIELER, C.M., translator)

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<sup>9</sup> A.DODIN, *Entretiens Spirituels de Saint-Vincent de Paul*, n. 24, p. 93; taken from ABELLY, L., Book II, Chapter I, Section VIII, p. 187 (English edition, p. 126).

# Eucharist and the Formation of the Clergy

“Living” and “Being Formed” to Preside at the Eucharist  
in the Development of Models of Priesthood

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## 1. Introductory questions

The theme assigned for this contribution, reduced to the bare essentials, hides many complications since it involves a large number of issues to be clarified.

The title, “*Eucharist and the formation of the clergy*,” should be interpreted in at least two senses: 1 - “*The Eucharist in the formation of the clergy*,” where the accent is placed on the role that the Eucharistic celebration has in the formation of seminarians, or on their daily path of priestly formation; 2 - “*The formation of the clergy for the Eucharist*,” where the accent is placed on formation for the Eucharistic celebration as is done in seminaries and institutes of formation.

From this point of view, the perspective widens to embrace an entire series of questions that revolve around the theme *Eucharist and priestly formation*. It means, concretely, asking how seminarians are formed to live the Eucharistic celebration, how it is experienced in the seminary, what the main formation concerns are to prepare them to preside at the Eucharistic celebration, and to prepare the seminarians to develop their future ministry with responsibility and competence. All this should be placed in the broader perspective of formation for life and for the priestly mission.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The issue here directly turns toward initial formation and not permanent or ongoing formation, even if these two phases of formation are generally today considered more unified than they were in the past. If since the Council the tendency was to consider ongoing formation as a kind of continuation of initial formation, today one tends to consider and think of initial formation in the light of ongoing formation. The following stimulating studies concern the relationship between initial and ongoing formation: AA.VV., *Sacerdoti per la nuova evangelizzazione. Studi sull'Esortazione*

### 1.1 Formation in evolution

Formation clearly depends not only on the demands of a formation to be carried out in a specified place, but also on the ideal figure that one intends to propose and thus to join to formation itself. Although the Council of Trent had expressed a very precise model to define the figure and interpret the role of the “pastor of souls,” the same cannot be said of the Second Vatican Council. The recent council laid down the foundations for a reformulation of priestly identity in relation to a new image of Church, but it did not propose one exclusive figure or one exclusive model.<sup>2</sup> Certainly it understood the need to overcome the tridentine concept of a “man of worship,” a concept rooted in an image of a “Gregorian style” Church perfectly inculturated in the spirit of Christendom. Instead, it put forth a radical change in the way that the clergy should live their ecclesial belonging, in relationship to the world and to society, living their own consecration and interpreting their personal mission.<sup>3</sup>

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*apostolica “Pastores dabo vobis” di Giovanni Paolo II* (ed. E. dal Covolo and A.M. Triacca), Las, Roma 1994; AA.VV., *Il primato della formazione*, Glossa, Milano 1997; AA.VV., *La formazione dei formatori*, in «Presenza pastorale» LXVIII 6-7 (1998); A. CENCINI, *I sentimenti del figlio. Il cammino formativo nella vita consacrata*, EDB, Bologna 1998; AA.VV., *Percorsi della cittadinanza. Materiali per la formazione*, AVE, Roma 2000; AA.VV., *Quando un’asina educa il profeta*, Comunità Edizioni, Fermo 2000; AA.VV., *La formazione nella comunità cristiana*, EDB, Bologna 2002; AA.VV., *La religione postmoderna*, Glossa, Milano 2003; AA.VV., *Formare i presbiteri. Principi e linee di metodologia pedagogica*, LAS, Roma 2003; AA.VV., *Prevedere e provvedere. La formazione in un mondo che cambia*, Paoline, Milano 2004; AA.VV., *Vivere in Cristo*, Città Nuova, Roma 2004.

<sup>2</sup> For a deepening of the issue of the formation of the clergy in an historical perspective of changing models: GUASCO M., *Seminari e clero nel ’900*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1990; OFFI M., *I preti*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1998.

<sup>3</sup> As regards studies on priestly ministry, the bibliography is enormous. Among the studies important for their breadth of treatment and for their summaries, see: GRESHAKE G., *Essere preti. Teologia e spiritualità del ministero sacerdotale*, Queriniana, Brescia 1995 (orig. ed. *Priestersein. Zur Theologie und Spiritualität des priesterlichen Amtes*, Herder Verlag, Freiburg im Breisgau 1982, 1991<sup>3</sup>); MARTELET G., *Teologia del sacerdozio. Duemila anni di Chiesa in questione*, Queriniana, Brescia 1986 (orig. ed. *Théologie du sacerdoce. Deux mille ans d’Eglise en question. Crise de la foi, crise du prêtre*, Cerf, Paris 1984); DIANICH S., *Teologia del ministero ordinato. Una interpretazione ecclesiological*, Paoline, 1984. For a more spiritual and pastoral perspective, see: AA.VV., *Il prete. Identità del ministero e oggettività della fede* (ed. G. Colombo), Glossa, Milano 1990; DORÉ J. - VIDAL M., *Des Ministres pour l’Eglise*, Cerf, Paris 2001; LUSTIGER J.M., *I preti che Dio ci dona*, Massimo, Milano 2001; MOIOLI G., *Scritti sul prete*, Glossa, Milano 2002. For an up-to-date bibliography, see the following by the Associazione Teologica Italiana, AA.VV., *Il ministero ordinato. Nodi teologici e prassi ecclesiali* (ed. M. Qualizza), San Paolo, Milano 2004.

At the level of documents, it may be said that the main lines had already been drawn up, but at the level of the incarnation of the figure of the priest, the panorama is quite varied. There are many styles and various models of priesthood that the seminarians encounter in their beginning years of pastoral ministry, and these models and references are mutually diverse.<sup>4</sup> The central questions are: what kind of priest? And for which Christian community? And how to interpret the role of pastor and guide of the Christian community, taking into account the cultural, social and ecclesial context in which one lives and works? I believe that on this point no one can offer exhaustive answers, given the utter complexity of the modern world.

The seminary therefore finds it impossible to offer a single or exclusive model of priesthood or, better, to offer an ideal figure of the priest as it has been presented in the post-conciliar era, with the many incarnations and interpretations of the role that make adequate formational programs difficult. The result is that, with all its problems, it is difficult to hand on the theological and pastoral depth of the identity of the figure of the priest. Today's seminaries and institutes of religious formation can only offer criteria, guidelines, principles, through which each candidate can construct his own proper identity as a priest-pastor.<sup>5</sup>

The situation is worrisome, since there is not a strong identity or formation targeted to reach a given figure. For others, however, all this may turn out to be extremely stimulating, since it foreshadows one to invent, to construct and to carve out a role that has not yet been offered.

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<sup>4</sup> Among the more recent typologies of Catholic clergy, see the interesting research in *Priester 2000*, which dealt with diocesan clergy of Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Croatia and Poland. From these studies, four models of priests arise: the a-temporal cleric, the man of God open to the modern age, the modern Churchman, the leader of the modern community. The results of the study are contained in ZULEHNER P.M. - HENNERSPERGER A., *Sie gehen und werden nicht matt. Priester in heutiger Kultur. Ergebnisse der Studie Priester 2000*, Ostfildern, Schwabenverlag 2001; summarized by the authors in the essay *Preti nella cultura contemporanea*, in «Il Regno» XLVI (2001) 885, 483-489. In the Italian context, similar research has been done in 2000 and 2001 by the research institute Eurisko and analyzed by Garelli and his collaborators. There are four kinds of clergy: the mediation model, the modernity and tradition model, the nostalgic-reactionary model, and the social-challenge model. See: AA.VV., *Sfide per la Chiesa nel nuovo secolo. Indagine sul clero in Italia* (ed. F. Garelli), Il Mulino, Bologna 2003.

<sup>5</sup> It will be the ministry and life itself that will call forth the capacity of reinventing oneself as pastors, continually open to the new, despite an early old age and an expected fossilization. Naturally, human and spiritual maturity occur, with openness of spirit, docility but at the same time firmness in principles, practicality together with a great idealism — qualities to be acquired during the years of formation.

## 1.2 *The Eucharist in formation*

As regards the role of the Eucharist in the formation of seminarians, the question of law is quickly resolved. I borrow words from Cardinal Kasper who summarized the issue very well: “The celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit of the life of our Church.... It is the great legacy which the Lord left us on the eve of his passion and death. It is the most precious thing that we possess as a Church. It is the heart of our Church. Everything is ordered to it, and from it comes the strength for all the other parts of ecclesial life and not least for our personal life. From a *correct understanding* and a *correct practice* of the Eucharistic celebration everything pastoral depends, through which we will never do enough to understand more deeply or to celebrate better this mystery of faith.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of seminary formation, just as it is of every aspect of ecclesial life.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, the operative guidelines for formative practice in seminaries are well repeated in the documents.<sup>8</sup> The celebration of the Eucharist in the course of the day should take a central position: it is to be celebrated daily and worthily and, it should be said, with a certain solemnity (always singing certain parts, dividing the roles to

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<sup>6</sup> KASPER W., *Sacramento dell'unità. Eucharistia e Chiesa*, Queriniana, Brescia 2004, 9 (italics in the citation are mine). Out of this concern comes the plan in the book AA.VV., *Eucharistia. Enciclopedia dell'Eucharistia* (M. Brouard edd.), EDB, Bologna 2004. It is hefty volume (in the Italian version, 975 pages) which pulls together a huge amount of material that is very heterogeneous in methodologies, approaches and results. Eight-one editors from five continents, an expression of various ecclesial traditions, present in summary the results of their specific research. Consequently, it is a text which, thanks to its multidisciplinary approach, attempts to present the various aspects of the Eucharistic mystery in the most complete way possible. Also, another large volume: RAFFA V., *Liturgia eucaristica. Mistagogia della Messa: dalla storia e dalla teologia alla pastorale pratica*, CLV, Roma 2004<sup>2</sup>. This is also an encyclopedic work (of 875 pages) which presents the various parts of the *Ordo Missae* by furnishing a systematic and virtually complete bibliography of specific monographs.

<sup>7</sup> The expression «fons et culmens» has found large resonance in magisterial documents. The major references are SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10, *Lumen Gentium*, 11; C.I.C. 246.

<sup>8</sup> I refer to the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* from the Congregation for Catholic Education, 6 January 1970 [AAS 72 (1970) 321-384] and revised after the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law, 19 March 1985 [EV SI, 918-1072] and in *Pastores dabo vobis*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II on the formation of priests in the modern day, 25 March 1992 [AAS 84 (1992) 657-804]. Other documents are in: CONGREGAZIONE PER L'EDUCAZIONE CATTOLICA, *Documenti - Formazione dei sacerdoti nel mondo d'oggi*, LEV, Città del Vaticano 1990.

exercise the various ministries), and with a spirit of faith. Besides, there should be a “wise variety” in the way of participation, to make the celebration subjectively more efficacious and the seminarians better aided in preparing themselves for future ministry in the Eucharistic apostolate.<sup>9</sup>

### **1.3 Formation for Eucharist**

However, when we move from the question of law to the question of fact, things change notably. The way in which the Eucharist is celebrated in seminaries depends on certain variables or contingencies, such as the composition of the seminary community, the number, age, origin and social class of the seminarians, whether the formators are homogeneous or heterogeneous, the kinds of educational methods, etc. Also, some of these factors are stable and always present, even if they are not there consciously or reflexively in the teachers or formators. The form of the Eucharistic celebration and the style of presiding depend on how the priest interprets himself and his proper role. It is worthwhile adding that, just as a priest understands his being in relationship to his mission to be developed, from the concrete ways in which he relates to the world and to culture in general, so does the image of the Church depend on what he wants to promote and the type of celebration that he wants to live out.

On the one hand, the lived Eucharist is a tremendously powerful agent in formation (the Eucharist forms and shapes what is lived in conformity with what is celebrated); and on the other hand, it is a reflection and mirror of a formational proposition (the celebrative “form” is for service, or is conditioned by formational activities and strategies.) Clearly, the various ways of celebrating correspond to the various models of priesthood.

I now move to sketch in broad strokes the various figures or models of priesthood from Trent and from Vatican II, the various ways of living and celebrating the Eucharist linked to various visions of the Church, various formation models and the resulting spiritualities. This encounter allows us more easily to gather up the new elements proposed by the Second Vatican Council and to lay down the foundations for overcoming the tridentine model. Of course, it produced much fruit for the Church in the age of Christendom, but it needs now to be radically reconsidered to correspond to modern times.

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<sup>9</sup> The principal references: VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 17-18-19, *Optatam totius*, 8, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5, *Ad Gentes*, 19.

## 2. The priest of the Council of Trent and the sacrament of “union”

### 2.1 *The figure of the “sacerdos”*

When the council Fathers met at Trent, they had to confront issues concerning sacerdotal functioning. They were conditioned by the great task of reacting to the criticisms in the thought of the Reformation. The Reformers had attacked, among other points, the very idea of priesthood and sacrifice. From the denial of the sacrificial aspects of the Mass, they derived the rejection of the dimension and function of the priest in the very celebration of Mass. As a result, they put into opposition a sacramental vision of the priesthood with a ministerial, or diaconal, vision.<sup>10</sup>

The council Fathers reacted under the inspiration of the thought of Thomas Aquinas and joined indissolubly Eucharistic priesthood and sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> The result was twofold and ambivalent. On the one hand, there came about an important clarification and the fixing of doctrine; but on the other, they failed to draw up a complete vision of the problem, unleashed from the demands of polemics. Thus in its dogmatic texts, for reasons of an immature ecclesiology and a polemic emphasis on the doctrine of the priesthood, there emerged a “reduced” figure of the priest, fundamentally involved only in worship.

There are two important points in the argumentation: 1 - In the New Testament, to a visible and exterior priesthood is joined the power of consecrating the body and blood of the Lord and of forgiving sins; 2 - Orders is a sacrament instituted by Christ himself which imparts a character. Holy Orders is therefore not just a simple office but a sacrament; it is received by means of consecration and anointing and cannot be the object of any rethinking, since it changes ontologically the person who receives it, producing permanent effects.

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<sup>10</sup> In Luther’s pamphlet that brought about his break, published in 1520, *Luther Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* affirmed that all Christians belong to the ecclesiastical state, and that there is no difference except for the office proper to each one. “Baptism and the Gospel make all of us religious and Christians.” Consequently, the primacy of the common priesthood of the faithful and of the Word, its ecclesiastical office and the Eucharist. For the description of this model in reaction to the Reformation, I refer to the results of the study of the theme by Luigi Mezzadri in *A lode della gloria. Il sacerdozio nell’écôle française XVII-XX secolo*, Jaca Book, Milano 1989, in particular, the introduction, pages 9-36.

<sup>11</sup> Session XXIII, 15 July 1563, on Holy Orders, in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta* (ed. Istituto per le Scienze Religiose di Bologna), EDB, Bologna 1991, 742 ff.

From Trent's reform decrees, on the other hand, there emerges a more complete concept. The pastor should know the people committed to his care, and he should nourish them with the Word, the sacraments, and his personal example, and he should love them in their weakest members. To accomplish this, he has to live in the place where he exercises his ministry, give a homily during Sunday Mass, teach catechism, and pray the Liturgy of the Hours for the people confided to him.<sup>12</sup>

In substance, the image of the priest from Trent is one of a man of the sacred, concerned with the salvation of souls and his own sanctification. Without a doubt the council laid the foundations for a reform of the clergy, but it happened only thanks to the activity of certain great personalities who joined ecclesiastical reform to spiritual renewal.<sup>13</sup>

## **2.2 *The theological concept of priestly identity***

The figure of the tridentine priest in spiritual literature found its legitimacy in the theological vision inspired by the corpus of writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. In this perspective, the priest is the man of worship. He has a sacral idea of his function, and interprets priesthood as mediation. He is and understands himself as a pontiff, a mediator between God and the community. Just as in the order of angels there are three levels of hierarchy, in which each hierarchy receives divine illumination from above and grants it to the lower levels, so also the ecclesiastical hierarchy is ordered as a kind of pyramid. Through the angels, the bishop communicates with God, and through the bishop, they rain down on the lower grades the powers of order and sanctification. The priest inhabits a lower level than the bishop, but is always lifted above that of men. Because he is lifted above the order of men by the sacrament of Orders, the priest receives an indelible character which separates him from the community and lets him become a man set apart for divine worship. Because of Orders, he undergoes a true and proper ontological

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<sup>12</sup> The attempt to limit the phenomenon of the so-called "Mass priest" is clear. An income from a patrimony was a sufficient canonical title for ordination; afterwards, the priest could leave without exercising any pastoral ministry, and so could avoid ever preaching or hearing confessions, but limited himself only to the celebration of the Eucharist.

