

The Eucharist, Manifestation of Dialogue and Communion: as Demonstrated in St. Justin de Jacobis

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Introduction

Abuna Yaqob Maryam, “the name by which I am known in this country,”¹ lovingly attended by his Ethiopian priests, died on July 31, 1860, died in the hot and desolate valley of Aligadé,² not far from today’s Hebo, Eritrea. The continued deprivation, the difficult imprisonment and fierce persecution of the harsh Abuna Selama, the supreme religious authority of the Orthodox Church of Abyssinia, finally got the better of the tenacious will and stamina of Abuna Yaqob, who was weakened by 21 long years of bitter and continuous apostolic efforts.

1. A “Eucharistic piety” along traditional lines

In 1809, in the ancient parish church of Santa Maria della Quercia in San Fele (Potenza),³ the newly-nine-year-old Justin de Jacobis received his first communion at the hands of Bishop Gianfilippo Ferrone, Bishop of Muro-Lucano. This event left an indelible mark in

¹ *Scritti*, vol. II, *Epistolario*, C.L.V.-Edizioni Vincenziane, Rome 2003, 557, 567 and 1473. Edited in their entirety for the first time: the *Diario* in 2000, and the *Epistolario* in 2003, totaling 2,730 pages, they constitute a true and properly imposing *corpus* of the writings of St. Justin de Jacobis. Other writings, however, have been completely lost: “... In Rome I had thrown all my writings into the fire...” (*Epistolario*, 889).

² Justin often makes reference in his writings to the difficulties of the Ethiopian climate: “The hot season is killing, the hot winds are intolerable... the poisonous snakes who instantly kill a traveling man on his journey... one can die from thirst...” (*Epistolario*, 784).

³ Construction in the form of a Greek cross from the 15th century. The interior was repeatedly redecorated in the following centuries. The church was made more striking by an impressive baptistry and a cupola from the school of Luigi Vanvitelli (1700-1773).

the rugged piety of the preadolescent Justin, who in the future was markedly Eucharistic.

San Vincent de Paul (1581-1660),⁴ had insistently urged the students of the Congregation of the Mission which he founded (January 25, 1617), to keep elevated the fervor of their consecration to the poor⁵ by pious exercises, first of all by Eucharistic adoration.⁶ The most authoritative evidence of Justin de Jacobis' Eucharistic piety comes to us from the affidavits of his fellow Vincentians and from simple lay people at the "Informational Diocesan Processes," at the end of the long and complex canonical process that would culminate first in his beatification and finally in his canonization.⁷ The witnesses are unanimous in reporting that Justin, before ascending the pulpit for missions to the people, a special ministry of his congregation intimately linked to the charism of the founder, used to spend much time in deep contemplation before the tabernacle.⁸ The goal of deeper contemplation is always intimate communion with the Father, which is concretized most profoundly through Christ in the Eucharist. In contemplation, in fact, more than knowing God one experiences Him in the depths of oneself, while in preaching God is communicated to the faithful.⁹ No wonder, then, that his preaching had such a wide following and popularity among the faithful of the various Church communities he visited in southern Italy.¹⁰

The two years that Justin spent in Lecce as Superior of the Vincentian community (1834-1836), are full of lively anecdotes that testify to his simple but solid Eucharistic piety. In the beautiful chapel he had built with so many sacrifices, including those that

⁴ St. Justin de Jacobis died exactly two centuries after his founder.

⁵ The official motto of the Congregation of the Mission is: "*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*" (Lk. 4:18; cf. SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL, *Correspondance, entretiens, documents*, éd. P. Coste, 14 voll., Paris 1920-1925, vol. XII, 84-85).

⁶ In the 17th century the Eucharist was referred to as "*the sun of the sacraments*" and also as "*the center of religion*."

⁷ Just four months after his election to the throne of Peter, Pius XII beatified him on June 25, 1939. Paul VI inscribed his name in the roll of the saints on October 26, 1975.

⁸ Cf. S. PANE, *Blessed Justin de Jacobis of the Congregation of the Mission, Titular Bishop of Nilopoli, First Vicar Apostolic of Abyssinia. Critical History of his Surroundings and his Writings*, Editrice Vincenziana, Napoli 1949, p. 83.

⁹ Cf. the well-noted "*Contemplata aliis tradere*" (cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, II.2 II.2, q. 188, a. 6).

