

The Eucharist and Our Formation as the People of the Church

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Thank you all for being here. It is a great privilege to be able to address you on such an important topic. I want to express my gratitude to Boston College and the School of Theology and Ministry, capably led by Fr. Richard Clifford, for the invitation to be with you today and for all that you do to promote the Catholic theological tradition of the Church and to prepare people for ministry.

Occasionally one of my priest friends will take a little junket as chaplain on the Carnival Cruise line. They give you the best accommodations if you take the chaplain post during September, at the height of the hurricane season. It really helps Mass attendance when the gale begins to blow.

St. Paul discovered the same thing in the Acts of the Apostles, where St. Luke describes Paul celebrating the breaking of the bread for 276 crew and passengers aboard during a storm. The ship ran aground on a sandbar off Malta and all were saved.

It is a wonderful image, and repeats itself in times of danger and distress. After September 11 throngs of people came to church to feel the safety of the Eucharist and the consolation of the Body of Christ, the Church. That day I was in Washington at the meeting of the Bishops Conference, at noon we crossed the street to celebrate Mass for 4000 that spontaneously gathered there to seek strength from the Eucharist and the Body of Christ. There is something about a crisis that opens our eyes to the really important things in life.

For the Jubilee Year 2000, the French hierarchy published a book called *Le Livre des Merveilles*. The subtitle says that the book contains 365 true stories, to read each day of the year, where we can see God at work in the world. But nowhere is God's action in the world as powerful or as dramatic as it is in the Eucharist. Yet I fear that God has made Himself so accessible that we often fail to grasp the depths of His love.

It is like Naaman the Syrian General who sought a cure for his leprosy. The prophet Elisha stayed in his house and sent a messenger to tell him to bathe in the Jordan. Naaman protested. He had expected a dramatic event that would cure him, not an invitation to go to the beach. Wisely, a servant said to him: "If the prophet had asked you to do something spectacular, you would have gladly done it, but he asked you to do something simple, try it." Naaman washed in the Jordan, not as good as the rivers of Damascus, but he came out cleaned and cured.

It is as *The Imitation of Christ* states in the sixth chapter, that if there were but one Mass celebrated in one place in the world, what sacrifices people would make, what longing they would have, to be present at the Mass at least once during a lifetime. But we have the Mass celebrated each day in many places. I am often reminded of Ghandi's words, that there is so much hunger in the world that God could appear only in the form of bread.

It is crucial that we spend time reflecting on the meaning of the Eucharist. It really is at the center of our lives as Catholics. For 2000 years it has been Christ in the Eucharist that gathers us as God's people. All the mysteries of our faith, sense of community, Gospel of social teaching and fellowship converge in the Eucharist. I am happy to have the opportunity to share these modest ideas about the greatest treasure we share as Catholics.

As was noted in the introduction, my first diocese was in the West Indies. Unlike St. Paul, I was never shipwrecked, but I did have over 800 harrowing flights in seaplanes. When I arrived there I was terrified by the prospect that I was going to have to travel from island to island in the very old sea planes. They had told me the story about a man who came to our Cathedral to make his Easter duty, who was going to confession to one of the Redemptorist Fathers there. When the confessor heard how long it had been since this man had been to confession, he scolded him a little bit, and he said, "But, Father, you must understand, to come to confession, I have to come on a sea plane." And he said, "For a venial sin, that is very expensive." And he said, "For a mortal sin, it is very dangerous."

I will never forget my first ride on that dangerous sea plane. I walked down to the harbor and stood in line. There was a very substantial, large woman standing in front of me. Suddenly, the pilot appeared with a yellow pad, got off the plane with a tablet, and he walked over to us, and, preparing for the flight and the plane's capacity, he said, "Miss, how much do you weigh?" There was a pause in the conversation, and the woman responded, "Eighty pounds." And then the pilot said, "Bishop, how much do you weigh?" I said, "Three hundred."

Life is a journey. Like with those sea planes, there are many perils and many indignities, but also many joys. We do not make the journey alone. The Lord is with us, and he has given us a family.