<sup>13</sup> In the Church there can be no genuine reform without spiritual renewal. It is impossible to present here the complete sacerdotal movement in the post-Trent period, other than to list its most qualified exponents: For Italy, St. Charles Borromeo, and for France, the work of the Cole franchise, with its major figures: Bérulle, Condere, Oliver, Eudes, Vincent de Paul, and the influence of the teaching of Francis de Sales.



change that makes him different than other men. From this, there developed a complete priestly spirituality that insisted on his radical diversity from ordinary men, on separation, and on the duty of a greater sanctification.<sup>14</sup>

### **2.3 The vision of the Eucharist and the main post-tridentine liturgical deformations**

In the Dionysian model, the Eucharist is the “sacrament of union.” The Eucharist lifts believers out of their divided lives to bring them to unity, and through this divine reduction of divisions, it grants them communion and union with the One. This strongly unifying character makes of this sacrament the necessary complement of all the others, which, without it, are incomplete. Thus the Eucharist finds its center in the sacramental ceremonies. For this reason, it appears as the “sacrament of sacraments.”

Union, which the Eucharist (Synaxis) brings about, binds one to God, the supreme One and Only. But since this union is impossible without the reduction of interior division, a person must have the form of the One to enter into communion with Him. In this way, the sacrament of union is radically opposed to sin and to the passions, the bases of multiplicity and division.

In conformity with this vision there results an entire ascetical spirituality focusing on interior purification. From this comes the insistence on going to confession before receiving communion and of deferring communion to attain the best possible spiritual conditions. Such praxis was promoted in the tridentine seminaries, so much so that, although the Eucharist was celebrated daily, communion was received only once a week. It took place during the solemn *Missa cantata*, after which there was another Mass of thanksgiving. Eucharistic piety lived more through the adoration of the real presence, which had the primary importance, than through the common participation in the sacrament.<sup>15</sup>

Out of this vision, in the course of the following centuries, various aspects emerged which have so weighed on the past as to block, even today, liturgical renewal.

The first aspect to be reinforced in the Eucharistic liturgy was the “sacral mentality.” The celebration emphasized the aspect of the

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<sup>14</sup> To understand the model, see the celebrated work of ROQUES R., *L'universo dionisiano. Struttura gerarchica del mondo secondo Ps. Dionigi Aeropagita*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 1996; orig. ed. *L'univers Dionysien: Structure Hiérarchique du Monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*, Paris 1954.

<sup>15</sup> MEZZADRI L. - ONNIS F., *Missione e Carità. La Congregazione della Missione nel Settecento. I - Francia e Italia*, CLV, Roma 1999, 208-215.

mystery of the rite, along with the priestly function with its character of separation. Worship became more and more clericalized, seen, for example, architecturally in the choir or sanctuary which became more and more separated from the main nave. Through grilles or chancels or balustrades (which correspond to the oriental iconostasis) the people were left with an occasional view of what was happening in the sacred precincts and were excluded from any possibility of participation.

A second aspect of the profound transformation of the liturgy, closely joined with the first, is the loss of the assembly. A throng of people gathered around the officiating priest, but they were only passively present and understood very little. Even the liturgical language, Latin, contributed in increasing the distance. In this way, the dynamism of the liturgy was lost along with the liturgical focus on altar, presiding and ambo. The altar disappeared, since it developed into a support for a huge backdrop or a grandiose tabernacle. The seat disappeared since a priest presided over the Eucharist who was not part of the assembly. The ambo also disappeared, substituted by a pulpit for sermons, while the Word of God was read in a dead language in the area restricted to clerics.

The relationship to God in the Eucharistic celebration came to assume a private or devotional character: it was the celebration of a sublime ritual which served to consecrate the Eucharistic species with which one was nourished (less and less often for the people), and especially to be adored. The tabernacle, placed in the center of the apse, became the main liturgical focus, and the nave was filled with many altars around which developed private pious practices.

To these aspects of deformation (clericalization of worship, loss of the assembly, private devotionalism) there should be added the heavy rubricism which became the standard liturgical practice. The Council of Trent granted the Roman Curia exclusive competence in legislating liturgical matters. This liturgical centralism, established by Pius V, was consolidated by Sextus V with the institution of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. To this was added the competence of officially interpreting the liturgical books and of watching over the exact execution of the rites. In this way, moral and juridical problems took the upper hand over theological and pastoral ones. The mentality thus developed, in priests, of the importance of celebrating the sacrament "validly" (for the assembly) and "licitly" (for the celebrant), on condition that grace be "objectively" efficacious *ex opere operato*. The concerns of the celebrant converged on having a technically perfect celebration, without formal and material errors, scrupulously respecting all the rubrics, and being faithful to all the juridical-sacramental prescriptions. Almost completely absent, however, was attention to subjective conditions, to the reception of sacramental grace.

### 3. The priest of the Second Vatican Council and the sacrament of unity

#### 3.1 The figure of the “presbyter”

There is no doubt that the Council intended to put forth a renewal of priestly life,<sup>16</sup> but I believe that renewal had an great impact on the Council event itself, with the exception of certain indications in the conciliar documents: chapter III of *Lumen Gentium*, the decree *Presbyterorum ordinis* on the ministry and life of priests, 7 December 1965 (the final conciliar document), the decree *Optatam Totius* on priestly formation and the motu proprio *Ecclēsię Sanctę* containing the norms for application, dated 1966. Chapter III of LG is, in the judgment of all the commentators, the least successful of the entire constitution, together with the section about religious life (chap. VI). For this reason, PO lacks a prophetic quality, while the norms for application do not confront in any depth the issue of the evangelical renewal of priestly life. The crisis which has weighed, and still weighs, on priestly life is also due to this lacuna, this lack of strong prophetic signs that the council was able to express on other topics.<sup>17</sup>

More than the strength of the documents, it has been the council event itself which, together with rapid cultural and social changes, has shaken priestly life to its roots. The result has been a great variety of incarnations of priestly ministry, authorized by an extensive and thorough reading of the conciliar documents.<sup>18</sup> Thus to define and better understand the figure of the priestly minister of Vatican II we have to examine not only the texts dealing with it directly, but the complex of acts that gave rise to the documents: in the light of a renewed vision of liturgy and a new image of Church; in

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<sup>16</sup> Already on the level of terminology, the newness is clear. It was preferable to turn to the term *presbyter*, used in the patristic age, rather than *sacerdos*, used at Trent. This speaks a lot about the attempt to overcome a certain tradition.

<sup>17</sup> See the developmental story of *Presbyterorum ordinis*, compiled by WASSELYNCK R., *Les prêtres. Elaboration du décret de Vatican II. Histoire et genèse des textes conciliaires*, Desclée & Cie, Paris 1968.

<sup>18</sup> A note on methodology: if we take into account only the documents that look exclusively at the figure of the priest, the texts allow themselves to be interpreted in a traditionalist sense, from a reading which is limited to the letter. In this case, Vatican II would be nothing other than a deepening of Trent. But if the texts are interpreted in a broader framework of a renewed vision of Church and in a different way of relating to the world in general, then there emerges quite a different figure of the priest in respect to Trent. Consulting the *Thesaurus conciliorum oecumenicorum et generalium ecclesię catholice*, Series A - Brepols, Formae, Turnhout 1996, is particularly revealing.

the context of the new mission to be developed, whether *ad intra* or *ad extra*; in relation to the pastoral activity of the laity and the critical issues posed by modernity, with a network of relations that the Church is summoned to establish with the world of culture, the social and political realities present in various countries, other religions, with a heightened ecumenical sensibility and openness to the contemporary world in general. This is where the true novelty of the Second Vatican Council is to be found.<sup>19</sup>

### **3.2 The identity and interpretation of the role of the pastoral minister**

I turn now to lay out in broad strokes the vision of the figure of the priest of Vatican II by gathering together the important changes brought about by the council in our work of thinking about this ministry.<sup>20</sup>

When the Council was working on which has been called, regrettably, the *hierarchical constitution of the Church*, it began with bishops. To them has been conferred the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, and the threefold power of teaching, sanctifying and governing. The definition of the person who has received the sacrament of Orders as pastor in the image of Christ orients him directly to the community: *pastors for the community*. And they are pastors by reason of a charism recognized by the community but which came from the Spirit. For this reason, the Council insisted on the unity of charism and sacrament for the pastoral minister.

Just like the bishop, the figure of the presbyter is defined by a global responsibility for a community. The priest is considered as the representative of the bishop and his first collaborator. Thus he exercises the pastoral responsibility of Jesus Christ on a part of a particular Church: this is his responsibility. Following Irenaeus and Augustine, the Council explained that priests are ordained to contribute to building up a community of living persons who are to be, through their mutual charity and witness, a spiritual sacrifice pleasing to God. Their ministry is ordained to the construction of the Christian community. For this reason, they are called to collaborate,

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<sup>19</sup> AA.VV., *L'Eglise de Vatican II* (ed. G. Barauna), vols. I-II, Cerf, Paris 1966; AA.VV., *Vatican II. Bilancio & prospettive* (ed. R. Latourelle), Cittadella, Assisi 1987; ROUTHIER G., *L'ecclésiologie catholique dans le sillage de Vatican II. La contribution de Walter Kasper à l'herméneutique de Vatican II*, in « Laval théologique et philosophique » 60 (2004) 13-51.

<sup>20</sup> For a global vision, see LAFONT G., *Immaginare la Chiesa cattolica. Linee e approfondimenti per un nuovo dire e un nuovo fare della comunità cristiana*, San Paolo, Milano 1998, especially pages 153-201, dedicated to deepening the « Il carisma diversificato della Presidenza » (chap. 7).

according to what is proper to them, in the building up of the Christian community (they are not its only builders, but co-builders of the community.) And what is proper to them, that is, their specific ministry, is to preside over the community.

The priest, therefore, is (or should become) the animator of the community, the coordinator of its various charisms and ministries, the guarantor for the community itself of the apostolicity of its various expressions (this is what binds him to the bishop). He is the one who exercises (or should exercise) the function of the moderator of the community and who possesses the charism of discernment and vigilance. He is no longer the *holy man* for worship, but the presider over the community, the *dialogue man*, and the agent of communion. In this perspective, the Eucharist becomes the sacrament of the unity of the various expressions of the charismatic and ministerial nature of the Church.

What I have just said comes simply from the ecclesiological inspiration of Vatican II. In reality, there is a noteworthy change as regards Trent, which would demand a great deal of time to be able to enter the mentality of a believer. The priestly spirituality of Trent insisted in the first place on the sacramental function of the priest (everything was directed to the Eucharistic celebration), and consequently to a certain idea of sacramental character which made such a function possible, seeing in it what is exclusive in the area of apostolate and mission. If, according to Vatican II, the specific task of the priest is presiding or moderating a community, this does not mean that this covers everything in the Church. It is normal and necessary that the laity intervene, according to their proper charism, full-time or part-time, in the exercise of the power of teaching, sanctifying and governing.<sup>21</sup>

### **3.3 Liturgical reform and the goal of formation**

The Second Vatican Council decided also on a radical development in the understanding of the meaning of the liturgy in the life of the Christian community. It intervened with a renewal of the structure of ritual itself which had noteworthy implications for the way of conceiving and interpreting priestly ministry. From this

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<sup>21</sup> The reference is to the various services exercised according to what is proper to each one with their various ecclesial components: the *service of the Word* (evangelization and mission, liturgy, catechesis), the *service of the tables* (all the ministries of compassion and charity), the *service of administration* (looking to the goods of the community). These are services which should be exercised fully in themselves, without showing the character of supplying for an absent clergy or for simply helping the clergy who are present.

there emerge today various formation needs, around which should revolve the educational work within the life of seminaries and institutes of formation.

Liturgical renewal has developed around three key issues: 1 - the recovery of the centrality and the dynamic of the paschal mystery in the Eucharistic celebration; 2 - the rediscovery of the assembly as the subject of the Eucharist; 3 - the renewal of sacramental language rediscovered in all its symbolic depth, to favor participation in the salvation event as celebrated.

From these principles spring forth the foundations of a formation for “presiding over the community” which should respect major pastoral demands for more meaningfully lived Eucharist.

The primary and basic factor is therefore the *formation of the Eucharistic assembly*. The Eucharist is the celebration of the Christian community for the Christian community. Its main efforts are directed toward creating the conditions for the formation of the community through a renewed work of evangelization and catechesis.

In addition, active, full and conscious participation of the assembly in the Eucharist should be promoted through a solid *initiation to liturgical symbols*. The sacramental language should be deciphered, and therefore the faithful should be initiated into Christian symbols and accompanied in perceiving their own communal nature that the sacrament produces. In other words, the capacity of reading the Eucharistic ritual should be promoted by means of an initiation, along with the action of God through a *mystagogical activity*. Initiation and mystagogy are the two foci of the same ellipse, each helping the other in liturgical and sacramental practice.

A new mystagogy calls for a new *esthetic*. The entire system of Christian symbols should recover a certain esthetic quality, that is, it should be able to amaze, to provoke emotions, to capture the attention of people and favor the turn to the activity of God. The way of celebrating, the place of celebration, the way of arranging the assembly, the songs, the sacred vestments, etc., are not just secondary or ornamental elements. The “how” of celebration is fundamental, provided the “how” is contained in the “if”: the possibility of bringing about a significant experience of God depends on the mode of celebration.

Nevertheless, today the esthetic quality of the rites has generally declined. It is therefore urgent, on the one hand, to return splendor to the symbols and, on the other, to generate in persons the capacity to understand them. It is the problem of the relationship between the theological and the esthetic, between the action of God and the way

of perceiving it.<sup>22</sup> Also, esthetics is the doctrine of perception. The ancient Christian tradition had taught such perception to be able to consider worship at one and the same time a physical and a spiritual act, through the *doctrine of the spiritual senses*. If today people are in the grip of their own sensible perceptions and are conditioned and inevitably bound only to their emotions, this is why the art of deciphering them, or esthetics, is reduced to the theory of mere adornment. There should be a return to having the teaching of Christian perception, so as to educate people's esthetic sensibilities and to bring them to the transfiguration of their senses in God. Only in this way can be born the capacity of spiritually accompanying the people to accomplish their path of faith and charity, to sustain them in their ecclesial membership and in their Christian witness.

In the circle of catechesis-initiation-mystagogy and in the search for a new esthetic the entire redefinition of priestly ministry enters in concerning the Eucharistic celebration. All this is demanded by our age and current circumstances. This is therefore the educational issue from which initial and ongoing formation should begin.

#### 4. The principal characteristics of the new figure of the priest

We turn now to attempt to redefine the role of the presbyter-priester over the Christian Eucharistic assembly through the use of a term taken from Hebrew tradition: *ba'al tefillà*, master of prayer.<sup>23</sup>

The priest has the responsibility of creating a liturgical community, transforming a plurality of individuals who are praying in a worshipping community recognized as such before God. It is up to him to create an atmosphere in which the search for absolute values is awakened, in which interest in the Spirit is shared with the whole community. On this point, the priest today experiences his greatest frustrations. The invitation to prayer runs up against a brick wall. The assembly is not always disposed to or ready for a gesture of worship and an act of grace. The priest has to pierce the shell of indifference of the many. Literally, he has to fight to get a response (just consider certain weddings and funerals: the assembly often does not know how to respond or even know the formulas for the responses.) In a certain sense he has to conquer those who assist to be able to speak to them.

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<sup>22</sup> Exactly on the study of this point Pierangelo Sequeri has dedicated a large part of his teaching. In particular: SEQUERI P., *Estetica e teologia. L'indicibile emozione del sacro: R. Otto, A. Schönberg, M. Heidegger*, Glossa, Milano 1993; *L'estro di Dio. Saggi di estetica*, Glossa, Milano 2000; *Sensibili allo Spirito. Umanesimo religioso e ordine degli affetti*, Glossa, Milano 2001.

<sup>23</sup> The reference is to the essay of HESCHEL A.J., *Il canto della libertà. La vita interiore e la liberazione dell'uomo*, Qiqajon, Magnano 1999.

The tragedy that we often experience is that of the anonymity of the Eucharistic assemblies. As a rule, the ritual does not generate any participation. The words reach the ears but do not touch the hearts, and the gestures reach the eyes, but do not lift the gaze.

The office of the priest is to “guide the prayer.” He stands before the assembly not as a separate or isolated man, not as an individual, but as one with the assembly itself. He is called to become identified with the assembly (from which he receives the priestly character of his office). His role is that of representing the community and at the same time of inspiring it and leading it, at least some times, to the threshold of mystery. He is the one who guides their faith experience by means of the liturgy at which he presides. His function is fulfilled in helping the people to live with intensity the moment of encounter with the presence of God in a critical self-examination, to be opened at the end to praise and thanksgiving.

The presbyter is the one to arouse the singing, since praying in an assembly without song means a loss of the active participation of the community. It can happen that some people do not know how to pray any more or never learned how, but everyone knows how to sing. Song leads to prayer, and prayer arouses joy in the spirit, without which there is no paschal celebration. The separation of music from the liturgical word is a real drama that we have experienced for centuries. In some periods, music overpowered the word because of its excessive splendor and complexity. The *schola cantorum* substituted for the assembly, making it mute and passive. In other times, the esthetical quality of liturgical music declined terribly, and made it impossible to communicate the spiritual meaning of the words. Between music and text there should be a certain harmony connected with the spiritual experience that the assembly is living out. Sometimes the assembly appears traumatized listening to stupendous verbal expressions that appear in a mistaken musical guise: sublime words combined with vulgar music. A large part of today’s liturgical music distorts and at times contradicts the words instead of giving them their intensity and exalting them. Music of this type has devastating effects on the search for prayer.