¹⁰ For 15 years, from 1824 (the year of his ordination on June 12) to 1839, the year of his departure for Ethiopia (on May 24), he ministered for the most part in Puglia and Campania.

came to him from criticisms by his confreres and from official rebukes by superiors who worried about the excessive costs, one can see him frequently during the day spending time in adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament. For Justin it revealed an intense form of communion, of a true symbiosis with the Lord, an “*eat with your eyes*,” which means to make one’s own, to immerse oneself in, and to become completely one with Him. To “*eat with your eyes*” is a looking deeply not only within oneself but also above and beyond the mystery, with that same faith that both precedes and accompanies the *eating* (*manducatio*) and the *looking* (*contemplatio*); that faith capable of *recognizing* and of desiring the Word to the point of *eating* it (cf. Ez. 3:1-15). To *watch* and to *eat with the eyes* are no longer distinct, they are two interdependent moments that together make contemplation possible. To *watch* does not only speak of the power of the eyes. It is a unique look: it intensely communicates, expresses a relationship, says that one is for others, it knows how to grasp the essence of the mystery. It is a process of a transforming union: an exodus from one’s own will, a giving up of oneself to enter into intimate union with God’s will, to be enriched by Him. Whoever inexorably holds on to himself loses himself, while he who gives himself, at the end finds himself (cf. Jn. 12:25, Mt. 10:39, Mk. 8:35, Lk. 9:24). The Eucharist is the mystical center of Christianity in which God, in some mysterious way, continually goes out of Himself and draws us in his embrace of communion.

The Vincentian confreres tell that the coadjutor brother in charge of ringing the rising bell, was asked by De Jacobis if the bell for going to bed had already rung. The brother, with confusion mixed with admiration, responded that what Justin had just heard was the signal for rising for a new day. De Jacobis, without realizing it, had passed the whole night in Eucharistic adoration.¹¹

However, the most extraordinary episode that happened in Abuna Yaqob Maryam’s life comes from the time of his first trip to Africa. On May 24, 1839, Justin, in the company of Fr. Luigi Montuori and three other Vincentian missionaries heading to Syria,¹² raised anchor at the port of Civitavecchia heading for Alexandria, Egypt, from where he would continue for Massawa, along the broken and treacherous coastlines of the Red Sea. After two days’ navigation, the ship docked at Valletta, Malta, the first leg of a voyage that would be longer and more difficult than foreseen. The day after, early in the

¹¹ Cf. S. PANE, *o.c.*, 87-88.

¹² These were two priests, Fr. Poussou, the Prefect Apostolic, Fr. Reygasse and the coadjutor brother Martin, all three of French nationality.

morning, de Jacobis went to the cathedral of St. John to celebrate the Eucharist. It was the first Mass he would say during the voyage to reach his mission on the African continent. Justin celebrated with his usual devotion, remaining at the altar for about an hour. The eyewitnesses referred to it in this way: *"We assisted at his Mass, and we saw the Baby Jesus on his head from the time of the elevation until the time of communion."*¹³

These episodes, told with a disarming Franciscan simplicity, are an authoritative witness to the well-formed Eucharistic spirituality of St. Justin de Jacobis, from which he knew how to draw forth a secret strength for a fruitful and effective ministry, which would be his later on in Ethiopia.

2. The Eucharist, the Heart of Ecumenical Dialogue

An event that is crucial for understanding the missionary methodology that St. Justin de Jacobis would use in his life is found in his encounter with the German Lutheran Dr. Wilhelm Schimper. In 1832, Dr. Schimper had arrived in Ethiopia for a special scientific mission, his task from a society of naturalists from Wüttemberg (Germany). Having given himself with enthusiasm to the study of the flora of Tigrāy, over time he put together precious collections which later enriched the best naturalistic museums of Europe, including the Vatican museums.

His meeting with de Jacobis matured his decision to become Catholic: *"... all that I saw in you has convinced me that Jesus Christ is in you... it is as if I had become reacquainted with the life of Christ which you imitate, and this created such confidence in me."*¹⁴

Dr. Schimper, accustomed to accepting only irrefutable data that is the result of a serious scientific method, found it very hard to accept the mystery of the Real Presence of the Eucharist: *"I had to... clarify those points on which my reason could not agree with my faith."*¹⁵ And continuing in his thoughts, he declares without doubt: *"... what I want to embrace is the truth."*¹⁶

In Europe the 17th and the 18th centuries, which are those during which the Congregation of the Mission was founded and grew, represent a historical opening that is quite interesting, because they

¹³ Cf. *Summarium*, n. VI, 191.