At the Last Supper, Jesus bids us farewell. He gives us a command and a gift. The command is the New Commandment. In the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus teaches the Great Commandment is, "Love God above all else. Love your neighbor as yourself. But in the last Gospel, St. John's, at the Last Supper Jesus gives us the New Commandment. To those who are of the household of the faith, those who are the members of His Church, to the people of God, he says, "Love one another as I love you." Jesus has established a new standard, now it is His love for us that is to be the measuring stick for the love that we have to have for each other. How does the Lord love us? He loves us to the end. He loves us to the point of laying down His life for us. He loves us when we were still in sin. He loves us first. And this is the way that He wants us to love each other, and to be part of His family.

It is John the Evangelist who records the New Commandment and gives it to us through his Gospel and the epistles. At the end of his life, John was living in exile in the island of Patmos in a cave, and each Sunday they would carry him into the village to speak at the Sunday Eucharist. And Saint John gave the same sermon every Sunday. I am sure that is not the case in your parishes or at St. Ignatius, but, if your pastor is Saint John the Apostle, there is not much you can do about it. However, somebody finally got up enough courage to speak up and said, "John, why do you give us the same talk every Sunday?" And John said, "I preach to you, 'little children, love one another', because this is what Jesus said to us over and over and over again. This is the New Commandment, 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for each other.'" But the Lord not only gives us the Commandment, He also gives us the Sacrament so that we can have the strength to live that life of love. Jesus gives us His enduring love in the Eucharist.

In the Eucharist, Jesus makes a gift of Himself to us, and this gift gathers us, strengthens us, and challenges us. Jesus makes Himself present to the people of God everywhere, for all times, and established that the Sacrament of the Eucharist comes to us through the priesthood. "Do this in memory of me." The first Mass was also the first ordination. Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, has given us the Year for Priests, and we thank God for the gift of the priesthood that makes the Eucharist available for the community of faith.

In reflecting on the gift of the Eucharist, the gift of Jesus making Himself present through the ministry of the Church for all time, we remember that when God was knocking on the door of humanity, it was Mary who opened that door in our name. By way of Mary's *fiat*, her "yes", God

came into our world in the person of Jesus. Mother Teresa once said to Cardinal O'Connor, "Give God permission." What a profound statement that is! And the greatest permission of all time was that given by Mary. She gave Jesus his human body and blood, and she is the Mother of the Eucharist. My favorite painting of the Blessed Mother is one that is in St. Mary's Church in Charlestown, in Boston. It depicts Saint John, the Beloved Disciple, giving Holy Communion to our Blessed Mother. It reminds me of Faber's beautiful hymn, "Had I but Mary's sinless heart to love thee with, my Dearest King. Oh, with what bursts of fervent praise Thy goodness, Jesus, would I sing."

Today, we know that there are many, even among the people of God, who do not accept Jesus' teaching on the Eucharist. We should not be surprised. In John's Gospel, when Jesus explains the Eucharist, He says, "Unless you eat of my body and drink of my blood, you will not have life in you." At that time, many of the disciples said, "These are hard words. Who can accept them?", and they left Jesus' company. Today many people find the central teachings of our faith too hard to believe and simply stop coming to church. Jesus asked His Apostles, "Are you going to leave me like the others?" And Peter says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Jesus' words and His actions assure us that He has left us a miracle of love in the Eucharist. We need to be witnesses of that truth to our brothers and sisters who have drifted away from the community of faith.

During the twenty years that I worked with the refugee and immigrant communities in Washington, I came to know Fr. Morty Fox, who was a very dear friend. Fr. Morty was just a delightful person. He was a man who was full of joy, energy and goodness. Wherever he went, people were delighted to be with him and could feel God's love and joy. One day when I was in the Virgin Islands having been sent there as bishop, I received a telephone call telling me that Fr. Fox had died very suddenly of a heart attack. I was of course distressed and saddened to hear that. Later on that day, I went to the Post Office to pick up the mail. The Post Office in the Islands was not terribly reliable. We used to call it "The Bermuda Triangle of the U.S. Postal Service." But on this particular day, among the bills and the ads, there was a letter from Fr. Fox. Now Morty Fox never wrote, except at Christmastime, and was now writing me from the grave, as it were. It was a very moving experience. I still remember opening that letter; I was trembling as I read his words, I could hear his voice, see his smile, feel his friendship. That afternoon, when I was in the chapel praying, it occurred to me that the Eucharist is like that letter I received from Fr. Morty, but the Eucharist is not by accident, it is not improvised. The Eucharist is Jesus' message, telling us how much He loves us and that will be with us always and everywhere, and the letter that He sends is Himself.