Then, the only thing remaining for the priest is the Word, whose servant and spokesman he becomes. He is personally called to be transported by the words of the rite that he is celebrating in the name of and on account of the assembly, and as the assembly. In this way he will be led by the Eucharistic liturgy to live certain moments in which he will forget the world and its daily worries, moments during which he will be overcome by the consciousness of Him in whose presence he stands. The assembly, then, will listen and realize that the priest is not just reciting but is adoring God, that praying does not mean repeating formulas, that singing does not mean listening to music or simply giving voice to a melody, but rather identifying



oneself with what has been spoken and proclaimed. In this way the temple or church will be transformed into a house of prayer. When all this happens, and only when this happens, will the priest have fulfilled his responsibility.

Masters of prayer are not improvised and cannot become such just by perfecting the art of liturgical “performance.” They are masters of prayer through grace. Formation, consequently, should bind together ability and technical capacity to become a good liturgical animator, along with faith, to be able to preside over the community with authority. A pastor without faith would be a caricature, incapable of doing what only he can: that is, of representing the community publicly, presiding over its assemblies, guiding prayer, and supporting the members of the community in the witness of his life.

(JOHN E. RYBOLT, translator)

# Eucharist, Mission and Evangelization

by Andrés Motto, C.M.

*Province of Argentina*

We know that there are many people who live good lives and yet do not receive communion. This statement not only refers to non-believers and to believers who are non-Christian, but also to those members of Christian churches who do not believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. I have in mind the many Catholics who, even though they know the value of the Eucharist, do not see the need to receive the Eucharist frequently in order to grow in the values of the Kingdom. What can we say about this situation? In this article we intend to show briefly that the Eucharist is a legitimate and necessary way to advance in the mission. Also, we will talk about the aspects that we ought to modify in our religious practice that will make the Eucharist the source of evangelization and not merely an empty and temporal rite. Finally, as Vincentians, we cannot separate the Eucharist from its role as an essential aspect of evangelization: to work for the dignity of all people.

Above all, we want to point out that, as Vincentians, the Eucharist constitutes the source, the goal and the synthesis of our mission and our spirituality. We know very well the enormous and varied richness of the Eucharist in the life of the Christian. As such, it is part of our pastoral work to develop these for the people, revealing the rich significance for the life of the community. The Eucharist is at the same time a communal feast and celebration. It is the creator and restorer of communion and fraternity in the many sharing the one bread, It is the sacrament of love and of the life of Christ in us as the seed of the resurrection. It is the source of all holiness. It is the root and the end of all apostolic work. In its quintessence, it is the sacrament that renews for us the saving Paschal mystery of the Lord putting us in contact with him who rose from the dead in his living body for ever. Our Founder always celebrated the Eucharist with dignity, because in a certain way, the priest is his Mass. The Eucharist is the prayer of prayers. The best

way to assure that the People of God pray is by praying together with them.

In this context of the missionary value of the Eucharist, we point out the presentation of John Paul II in this Eucharistic year to reaffirm the importance of this sacrament for the life and mission of the Church. For us, members of the Congregation of the Mission, the Eucharist must help us to be contemplatives in action, to be mystics with our eyes open, and to bring about a wise peace with prophetic energy. The Pope develops the missionary aspect of the Eucharist in Chapter IV of the apostolic letter *Mane nobiscum domine*. As he does frequently in various documents, John Paul II takes a biblical passage and later develops it. For this particular topic, he selects the text of the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35). We, just as the disciples of Emmaus, after receiving the body of the Risen Lord, ought to joyfully evangelize, giving witness to the Kingdom. Each Eucharist ought to renew in us the Christian life, giving thanks to God for continuing his project in the world. This makes us have no fear of giving witness to God in a world that presents two errors with regards to religion: 1) On the one hand, there is has a secular culture that prescind from God. It thinks that religion is an anti-value from which we must be liberated or at least have its influence reduced. 2) On the other hand (as an extreme opposite), the havoc of religious fanaticism is raised. In light of these two errors, it must be pointed out that:

*It is a mistake to think that any public reference to faith will somehow undermine the rightful autonomy of the State and civil institutions, or that it can even encourage attitudes of intolerance. If history demonstrates that mistakes have also been made in this area by believers, as I acknowledged on the occasion of the Jubilee, this must be attributed not to "Christian roots," but to the failure of Christians to be faithful to those roots. One who learns to say "thank you" in the manner of the crucified Christ might end up as a martyr, but never as a persecutor.<sup>1</sup>*

St. Vincent wanted the life of his sons and daughters to be intimately connected to the Eucharist. Therefore, arriving at a new place, the first thing they ought to do is visit the Blessed Sacrament and put in God's hands the mission that they were about to conduct.<sup>2</sup> He wanted them to celebrate the Mass with profound devotion. At the same time, he wanted them to make sure the *Corpus Christi*

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<sup>1</sup> *Mane nobiscum domine*, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. SV I, 514; English edition, 1, 504.

processions were done correctly, stepping in when the processions were out of order, almost imitating a carnival.<sup>3</sup> One of the concerns of the Congregation was that the seminarians, who were formed, not only know the ecclesiastical sciences, but also that they care for all the sacraments and especially celebrate Mass with dignity.<sup>4</sup> This is a very necessary topic because in many seminaries one frequently sees candidates about to be ordained with an astonishing ignorance of liturgy and sacraments. Now, beyond knowing liturgy, is the true meaning of the Eucharist being lived in our communities?

### **Revive Fellowship in the Christian Life**

There is no doubt that the true cult is that which makes us better persons. To be better persons is equal to saying we must grow in our capacity to love. Then why is it that so many times our parishes are filled with people who do not grow, who are filled with fear or resentment, struggling for power, indifferent to the pain of the neighbor and even provoking that pain? This problem has to be resolved now with great urgency. Besides, we know that one of the objectives of our missions and our missionary parishes is to bring people closer to the Church and to revitalize the life of the parish. We have to resolve this problem with urgency. Is it worthwhile to bring people closer to the community when community life is so deficient? What can be done so that communities have the capacity to be receptive and influential?

Let us start with some existential data: some time ago, a certain phenomenon began in many parishes. Catholics decided that they were going to go to Mass (or receive the sacraments) where they find a cordial reception, some friendly faces, a lively liturgy, and preaching that is sensitive to their needs. Without considering ecclesiastical jurisdiction, they go to the parish community where they feel welcome effectively and affectively. This approach is felt primarily in the outward sign of the Church: a dynamic Eucharist. There are many Catholic Christians whose tie to the Church does not involve the Sunday liturgy, and who have little value for the sanctions of not fulfilling the precepts of the Church.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. SV II, 527; English edition, 2, 575-576.

<sup>4</sup> St. Vincent attributes this idea to Fr. Bourdoise: "Before him, no one knew what it was [a seminary for learning the rubrics]; there was no special place where they were taught; a man, after his philosophy, after his theology, after the least studies, after a bit of Latin, went forth to a parish and administered the sacraments there in his own style; that is what made for such great diversity" SV XII, 289.

<sup>5</sup> The ecclesiastical law with regard to assistance at Sunday Mass and many other questions has not changed, but Catholics have assumed that they

It seems that Catholics will not be going backward with regard to this style that they have initiated. This was not a process that was orchestrated or programmed, but rather a change of sensibility that rose up more or less spontaneously in various sectors. Perhaps, due to “these disobediences” God himself is calling to a greater authenticity, to leave a pharisaical practice and enter into a liturgy that is more authentic. I believe that, as missionaries, we ought to sit down with the people and talk with them. We ought to come down from our clerical throne to understand what is happening. At the same time, if we effectively want to draw the people closer to the Church of the Lord, we ought to convert the Eucharist into gatherings of communal praise, full of fervor, enthusiasm, interest and so much so that the motivation to participate in the “Day of the Lord” comes not from fear of sin, but rather from the interior need of Christians to encounter God and community. In this aspect, I consider dangerous the path of certain renewal sectors (frequently inside the actual Church), where the only way out consists in being faithful to the past.

To be missionaries today implies going out to meet the needs of the people. This is more important than where to put the flowers. It means we must understand the hopes, the fears, the struggles and the needs of the people. The hurt and suffering people need a word that can help them understand and resolve conflicts in life. We know that the Eucharist is always preceded by the word. In this context, what value is there in a boring, uninteresting, poorly prepared homily, when the preacher does not know when to stop, which goes on endlessly, which does not offer anything useful for daily life; a homily that is not shared with anyone, saying things that are not felt nor lived. To all this we add horrible songs, a defective sound system, a place not well prepared and not less the people.... It also happens that there are parishes where the celebrations are “correct,” but they do not respond to the spiritual needs of the people. This is to say that the celebrated Eucharist ought to be an experience of the richness of the Christian mystery and therefore should evangelize in a personal way. We cannot keep the faithful and ourselves in infantilism. We cannot encourage a liturgy that maintains the people in loneliness, depression and pain.

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on their own can change the law. Even today it is frequent that actually almost all the Catholics that are in the church come forward to receive the sacrament. Up to a few years ago, a large number did not go to receive, some simply because they had missed Mass the previous Sunday. Today, many adults and youth go to communion even though they are aware that their lives are not always in agreement with Church laws. Cf. ANDREW GREELEY, “The Children of the Council,” in *America*, 7 (2004) 8-11.

The other need is participation. There is little value in the missionary who brings the people closer to the Church so that they can have a life of mere spectators. Certainly, participation in the Christian life does not consist only in liturgical activities, but even at that much attention should be paid to all that promotes participation. We must remember that the People of God are primarily responsible for the liturgical action. If this is so, the result is that the spiritual life of the parish and of the community will be profoundly transformed by the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. In the liturgy, all ought to be transformed. The liturgy should be very prayerful, as Anselm Grün, the “transformer,” points out.<sup>6</sup> The rites that we celebrate in the liturgy are “transformers” and the rite itself is a way that leads us to the transformation. Each time that we celebrate a rite, we are heading for an interior transformation. The central rite of transformation is the Eucharist. In it, we celebrate the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Products of creation are transformed into divine gifts. Besides, in the Mass, we celebrate (or we ought to celebrate) our own transformation. Our daily lives, our work, our sentiments, and our joys are transformed into joy and divine life. All the sacraments are, in the last instance, ways of transformation.

To draw the people to the Eucharist is to make them discover the transforming force of the liturgy, in the first place by the *anamnesis* or remembrance. Participating in the past salvific action, those who take part in the liturgy are drawn out from the routine and the boring to be filled with the force of a super-personal and divine event. Also, one is transformed by participating in the liturgy of heaven. People are elevated above the routine and monotonous to be brought to the superior and divine powers that transform us into new beings. Finally, the transformation in the liturgy has a place for anticipation too. The future opens up in the present and transforms it. In this sense, the very liturgical year, prayed attentively, gives us many symbols of transformation. C. Jung said that the Christian liturgy, with its richness in signs, gestures and words, was, even without consciously seeking it, a true therapeutic system.

The question is: Do we live the transforming power of the Eucharist? At times, we have to admit sadly that the moment of the corporal action, of the signs, of the very celebration is relegated. As pastors, it would be our task to organize the liturgy in such a way that it has a new transforming force. This includes not only the external forms, but all that they realize. The people ought to

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. ANSELM GRÜN, *Transformació* (Lumen: Buenos Aires, 1997) 73-82.

experience something happening if one, day in day out, goes to church and lives the liturgy. This certainly would be an opportunity for receiving the grace of God, if the rites are not done superficially. Even more, how much can the Sunday liturgy transform a family that relates to God during one hour? How much can daily Mass transform one who discovers Christ? Naturally, these transformations do not always appear visibly. These transformations take place slowly, and at times imperceptibly, but really. It is also certain that the People of God will be helped if we, the clergy, pray and celebrate the Eucharist with devotion, putting our life on the altar, with all its interior and exterior conflicts. Our life, slowly transformed by God, will make us live in greater communion with all.

Another element to improve is strengthening hospitality in our communities. For example, the Bishops in the United States, in a message to young adults, said: "We must be aware of the pain of so many of you who feel unwelcome and alone, strangers in the house of God."<sup>7</sup> We know that this reality is repeated in many places and within other sectors of society.

Ordained ministers have to be aware that Christ is present in the person of the minister, but that we are not the center of congregation's attention. It is for this reason that humility must accompany in a very special way the liturgical service. To preside does not mean to do everything nor to give orders in a demanding way. It implies teaching, delegating, coming to a consensus, hoping, modifying, etc., attitudes that require the practice of the virtue of humility. Prayer, like all activities of love, implies a great giving. The one who uses liturgy to show off talents, to gain fame, to preach to himself, in short, to find himself, still has to grow much in love. A new reason for going in search of humility is that it teaches us to love just as Christ in the Eucharist.

Searching for a more participative Eucharist should make us think about games and festivals, as strange as it seems. Let us observe the game.<sup>8</sup> Understood in its full sense, it is present in the participation of the rites, traditions and liturgies. What we observe in the game is: serious (because it has rules that must be followed); 2) interesting (because each one makes the effort, is attentive and enjoys him/herself); 3) humble (because that which is most important is not the individual, but something external, e.g., a ball). The liturgy can be considered a game in the religious sense. For this reason, it

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<sup>7</sup> UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *Message to young adults*, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. JOHANN HUIZINGA, *Homo Ludens* (Emece: Buenos Aires, 1972) 11-42; HANS GADAMER, *Truth and Method* (Continuum: New York, 2003) 101-113.

would not be bad to come to the liturgy with the desire to play instead of experiencing it so solemnly. We repeat, we use the word game not in the physiological sense but rather as a cultural attitude of relaxation and entertainment.

We now move to the concept of feast.<sup>9</sup> We are conscious of how people feel drawn to feasts and we also know that many Christians do not live the liturgy as a feast. This is true in part because the clergy do not celebrate it as a feast. We know from anthropology that the feast is a rupture from daily life. It is a parenthesis in the face of daily tensions. This implies an air of gratitude and joy. It is the vital response opposed to business (that is why worldly feasts are not always true feasts). It is the capacity of contemplation, of knowing how to “waste time,” accepting life as gift and grace in an atmosphere of esthetics and play. Happiness is part of the feast, with its thousands of expressions in dress, food, drink, dance, song, etc., even up to a certain extravagance and abundance. Besides, all feasts presume the presence of the community or a social dimension of coming together among members of a group with an open spirit of wanting to know one another. In this way, all barriers are torn down and the identity of the group is celebrated in a joyful way. The feast also has a certain ritual, that captures the spirit of the group. It has a more or less fixed structure either inherited or invented. The feast is also in intimate relation with time. It is the celebration of a determined time (today) with a lived remembrance of the past (anniversary or birthday, etc.) and a hopeful projection to the future. Oh that our liturgies might reveal the divine feast! As Eucharistic Prayer IV says: “Father, we acknowledge your greatness: all your actions show your wisdom and love.” The God of the Bible is free and happy. The first one to have a feast is God himself. The question is: do we live the liturgy as play and a religious feast?

For that, the people of God ought to recover its voice. They ought to pray in a way that the prayers, the acclamations, the responses be heard. The Word ought to be proclaimed relating it to our own lives. The music and the songs permit various and different styles in the celebrations, so that the people find ways of expressing themselves to get closer to God. We cannot convert our churches into museums of the past where only the music of the past is heard, as if the Church were the custodian of the music of the past. The Gospel teaches us to display both the old and the new of our treasure (Mt 13:52). We must use the better singers, not so that the people listen to the singing, but so that the entire community sings. There is no need to tire out oneself teaching the responses and the other

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<sup>9</sup> JOSÉ ALDABAL, “Fiesta,” in *Cuadernos Phase* 27 (1991) 3-13.



musical texts to the people of God. Also, the people participate more when they share their reflections (from time to time). The value of the word should be accompanied by the value of liturgical silence. That is to say, the Eucharist should recover and grow in its interactive format. In that way, the people will feel really and affectively pleased to have come to the house of God. Like all that I have previously mentioned, this is a task that requires perseverance, preparation and the willingness to do it.