¹⁴ *Diario*, part II, C.L.V.-Edizioni Vincenziane, Roma 2000, 448-449.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 425-426. This request of De Jacobis will constitute an interminable **litany**: *... I want at least to be enlightened...* (*ibid.*, 425, 426, 451, etc...).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 427.

take place at a crossroads. To the new questions which are posed, during a period in which *fides et ratio* are located in uncompromising positions, two different responses are given: that of ultramontaniam, concerned with *touching* something through esthetics, and that of the "Lumi,"¹⁷ who want to *convince* someone by means of ethics.

It was precisely for helping someone rationalistic¹⁸ like Dr. Schimper in his very difficult research but yet determined to find the truth, that de Jacobis wrote expressly for him a short but dense text on the Eucharist, a kind of *"little Summa of Eucharistic theology."* Commenting on the request of the sincere Dr. Schimper, Justin expressed himself as follows: "... *he only needed... the gift of faith,*"¹⁹ words that suggest a flattering assessment of the character of the man in question. That the quest for "truth" was the priority and the main concern of both, bursts forth with vigor from the texts: nine times in the two letters of Schimper²⁰ and six times in the text from Justin²¹ where in reference to their search, they speak of a work carried forward by "lovers of truth."²² Theirs was a joint mission, in which the passionate worship of Truth empowered them to a differentiated but complementary ministry within the community of believers: "*With so many reasons to be forever separated, the good Lord had given to our souls such a character that when we met we no longer could stand apart, but we mutually opened up our hearts to discover the mandate that He has given to us by sending us to Abyssinia and that we must fulfill.... We both have been privileged to implement the plan of the true loving Friend of Mankind.... O Lord, this is the purpose of our vocation for which God has sent us to Abyssinia.*"²³ The strength of love intensified the quality and the commitment to do research. He experienced this ardent love whenever, with effort and tenacity, he succeeded at the happiness of coming to know the truth,²⁴ the satisfying bliss of the vision indicated by the Master: "*The truth will make you free*" (Jn. 8:32).

¹⁷ Justin adds one more of them to the group: ... *Robespierre Gran Sacerdote della Ragione...* (*Robespierre, High Priest of Reason...*) (*ibid.*, 434).

¹⁸ Commenting on this Protestant peculiarity, Justin expressed himself this way: "... *men so rationalistic among whom are found many Protestants*" (*ibid.*, 436).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, part III, 619.

²⁰ Cf. February 24, 1843, in *Diario*, part II, 424-428; cf. April 8, 1843, *ibid.*, 448-453.

²¹ Cf. March 18, 1843, *ibid.*, 428-442.

²² *Ibid.*, 431.

²³ *Ibid.*, 428-430; cf. *Epistolario*, 931.

²⁴ Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, bk. 7, 10, 18; 10, 27, in C.S.E.L., 33, 157-163, 255.

The request of Dr. Schimper could not be more explicit and concrete than this: “*Because your love can assist me almost as a means of enlightenment, please... give me some small and simple observation about... what concerns Communion, so that... I can remake... the certainty that the Real Presence of Christ is in the host and the wine, which are his body and blood. I do not lack this to become a Catholic, and to declare myself as such.... I do not dare think of being a true Catholic if I do not possess a full evidence or certainty that in Communion there is the Real Presence of Christ.*”²⁵ Making himself available with pastoral charity to accept the request of the German scientist, de Jacobis anticipated the sensitivity and the contents of the document on Ecumenism, even in its verbal formulation: “*... the time has come where the good Lord wants to give a beautiful proof to **our separated brethren** of the ineffable mystery of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ... **our brothers** no longer have great difficulty to join their beloved brothers in the great house of our common Father.*”²⁶ This is sign that the saints, under the illuminating action of the Holy Spirit, anticipate as intuitions and values, what we can only gather up gradually and at great personal expense over a longer period of time.

