

**51st INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS,**

**"CHRIST IN YOU, OUR HOPE OF GLORY"**

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**The Eucharist in Dialogue with the Poor and Suffering**

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**INTRODUCTION**

It is a great grace for each and everyone who is here to be part of this 51st International Eucharistic Congress. There are many all over the world who would have wanted to be here but cannot be. For those of us who are here we must consider ourselves called by God to this Eucharistic Assembly. During our time here, we should try to find union with God and solidarity with each other. I personally thank God that I have the chance and the opportunity to share some reflections with this special congregation on this occasion. Many people have spoken about the Eucharist under many forms and many more will speak until we conclude the congress. It is one huge hymn of praise to God in different tones but in a harmony of love and praise to God who has given us the gift of the Eucharist. My reflection will proceed in three phases. First I will share some general reflections on the theme of the Eucharistic Congress: "Christ in you: or Hope of Glory" The Eucharist: Source and Goal of the Church's Mission. Secondly, I will try to recapitulate the three main dimensions of the mysteries of the Holy Eucharist. Finally, I will try to apply all this to the specific theme assigned to me, namely "The Eucharist in Dialogue with the Poor and Suffering".

## **PART 1**

### **CHRIST IN US, OUR HOPE OF GLORY**

The Eucharist shows in a most intimate way the mystery of God living inside all of us. As we share in the Eucharistic, we share in the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and he dwells in us with his humanity and his divinity. Jesus already told us: "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him*" *Jn 6:56*. Thus we will be united in him, one with him, he dwells in me and I in him. He once told us; "*Anyone who loves me...my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him*" *John 14:23*. And if we are one with him, we should be one with each another. His great prayer before he left his apostles was "*that they may be one.*" *John 17:21*, a prayer that was said in the context of the Last Supper, during which was established the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

To some extent, it can be said that through the Eucharist, Christ is present in the world. At Christmas we were reminded that when the appointed time came, "the Word was made flesh and He dwelt among us", *Jn 1:14*. St John tells us that "*For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life*" *Jn 3:16*. To redeem us, God sent His only Son into the world. Therefore, since that appointed time, God has become part of us in a real and mysterious way. It is not a figure of speech when we say that God sent His Son into our world. It is a mystery of faith. God is in our world today through Christ, this our world, full of its problems and difficulties but as well full of its beauty and possibilities. The same St John said: "*Not that anybody has seen the Father, except Him who has his being from God: He has seen the Father*" *Jn 6:46*. In an earlier passage we read: *No one has ever*

*seen God: it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known. Jn 1:18.*

The Church is described by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium*, (1) as a Sacrament of God's presence in the world - Sacrament in the sense of sign and instrument. As sign, the church is a model of how the presence of God in our world is to be experienced in a real way. As instrument, it means that it is through the church that God works in our world and makes his presence felt. Thus, Christ is in us in the Holy Eucharist, and in the world through the Church.

Christ is also our hope of glory. But what glory are we talking about? It is the glory first and foremost of the face of God revealed to us through the Son. It is the glory that is also revealed in the will of God being expressed and fulfilled in our world and in the lives of each and every one of us. It is the glory of God's eternal kingdom, which is the ultimate destiny not only of Christians but of every living human being created by God. Christ is the Word, *"the real light that gives light to everyone"* Jn 1:9. It is the glory of the heavenly banquet of which we have already a foretaste in the Holy Eucharist, which is "The bread of angels that has become the bread of human beings! *Panis angelicus, fit panis hominum!"* as St Thomas Aquinas so beautifully chants. (2)

This is not in heaven alone. The glory of God is manifested also here on earth. It is the will of God. *"Glory to God in the highest heavens and on earth, peace for those he favours!" Lk 2:14.* Jesus considers his elevation on Calvary as the hour of His glory. *"Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son, so that your Son may glorify you!" Jn 17:1.* This is the glory, which God gave him from all eternity.

Our life here on earth is sustained in the hope of glory. What then is this hope? Hope is the expectation of what is to come. It is not a vague expectation but a firm hope based on faith in the promises of God who never deceives us. The

Eucharist is the pledge of hope in that eternal banquet. That is why the dying happily receives the Holy Eucharist as *Viaticum*, meaning food for the journey to heaven. This is brought out clearly in the Communion hymn during the Eucharist here in this pavillion on Tuesday:

*"Jesu Panis Vitae, cibus et potus noster in itinere ad domus Dei."*

(Jesus, the Bread of Life; our food and drink on our journey to the house of God). Eucharist is therefore Christ in us, our hope for glory.

## **PART 2**

### **THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE EUCHARIST**

It could be useful at this point to summarize the classical three theological dimensions of the Eucharist: Eucharist as Real Presence, Eucharist as Sacrifice and Eucharist as Communion.