Bringing this point to a close, we recall the advice of St. Vincent as he teaches us that a magnificent act of charity is participation in the Mass.<sup>10</sup> The Eucharist is a beautiful expression of the theme “love is inventive up to infinity.”<sup>11</sup> This is the sacrament of charity “par excellence” and it leads us to practice charity. Vincent de Paul believes profoundly in the power of the Eucharist for one to grow in charity; that is why he commented that some persons who were divided should be invited to the Eucharist with the intention of asking God for the unity of those persons.<sup>12</sup> This is to say that the Eucharist is not only to express the love of God, but also the love of neighbor. So to participate well in the liturgy, one must go with an attitude of charity.<sup>13</sup> St. Vincent tells us that to receive the Eucharist correctly, one has to prepare the heart to be open to the love of God and the love of neighbor. God asks only that we give him our hearts.<sup>14</sup> And this giving over of our hearts demands of us repentance of our past faults, abandonment to all vanity in the world and a firm purpose not to offend him again.<sup>15</sup>

So, as we can see, the Congregation of the Mission since its origins has a great concern for the Eucharist. However, the liturgy should not be understood as rubrics, nor as a fanatical completion of the ritual. The liturgy ought to be profoundly connected to the pastoral so that it be the way all people make contact with the divine realities and bring about the liberating transformation of human realities.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. SV IX, 42-43.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. SV XI, 146.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. SV I, 570; English edition, 1, 560.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. SV XII, 376.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. SV XIII, 36-37; English edition, 13a, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. SV XIII, 30-37; English edition, 13a, 36-42.

**To serve the poor and transform structures<sup>16</sup>**

The Eucharist well prayed ought to be the project of solidarity for all humanity. As Vincentians, we ought to be at the forefront of communion, peace, and solidarity with all, especially with the poor. Jesus Christ at the Last Supper used a jar full of dirty water and a used towel, and it was the solemn Eucharist. Of what value are neat and tidy liturgies if we do not get close to those who are suffering more than us and have so many needs that we do not have. To be a missionary implies that we give a warm welcome to those people who are suffering from discrimination in society, the physically challenged, people with special needs like the elderly, the economically marginalized, the socially deprived for any reason: such were the followers of Jesus. It is urgent to recall that the Eucharist is a meal shared among all. More than “receive” communion we should “share” communion!

The purpose of this article is not to develop an analysis of the actual social-political situation. We simply point out that we are happy that military dictatorships have practically disappeared. Another positive fact is that Communism in the Soviet style, with all the human rights violations implied in it, has fallen. However, the certain negative aspects of neo-capitalism have persisted and are growing. This style of society has fostered and given growth to the exclusion of the poor and maintains the supposition of being the only model of life for humanity. The superpower is reigning, submerging the world in violence and holds to no law but its own cravings. Added to this are terrorism, political corruption and the increased criminal activity of the population.

In the face of this situation, what repercussions does our Mass have? It is very important that our communities help the poor... but that task will be incomplete if we help the marginalized but do nothing to change the structures that continue creating misery, poverty and exclusion. Christian action would be incomplete if, for example, each year we establish more soup kitchens for children and do not work to eradicate the deep evils that produce in the homes of the lowly insufficient food for the children to eat. The Vincentian mission continues in the active commitment in favor of a more just and fraternal society. John Paul II says:

*In the Eucharist our God has shown love in the extreme, overturning all those criteria of power which too often govern*

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ, *Teología de la liberación* (Sígueme: Salamanca, 1990) 300-320; SEGUNDO GALILEA, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal* (Ed. del Seminario Pontificio Mayor: Santiago de Chile, 1991) 5-46; 67-72; JEAN-MARIE AUBERT, *Compendio de la Moral Católica* (Edicep: Valencia, 1991) 228-234.

*human relations and radically affirming the criterion of service: "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9:35). It is not by chance that the Gospel of John contains no account of the institution of the Eucharist, but instead relates the "washing of feet" (cf. Jn 13:1-20)... We cannot delude ourselves: by our mutual love and, in particular, by our concern for those in need we will be recognized as true followers of Christ (cf. Jn 13:35; Mt 25:31-46). This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged.<sup>17</sup>*

I would like to point out that when I make a retreat, I always discover that I am not praying enough and among my promises I tell myself that I must pray more. I suppose that this promise would be shared with many readers of this article. It seems that one has a hard time in finding equilibrium. That is to say, we always have a bad conscience in light of prayer. This can be a good thing in a way. Affirming all this, I can honestly also point out: I like to recall that St. Vincent repeats the centrality of charity in a way that subordinates piety to evangelizing activity. This is expressed in things that are real and yet strange for the ritualistic mentality, such as leaving Mass to attend to a poor person: "You are right in having no scruple about missing Mass to assist the poor, for God prefers mercy to sacrifice."<sup>18</sup> He emphasized to the sisters that they ought to participate in daily Mass, but for as sublime as that is, they should still omit it for the sake of serving the poor<sup>19</sup> In this way, they affirm that the true love of God is found in the love of neighbor. It is to be understood that charity is the absolute norm and to fulfill that duty is above and beyond all other obligations. We find these teachings of the great commandment of love of God and the neighbor explained by Jesus (Lk 10:25-42), which are found in the diptych of the good Samaritan and of Martha and Mary. In certain situations of emergency, God himself "leaves his place" to attend to others:

*There are some occasions in which it is not possible to observe the order of day; for example, there is a knock on the door while you are at prayer and the sister has to go attend a poor sick person in an emergency; what should she do? She would do well to go and leave her prayer, or rather in continuing it, because God asks this of her. Because, you see, charity is above all the rules and everything must relate to it. It is a great*

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<sup>17</sup> *Mane nobiscum domine*, 28.

<sup>18</sup> SV VII, 52; English edition, 7, 66.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. SV IX, 42.

*lady. One must do all its commands. In this case, then, it is to leave God for God. God calls you to pray and at the same time calls you to attend this poor sick person. This is a called leaving God for God.<sup>20</sup>*

This text reminds us that the fundamental virtue of the Christian life is charity. Of course, charity without prayer is empty.

We understand that the mission of the Church is to place itself right there where the celebration of the Lord's supper and human fraternity are indissolubly united. The first task of the Church is to celebrate with joy the gift of the salvific action of God in humanity, realized through the death and resurrection of Christ. This is the Eucharist: memorial and thanksgiving. For that reason, it is really a feast. It celebrates the joy that one desires and that one seeks to share. The Eucharist is realized in the Church and, simultaneously, the Church is built up by the Eucharist. In the Church we celebrate that which was realized outside the building up of the Church in human history. This work, creative of a profound fraternal humanity, gives its *raison d'être* to the Church.

In the Eucharist we celebrate the mystery of human fraternity, which includes the dignifying of each and every human being. We recall that the Last Supper is presented having as a backdrop the Jewish Passover, which celebrates the liberation from Egypt and the covenant of Sinai. This was God's action in favor of a people who were living an intolerable economic and political situation. The work of Yahweh implied a salvation, therefore, which included the economic and political.

We know that the work of Jesus Christ, lived with such strength in the Eucharist, fights sin. However, we often forget that the political and economic injustices are part of the sin from which Jesus came to redeem us. How many Eucharists beautifully celebrated are absolutely indifferent to social injustices and conflicts! The "institutional violence" that Medellín denounced is frequently accompanied by institutionalized hypocrisy. This has become a real scandal for those who seek in the Church the defender of all people, as Jesus Christ wanted. It is very striking how conservative sectors have blown up some moral themes, minimizing themes related to social ethics, celebrating Masses where leaders who are oppressors of the people receive communion. It is true that this has occurred more often in the past than now, but we cannot say that these practices have been banished or that they will not come back to intensify.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> SV X, 595.

<sup>21</sup> We have to recognize that a part of the Catholic Christians, including many who were formed in a Catholic educational environment, frequently

In conflictive situations, a Eucharist that does not bring about a real commitment against injustice and in favor of the marginated is an empty rite, contrary to the teachings of Christ, who despite our inconsistencies, continues to be present in the consecrated bread. Eucharist and social justice are much more closely united than they appear in many parishes. Still, the ideological influence, which leads to individualistic worship or closed to the social question, or even worse, to celebrating in a triumphalist manner for those holding power, is strong. "To bring about the memorial of Christ" in the Mass is more than carrying out an act of worship: it is to accept the sense of a life that ended in death, at the hands of the powerful of this world, for love of the rest.

In this Eucharistic Year, we ought to commit ourselves as Vincentian Family to taking a clear position of denouncing the actual situation of social injustice and collaborating in the process of seeking a more human world order. This will happen, to a good extent, by applying the teachings of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Each Eucharist ought to be a liturgical manifestation of a permanently lived reality: the attitude of solidarity with the oppressed and disenfranchised. We ought to maintain an active hope, trusting that we can construct the Civilization of Love each time with greater determination. As custodians of the liturgical action, we must be prophets who unite Word, Eucharist and dignifying of the other.<sup>22</sup> There are times when this prophetic Eucharistic stance can bring Christians to loneliness, marginalization and even to martyrdom. That is why each Mass teaches us, like our Master, to be ready to shed our blood for love.

The contact with Christ in the Eucharist should lead us to greater contact with the Bible in order to separate worship from the Marxist and capitalist ideologies in their pure and severe forms. But

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find themselves tied to social systems that foster social exclusion. We have contributed in many places to creating a "Christian order," giving a certain sacred backing to unjust situations, especially those of the powerful against the weak. At times, the Christian has ended up being a piece of the dominant system or having accommodated the evangelical message to justify military dictatorships, brutal capitalism, guerrilla violence, war, religious fanaticism, etc. In this situation, all apolitical positions usually express: 1) cowardice, 2) covert social disinterest, 3) subterfuge to continue allowing the powerful to exploit the rest, 4) lack of a critical sense, 5) camouflage of pre-existing political pacts.

<sup>22</sup> Here we want to affirm that opting for the Christian God is opting for justice, with the complexity that these questions contain. To better clarify them it is convenient to leave to one side: 1) the ambiguous and impoverished simplifications, 2) the demonization of some social sectors and the idealization of others.

we also ought to separate ourselves from religious fanaticism (which also shakes Catholicism in its neo-conservative versions), so as to lose the missionary sense, thinking that we have nothing to announce. All is a question of equilibrium. We cannot return to a pretended evangelical “purity” that leads us to get farther away from human realities, among which are social conflicts. Also, we ought not to reduce the Christian richness to social work. Rather, we ought to develop, from the point of view of the Eucharist, a reflection, a spirituality and an ethic that lead us to encounter God through others. Without a doubt, these are the bases of spirituality and the Vincentian ethic. Christian faith cannot forget eschatology, but eschatology cannot be an excuse to want nothing to do with human things.

It is necessary to confront decisively this challenge which supposes that we look at reality and make the decision to transform it. Our Eucharists cannot serve for us to be unconcerned by the suffering of others. This is not acceptable, neither in a human or Christian way. Social conflict, currently emphasized by some neo-liberal schools, is a sad historical reality. For as difficult and risky as the task might be, we have to see this situation in the light of faith and the demands of the Kingdom. The problem is this: the question is how charity, inspired by faith, can work to seek creative solutions. One of the essential propositions, from Eucharistic love, is to attain the exclusion of hatred, lack of interest, and the reciprocal exploitation of diverse social groups. To participate evangelically on the side of justice and the excluded implies commitments, taking stances, being opposed to certain practices, defending as “not negotiable” human rights, etc. All this is done out of love and to put down social violence (which is always the absence of love). For example, John Paul II appreciates Christians who participate in solidarity movements in the work world: *“The Church is firmly committed to this cause, for she considers it her mission, her service, a proof of her fidelity to Christ, so that she can truly be the ‘Church of the poor.’”*<sup>23</sup>

The universality of Christian love is incompatible with the exclusion of persons. On the contrary, Christian charity permits the preference for the poorest and oppressed, who are already the favorites of our Master, who loved most those who most needed to be helped. Therefore, evangelizing implies affirming that the love of God is directed to all without exception, beginning with those who suffer most. No one is excluded from our love. The gospel even commands us to love our enemies. This does not take away the fact that one

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<sup>23</sup> *Laborem exercens*, 8.

must confront those who create hunger and misery, not to reject or hate them, but rather to call them to conversion. To evangelize is to never tire of the call to conversion.

So, in light of all the numerous social conflicts, many times in our own communities, it costs us to take a common stance. It seems that each one tends to respond from his ideologies, favored positions, upholding of privileges or responding in agreement with worldly criteria (neo-Machiavellianism) or maintaining a “pious neutrality” that deep down contradict the evangelical mandate. On the contrary, we have the Eucharist as the paradigm that invites us to unity, although for that one must “crumble” the various grains. The Church, in celebrating the Eucharist, wishes to be a sign of communion in history (LG 1). Therefore, she must contribute to the unity of the world, knowing that the harmony of all people is possible only by effective justice for all. In the midst of a 21<sup>st</sup> century that began with terrible violence and exclusion, the first mission of those who receive communion is to show that we believe in peace and equality. Thus, the Church will constitute an authentic and efficacious sign of unity in the universal love of God.

An important and urgent task for the Congregation of the Mission is to strengthen peace and unity today, knowing that unity is above all a gift from the Lord, that we must ask for in prayer, but it is also our job. This vocation to unity calls us, from our Eucharistic identity, to work with other non-Catholic Christians, as well as with men and women of other religions, and even with those of no religion, to build a world that respects the dignity of the poorest. I conclude this article with a text from St. Vincent de Paul that makes reference to the greatness of the Eucharist. Receive it with the devotion that it merits and spread it to others. It compares communion to a new birth of the Lord:

*The angels made the air resound with hymns and praises when he came into the world; St. John paid homage to him while he was still in his mother's womb; the Magi, who represent human knowledge, contributed their gratitude as well; the shepherds, symbolizing simplicity, also brought their reverence to him. But here is something unusual: what shall we say about the irrational animals? They did not want to be left out of this acknowledgment. What is even more unusual, however, is that inanimate things, who have no gratitude, made an effort in nature to have some so that they, too, might add to it their faith and homage. If God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the angels, little children, persons of great dignity and exceptional knowledge; if the simple people, the irrational animals, and inanimate things contributed to the*

*birth of the Son of God — some to foresight, some to the work, others to preparing themselves — each [according] to his savoir-faire — how much more should we foresee, work, and prepare ourselves to receive this same Creator?<sup>24</sup>*

(ARTHUR KOLINSKY, C.M., translator)

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<sup>24</sup> SV XIII, 36; English edition, 13a, 40-41.



# The Javanese Rite of *Slametan*

## A Comparison with the Eucharistic Celebration

by Rafael Isharianto, C.M.

*Province of Indonesia*

The purpose of this reflection is to compare the dimensions of the Eucharistic celebration with the Javanese rite of '*slametan*.' Since our reflection is culturally particular, it seems quite normal that we begin this reflection by taking the Javanese culture into consideration. We decided to use this approach because the Javanese culture has much effect on the Indonesian personality and identity.

### **The Javanese View of the Universe**

According to the world picture in the Javanese culture, there is a universal cosmos with a harmonious hierarchical and collective order. The cosmos includes the invisible world and nature, as well as the visible world and society. All have certain and appropriate places. Therefore, society is ordered hierarchically and collectively and the stratification is harmonious: there is a hierarchy of the powerful (*wong gedhé*) and there is also a collective life of the powerless (*wong cilik*).

This hierarchy is believed to be magical and static. It can help solidify society. Therefore, the right attitude of man in the cosmos is that of acceptance (*nrimá*). In society, everyone has his place and obligation. That is why, as long as a man puts his own personal interests above all, he will never be able to adapt himself to the harmony as a cosmic power. It is comprehensible because fulfilling this cosmic duty supposes that he is free from egoism.

To maintain the sense of harmony, the Javanese use, as a system of pedagogy, the education of identity and personality. It is implemented through the internalisation of sensitivity (*râsâ*). This education is destined to identify one's right place and role and adapt oneself to the existing harmony. This refined attitude (*halus*) will bring about spiritual happiness and peace. On the other hand, a rude attitude (*kasar*), disturbs the harmony. Such an attitude will eventually be in vain and lead to failure.

## **Slametan**

The Javanese rite, which is meant to maintain the harmony, is called *slametan*. C. Geertz describes this rite as a simple and formal ceremony (J.B. Banawiratma, 1986: 49). We do not find in it a rite, which is dramatic. On the other hand, the rite is almost mythic. One element in the rite is the offering in the form of food. This offering has a socio-religious dimension because the neighbors, relatives and friends participate in the gathering. In general, as the terminology indicates, the goal of *slametan* is to achieve inner peace of mind ("*slamet*").

Niels Mulder (1996: 28) observes that people hold *slametan* on every occasion, including when crises and disorder appear. To nurture a peaceful harmony, this rite is also held to celebrate regular social moments. People also organize *slametan* at the moment when something bad is bothering prosperity and equilibrium. All participants have the same ritual status. Everybody makes the same contribution to the creation of the spiritual dimension of the ceremony. Accordingly, the function of *slametan* is to show that society is in harmony. The harmony itself becomes the condition, without which the Divine will never grant their prayers, neither will the spirit of their ancestors, nor the other cosmic spirits.

*Slametan* has also another function; namely, to show the willingness to receive protection against dangers in a chaotic world. The participants do not intend to have a better life neither at the present moment nor in the future. Their only aspiration is to maintain harmony and to avoid dangers in such a way that they may not happen. We should not forget here that man plays an active role in maintaining the order and its dynamism.

## **Dimensions of the Eucharist**

According to Article 47 of Vatican II's Constitution, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, there are five dimensions of the Eucharist. First of all, it is a sacrifice. We celebrate Jesus who has given up himself. In the Last Supper, where the moment of betrayal reigned, he was still able to underline the truth that his death was a sacrifice.