Surprisingly, even before penetrating to the heart of the theological debate and without waiting to take stock of his arguments on the Eucharist, St. Justin de Jacobis makes a declaration of love towards his “**separated brethren**”: “*... these Protestants, whom I love.*”²⁷ In him, before he establishes the truth,

²⁵ *Diario*, part II, 426-427. The scholastic concept of *transubstantiation* is refuted by Luther, who did believe in the *real* presence, but in a way different from Catholics. Fidelity to the Word of God leads him to deny the validity of some of the more recent pious practices of his time. To celebrate *The Lord's Supper* implied the need for Christians to communicate. Communion under two species, *l'utraquismo*, had its origin in the institution of the Lord's Supper by Christ Himself. It is on this terrain that dissent among the reformers arose. After Karlstadt, even Zwingli separated himself from Luther, because the Lord's Supper was the symbolic representation of the sacrifice of Calvary, where for Calvin Christ gives Himself at the very moment of communion. God has no need of bread and wine to communicate His grace, but He does so independently through the work of the Spirit.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 429; cf. *Epistolario*, 739, 777 and 905; cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, cap. I, 3; ch. II, p. 12. The pregnant expression “*the good God*,” repeated many times by Justin, evokes the mystical sense of analogous expressions in St. Therese of the Child Jesus: “*If you find me dead one morning, do not be distressed; the **good God** has simply come to seek and find me*” (*Novissima verba*, 28).

²⁷ *Diario*, part II, 430. The expressions of esteem for Protestants are numerous: “*... I have a most favorable opinion of the knowledge and the spirit of*

it is important that he seek that which promotes unity and concord, because *"In the evening of our lives we will be judged by how we have loved."*²⁸ The new commandment of love has the Eucharist as its summit and its ever-flowing font. *"Above everything there is love, which is the bond of perfection"* (Col. 3:14). It is love that characterizes the followers of Christ: *"You will be my disciples if you have love one for the other"* (Jn. 13:35), love that is the foundation of community among mankind, love that is the indispensable condition for lasting and authentic communication with God and among themselves: *"... those who are united in love will be united perpetually and inseparably."*²⁹

The way the thought is expressed, its content and intimate expression of the heart of Justin de Jacobis, is in perfect harmony with the ecumenical spirit of Blessed John XXIII, of Vatican II, and of the ordinary magisterium of the Church: *"What unites us is stronger than what divides us."*³⁰

3. "We are dealing with rendering justice into truth"³¹

*"... you are also more enlightened by common sense, because you are animated by a keen desire for truth about the main difficulties.... The force of truth has infinite power over souls made like yours...."*³² These recognized and undeniable inner dispositions of the German naturalist, make de Jacobis particularly bold and at the same time demanding in proposing new and ever more difficult goals to achieve, but only at the price of dedication and perseverance out of the ordinary: *"But since Christian love towards one's friends draws us closer to Jesus Christ and love for Jesus Christ draws us closer to friends, I satisfy both duties, truly great duties of my soul, giving in writing some reasoning that you seek."*³³ And as "sources" of study,

the nations of the North..." (ibid., 433) *"... a nation as enlightened as are the Christians of the North..."* (ibid., 436) *"among Protestants there are persons who are truly learned"* (ibid.).

²⁸ ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS, *Words of Light and Love*, n. 57.

²⁹ *Diario*, part II, 428.

³⁰ JOHN XXIII, *Ad Petri Cathedram*, 29/VI/1959, in A.A.S., 51 (1959), 513; *Gaudium et Spes*, 92; JOHN PAUL II, *Ut unum sint*, 25/V/1995, I, p. 20.

³¹ *Diario*, part II, 430; for the Pauline tones, cf. Ef. 4:15.24.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 430-431. The language used is *French*, sometimes difficult to understand because neither of the speakers knows it well. *"I greatly ask your pardon for the mistakes of my writing. I do not have a dictionary of the language that I do not know well, and yet I would like to speak every time I have the*

research and personal reflection, St Justin offered to Dr. Schimper *five fundamental means*: 1) The deposit of faith of the Church: "... we must believe what the Church has always believed; the Church has always believed in the Real Presence."³⁴ And he adds with the meticulous precision of someone who understands the great responsibility that falls to one who is to convey the truth, as if to warn Schimper: "... individual impressions are not a good guide in our faith; we need to make reference to the interpretations of the Church presided over by its natural Head who has competence over questions of this nature."³⁵ 2) The Sacred Scripture in general, and the Gospels in particular: "... a book where the Spirit of God who wrote it can be seen everywhere,"³⁶ "... the great Fathers of the Church have said that the Word in the Scripture is full of great fruit."³⁷ "Let us take the Gospel in this sense and let us read this more-than-human book without comment...."³⁸ "... then, as you continue your reading, enter into the spirit of the sixth chapter of St. John, and there you will find the story of the multiplication of the loaves; of the need for faith; and finally of the scandal of the people of Capharnaum because of the clear and repeated manner with which Jesus Christ says it is necessary to eat His flesh and drink His blood so as to enter into eternal life."³⁹ In Lutheranism, Eucharistic piety is based essentially on the Word of God, because the sacrament is lived out as a "word in act," at the base of which the faithful are justified by faith and not through the power of the works of his own devotion.⁴⁰ 3) The books of the Ge'ez liturgy: "... the Ritual Book of this Church comes from the time of St. Frumentius, of Athanasius, of the golden era of the Christian faith. Now, from the moment that in this book one finds expressed the Catholic belief in the Real Presence with formulas more alive, perhaps, than we have in our Latin Ritual.... I put in your hand the words of the liturgy in its original language with a translation; refer to the