#### **2.1. REAL PRESENCE**

It is a mystery of faith that Jesus is fully and truly present in the Eucharist, under the outward forms of bread and wine. It is a great mystery, a great miracle which God decided to perform and continues to perform everyday, everywhere that the Eucharist is celebrated. The church down the ages has developed the theological terminology of *Transubstantiation*, meaning that the essence of the bread and wine is completely changed into the body and blood of Jesus.

In the 6th chapter of the Gospel of St. John, Jesus already categorically states it in blunt terms that "*For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.*" He further declares that unless we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we will not have life in us. This was a statement which was most difficult for the hearers. Only the apostles stayed with Jesus believing in what he said no matter how difficult it was for them to grasp the meaning.

The Last Supper is described in almost identical details in all the three synoptic gospels. (Lk. 22: 19-20; Mat. 26: 26-29; Mk. 14: 21-25), a description is repeated with similar details by St. Paul in 1 Cor 11:23-26. Jesus took the bread, blessed it, gave it to his disciples and said, "**This is my body.**" He did the same with the wine and gave it to his disciples saying: "***This is my blood***". He then gave them to eat and to drink, asking them to "do this in memory of me!" This must have brought more clarity in the minds of the apostles about the statements of Jesus earlier: "***For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, lives in me and I live in him.***" *Jn 6:55*. And so at the Last supper, with the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the Apostles shared the body and blood of Christ under the form of bread and wine which he gave to them. This remained a truth of faith that they held most vigorously.

St Paul writing later to the Corinthians tells them: "I hand over to you the tradition that I myself have received." I Cor. 11:23. And he goes ahead to narrate the events of the Last Supper. He then draws the conclusion that since this indeed is the body and blood of Christ, we must be sure we are well prepared to eat and drink it. He strongly warned that whoever eats or drinks unworthily eats and drinks damnation unto himself.

Eventually, the "Breaking of Bread" namely the celebration of the Eucharist quickly became the characteristic worship action of the Christian community. (Acts 2: 42) And so it has remained from that time until now.

The real presence continues for as long as the physical specie of the Bread and Wine remains. That is why even after the celebration of the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ is carefully guarded. Through an age old tradition, the sick who could not participate in the Eucharistic celebration often had the opportunity of being fed with the Holy Eucharist in their homes in their sick beds. The pastoral care of the sick makes a particularly great impact with the

administration of the Holy Communion. By the same token, the Eucharist becomes a healing remedy for those who are sick. Many miracles of healing have been recorded in Pilgrimage Centres like Lourdes where the Holy Eucharist is carried in devotion in procession for the contemplation and prayer of the sick who line up in the procession route. Even those who do not receive physical miracles, get divine consolation as they devoutly look up to the Body and Blood of Jesus carried in the Holy Monstrance. This holy practice has become frequent in many of our local churches under the forms of what is often called "Healing Ministries". Many poor people who have no access to good health care facilities often fall back on such "ministries" as a last resort, with faith in the healing power of the Holy Eucharist.

A particularly significant expression of the faith in the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist is when it is brought to the bedside of a dying Christian. Looking at the Holy Eucharist in faith, the dying person feels the presence of God on his or her way to heaven, thus receiving food for the journey into eternity.

The devotion to the real presence of the Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist has become very traditional in the reservation of the Eucharist in the tabernacle. There, Jesus is present for adoration, contemplation and for prayer. The practice of a regular visit to the Blessed Sacrament deserves to be constantly encouraged for all our people, irrespective of age or social status. It is most edifying to observe the faith of children and simple people in this regard. In more recent times, the practice of Perpetual Adoration in a particular chapel has become more common, especially in many of our mission territories. This too deserves to be encouraged.

Whatever may be the theological reasons why some modern liturgists recommend that the tabernacle be moved away from the high altar, I do not believe it should be hidden away in some obscure angle of the Church. At times, we are reminded of the complaint of Mary Magdalene to Simon Peter on the morning of

the resurrection: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" Jn 20:2. Wherever the tabernacle is installed in the church, it should be within direct visibility and ease of access for lovers of the Lord Jesus seeking for him in the tabernacle.

## **2.2. THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS A SACRIFICE**

What happens on the Altar is a re-enactment of the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. In the Last Supper, Jesus spoke of His Body and His Blood in the context of the celebration of the meal in which the Paschal Lamb was sacrificed for the forgiveness of the sins of the people in commemoration of the great events of the Exodus. This is clear as He says during the Last Supper: "Take and Eat, This is my Body given for you" and "This is my Blood poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins." John the Baptist had earlier pointed out Jesus to his Disciples saying: "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.*" Jn 1:29. If Jesus is the Lamb of God, He is the Paschal Lamb *par excellence*. St Paul stressed the fact that the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross is our redemption in the Blood of Christ, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant. The old covenant was with the blood of animals. The Epistle to the Hebrews contrasts that blood of animals of the Old Testament with the Precious Blood of the Lamb of God in the new and eternal covenant. We see this in Heb. 6-10, especially Chapter 10. It is a covenant that is not only new and eternal but a covenant that is eminently superior in every way. If the blood of goats and rams were considered useful for the remission of sins in the Old Testament how much more the Precious Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus on the Cross, hanging there in His glory, intercedes for us in a most supreme way. No act of worship can be as

high and effective as the sacrifice which Jesus made of Himself on the cross, and truly reenacted in the Holy Eucharist.