The Eucharist has also a memorial dimension. Jesus "*broke the bread and said: 'This is my body which is given up for you. Do this in memory of me.'*" Celebrating the Eucharist, the Church commemorates the Paschal Mysteries of Christ. Yet, the commemoration does not mean only the memory of the events in the past. The commemoration underlines the proclamation of the wonderful work of God because he is still accomplishing his promises of salvation up to now. By this commemoration, these events become, in a certain

sense, present and actual. Moreover, the sacrament of the Eucharist would like also to draw the attention of the faithful to the complete accomplishment of salvation in the future. In this context, the Eucharist becomes “a pledge for future glory.”

St. Paul writes that the participation in the Lord’s Supper means the communion with the Lord as well. By this sacrament, the members of the Church unite themselves to Christ and form one body (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). The Eucharist is thus a sign of unity. Nobody shall be excluded from the paschal banquet, since God wishes all men to be saved, without any exception.

### **Slametan in the Eucharistic Perspective**

We can now try to articulate some dimensions of the Javanese rite. For this reason, we use the points manifested in Article 47 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. In the *slametan* rite, all the participants sit around one table on which the offering lies. The offering contains yellow rice, chicken, vegetables, and other food. Just like all other religious systems, this Javanese rite is in fact a religious meal. The memorial aspect of the Javanese rite is quite obvious. People hold this religious rite on several occasions such as the funeral, the prayer meeting after someone’s death. They commemorate the person(s) for whom they get together for the rite.

The rite of *slametan* contains a communal dimension. All relatives and neighbors who live nearby are invited to participate. The ritual chief (*modin*) says the benediction over the offering and then all the participants eat just a little of the offering. They can go home bringing the rest of the offering for their families. The distribution of the offering to the other members of the participants’ families underlines the communal aspect of the Javanese rite. It is a gesture which expresses the harmony among all the members of the society. In this communal harmony, no one should be excluded. The prayer said by the *modin* is believed to be able to invite the *cosmic spirits* to participate in the rite. According to this religious conviction, the Javanese *slametan* intends to make people live in harmony with each other as well as with the cosmic spirits.

When the Javanese organize the *slametan* rite, in connection with some important moments of life (birth, harvest, circumcision, marriage, professional promotion, etc.), this religious meal can be seen as a thanksgiving celebration. The Javanese perceive these things as a gift coming from the Divine.

### Some Reflections

After a very general comparison between the *slametan* and the Eucharist, we can conclude that the Last Supper of Jesus affirms the values that already existed in the Javanese rite. It is in this context that the Eucharistic liturgy expresses the meaning of the Javanese *berkah*: “grace,” “gifts.” Everything is grace. At the same time the socio-religious rite of *slametan* enables the Christian Javanese to see the relation between their cultural rite and the Eucharistic celebration. Hence, the Javanese rite of *slametan* can be regarded as fertile soil for the celebration of the cosmic Eucharist.

Meanwhile we observe some divergences between the Eucharist and *slametan*. We mention here only two. While the Eucharistic celebration emphasizes its anticipation of the paschal banquet in the future, the latter does not have any orientation toward the future. In short, the Javanese rite does not consider the time-orientation as an essential aspect in the celebration. The focal element is protection against dangers, which menace the community as a whole. Besides, we do not find the paschal dimension in the Javanese *slametan*. Harmony becomes an important point in this rite. We can say that the “*do ut des*” pattern lies behind the rite. But this pattern should be understood in its positive sense.

# Celebrating the Eucharist in Japan

by Victoriano C. Torres, C.M.

*Province of the Philippines*

I remember clearly the evening I first arrived in Japan. I was welcomed at the airport by an elderly confrere and a group of sisters. It was about 10 o'clock p.m. when we got to the priest's house. The elderly confrere utterly surprised me saying: *"You better start celebrating Mass in Japanese from tomorrow!"* *"You must be joking!"* I said. But he was serious, and handed me the missal in Roman characters to start practicing. I practiced until I fell asleep past 12 midnight.

The following day, the elderly confrere decided he would be the main celebrant so that I could have an idea how the Mass would flow in Japanese. All I heard were strange sounds. It was my first Japanese Mass. For the ensuing weeks and months, even as I was doing an intensive Japanese course, I remember the terrible uneasiness in celebrating Mass in a language I could barely understand. That was truly a prolonged journey of faith.

Among the things that greatly struck me at the beginning was the small number of people who came for Sunday Mass in the sisters' chapel where I had been charged to celebrate Mass. Aside from the sisters, only elderly folks came with no young people. I found it quite sad, having been accustomed to the overflowing crowd with many young people in the Sunday Masses I celebrated in various parishes back in my country of origin. It took some time to get used to a totally different reality. The lovely harmony of the songs and responses of the Japanese Mass interspersed with semi-contemplative silence bring an atmosphere of solemn worship. One can almost breathe inner peace and experience harmony of mind and body.

After some months in this mission, I met a veteran Jesuit missionary who was facilitating the annual retreat for the sisters. I was moved to learn that he had spent over 50 years as missionary in Japan. I spontaneously asked how many conversions he had made during those 50 years. He spread out his two hands before me and said emphatically, *"Not more than these ten fingers!"* I soon got awakened to the great challenge of mission work in a country with advanced technology and rampant materialism and consumerism.

Some years later I learned an approach towards evangelization in this mission from another missionary, a Canadian Redemptorist. He shared being invited to give a talk at an organized church activity. When the time for the talk came, he was awkwardly surprised to see only a couple. Nevertheless he took the full time to give his talk. The couple asked many questions, and they later became friends. After several years of more or less regular meetings, further questions and meaningful exchanges, the couple requested baptism. I learned an important lesson — that is, every single person is important, every single one counts. A well-prepared talk or homily is equally good for an audience of one or of a hundred people. Faith is a gift that God alone grants in his own good time. It is often preceded by a sincere quest. God's gracious response may come in the form of some touching encounters, like the patient kindness of a missionary.

One dark, chilly, rainy day during winter, an usually very active and alive sister was seated most of the time during the early morning Mass. Apparently she was not well. She might well be excused from the community activity for being sick, but she decided to join the Eucharistic sacrifice. One very admirable characteristic of the Japanese is fidelity to duty. They would not so easily miss or absent themselves from work nor withdraw from their responsibility when inconvenienced by common illnesses such as fever or colds. What an amazing attitude! They consider devotedness to work as sacred, much akin to the sacredness we Catholics attach to the liturgy and the Mass.

For lack of priests, I celebrate Mass on most days of the week in two Provincial House chapels — that of the Daughters of Charity and that of the Carmelite Sisters of Vedruna. There I feel inspired by the sisters' devotion to the Eucharist. Their eagerness and enthusiasm for Mass is very contagious. They openly express how much they miss it when nobody is available to celebrate for them. From the very beginning, I have made it a practice to give a brief homily or sharing on the message of the readings everyday. The great majority of the sisters are converts, and many needed greater deepening in the Bible and Church teachings. Most of them have pretty much a life of regimented activities for the day. Those working in institutions under government regulations would hardly have quality time for spiritual or inspirational readings. That is why they appreciate the daily short homilies, which do not usually exceed three minutes. Preparing to share a point or a summary message of the readings in Japanese still takes a lot of effort and time, but the practice makes the Eucharistic celebration more rich and meaningful.

*"What does the Mass or the Eucharist mean for you?"* I recently asked a couple, who regularly come for daily Mass in the sisters' chapel. After expressing the great blessing of accessibility to the chapel from their new residence, the husband immediately

responded, “*I derive from the Mass great strength and daily sustenance to be a good Christian.*” The wife, who is suffering from a grave illness, said in turn, “*I grow in deeper closeness with Jesus and the Eucharist gives me the courage and hope I need for the day.*” Like most sisters, I believe they have made the Eucharist a most important part of their daily life. Both of them are actively involved in volunteer works and are generous in assisting the poor and the needy. The dedication of these lay people as well as the commitment of the sisters in their service to the poor bear witness to their lively participation in the daily Mass. The Eucharist makes the kingdom of God come alive amidst a non-Christian environment.

The *Japan Catholic News* issued last month the latest statistics showing the number of Catholics in Japan now exceeding one million for the first time. Of that number, approximately 450,000 are Japanese, while more than 565,000, or 56% are foreigners. Many bishops and priests have been sounding appeals for greater openness and welcome to the foreigners, for their fuller integration into the Japanese society. I believe the Church efforts and initiatives on this worthwhile venture can bear abundant fruit only in the context of the Eucharist — the sacrament of love and unity, the celebration of fellowship of the People of God as one family. I pray that people on fire with Eucharistic values multiply and become agents of change to transform the face of the Church in Japan.

# Theology of Adoration<sup>1</sup>

by John H. McKenna, C.M.

*Eastern Province, USA*

The theology of adoration is really a part of a broader question: communion and worship of the Eucharist outside its celebration. The purpose of this article is to give a brief historical sketch of communion practice and the origins of Eucharistic devotions outside the celebration of the Eucharistic. From these we hope to draw the theological roots of Eucharistic adoration and the challengers it presents today.

To start with, the early Christians had celebrated their Eucharist in the context of an ordinary meal. The emphasis was on the action of eating and drinking, of sharing a meal with the Risen Christ and with one another. They were especially concerned with the purpose of all this, namely, nourishing the Christ-life already within them through baptism, unity with each other in Christ and eternal life though a share in Christ's resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

As time went on, the Eucharist was separated from the ordinary meal, probably because of abuses.<sup>3</sup> This was the case by the time of Justin Martyr (d. 165) who describes the Eucharist in terms of a "stylized" meal; i.e., one in which the bread and wine alone serve as food and drink. Justin makes the point that "... the gifts over which the thanksgiving has been spoken are distributed, and everyone shares in them, while they are also sent via the deacons to the absent brethren."<sup>4</sup> All who are present receive and communion is brought to the sick so that they also can share the Sunday celebration. Thus the first evidence of communion outside of Mass links it intimately with the celebration itself and this holds true until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Article originally published as "Adoration, Theology of" in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, Peter E. Fink, S.J., Editor (Collegeville, MN: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John 6:51-58; 1 Corinthians 10:16-18; Acts 2:42-47.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

<sup>4</sup> L. DEISS, *Springtime of the Liturgy*, translated by M.J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979) 93-94.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. NATHAN MITCHELL, *Cult and Controversy: The Worship of the Eucharistic Outside Mass* (New York: Pueblo, 1982) II, 28.



The stress also continued to be on the receiving of communion and its purpose. Augustine (d. 430) put it so well: "If you receive well, you are what you have received.... Since you are the body of Christ and his members, it is your mystery that is placed on the Lord's table; it is your mystery that you receive.... Be what you see, and receive what you are."<sup>6</sup> This same point was made by Pope St. Leo the Great (d. 461): "This partaking of the body and blood of Christ has no other effect than to make us pass over into what we receive."<sup>7</sup>

Up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the rule was that all the faithful partook in communion. But then with unexpected rapidity, at least in some countries, the number dropped off sharply. The reasons are numerous and complex and were to give rise to a shift in attitudes which would provide the setting for Eucharistic devotions outside the Mass. First, there were the Christological controversies. Arianism's attempt to play down Christ's divinity led to an overemphasis of that divinity almost to the exclusion of his humanity, despite Chalcedon's effort in 451 to strike a balance. The Risen Jesus became a distant God. This eventually led to the liturgy and clergy becoming distant as well. Second, the Eucharistic action and Eucharistic food were disengaged from communal acts of dining. This in turn led to a new interpretation in which "... the ancient human symbols of dining together were reinterpreted as *ritual drama*, vivid symbolic reenactments of Jesus' life, death and resurrection."<sup>8</sup> From there it was a short step to dramatic allegorizations like those of Amalar of Metz, which emphasized recalling the past rather than present participation though communion as Augustine and those before him had stressed. Third, the gradual limiting of the knowledge of the language of the liturgy (in this case Latin) to a select few widened the gap between the people and the celebration. The inability of the ordinary people to understand the language of the liturgy and thus to participate in it led them to seek an alternate language. Eating and drinking the Eucharist would gradually give way to "ocular communion," the desire to see the host. Finally, the growing distance and awesomeness of Christ and the liturgy was eventually to lead to a demand (9<sup>th</sup> century on) for sacramental confession before each communion and for a longer fast in preparation for communion.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> JAMES J. MEGIVERN, *Concomitance and Communion: A Study in Eucharistic Doctrine and Practice*, Studia Friburgensia, New Series # 33 (New York: Herder, 1963) 68.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>8</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> JOSEPH JUNGSMANN, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, translated by F. Brunner and reviewed by C. Riepe (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1961) 56-70, 498-502; MITCHELL, *op. cit.*, 4-5, 116-119; MEGIVERN, *op. cit.*, 63-66, 73-74, 81.

These factors probably account, at least in part, for the widespread use in the 9<sup>th</sup> century of unleavened bread, a tube or straw to drink from the chalice, communion on the tongue instead of the hand and communion *in church* outside the celebration of the Eucharist. The same factors plus controversies in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries over Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the "moment of consecration," focused more attention on the elements of bread and wine and miracles in their regard, e.g., bleeding hosts. An ever-decreasing number of communicants followed. No longer able to participate actively in the language of the liturgy and, out of extreme reverence or fear, hesitating to partake in communion, the faithful were ripe for other forms of expressing their belief in Christ's presence in the Eucharist. The attitude that the Eucharist was something to be looked at and adored rather than eaten was to become characteristic of medieval Eucharistic piety.<sup>10</sup>

Reservation of the sacrament had obviously been a practice from the start so that communion could be brought to the sick and dying. In addition, in earlier times people were allowed to bring communion home for use during the week. The origin of prayer before the sacrament seems to be the priest's prayer before communion (11<sup>th</sup> century). This evolved into the people's praying after the elevation (late 12<sup>th</sup> century) and visits to the Blessed Sacrament (early 13<sup>th</sup> century). Reservation near or on the altar in the 13<sup>th</sup> century tended to focus the devotion in that area.<sup>11</sup>

Eucharist processions appear as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, at least in England. As devotion to looking upon the host grew, these became a way to honor Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and to gaze at the host even longer. On the continent, the Bishop of Liège approved the feast of Corpus Christi for his diocese in 1276. It soon spread and included a procession of the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>12</sup>

The earliest form of exposing the Eucharistic species was just before communion with an expression like: "Holy things for the holy." Until the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century this was the only place that the people were invited to gaze upon the sacred species and reverence them. With the introduction of the elevation, which in the 14<sup>th</sup> century came to be regarded as the supreme moment of the celebration, the people were invited to adore Our Lord immediately after the words of "consecration." Earlier it had been an invitation to partake of communion. Now, however, the invitation was to contemplation or "ocular communion." So far exposition had been

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<sup>10</sup> JUNGSMANN, *op. cit.*, 89-92, 502-512; MEGIVERN, *op. cit.*, 29-33, 78-84; MITCHELL, *op. cit.*, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. JUNGSMANN, *op. cit.*, 552-523; MITCHELL, *op. cit.*, 164-170.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. MITCHELL, *op. cit.*, 170-176.

from within the liturgy itself — at communion, at viaticum or communion to the dying, or Corpus Christi. In 1380 a popular custom arose in some parts of Germany to expose the sacrament in a monstrance. This eventually led to exposition in a monstrance apart from the liturgy.<sup>13</sup>

The origin of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was also from within the Liturgy of the Hours and of Corpus Christi. In the early 13<sup>th</sup> century it became popular to sing Marian hymns at the end of evening or night prayer. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century the trend was to do so in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament to enhance this devotion rather than to increase honor to the sacrament. On Corpus Christi as early as 1301, there were stations or pauses where the priest would bless the people with the sacrament and at the end of the procession they would be blessed by a monstrance or similar vessel.<sup>14</sup>

All these devotions to the Eucharist outside of Mass had their origins, then, in the liturgy. In addition, many of them seem to have appeared first in communities of religious.