pleasure... of writing to you" (*Epistolario*, 738); "in my so bad and barbarian French..." (*ibid.*, 1075).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 431.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 431-432.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 438.

³⁸ "*Evangelium sine glossa*," these were the usual counsels of St. Francis and of a full chorus of other spiritual masters.

³⁹ *Diario*, part II, 431-432.

⁴⁰ Lutheranism, faithful to the *Confessions* of Augustine (530), teaches a lesson that nothing has lost its reality and that all the Churches should remember more frequently: participation in the Eucharist, as in the other sacraments, has value only in faith, and arrives at a true spiritual profit only through faith.

texts yourself, ask the doctors..."⁴¹ 4) The Fathers of the Church: "... I can assure you that in the reading of the Fathers of the Church, which was one of my almost continuing tasks, I found confirmation of this truth everywhere."⁴² 5) The solemn magisterium of the Church and the history of dogma: "... I find it also in the most ancient Councils."⁴³ It is that which the Council of Florence says to us when, speaking of the offerings of communion, it speaks to us of the "conforming of man to Christ."⁴⁴ Here St. Justin conveniently recalls to mind the intimate connection between *gathering and Eucharist*, where gathering together signifies "being reconciled" with men and with God. And it is in exactly this context of faithfulness and of interior assent to the magisterium of the Church, and thus of authentic *common-union* that Justin locates the special charism of the Petrine ministry: "The Catholic wishes to hear the voice of God Himself through Him to whom Jesus Christ said: whoever accepts you, receives me."⁴⁵

Unity pertains to the very nature of the Church in her essential characteristics and in her fundamental attributes: one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic. Unity as a fundamental motive establishes her credibility in the world: "As you, Father, are in me, and I in you, so may they be one in us, that the world believe that you sent me" (Jn. 17:21).

4. Eucharist, the source of mission

The missionary duty to evangelize all people: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt. 28:19), is based on Baptism which confers the indelible character of *God's children*, it involves a Christian lifestyle centered on the Gospel of Christ and the proposal on the fulfillment of the laws, of which the Eucharist is the summit and supreme example. The proclamation of the Gospel has its core in the Eucharist as the sacrament of communion with God and with men-as-brothers. Today more than ever, the mission is

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 429-430. The printing of the *liturgical books* for the Orthodox has represented what the Council of Trent was for Catholicism. The printing of liturgical texts put an end to the fruitful creativity and exuberance of the Orthodox liturgy.

⁴² *Diario*, part II, 433.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 439. The Council of Florence (1439-1442) is important because it sanctioned the union with the Greek Orthodox Church.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 435. Justin makes reference to Lk 10:16: "He who hears you hears me," or to Mt. 10:40: "He who welcomes you, welcomes me."

communication of this experience of communion, sharing with others the fruits of a demanding commitment of communion and solidarity, especially for the poorest. All the baptized are involved in it, each according to his calling within the ecclesial community. It is interesting to note the intimate link that St. Justin establishes between the Eucharist and the mystery of the Incarnation, as the reiterated will of God to communicate with man, to establish relations ever more personal and lasting with him. In the Incarnation, God in Christ came down and took on Himself the precariousness, the limitations, the fragility of the human being: *"For us who believe that the communication has been established between the finite and the infinite, between weakness and strength, between God and man, in the great work of the Incarnation, a completely different communication must not seem impossible to us to be able to take place between them...."* *"To all who believe in the mystery of the Incarnation, there should be no difficulty in believing in all the other mysterious means that God has used to communicate to man, and above all, I would add here, through the means of Communion.... That is why he has joined humanity to God with such close ties which are precisely the links of the Incarnation.... All the other Sacraments, therefore, that more or less put us in this happy and noble communication, do no more than finalize this great communication, which gives us eternal life according to the assurance of Jesus Christ."*⁴⁶ The Eucharist represents the summit to which all the evangelizing activity of the Church points, the Church which has as its absolute priority the bringing of men into perfect communion with God through Christ, who is the universal sacrament of salvation, who enters into men's lives in order to transform them. The Eucharist is a *foretaste* of a new world where solidarity and peace will put an end to sins against unity, perpetrated for centuries by men against men (cf. Gn. 4:8 ff.). In this Eucharistic perspective, as *the sacrament of unity and of love*, it represents the final goal of ecumenism, committed to the search for unity of faith. That faith is the dynamic principle of the origin of mission, through which the world becomes a living sacrifice pleasing to God.