As a young man, I was in Ireland at the time of Pope Paul VI's coronation and the visit of President John Kennedy. In the village where we lived there was a great celebration, a *Te Deum*, and everyone gathered in the church. As they did in rural Ireland in those days, the men all sat on the Saint Joseph's side, and the women sat on the Blessed Mother's side, and afterwards, the town officials began giving speeches. One of them said that in honor of the coronation of the Pope and the President's visit, that when the bells of the church rang, there was going to be an amnesty, and they would open the doors of the jail and free all of the prisoners. I was very impressed. It was only afterwards that I learned that they have not had a prisoner there since 1917. The night before, the local constable went out rounded up the town drunks, put them in jail, and so indeed there was an amnesty.

But the great amnesty in all human history is the one that Christ won for us on the Cross and which is present to us each time we celebrate the Eucharist. By His stripes we are healed. We are purchased at a great price. The blood of the Paschal Lamb has warded off the exterminating angel. Our God loves us, and the Eucharist is the celebration of His saving love and redemption.

In *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* we read that “The Eucharist as Christ’s saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual food; is the most precious possession which the Church can have on her journey through history”. The more that we can penetrate this mystery the more we discover the boundless love of God for us. The Eucharist is love taken to the extreme. We recognize Christ, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus in the breaking of the bread. When minds are enlightened by Jesus’ words and hearts are enkindled, the signs begin to “speak”. The Eucharist unfolds in a dynamic context of signs that come from Christ himself and that contain a rich and luminous message. In these signs the mystery opens up before our eyes. By way of our participation in the life of the Church, we delve into various dimensions of this mystery which is the source and summit of our life of faith. The Eucharist is called *viaticum* when administered to the dying as food for the journey homeward. But in a sense, Eucharist is always *viaticum*, when the Bread of Life nourishes us and orients our life on the path that leads us to our destiny in God.

There is direct connection between the Eucharist and the ongoing process of our formation as the People of God. The Eucharist is the source of our strength for a life of discipleship, and through the Sacraments of initiation we respond to the call to holiness. Enlightened by the Eucharist, we discern our personal vocation, whether to priesthood, religious life, marriage, or the single life. Whatever our role in the life of the Church, we are all called to be part of a communal mission to transform the world, to build a civilization of love and to live our lives as Christ’s disciples, carrying out the mission He has entrusted to us.

While serving the immigrant community in Washington, I almost never celebrated Mass in English. I tell people that I only began to celebrate Mass in English after I became a bishop. One day an American friend visited the parish and after Mass leveled the criticism: “So many of your people do not go to communion.” I was a little annoyed by the remark, and I retorted: “It is because they believe.” Many of those people were in irregular marriages or for whatever reason realized they were not prepared for the reception of Holy Communion, and so they refrained. In parishes today it is expected that everyone who attends the Mass will draw near for Communion, whether they are prepared or not.

The Mass begins with a penitential rite that reminds us of the need for conversion and repentance as a preparation to enter into the sacred mysteries. The very holiness of the Eucharist is an invitation to conversion, to live the ideals of the Gospel, the costly grace of discipleship. When believers truly reverence the sacredness of the Eucharist, that sense of awe and Eucharistic amazement causes people to examine their lives in the light of the commandments and strive to put their lives in order before receiving the Eucharist. Being confronted by the presence of that which is truly holy we will either repent or flee.

A Holy Ghost Father who served as a missionary in Africa states that one of the most important symbolic gestures that the Massai people have is to offer one another a handful of grass as a sign of peace and reconciliation. During any dispute a handful of grass offered by one of the Massai, and acceptance by another is a guarantee that peace will reign, that neither will turn to violence. This spirit of reconciliation is essential for the celebration of the Eucharist.