As is often the case, the main theological lines of the attitudes and devotions emerge from history. Their roots lie in the belief that the Risen Christ is really present in the Eucharistic celebration to those who were sick or dying, in danger of persecution or absent for some other good reason. This is anthropologically as well as theologically sound and leads to what Piet Fransen describes as the “law of extension.” Symbolic realities, when they have central importance in our lives, tend to extend themselves in similar, if only analogical, expressions. A married couple, for instance, find many ways of expressing their love in addition to the marital act, e.g., kisses, touches, gazes. It is important not to disparage these extensions simply because they are not the central act or were not there from the very beginning, e.g., Eucharistic processions. It is equally important, however, to recall their original source and background and to relate them to that central celebration.<sup>15</sup>

The origin of all Eucharistic devotions outside Mass lies, as history tells us, in the liturgy itself. To lose sight of this is to lose sight of their purpose. Underlying all of them is belief in Christ’s presence, first in the sharing of the meal and then, by extension, in the remaining bread and wine. If Christ is present in the bread and wine, it seems legitimate and beneficial to adore him there. The difficulty, historically and theologically, is that his worship outside the celebration of the Eucharistic sometimes seemed to be loosed

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 176-181.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 181-184.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. P. FRANSEN, *Intelligent Theology*, vol. I (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1969).

from its moorings. That is its weakness. Its strength rests in its ability to give people time and quiet to reflect on what it means to receive the body of Christ — the whole body, as Augustine would say, head and members — into one’s heart. There were good elements in the “elevation” or “tabernacle” piety; namely, personal devotions to Jesus, an awareness of the sacrificial character of the Eucharist and an awareness of the power of the Eucharist to draw one to imitate Christ’s self-sacrifice. Perhaps more attention to these elements today would help us appropriate more deeply the paschal mystery of Christ which we celebrate in the Eucharist.<sup>16</sup>

Pastorally, the future is challenging. Is it possible to return to the center without losing the values of Eucharistic devotions outside of Mass? “The celebration of the Eucharist in the sacrifice of the Mass is truly the origin and goal of the worship which is shown to the Eucharist outside of Mass.”<sup>17</sup> Is it possible to rediscover the value of Eucharistic devotions outside of Mass without letting them again slip loose from their moorings? Mitchell’s quote from T.S. Eliot’s “Little Gidding” is on target: “We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”<sup>18</sup>

All the Eucharistic devotions, even the most elaborate, have as their purpose or end to bring us back to the beginning — to Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, sharing this meal and his paschal mystery with his people.

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<sup>16</sup> JUNGSMANN, *op. cit.*, 90-91; cf. also E. DIEDIRECH, “Notes on Liturgy” and “The Eucharistic Mystery in All Its Fullness,” in *Review for Religious* 42 (May-June and November-December 1983) 363-380, 914-927.

<sup>17</sup> *Instruction on Eucharistic Worship*, 24 May 1967 (Washington, DC: 1967) Article 3<sup>e</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.*, 8.

# Eucharist, Charity and Social Justice

by Gilson Cezar de Camargo, C.M.

*Province of Curitiba*

## Introduction

The great French scholar Henri Bremond expressed some indignation in his well-known work, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, 1926-1938 (vol. 3, p. 245). He wrote, “St. Vincent de Paul still remains hidden under his cloak.” Referring to Pierre Coste, he continued, “Eight thick volumes, rich in doctrine, sparkling with humor, where I have never found any superficial line — this is something unique in a collection of this type. Nevertheless, the public at large does not know these volumes. This is a strange way to honor one’s founder.” Such indignation has echoed in the hearts of many of the sons and daughters of Vincent de Paul. Today, we have fine works, biographies and documented studies that allow us access to the *Great Saint of the Great Century*.

Nonetheless, the challenge remains to write something about Vincent de Paul that is not a complicated rehash, since we already have at hand a quantity of abundant facts coming from the facile and astute pen of the peasant from Pouy. The major abiding challenge is not to mutilate or simplify him, crediting Vincent de Paul with our own ideas and reasoning drawn from the reality of our own time and contemporary theological environment. If we went on like that, we would be adulterating all the richness and complexity of this man’s worldview, a man who lived, thought and acted out of the complexity of 17<sup>th</sup>-century France.

To explain better, it is worthwhile referring to the truly interesting article “Monsieur Vincent: a heart for our time,” from a French periodical, *Messages du Secours Catholique* (n. 366, December 1984). At the beginning of this article, developed like an interview, we read: “St. Vincent de Paul, Monsieur Vincent. His life is in everyone’s memory. The poor today are his realization. To whomever wishes to encounter the person who gave a heart to the Great Century, Bossuet will say: ‘Whenever we were gathered around him and were listening to him, no one could deny that the expression of the Apostle was fulfilled in him: Whoever speaks, let his words be like the words of God.’” In a note, the periodical adds: “This first-person interview was able to be held thanks to the warm scholarship of Fr. André Dodin, historian of St. Vincent de Paul.”

I would like to go to the first question posed in the periodical, done in first person, directed to Vincent de Paul, and answered by him, through the scholarship of Fr. André Dodin. This is how the question was formulated:

Messages: “Many striking images circulate concerning your person. Were you the man whom we know today?”

Vincent de Paul (André Dodin): “Certainly much should be relativized. I am not all of that. But after three centuries and a half each institution and period will not and does not cease leaving in the world the St. Vincent de Paul whom they imagine or whom they need, and who I was not.”

I think that there is some danger here when we write or give conferences about Vincent de Paul. Do we really transmit his thought, or are we projecting what we imagine about him or what we would like him to have affirmed, but which in fact he did not affirm, realizing that he was situated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, three and a half centuries removed from us?

## **1. The opportunity to deepen my knowledge about Vincent de Paul**

As a young Vincentian priest, I left my country in pursuit of an academic degree. Since I had some French ancestry on my mother's side, I opted for the Institut Catholique in Paris and chose the Master's program in theology, with specialization in liturgy and the theology of the sacraments. For two years, (1982-1984), this program was under the direction of the admired and famous Dominican liturgist, Pierre-Marie Gy, one of the *periti* at the Second Vatican Council.

When the moment arrived to submit my research plan for the master's degree, I presented to Fr. Gy, the director of the course, my intention of involving liturgical research based on the predominant theological environment of the moment in Brazil, the theology of liberation. Clearly, up to that moment, I did not realize that Fr. Gy had been a great friend of Fr. Annibale Bugnini, and had shared all his joys and anxieties, his sufferings and hopes on the preparatory commission, and then during the Council, resulting in the Apostolic Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

With all the calmness and ease proper to great minds, Fr. Gy argued that, after finishing my academic program and returning to Brazil, I would have all kinds of time available to develop and deepen the question of liturgy in relation to the theology of liberation. But at that time, he assured me, since I was a Vincentian, and to honor the great liturgist Bugnini, it would be better to do my research based on the thought of our founder, Vincent de Paul. He also suggested a

theme: "Vincent de Paul: his teaching and vision of the sacrament of the Eucharist." Besides, since he knew that I was living in the Vincentian Motherhouse in Paris, where Fr. André Dodin, another good friend of his, was living, Fr. Gy suggested that I seek out all Dodin's wisdom and knowledge.

I happily returned to the Motherhouse, realizing that the challenge would be quite large, both as regards the academic demands of the Institut Catholique and the vastness of my proposal. Yet I had one hope: the important collaboration of Fr. Dodin. At the first opportunity, I presented the suggestion to him that Fr. Gy had made, the theme to be developed, and I asked whether he would be disposed to help me in this undertaking.

Fr. Dodin responded affirmatively. He would be ready to help, but under certain conditions: that I would never take the initiative of calling him, but that he himself would call me through the house intercom during his free time and moments of inspiration; that I would never interrupt him with questions when we were talking, but that I would simply take notes. I always tried to comply with the risk involved in these two conditions. On many occasions, Fr. Dodin called me to come to join him. There were many pages crammed with an avalanche of Fr. Dodin's knowledge about the thought and teaching of our holy founder, Vincent de Paul. These allowed me to develop the work of research. Since I was in France, the demand of the Institut Catholique was that the work be written in French. Thus, "Saint Vincent de Paul, doctrine et vision du sacrement de l'Eucharistie" allowed me to receive my degree.

When *Vincentiana* honored me with the invitation to write about the Eucharist, charity and social justice in the light of the teaching of St. Vincent de Paul, I recalled my research, all done in French but never translated into my native language. I then decided to base myself on this to complete the task confided to me, ever aware of my limitations, which I would like to list here. First, I am not a writer. In fact, I am quite limited in this regard. I am a pastor in the outskirts of the city of Curitiba, where I live. I have always been very involved in classes on liturgy in various courses of theology for the formation of the clergy and in numerous formation sessions for laity, which give me great joy as a Vincentian priest. Second, I am a Latin American, Brazilian, and my way of focusing and developing this article, my surrounding culture deeply influence me. And so, I develop this article with a certain sense of envy for others who write about St. Vincent de Paul and who have an infinity of sources at hand. Those of us who live quite far from the Old World, and from France, where our beloved Father lived, are happy to stand with the poor, who were the subject of his attention, and from whom Vincent developed all his teaching and theology: "The poor are our teachers and lords."

## 2. Situating the issue in the perspective of Vincent de Paul

If we asked Vincent de Paul about his theological thought concerning “Eucharist, Charity and Social Justice,” I think that he would find it quite hard to answer, since the Eucharist in reference to charity and social justice is a concept linked to our time, to our theological reality.

Consequently, to be able to develop our line of thought concerning the theme, we will have to ask permission to use Portuguese to be able to create certain words to help us make our work understandable. The first one that I would like to create is “to temporalize,” *temporalizar*. This involves placing St. Vincent in his time, with his way of thinking and acting, engaged in the theological and ecclesiological issues proper to the Church in France in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The other word that we have to create is “to contemporalize,” *contemporizar*. This involves transferring, interpreting, or applying the teaching and theological thought of Vincent de Paul to the time in which we live, that is, the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We begin with the horizon of our theological thought, enriched by the current teachings of the magisterium of the Church (Second Vatican Council, and, for us in Latin America, the documents of Medellín, Puebla and Santo Domingo), as well as by contemporary theological thought and our ecclesiological environment.

When we “temporalize” Vincent de Paul, we can glimpse the pragmatism of his theological and spiritual thought. He did not leave us any book where we could find his own systematized theological thinking. We should not forget that he was the child of peasants from the south of France. He was a very simple and familiar person. He knew nothing of extraordinary ecstasies and miracles. He affirmed: “Perfection does not consist in ecstasies, but in doing well the will of God.” All his thinking and way of acting grew out of his capacity of opening his eyes to the reality of his time. He did not compose great tomes. What we have at our disposition instead are his letters and conferences, always rooted in the concrete, in the reality of the problems and conflicts of his time, in order to maintain his sons (the Congregation of the Mission) and his daughters (the Daughters of Charity) in faithfulness to his teaching and faithfulness to the Church. “I have always been afraid of becoming involved in the errors of some new teachings. Yes, for my entire life I have been fearful of this” (SV XI, 37).

What Vincent de Paul believed and firmly defended we uncover in his very direct and down-to-earth way of dealing with the events of daily life. This life endowed him with strength and vigor and was expressed very spontaneously through circumstances. The events of his life made real the basis of his conversion and his undertakings. The experience of the dying man at Gannes, followed by the first



sermon of the Mission, 25 January 1617 at Folleville, moved Vincent to look at the reality of his time and to affirm that “the poor country people were abandoned and suffering the evil of ignorance and misery.” In Châtillon-les-Dombes, he looked at reality and acknowledged the overwhelming generosity of his parishioners toward the needy family, but “what about the days and months to come? Their charity is great, but it is badly organized.”

Folleville and Châtillon-les-Dombes, for us today as followers of Vincent de Paul, should not be of interest only as geographical locations, part of that marvelous country called France. Instead, they should be considered as charismatic locations, emblematic of the two great charismatic experiences of our founder: the spiritual and material misery of the country people. His two great works, mission and charity, responded to those needs, but as a single reality. Mission includes charity, and charity includes mission. At bottom, a single experience gave rise to Vincent de Paul’s works: his courage in opening his eyes to the reality of his time. Through this, he discovered people suffering, humiliated, exploited, imprisoned by the greed of the great and powerful, burdened by a society based on privilege, glory, luxury and the intellectual brilliance of the Great Century.

Vincent de Paul began with experience, with the events of life, with reality leading to action. Jesus, after all, began first to do and then to teach. He did not have “ideas” of Christ. Rather, he lived Christ, but this living always grew from the events of daily life. The two episodes of Folleville and Châtillon showed him the two faces of poverty — the lack of God and the lack of bread. These correspond to the two faces of his Christ, both missionary, *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*, and servant of the poor, *Caritas Christi urget nos*.

In addition to these two events just noted, Vincent searched the Scriptures, especially in his reading of the apostle Paul, and studied St. Francis de Sales, in his *Treatise on the Love of God*, finding inspiration and assurance in their convictions. He was entranced by the discovery of the goodness of God, who lifts up and is never inactive. This discovery of God’s loving kindness was the source of the amazing dynamism present throughout his life and influencing his theological thinking.

Following this, he recommended that his sons and daughters be open to divine providence. We did not love God first; rather, God loved us first. St. Vincent’s wonderful maxim, “to leave God for God,” to do well the will of God, helps us understand that there was more than one way to reach God and grow in his love. “My daughters, you should realize that when you leave prayer or holy Mass for the service of the poor, you are not leaving anything, since the service of the poor is to go to God. You should behold God in their persons”

(SV IX, 5). Prayer is certainly important, no one can dispense with it, but nobody should be satisfied with prayer alone. "My dear daughters, you should always do what you can to make prayer the first thing you do. As a result, your spirit will be full of God for the rest of the day. It is true that you should prefer the service of sick in case of need; but if you organize yourselves, you will find time for both" (SV IX, 33-34).

Clearly, for him, this will of God is always a will for love. Holding to the will of God translates into acts and does not remain fixed just in wishes. "Our Lord is the only model, since he always referred to his Father and always did everything to please him." Vincent beheld the mystery of the Incarnation in following the will of his Father. In contemplating this mystery of the love of God, he became man. Vincent learned to love God and to love God's people in one and the same movement.

Jesus Christ is the savior. This affirmation was essential for Vincent. In fulfilling the command received from his Father, Jesus gave himself freely up to death on the cross. He, who brought with him the freedom and joy of the kingdom of God, chose to be the victim of the evil existing in the world. For love of us, Jesus completed, in reverse, the way of sin. His passion would be the supreme witness of the love of Christ for the Father and for humankind. As a result, for Vincent the goal of life is to honor our Lord in his earthly life. Joined to Christ, the source of our salvation, we have in him the model of our salvation. Vincent considered the imitation of our Lord as fundamental for all spiritual development. "Remember, Monsieur, we live in Jesus Christ through the death of Jesus Christ, and we must die in Jesus Christ through the life of Jesus Christ, and that our life must be hidden in Jesus Christ and filled with Jesus Christ, and in order to die as Jesus Christ, we must live as Jesus Christ" (SV I, letter 197, p. 276).

In his time, the Church was arguing about a difficult crisis: the reform of western Christianity. The Council of Trent had been attempting to remedy excesses and errors, and thus Vincent was a post-conciliar man, one of those who did the most to make the council real for the Church in France, by moving from a worldly Church to a Church of the poor, and by reestablishing the true meaning of a Christian life accessible to the humblest. In this sense, we situate his statement: "... alas! the Church has enough solitaries... too many useless ones and even more who tear it apart. Her great need is evangelical men who work to purge, enlighten, and unite her to her Divine Spouse" (SV III, letter 960, p. 204).

Vincent struggled incessantly to promote the renewal of a truly apostolic priesthood and episcopacy. "Clearly, all evil comes from bad priests. The sad state of the clergy is the main reason for the ruin

of the Church. The Church has no more dangerous enemies than its priests. Even though they are not heretics, they are still responsible for this sad state, for which they should shed tears of blood. Out of their neglect and unruly lives there flow three rivers: heresy, vice and ignorance; these will unmake the Church.” But, on the other hand, Vincent affirmed: “Oh, gentlemen, how great a good priest is. How much good can a good priest not accomplish! How many conversions could he not bring about! The happiness of Christianity depends on the clergy since, when good parishioners behold a good priest, a charitable pastor, they respect and follow his voice, and they try to imitate him” (SV XI, 7).

In this spirit of renewal, he developed a new form of religious life, receiving simple country girls who were ready to undertake multiple tasks for the abandoned, at that time as numerous in the cities as they were in the country. He proposed to his daughters: “They will have no other monastery than the house of the sick where the superioress is; as a cell, a rented room; as a chapel, the parish church; as a cloister, the streets of the city; for their enclosure, obedience; for a grille, the fear of God; for a veil, holy modesty; for profession, a continuous confidence in providence, an offering of all that they are” (cf. SV X, 661).

His horizon of understanding was of a Church that continues the mystery of Christ, which should reveal and prolong the faithful and merciful love of Jesus Christ. She should be poor and of the poor. Certainly, this Church should not despise anyone, but its predilection should go toward the poor. For Vincent, Jesus is present in the poor, for him a certainty. The mystery of the neighbor in Christ comes about through his gesture of devotion and aid granted to the poor. Charity is a sharing, a participation in the very love of God. “Oh! Sister, how consoled you will be at the hour of death for having consumed your life for the same reason for which Jesus Christ gave His — for charity, for God, for the poor!” (SV VII, letter 2734, p. 397).

For Vincent, Christian charity was effective. It did the will of the Lord, and this supposes a faith that culminates in obedience to this will. For this, he said: “It is said of religious that they are in a state of perfection. We are not religious, but we can say of ourselves that we are in a state of charity, since we constantly strive to practice love or to be disposed to do so” (SV XII, 275). The proof of love is its manifestation in action. God loved us when he gave us his Son. We cannot love him unless we respond to the gift of his love through the acceptance of his will, in the obedience of a living love. Showing love for God and love for the neighbor is, at the same time, a communion in the love of God, since its source is the very gift of God.