Other than the aspects we have already considered, for Justin De Jacobis there exists a very strict relationship between the Eucharist and moral commitment, the formation of consciences, and an evangelical life style. The Eucharist is a perennial font of moral

⁴⁶ *Diario*, part II, 436 and 439-440. According to a genuine saying of de Jacobis, it is by God's *condescension* and his *gift of self* that we receive the sacrament of the Eucharist.

force, which necessarily leads the believer to witnessing evangelical values in the society in which he lives: "... the dogmas of religion... inspire a kind of religious cult for the bodies which have received or are preparing to receive a food that is completely divine. It is necessary to read St. Paul to be aware of the victorious use that he made of it to block the disorders of incontinence and adultery, which are the principal sources and the most deplorable of all social ills. For he orders us to honor the bodies which have become members of Christ not only through a mystical and metaphysical communication, which provide almost no stimulus to a natural heart, but also for a true, just, continuous and even material communication. May it be so strong among the faithful that it prevents all the abuses of flesh destined to rise again through a right it has acquired because of its admission to communion."⁴⁷

Through the centuries the Eucharist has always given new energies to unpopular choices and to the countercultural moral conduct that Christians have been called to take up, even if, unhappily, we must admit that Christians have not always distinguished themselves from other men in resisting the temptation of corruption. It is important to remember, in this regard, what Vatican II affirms: "*The Church is holy, and is always on the path of being redeemed.*"⁴⁸ In the fulfillment of the missionary mandate of the Church, the witness of Christians is of primary importance. John Paul II has authoritatively given example, and has taught that "*there is no witness without witnesses, just as there is no mission without missionaries.*"⁴⁹

Conclusion

The shining example of St. Justin de Jacobis should lead us Christians to witness with more strength, conviction, and clarity the presence of God in our society, and not to be afraid to speak of Him, to follow the truth personally, and to teach others to do so. From the Eucharist came his daring in professing his faith in Christ during the hard times of persecution in Ethiopia: "*The mystery which makes us look at all individuals of the great human family as true parts of the*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 441. For Justin, the *eros* of the creature is assumed and transformed by the *agape* of Christ, thus becoming a transforming and sanctifying embrace in sacramental communion.

⁴⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

⁴⁹ *Redemptoris missio*, in A.A.S., 83 (1991), 309-310.

body of Christ: he inspires in us a great desire to do good to others and to comfort suffering humanity."⁵⁰

Having had the experience, innumerable times, of our frailty, and of our discontinuity in following through on the unity of the Church, we need to pray that Christ conquer our resistances and transform each of us who are timid disciples into credible witnesses of his love in the world, so that dialogue, respect for persons, and an unlimited trust in the mercy of God, manifest in the Paschal Mystery of His only Son, prevail in the world.

The Church must never cease to pray for the return of the happy days of communion and of full unity of believers in Christ:

*"Lord, remember what you have promised.
Make us one sheep and one shepherd!
Do not let your net be torn,
and help us to be servants of unity!"*⁵¹

That secret strength will spread from the Eucharist that will overcome the frontiers of division, and will transform them into a world capable of communion through *service* and through *selfless love*, above all in favor of those who have borne the consequences through the wounds of discord and division.

Translation: ROBERT J. STONE, C.M.

⁵⁰ *Diario*, part II, 441-442.

⁵¹ BENEDETTO XVI, *Homily of April 24, 2005*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 25, 2005, p. 5. St. Justin also speaks of the happy times of unity, but with a tender Marian accent: "*That the Immaculate Heart of Mary, with her intercession make flower that day when... such joy will fill the whole Church!*"