That same Holy Ghost missionary, Father Donovan, gives a moving description of how Mass preparation begins among the Massai people as soon as the celebrant arrives at the village. There is much dancing and prayers are offered for the sick. This sort of pre-celebration can go on for a whole day before culminating in the celebration of the Eucharist. Yet the missionary priest never knew if indeed the Mass would follow. The leaders of the tribe would have to decide whether they could celebrate the Eucharist. If there had been selfishness, forgetfulness, hatefulness or lack of forgiveness in the life of the village, they would not make a sacrilege out of the Eucharist by calling it the Body of Christ when there was a lack of unity among the people. The celebration of the Eucharist would be postponed until the whole community could deal with their shortcomings.

The Gospel itself begins with a call to conversion, “*Repent and believe the Good News.*” The Eucharist calls people to repentance and conversion as well as reconciliation. Pope Benedict speaks so eloquently of Eucharistic consistency which demands that we be living lives worthy of reception of the Eucharist. And as St. Paul says, “we must eat and drink worthily.” The very sacredness of the Eucharist has been a part of the Catholic Faith from the beginning of the Church. The Eucharistic celebration was part of the *disciplina arcane*, the secret life of the Church that had been reserved only to those who had been mentored and initiated into faithful discipleship. The catechumens and penitents were not invited to the Eucharistic celebration until they were fully schooled in the life of commitment to the Church.

In a world of political correctness and “inclusivity” these ancient practices seem peregrine and even harsh. Yet the awareness of the sacredness of the Eucharist evoked an awe and reverence in the faithful, even before they approached. Indeed many sinners have found motivation to overcome their vices because of their desire to receive the Eucharist. Even before we are repulsed by sin and evil, we are attracted by grace and beauty. Yet we know that many receive the Eucharist without examining themselves. It is what Bonhoeffer describes as a cheap grace.

When believers are aware of their need to be spiritually prepared for the Eucharist, the call to conversion is part of the experience of the Eucharist. Jesus washed the feet of the Apostles in part to denote the cleansing and repentance that must be sought in preparation for participation in the Eucharist. The call to conversion that opens the Gospel is complemented in the Mass by the Penitential Rite. We present ourselves before God and before the community acknowledging our need for forgiveness and reconciliation. Jesus says clearly in the Gospel that before we offer our gifts on the altar, we must be reconciled with our brothers and sisters. We need to wear the wedding garment of grace and mercy as we come to the Eucharist. We must approach the Eucharist like Moses who removed his sandals drawing near the burning bush, with a sense of wonder and awe. At the same time, we have a sense of our own unworthiness in the presence of God’s boundless and gratuitous love, like Peter, who after the miraculous draught of the fishes, throws himself at Jesus’ feet and says: “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” And the Eucharist is a far greater miracle than the draught of fishes.

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict underscores the need for an authentic catechesis on the meaning of Eucharist that includes “the call to pursue the path of penance”. The Holy Father also points out the relationship between the Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation, reminding us “that sin is never a purely individual affair; it always damages the ecclesial communion that we have entered through Baptism”. This truth has significant implications for our life as the people of God, as the community of the Church. A culture that has lost its sense of sin, a culture obsessed with entertainment and celebrity that has convinced itself that there is no limit to entitlement cannot help but fail to see the need to be in the state of grace to receive the Eucharist. This failure to recognize and respect the Eucharist as the real presence of Jesus Christ trivializes the grandeur of God’s love.

Pope Benedict also discusses the relationship between the Eucharist and moral transformation. He states that the moral life “has the value of a spiritual worship”. The Holy Father goes on to say that this spiritual worship should not be interpreted in a moralistic way, because it is before all else the joyful discovery of love at work in the hearts of those who accept the Lord’s gifts, who abandon themselves to Him and find true freedom. The moral transformation implicit in the new worship is a heartfelt yearning to respond to the Lord’s love with one’s whole being, while yet remaining aware of our own weakness. The Gospel story of Zachaeus exemplifies this phenomenon. After welcoming Jesus into his home, this tax collector who has experienced the rejection of the good people in the community is overwhelmed by Jesus’ attitude of mercy. Zachaeus’ experience of Jesus’ love results in his dramatic action of giving half of his wealth to the

poor, and pledging to repay fourfold those whom he had defrauded. The moral urgency that follows from welcoming Jesus into our lives is the fruit of gratitude for having experienced the Lord's unlimited love.