Salvation comes to us through faith in the Word and through participation in the sacraments. Vincent highlighted the sacramental life of the Daughters of Charity, especially the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. According to him, our faith is established through contact with the glorified Christ, and the sacraments bring about a real encounter, under the veil of a sign. To meet Jesus, we have to make an act of living faith in him, prolonged into an act of adoration, love and oblation.

But, if we want to understand well the thinking of Monsieur Vincent about the sacraments, especially about the Eucharist, we cannot forget that in his intellectual horizon, the poor appeared primarily as a form of the “sacrament” of the encounter with God. For Vincent, the Lord appears to us also under the sign of the poor, under the sign of the ignorant neighbor. For this reason, he said: “I should never consider a poor peasant or a poor woman according to their exterior, nor the way their intellect presents itself. The reason is that they almost do not appear to have the spirit of rational beings, since they are so base and earthy. But turn the medal around, and you will see through the light of faith only the Son of God, who wished to become poor for us, represented in these poor folk” (SV XI, 32).

In this broad horizon of theological understanding, we can locate his appreciation of the Eucharist. Vincent considered the Eucharist as a sacrament in the light of the Word made flesh, who came to give life to mankind. This Word made flesh remains among us in the Eucharist as the food that nourishes charity. In this way, he recommended it to the laity, to the Daughters of Charity, and to youth, “to help them live like Christians.” Once we see him in a broad understanding of the mystery of faith, well rooted in real events, we will appreciate that he did not let himself fall victim to the evil influence of Jansenism.

### **3. Vincent de Paul and the struggle about “frequent communion”**

The central year in the whole polemic that involved our founder Vincent de Paul was 1642. In that year, a small group seemed little disposed to join those favoring frequent communion (motivated especially by the Jesuits). This group, formed of Cistercian nuns and some nobles, had retired to the solitary monastery of Port-Royal-des-Champs, the better to give themselves to God. They were in a special way the disciples of Jean du Vergier de Hauranne, Abbé of Saint Cyran.

Next, Antoine Arnauld appeared on the scene in September 1642, a few days after his priestly ordination, when he left for the solitary monastery. He had planned to make his ordination retreat at Bons-Enfants, but he was not completely satisfied and finally took

refuge at Port-Royal-des-Champs to share the existence of the solitaries. It was in this atmosphere that he would draw up his famous Jansenist thesis and the famous treatise *On Frequent Communion*.

This treatise by Arnauld grew out of his opposition to a small booklet by Fr. Pierre de Sesmaisons, a Jesuit. Together with Frs. Bauri and Ravardeau he demonstrated through the tradition of the Church the legitimacy of weekly communion that demanded only regular devotion and the absence of mortal sin. We read in this little work: "As often as one is deprived of grace, the more should one courageously approach Jesus Christ in the Eucharist." Such an affirmation agreed in no way with the theology of Saint-Cyran. As a result, Arnauld drew up in a few months his treatise on frequent communion to defend what he considered the truth. His thesis can be formulated as follows: Holy Communion is more a reward for virtue than nourishment for virtue. Only a sinless life, sanctified by virtue and penitential exercises can prepare for communion. His thesis had been approved by 20 doctors of the Sorbonne and by 16 bishops (DODIN, *Autour du problème de la Fréquente Communion*, p. 378).

We are now in 1644, at Saint Lazare-lès-Paris. Clearly, Fr. Vincent must have been well informed about all these events concerning the Eucharist, since he had just joined the Council of Conscience. He was consequently in contact with the powerful at court, with the Jesuits, and with a large number of bishops. He was well informed about Port-Royal, since he was a friend of Saint-Cyran. Besides, and beyond their friendship, Vincent always had a fear of falling into heresy, a life-long worry for him.

Thus we know that, from 1645 on, Vincent would have a hostile attitude toward Port-Royal. This is clear in a letter to Bishop Abra de Raconis, in which he counseled him not to name Fr. Joby (a declared disciple of the new doctrine) as his vicar general (cf. SV III, letter 1205, p. 618). In this same year, one of the theologians of Notre-Dame, Isaac Habert, who violently opposed Arnauld's teaching and Jansenism, was named bishop of Vabres. This indication comes from the Council of Conscience, where Vincent was all powerful.

Up till then, this entire quarrel had not gained the heart of Vincent de Paul. These were concerns external to the Little Company or, we might say, concerns *ad extra*. In 1648 this quarrel would reach the *ad intra* of the Little Company. Vincent received a letter from Fr. Jean Dehorgny, who sought to defend the Jansenists. As an old adage says: Some evil looks good. One of our confreres, a man who rightly enjoyed Vincent's total confidence, allowed himself to be influenced by the new doctrine. In this way we can today gain access to the ideas and positions of Vincent de Paul in relation to

Jansenism, as well as to his doctrinal vision of the sacrament of the Eucharist.

Dehorgny, one of the pioneers, was one of the most brilliant members of the Company. At the beginning, he was superior at the Bons-Enfants, a post demanding Vincent's confidence. Next, he was sent to Rome to be superior there. While in Rome he fell under the influence of the new teaching. In response to Dehorgny, who was too complacent with the new doctrine, Vincent presented decisive arguments.

He admitted that there were abuses in the overly prodigal administration of the Eucharist but, in his opinion, this did not justify falling into the contrary abuse. He showed that the title of Arnauld's book was just a trap, since its intended goal and the results it obtained were deplorable. The frequency of reception of the sacraments was less than before, even at Easter. Several pastors in Paris were lamenting the fact that there were fewer communicants than in previous years; that they no longer saw anyone approach the communion rail on the first Sundays of the month or on feasts, or very few, or hardly any religious, even when encouraged by Jesuits. Working with great ease and rapidity, Vincent marshaled texts from the Council of Trent. He concluded his letter to Dehorgny with an exhortation to peace and moderation: he should respect the practice at St. Lazare and in no way trouble himself about the new opinions.

On 17 August of the same year, however, Vincent received a letter from Dehorgny, who reproved him for not having understood Arnauld's book.

Immediately, Vincent set out to answer Dehorgny. This time, he used a more precise and solid argumentation, along with irrefutable texts and data. Vincent did not deny his concern about the liberality of frequent communion, celebrated without criteria, and consequently agreed that Arnauld's book could do much good. However, Vincent could not be mistaken since, although some people might profit from the book, it still confused some tens of thousands of others and held them back from communion. In no way either did Vincent accept Arnauld's interpretation of St. Charles Borromeo to justify the new doctrine.

It is untrue that St. Charles ordered public penance or abstention from communion. His orientation was to prohibit communion for scandalous sinners, something that St. Vincent agreed with entirely, following the Council of Trent. But St. Charles, far from being opposed to frequent communion, never ceased to promote it. Vincent knew his thought thoroughly, as he did that of the Jansenists. He regretted that the directress of Port-Royal was following the rules of St. Ignatius. He permitted great sinners to receive communion only every eight or ten days. This led Arnauld to have a good

religious abstain from communion for five or six months so as to live a great purity.

That Arnauld was completely opposed to communion is evident from his praise of those who abstained even until death. He believed that frequent communions were an insult and shame to Our Lord Jesus Christ, and he imposed such terrifying conditions on approaching the Eucharist that it was morally impossible to receive communion. Vincent affirmed: "As for myself, I admit frankly that, if I paid as much attention to M. Arnauld's book as you do, not only would I renounce Mass and Holy Communion forever in a spirit of humility, but I would even have a horror of the Sacrament. For it is true that for those who receive Communion with the ordinary dispositions approved by the Church, he represents it as a snare of Satan and a venom that poisons souls. He also treats all those who approach it in this state as nothing less than dogs, pigs, and Antichrists" (SV III, letter 1064, p. 364).

We may affirm that, thanks to the Jansenist tendencies clearly expressed by Dehorgny, we have these wonderful letters that present the sentiment, the intimate thought of St. Vincent about the issue of his time. They allow us to grasp the broader background to his understanding of the Eucharist. Thanks to these letters we appreciate his thinking better. We can sense his independence in relation to his milieu and to the struggles raging around him. His constant steadiness and lucidity of thought let us affirm that Vincent clearly possessed an excellent doctrinal vision of the Eucharist.

#### 4. Vincent de Paul's doctrine of the Eucharist

Evidently, we cannot project our current thought about the Eucharist on Vincent, bringing him to affirm things that really did not figure in his thinking. Vincent was influenced by the theological thought of his time, especially by Bérulle and the reformers. They brought him to adopt a less-than-noble concept of human nature. Nonetheless, to counterbalance his pessimism about human nature, the positive factor was his relationship to divine providence, a stance filled with awe and joyful abandonment, joined to serene confidence. His vision of God came to him from St. Paul, and it is a thought full of greatness, which he sought to hand on to his sons and daughters.

In this way he affirmed that "this knowledge which we have, that God is infinitely above all knowledge and all human understanding, ought to suffice to make us esteem him infinitely, to annihilate ourselves in his presence, and make us speak of his supreme majesty with great reverence and submission" (SV XI, 48; ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God, Vincent de Paul*, English trans., bk. 3, chap. 8, p. 72). We should not forget that, at the beginning of his

mission, Vincent had only one sermon that he turned in a thousand ways, on the fear of God (cf. SV XII, 8).

Clearly Vincent had this pessimistic sense of a benighted human nature. This concept would influence his teaching on the Eucharist but obviously it would not bring him to the radical position of the Jansenists. A rapid survey of the dispositions that he lists as requirements for communion will readily convince us of this. Despite the strict rules imposed on the Daughters of Charity, he forced himself to moderate their desire for communion. "Frequent communions badly made are useless. We can be saints without approaching communion" (SV X, 631).

For this reason, a person should not work much at or bother the director about obtaining his permission for more frequent communion. According to Vincent, this insistence would surely come from a hidden pride that would ruin our actions. If one hesitates about communicating, Vincent says, it is better to abstain. His worry was the frequency of unworthy and sacrilegious communions. This is constantly evident in his conferences. He conceived of this under the figure of Judas. He became a hypocrite by following his Master but, instead of conforming to the words of Our Lord, as the other apostles were doing, he was carrying out actions inspired by Satan. According to Dodin, this worry was almost an obsession in Vincent de Paul.

For frequent communion, the state of grace is rigorously demanded, but Vincent also demanded a good confession. Recall that his sermon on the importance of general confession marked the beginning, 25 January 1617, of the Congregation of the Mission. He looked on this preliminary purification as an excellent means of communicating well. "My daughters, you should see that for frequent communion it not sufficient to have no affection for mortal sin, but you must free yourself from all unruly and vicious affection. So, to have great affection for one sister and to cling to her is an unruly affection; to delight in being in this place and not in some other is an unruly affection, and you must leave all this aside to become worthy of communicating frequently" (SV X, 340-341). In summary, being a clear glass allows us to reflect God and to conform ourselves to Jesus and to identify with him.

Above all else, conformity to the Eucharistic Christ is, for Vincent, what he accomplished in instituting the mysterious sacrament, since he desired intensely to be united to creatures. To correspond to this desire of Jesus, the best reply is to be nourished in our souls with the same desire for union, approaching the intentions of Christ himself. To conform ourselves to Christ, in our thoughts and prayers, we place ourselves in the best possible dispositions to understand him and to unite ourselves to him. In this we take the first step, so to speak, in his direction.



These preliminary dispositions for union with God will demand a constant asceticism of mortification, self-denial and flight from unruly affections. Eucharist will not be for the Daughters of Charity a sacrament of union with God unless they are ready to give themselves completely to Christ at the moment of communion. And so, when Christ penetrates their soul, he consecrates, so to say, this state. He unites himself intimately to the creature and imparts his peace.

“After communion, we should be one with God. We share in the spirit of God so that he will take over all our being in such a way that, if we communicate well, all will be well. Whoever communicates well does everything well. Without our realizing it, life is transfigured, since Christ does not remain inactive. He moves us to change, he helps us to do nothing apart from him, in such a way that the actions we do reach perfection.”

He continued: “If Elijah, with his double spirit, was performing so many marvels, what then will a person not accomplish who has God within, who is full of God! She will not be doing her own actions but those of Jesus Christ. She will serve the sick with the charity of Jesus Christ. She will have the meekness of Jesus Christ in her speech. In her afflictions she will have the patience of Jesus Christ. She will have the obedience of Jesus Christ. My daughters, may all these actions not be the actions of a mere creature, but the actions of Jesus Christ.”

He concludes: “The Daughters of Charity were chosen to give spiritual manna, the spirit of God, to the poor. Where do they receive him in order later to communicate him? In Holy Communion, my daughters. Pay attention, please, and consider the greatness of God’s plan in your regard. He wants you, poor young women without ability or studies, to cooperate with him in communicating his spirit. Oh! my daughters, please never neglect this grace. But come close to this fire to be enkindled with it and then, through your charity and good example, to attract the others. You should realize, my daughters, that the principal strength of the Daughters of Charity is to communicate well” (SV IX, 332-333).

## 5. Conclusion

Eucharist, charity and social justice in the light of the thought of St. Vincent de Paul is a possible theme, if these terms are set in the complexity of his thought and feeling in relation to the human person, to Jesus Christ, and to the Church. Vincent de Paul exhibits the profound unity of the love of neighbor and the love of God. He invites us through words and actions not to regard persons and events just as they seem or just as the light of reason presents them to us. Rather, we should see things as they are in God; otherwise we

would deceive ourselves and act in a way that he would not want. We first have to listen to God, to give ourselves to God, for him to use us in the adventure of the salvation of the world.

Vincent de Paul paid attention to concrete realities, to the order of things as God wishes. In the ordinary way, God wants to save us through persons like ourselves. Our Lord became a man to save all men. And we act through others and with them to gain them to God, to bring about his kingdom to unite ourselves to God through Jesus Christ. The condition is that we be empty of ourselves for God to fill us. "Three can do more than ten when Our Lord puts his hand to things" (SV IV, letter 1293, p. 122). And so, "Affective love must pass over into effective love, to do the works of charity, the service of the poor undertaken with joy, courage, constancy and love" (SV IX, 592).

His Christological thought is associated with the Christ of the Trinity, but a Christ as gift from his Father and an eternal offering to mankind, a Christ in the state of mission, meek and humble, a Christ who became an oblation for humanity in the mystery of the Incarnation. The Christ of Vincent is a model to which we should conform ourselves, to love and serve, and a Christ, finally, concretized in the poor.

This is what he affirms in a conference of 13 December 1658. "We must clothe ourselves with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. O Savior! O Gentlemen! what an undertaking! to put on the Spirit of Jesus Christ! This means that if we are to be perfect and help the people fruitfully, if we are to serve ecclesiastics well, we must labor to imitate the perfection of Jesus Christ and strive to attain it. It also means that of ourselves we can do nothing. We must be filled and animated with this Spirit of Jesus Christ. To understand this clearly, it is essential to know that his Spirit is poured forth into all Christians who live according to the rules of the Christian religion; their actions and their works are bedewed with the Spirit of God and God has raised up the Company, as you will see, to act in the same manner" (SV XII, 107-108; English, pp. 626-627).

His thinking about the Church is clear: the poor are the true and beloved children of the Church. As a Latin American, I can state that, in the conception of Vincent de Paul, he anticipated the teaching of the document of Puebla on the preferential option for the poor. We have to go to meet those who are the beloved of the King of the poor. The purpose of the mission of the Son of God is *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me* (Lk 4:18). Jesus Christ saw himself as poor and the savior of the poor.

In St. Vincent's thinking, the vocation of a missionary is more beautiful. In his vision, the missionary is happy when he is seen as the minister of the poor. This obliges him not only to help the poor when they present themselves, but also to reach out to them as a servant

who should anticipate the wishes of his master. "There is no act of charity that is not accompanied by justice..." (SV II, letter 452, p. 68).

We can "contemporarize" this thought of Vincent's and apply it perfectly to the teaching of the Church's present magisterium on the Eucharist. The Pastoral Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, at the beginning of chapter two on "The Most Sacred Mystery of the Eucharist," number 47 states: "At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us."

The expression, "a bond of charity" used by Vatican II, presents us with the Eucharist as the sacrament which supports the essence of Christian life, namely, love. This love is total self-giving, the very essence of God, since *Deus caritas est*. This love or charity is what the apostle Paul lists as the highest of the gifts (1 Cor 13). This Christian love bears two indivisible realities: *a*) it is the source and origin of fraternal communion among those who partake of the same bread, creating *koinonia*, the sharing of goods, the solidarity of "one heart and one soul"; *b*) this *koinonia* love awakes in a Christian the commitment to Christian living, especially through service, but a preferential service of the poor, care for victims of injustice and of unjust and perverted political systems. This struggle is what we call social justice.

Let us look at the words of His Holiness John Paul II in his last encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: "Many problems darken the horizon of our time. We need but think of the urgent need to work for peace, to base relationships between peoples on solid premises of justice and solidarity, and to defend human life from conception to its natural end. And what should we say of the thousand inconsistencies of a 'globalized' world where the weakest, the most powerless and the poorest appear to have so little hope! It is in this world that Christian hope must shine forth! For this reason too, the Lord wished to remain with us in the Eucharist, making his presence in meal and sacrifice the promise of a humanity renewed by his love" (Chapter I, paragraph 20).