I often contrast Zachaeus with the rich young man who boasted of keeping the commandments, but was unable to renounce his wealth and give it to the poor. Although Jesus looked on him with love, the rich young man failed to understand how much the Lord loved him. Had he perceived the reality of Jesus' overwhelming love, like Zachaeus, he would gladly have let go of his attachment to money and possessions. In the Eucharist we can glimpse the gift of Jesus' love that frees us from worldly attachments and fills us with grateful affection.

In the 19th century, Russian classic, The Way of the Pilgrim, the unnamed author recounts his spiritual journey, which he began when he heard the Scripture readings at Mass. The priest read from Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians, the injunction to "pray without ceasing." The pilgrim set out armed only with his Bible and a copy of the *Philokalia* on his spiritual journey. He never makes it to the Holy Land but he does achieve a life of ceaseless prayer in the biblical phrase: "Lord Jesus Christ, have pity on me a sinner."

What magnificent witnesses we have in our Catholic tradition of those who have been converted and inspired to holiness by the word of God proclaimed at the Eucharist: St. Anthony of the Desert, Francis of Assisi, St. Augustine, Blessed Charles de Foucauld. The Word of God finds its home in the Eucharist. Here our Lord speaks to us and leaves us breathless with the challenge: How can we live the demands of His loving word? The Word of God is proclaimed at the Liturgy of the Word in the lessons, and then the Word is "proclaimed" intimately upon the altar in the bread of life and love.

In *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, Pope John Paul II points out that the Council Fathers desired that "the table of the word" would offer the treasures of Scripture more fully to the faithful. In particular, he cites the Council that declares: "It is Christ Himself who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read at Mass." In his Apostolic Letter to inaugurate the Year of the Eucharist in 2004, John Paul draws on the imagery of Luke's account of the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus. Amid our questions and difficulties, and even our bitter disappointments, the divine wayfarer continues to walk at our side, opening the Scriptures for us and leading us to a deeper understanding of the mysteries of God. When we meet Him fully, we will pass from the light of the Word to the light streaming from the "Bread of Life," and the supreme fulfillment of His promise to be with us always even to the end of time.

The Liturgy of the Word is the grace-filled encounter with the living God that made the hearts of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus "burn within them." That same word of life, joined to the bread of life, forms our hearts anew. Pope Benedict in *Deus Caritas Est* tells that all of those who are involved in the works of mercy need a "formation of the heart": they need to be led to an encounter with God which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbor will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence derived from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love.

This same "formation of the heart" is essential if we are to live the call to discipleship and service, to live our lives as the people the Church. In the same encyclical letter, the Holy Father cites the exercise of charity, along with the administration of the sacraments and proclamation of the Word, as the essential activities in the life of the Church. He cites Justin the Martyr who speaks of the Christians' celebration of Sunday and links the Eucharist to the Church's works of mercy. Saint Justin describes how the bishop employed the offertory gifts to support the orphans, the sick and the widows. The Pope also cites the testimony of the great Christian writer Tertullian, who recounts how the pagans were struck by the Christians' concern for all needy people, regardless of

circumstance. This all encompassing love, modeled on the very love and sacrifice of Jesus, was, to the pagan community, a most unusual and curious practice.

The formation of the heart is grounded in the wondrous faith in “the goodness and kindness of God” which has appeared to us in Christ Jesus. In St. Paul’s letter to Titus this quote is read at the celebration of the Eucharist for Christmas. In other words, the formation of our hearts takes place through our profound faith in the Incarnate Christ and His love for us.

Not only are we loved by God, but in Christ we are loved first. Is there a more beautiful passage in the New Testament than John’s exclamation in his first epistle: “Love, then consists in this, not that we have loved God but that He has loved us and sent His Son as an offering for our sins”. And “we, for our part, love because He loved us first” . Pope Benedict emphasizes that our conversion, our turning to God and our fellow men and women, is grounded in the immense grace and energy of God’s first love. “More than anything, they (who serve others in need) must be persons moved by Christ’s love, persons whose hearts Christ has conquered with His love”. This “first love” clearly comes to us from the Cross. It is the Cross and the Resurrection, as in the Eucharistic reenactment, that love is revealed to us, and even more, the most humble love of God for us. The correct formation of our hearts as Christians, rising from our contact with Word and Sacrament, is the basis for our formation as the Christian community, the people of the Church.