The magisterium and contemporary theology present charity and social justice as flowing from the sacrament of the Eucharist. In the light of this, and while safeguarding the distance that the centuries place between ourselves and Vincent de Paul, we cannot have doubts about affirming that, in the environment of doctrinal understanding,

the Eucharist was, in the heart of our Father and Founder, the ever-flowing source of true charity and social justice. “A Daughter of Charity who communicates well does everything else well. Her heart is the tabernacle of God, yes, the tabernacle of God. A Daughter of Charity should always be this. She should always be in God and God in her, and in this way she will do nothing else but good” (SV IX, 33).

**Translator’s note:**

Citations from St. Vincent de Paul are taken from the English translations of volumes one to eight of Pierre Coste. Those from volumes nine to twelve are the work of the translator. The volume and page numbers are from the French edition of Coste.

(JOHN RYBOLT, C.M., translator)

# STUDY

## Giuseppe Alloati (1857-1933)

### An Apostle of Eucharistic Worship

by Luigi Nuovo, C.M.

*Province of Turin*

Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncali, later Pope John XXIII, during a conversation, in the context of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with the title “The Catholic Church in Bulgaria and among the Slavs,” which was held on 18 January 1954, said among other things: “I still remember the worries of those ten years (1925-1934), when we were preoccupied with providing to that group of fervent Catholics, the last remains of a happy movement for Union, the foundation of a seminary, and the care for the development of the Eucharistine Sisters, founded by two Piedmontese, brother and sister, Fr. Giuseppe (Vincentian of the Oriental Rite) and Mother Eurosia Alloati.” In the period during which the future Pope John was Apostolic Delegate in Bulgaria, he had the opportunity to appreciate the work developed in the preceding years by Giuseppe and Eurosia Allotti and he was very impressed.

Giuseppe Allotti was born in Villastellone, on the outskirts of Turin, on 20 July 1857, of Pietro and Catarina Chicco; he was the firstborn among six brothers and sisters. His family was of good social standing and solid spiritual tradition, from which he received example in virtue and a good Christian education. In fact, even his brother Melchiorre (1860-1941) became a Vincentian priest and missionary. His sister Eurosia founded the Eucharistine Sisters and his sister Cristina entered the Congregation of the Sacramentines of Turin. Between 1874 and 1877 he was a student of the college which the missionaries ran in Scarnafigi.

He asked to be accepted into the Internal Seminary of the Congregation of the Mission and was welcomed by Blessed

Marcantonio Durando on 27 September 1877. Two years later, on 29 October 1879, he pronounced his perpetual vows.

After having made the regular course of studies he was ordained a priest in Turin on 24 September 1882. During his time as a student he wanted to leave for China, but he was sent to Thessalonica, then under the domination of the Ottomans. From that moment on he dedicated his entire life to the mission among the Catholic Bulgarians, committing himself to evangelizing the Catholic and Orthodox Bulgarians residing in Macedonia.

When he arrived at Thessalonica — the priests of the Mission were present there since 1783 — the superior of the house was Augusto Bonetti (1831-1904), who later became Apostolic Delegate in Constantinople.

Fr. Giuseppe led a life of missionary dedication and zeal, giving himself entirely and without reserve to the Bulgarian mission. He wrote in a letter to the Superior General, Antoine Fiat, three years after beginning his service: "When it comes to sacrifice, I believe that I did not spare anything for the salvation of my dear Bulgarians. Religiously and materially, I have become a Bulgarian and in reality I am so to my fingertips. Our Lord has given me the grace of familiarizing myself, so to speak, with the small and large incommodities of a way of life which is quite new to me."

He dedicated himself, above all, to an in-depth study of the Bulgarian language; he learned it, in a few months, so well that it became for him a second mother tongue. Indeed he knew it "with all the Macedonian particulars" because he lived for a time with an Orthodox priest in a village where it was not possible to converse in another language.

He wanted to know all the customs and traditions to be able to grasp the sensitivity and the feelings of the persons he had to meet.

To be more prepared and efficient in his priestly ministry with the population entrusted to his care, he embraced the Byzantine Rite, conscious of the fact that as he belonged to the Latin Rite this could give rise to certain misgivings and consequently distance him from his people. He learned the Slavic liturgical language, dressed in the clothes and vestments of oriental priests, and no longer celebrated the Mass in the Latin Rite but celebrated the Slavic Mass. He did this for the whole time he remained in the Bulgarian mission.

He quickly became aware of the spiritual and material poverty of the people, especially in the countryside of Macedonia. The situation of the women was even more precarious from all points of view; it was necessary to promote in all ways the instruction of the poor, not only for the boys, but also for the girls, by offering a good basic formation.

From their arrival, the first missionaries in Macedonia were aware that they needed to be concerned with this problem. They opened schools, looked for and prepared teachers who were capable of teaching, but while something had already been done for the boys, nothing or almost nothing had been done for the girls.

Another aspect that really struck Fr. Giuseppe Aloatti was the lack of seemliness of many churches and the manner in which the Eucharistic species was being preserved. Above all he wished very much to increase Eucharistic devotion. In a short time the idea ripened of founding a community of sisters with a double purpose: spreading Eucharistic devotion and also dedicating themselves to teaching poor girls. It was Fr. Bonetti who one day half jokingly and half seriously told him: "You should get Bulgarian sisters for Macedonia, because we need them." Initially, Fr. Giuseppe did not pay too much attention to these words, but the idea developed in his mind.

This was an heroic undertaking: financial means, available persons, and a first-rate collaborator were needed. Alloatti did not lose courage and got his sister Eurosia (1859-1920) involved in the work. She took the name Sr. Cristina of Jesus and became the co-foundress. St. John Bosco, who had received her in May 1887, a few months before he died, encouraged and stimulated her prophetically. The saint had told her: "You prayed to the Blessed Mother so that she might tell you where your vocation lies. Well, she told me that you must do whatever your missionary brother tells you, because that is the will of God."

From their childhood, the two siblings, in addition to their blood relationship, shared strong ideals of the spiritual and missionary life. They were capable of involving many people in this missionary adventure starting with their other brothers and sisters, their uncle Fr. Francesco Chicco, cousins and friends, who contributed offerings and help of various kinds.

The same Fr. Giuseppe spoke about the beginnings of his mission in a letter to the almsgiver of Leo XIII, Msgr. Francesco di Paola Cassetta (1841-1919), who later became a cardinal. He turned to him in order to get some concrete help and he became a real benefactor: "Divine Providence has thought about them (the girls) by inspiring one of my sisters and calling her to the noble vocation of sacrificing herself for the religious and moral formation of the Bulgarian women. Therefore, she left her own country and all that was dearest to her and came to Thessalonica three years ago, where she found four companions who wished to follow her in this holy purpose. With them, she took on the Oriental Rite and the dress of a Bulgarian religious woman, thus forming a little community of Eucharistines. This community has as its end to make known, love

and serve the most Holy Eucharist among the Bulgarian girls and women, by means of their instruction and the maintenance of poor churches.” It was in 1888 that this began in Thessalonica.

The general situation was very complicated. Difficult relations with the Turkish authorities, delicate relations with the Orthodox Church required moving ahead with much balance, respect and wisdom.

The two siblings decided to put in their personal patrimony. In August 1893 they acquired the village farm of Paliortsi in the interior of Macedonia to guarantee the survival of the newborn community. The growing community was transferred there from Thessalonica.

The community progressed with small steps. Soon an orphanage was opened, dedicated to St. Joseph, for the orphan girls of Macedonia.

Sr. Cristina of Jesus revealed herself as an intelligent and virtuous woman who dedicated herself with admirable abnegation to her mission. But, since the country was in a state of great poverty, it was difficult to proceed with the development of which she and her brother dreamed. Besides, it was said that the transfer to Paliortsi made them lose useful contact with the city, which guaranteed a greater opportunity for formation and useful occasions for contacts. Although the two siblings had acquired a village from which they obtained nothing, all this led the people, nevertheless, to think that they were rich, and so they were envied and became victims of theft.

They did not lack hardships and sufferings, but neither did they lack some satisfaction in obtaining conversions and success in certain initiatives. Their serene and total confidence in divine providence animated and supported the work of the two siblings.

Fr. Alloatti did his utmost for this foundation “which was the greatest preoccupation of his life” and to which he dedicated much of his physical and spiritual energy. He travelled to the places where his community was present, becoming aware of the spiritual and material situations, encouraging, exhorting and hearing confessions.

It was a very demanding and tiring apostolic activity; he walked or rode on horseback. He was a simple and austere missionary, who, for about 15 years, applied himself to preaching and administering the sacraments with care “in order to work at the evangelization of Macedonia.” He accepted to serve in poverty, sharing many situations of extreme discomfort. Very often his food consisted only of a bit of bread and a plate of vegetables, mostly beans. His housing was most uncomfortable, his bed was a sack of straw or a mat on the bare ground.

He got close to the Orthodox priests of the villages, listened to their problems and tried to form them to “a better understanding of



their ministry and to teach and administer the sacraments.” He wrote to Fr. Cazot: “When we founded residences in which the missionary lived with one of the young priests formed by us, life became easier: the missionary could more easily come home after having finished work. But for more than 15 years Fr. Alloatti lived the life in those Macedonian villages and it is necessary to have known this existence to know what kind of suffering and abnegation this meant. I do not know if there has been a more heroic missionary life than his.”

He was a humble, simple, mortified, Priest of the Mission, faithful in the observance of the Rules, and of the numerous and rigorous fasts which are part of the Oriental Rite.

What supported him in this generous apostolic life was a great love for the Eucharist — he began many of his letters with: “The good Jesus of the Eucharist be always with us” — and an intense and lively prayer life. He liked retreats very much and also to engage in conversation with a small number of persons, by way of a conference, to talk about arguments concerning the faith, spiritual life and apostolate.

He had also a deep devotion to the Holy Virgin. He honored her especially with the title, Immaculate, and tried to transmit this way of feeling to those who approached. He united to these spiritual gifts a “good and amiable” character; he willingly and joyfully came to recreation with his confreres who “liked his witty remarks and his plays on words.”

The Balkan wars of 1912-1913 created many difficulties in this little community, as in the whole Catholic mission in Macedonia.

He had to abandon Pailortsi in the spring of 1916 because it had become the front line. He went to Skopje where he remained until the end of July 1920 in a very precarious situation. When World War I finished, they had to confront the Serb authorities who wanted to requisition all that belonged to the Catholic religious communities. The sisters had to transfer to Sofia in Bulgaria and Sr. Cristina Alloatti, who was seriously and gravely ill, returned to Italy where she died in a state of holiness on 26 December 1920 in Turin.

For a few years Fr. Alloatti had begun thinking seriously of founding a priestly community which would take the name of Eucharistines. Like the Vincentian missionaries, they would dedicate themselves in those lands to the preaching of parochial missions and spiritual exercises. He also thought of a priest-cousin of the Diocese of Turin, as the possible rector, but the project, for various reasons, never got off the ground.

He had had good health, put to a hard test by many sacrifices and privations, so that, in the long run, it was seriously compromised already in the last moments of his stay in Macedonia. Somebody wrote about him: “Exhausted by the intense work and tribulations,

by the austere life of an oriental missionary rigorously faithful to the customs of the Rite, tireless preacher, confessor and surprisingly, writer of several theological, pastoral and spiritual works, of much poetry and prose, consumed but not tired (of working for the Kingdom of God), he could now retire to his own Congregation.”

He earned the invitation of the Lord: “Come, good and faithful servant.” He returned to Italy at the end of August 1927, stayed for a couple of years in the Provincial House of Turin and, from July 1931, at the House of Peace in Chieri, edifying everybody through his simplicity. He died there on 27 March 1933. He had been a hardworking man and he left a few writings, some published, others unpublished, among which are: *Living Bread*; *Jesus Victim, Food and Life for the Soul*; *The Month of Mary*; and *The Rule of the Eucharistine Sisters*.

Fr. Giuseppe Alloatti is a beautiful figure of a missionary, which really merits an in-depth study that would make his virtue, his farsightedness and the richness of his missionary and Vincentian spirit stand out.

(Translation: VICTOR BIELER, C.M.)

## 2004 ANNUAL STATISTICS - CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

### M I N I S T R I E S

Number of confreres involved in the ministries listed below. Each confrere is counted **only once**, considered under his principal ministry, as of 31 December 2004.

M I N I S T R Y	BISHOPS	PRIESTS	DEACONS	BROTHERS	STUDENTS
1. Parish (popular) Missions to the faithful		122	1	4	
2. Missionary parishes or districts	5	159	11	3	6
3. Parishes	1	847	8	20	3
4. Pilgrimage sanctuaries		63	1	5	
5. Seminaries and clerical formation		162	1	4	3
6. Formation of our own exclusively	2	171	4	3	3
7. Missions <i>Ad Gentes</i>		189	25	8	
8. Daughters of Charity (Director, chaplain)		137			
9. Schools (primary, secondary, superior, professional)		176	8	14	2
10. Social Communications (publications, radio, television)		27		2	
11. Special studies		85	14	3	22
12. Chaplains: military, immigrants, hospital, associations		158			
13. Chaplains: Vincentian Lay Groups		69			
14. Direct Service of the Poor		35	1	13	2
15. Manual work		5		41	
16. Administration	1	143		7	2
17. Retired, ill, convalescing	2	298		32	
18. Other	20	75	10	9	3
19. Absence from the Congregation		171	10	3	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3092</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>47</b>

PROVINCE	HOUSES	INCORPORATED MEMBERS by PROVINCE - 2004						ADMITTED MEMBERS & ASPIRANTS by PROVINCE - 2004															
		Bishops	Priests	Deacons	Brothers	Students with Vows	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS										
								CP	CB	P	PD	TOTAL	Voc. Grps.		Minor Sem.		Prep. Yr.						
													TP	TB	TP	TB	TP	TB	TP	TB			
<b>GENERAL CURIA</b>	4	0	7	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>AFRICA</b>	40	4	245	7	13	5	274	192	5	1	0	198	42	8	18	0	17	1	86	10	18	18	18
Congo (Dem. Rep.)	6		28	1	1	30	45	1				46											
Ethiopia	4	2	39		4	45	21	1				22			18								
Madagascar	9	1	81	2	5	2	91	22	3			25	3	2			4						
Mozambique	6	1	18		2	1	22	4	1			5	25	5			3	1	34				
Nigeria	9		45	4	1	1	51	80				80	14	1					15				
St. Justin de Jacobis	6		34		1	35	20					20							0				
<b>NORTH AMERICA</b>	82	2	438	18	36	3	497	19	1	0	0	20	0	0	25	0	7	0	32				
USA - Eastern	26	1	156	5	10	2	174	2				2							7				
USA - Midwest	14		107	4	17		128	4				4							0				
USA - New England	7		29		1		30					0							0				
USA - Southern	5		22		1		23					0			1				1				
USA - West	8		33	1Pd	3		37					0							0				
Mexico	22	1	91	8	4	1	105	13	1			14							24				
<b>LATIN AMERICA</b>	128	12	643	19	30	10	714	125	2	0	0	127	210	1	43	0	56	0	310				
Argentina	8		40	2			42	5				5							4				
Brazil - Curitiba	9	3	65	1	2		71	12				12							4				
Brazil - Fortaleza	3		36				36	9				9							3				



PROVINCE	HOUSES	INCORPORATED MEMBERS by PROVINCE - 2004					ADMITTED MEMBERS & ASPIRANTS by PROVINCE - 2004																		
		Bishops	Priests	Deacons	Brothers	Students with Vows	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS													
							CP	CB	P	PD	TOTAL	TP	TB	TP	TB	TP	TB	TP	TB	TOTAL					
Italy - Naples	11	1	53		2		56	1							1	2	1								3
Italy - Rome	10	1	52	1Pd	3		57								0									1	1
Italy - Turin	15		78	2Pd	2		82	2							2										0
Netherlands	5		54		1		55								0										0
Poland	29	3	252	3	5	1	264	36							36										0
Portugal	11	1	52	1	2		56	1							1	16		2							18
Slovakia	7		33	1	4		38	13	1						14	1								1	2
Slovenia	8	2	48		3		53	2							2			2							2
Spain - Barcelona	8		46		2	1	49								0										0
Spain - Madrid	16		107	1	16	1	125	2							2										0
Spain - Salamanca	19		88	1	11		100	1							1	5	2								7
Spain - Zaragoza	19		120	1Pd	3		124	9							9			1					2		3
SS. Cyril and Methodius	6	1	23	2			26	11							11	2									2
<b>OCEANIA</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
Australia	7		53	1	4	2	60	4							4	2									2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3092</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>3435</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>682</b>						

P = Priests; PD = Permanent Deacons; CP = Candidates to the Priesthood; CB = Candidates to the Brotherhood; P\*/PD\* = Priests/Permanent Deacons coming from a diocese or another Institute; TP = Aspirants to the Priesthood; TB = Aspirants to the Brotherhood.