Without losing the clarity that the Church desires in explaining the meaning of religious life or the priest’s virtues in view of his representing the Person of Christ, there is today a greater awareness of the evangelical counsels in the life of the laity. The Council Fathers wished to articulate the universal call to holiness, they declared: “It is evident to everyone that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity”. All too often, we are confronted with the reality that the human heart tends to be selfish in the areas of sexuality, personal freedom, and possessions, and this selfishness can have terrible consequences for individuals and for the community as a whole. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that the evangelical counsels have a clear application to everyone who aspires to a life of discipleship. The counsels of the laity arise from the Sermon on the Mount, the call to recognize blessedness and the presence of the Lord in all of the distinct and differing conditions of personal and familial life.

It must be stated that every Christian who seeks to be faithful to the high standard of Christian living must gratefully receive the call to live chastely in this world which is addicted to selfish and violent sexual expression. It is beyond comprehension that every day children and women are exploited with complete disregard for their humanity and their dignity. We cannot accept this as “the way things are”. In a world where so many people are disfigured by poverty, neglect and injustice, we cannot truly be the people of the Church, followers of Christ, if we step over Lazarus starving on our porch. It is the transformational presence of Christ in the Eucharist that gives us the strength to resist our culture’s “will to power”, to be witnesses of Jesus’ sacrificial love as given to us in the Church and her teachings.

When we look at that manner by which Christians in all states of life live the evangelical counsels, we can behold some of the paths which lead us into closeness to Christ. For example, all Christians today face an onslaught against the commitment and practice of living of a chaste life. But it is true that in light of our vocation, each Christian is called to humbly and faithfully live the chastity which has a profound reverence for the sacrament of marriage and for the proper expression of sexuality within a faithful spousal covenant. As Christ makes a gift of Himself to us in the Eucharist, so each of us is called to make a gift of oneself in a profound personal reverence for the other and with a pure heart “to see God” in the experience of many epiphanies of our lives, especially in those who suffer.

Pope Benedict in *Spe Salvi* quotes Maximus the Great who said something dear to so many saints: “The one who loves God cannot hold on to money but rather gives it over in God’s fashion...in the same manner in accordance with the measure of justice”. The Eucharistic celebration is oriented to adoration of and thanksgiving for the Lord who became poor for our sake. The living bread of the humble Christ leads us to turn to our neighbors in need, in order to serve them with love. The Pope goes on to say that if the Eucharist does not affect the way we lead our lives, something is missing. “Sacramental mysticism” is social in character. “Because there is one bread, we who are many form one body.” The Eucharist is a call to community, to the shared experience of people following Jesus, promoting goodwill and unity, despite the imperfections and differences that are part of the human condition. The Eucharist calls us to live that unity that transcends culture, age, ethnicity or ideologies.

In a culture that holds the rights of the individual as among the highest priorities, the obedience that accompanies life in the Church is increasingly regarded with suspicion. However, we cannot fail to see that the Eucharist itself is an oblation of Christ’s will, given in humble love toward the Father and for all. We share the offering of the Eucharist through the filial love and obedience of Christ toward the Father. The Lord’s Prayer reflects this as it introduces the Rite of Communion, so that our hearts might be properly disposed. There we pray with great confidence with the same spirit as Charles de Foucauld expresses in his prayer of abandonment into the hands of our Father. Thus we trustingly ask that God’s kingdom come, that His will, not ours, be done. It is essential that we be people who meet the Lord in personal prayer, which awakens in us the desire to hear the word anew and to offer ourselves really and truly in the Eucharist with Christ. In this way, we are transformed by the Holy Spirit into the poor, chaste and obedient Christ, and we truly become his brothers and sisters.

The two disciples of Emmaus, upon recognizing the Lord, “set out immediately” in order to report what they had seen and heard. The encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist, results in an urgent summons to witness and to evangelize. St. Paul wrote in the First Letter to the Corinthians: “As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”. When we enter into communion with Christ we will sense the duty to be a missionary of the event that made present Jesus’ abiding love. To be the people of the Church, to live as a community that witnesses our faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the way, the truth and the life, we must be a people who are devoted to the Eucharist. Going forth to live our call to discipleship, let us share with those around us that “we have seen the Lord and we have recognized Him in the breaking of the bread.”