We are supposed to be imitators of Jesus Christ in everything, and especially in his sacrifice on the cross. Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow Him. (Mt. 10:38.) We need to be prepared to join Him in his sacrifice. This is particularly clear in the actions of the Holy Martyrs who shed their blood to complete, as it were, what was left of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary. (Col. 1:24) St Ignatius of Antioch described in very graphic terms how his anticipated martyrdom to be crushed by the beasts in the Colosseum in Rome is like the grapes crushed to produce the wine which is the Blood of Christ. He prides himself with the honour and privilege of his own body being crushed so that, like the wine from the grapes, so the blood from his body will become mingled with the Blood of Christ. He pleaded with his friends in Rome not to deprive him of this honour by their misguided concern and efforts to save him.

The cross as an instrument of execution had existed before the time of Jesus and many people had been crucified before Jesus. Two others were crucified with Him on the same Calvary hill. Since He died on the cross, what had been until then a symbol of a shameful death has become a great symbol of the glory of Christ in His glorious crucifixion. Today, we hear Muslim terrorists crucifying Christians as a way of inflicting the greatest pain and humiliation on their victims. But the cross still remains the symbol of the victory of the Lord Jesus. We can hope that the blood of the Christian martyrs so crucified will eventually be a source of salvation for even the perpetrators of such horrendous crimes. In our modern day world, where a lot is said about respecting religious symbols, is it not most terrible that some Islamic nations, for example Saudi Arabia, still practice the execution of condemned people by crucifixion, especially Christians, as a sign of the worst humiliation? We have heard of violent riots and killings for alledged

disrespect of the book of the quoran, or cartoons of te Prophet Muhammad. Surely those who want their religious symbols to be respected ought to respect the religious symbols of others.

For us Catholics, the Holy Eucharist when celebrated is the Holy sacrifice of the Mass, which is the supreme prayer that the Church has at her disposal. In it, Jesus is both Victim and Priest whose pleas cannot but be favourably received by His heavenly Father.

In Africa, the importance of sacrifice in our traditional religions has been carried over by our Catholics into their faith in the Holy Eucharist as a sacrifice most acceptable to God. We see this in the popularity of the tradition of "Mass Offerings", not withstanding poverty, for the sacrifice of the mass to be offered for various intensions. Cardinal Turkson in his presentation on Wednesday, rightly highlighted the importance of the "offertory procession" in our liturgical celebrations, with all manner of gifts, sometimes including live animals, or a heavy rope indicating a cow tethered somewhere in the Church premises! These are all expressions of a correct spiritual instinct about the Eucharist as sacrifice.

### **2.3. THE EUCHARIST AS COMMUNION.**

In the Holy Eucharist, we receive Holy Communion, which is the food that we eat and share. We eat the flesh and we drink the blood of Christ, following what He did at the Last Supper. He told us, "*Do this in memory of Me.*" He already prepared the minds of the people in the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. (Jn. 6:5-15). That miracle is also linked with the Eucharistic Discourse in the gospels. As He gave bread and fish to the hungry, He also makes His Body available to us to share. There are two important Old Testament images which prefigure this aspect of the Eucharist: Manna that was given to the Israelites from the skies during the Exodus, (Ex. 16) and the paschal lamb which was slaughtered and

shared by the family as a sacred meal during the Passover festival. (Ex. 12:1-14) These are all preparations for the great miracle of the eating of the Body and drinking of the Blood of our Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. We have already referred to St Paul's emphasis on following the tradition he has received of eating of the Body and drinking the Blood in a worthy way, lest one eats and drinks damnation unto oneself. (I Cor. 11:29)

The Breaking of Bread was the most powerful instrument for the fellowship of the Christians: the fellowship, which was called "koinonia" in Greek and "Communio" in Latin. It is fellowship with God whom we eat and drink and that way become united with Him but also fellowship with our fellow men and women with whom we share the same Eucharist. St Paul stresses the importance of solidarity in our communion and warns against bringing social distinctions and discriminations into the celebration of the Eucharist. (I Cor. 11:21) It should not happen that some are overfed while some go home hungry. Therefore the sharing of the Eucharist became for the Christians a constant reminder that we must live a life of sharing and fellowship. The very liturgical assembly whose core is the Eucharist was also to remind people not to make distinctions that did not respect the dignity of those who worship together. St James talked about this in very clear terms. Whatever is our social status, whenever we meet in the church, around the table of the Eucharist, everybody must be given his due respect. (James 2:1-13) St James condemns the situation where discrimination is carried out in the very midst of the celebration of the Eucharist, a discrimination which is the exact opposite of what Communion is all about. This is an all time message equally valid for us today. How many Catholics celebrate the Eucharist together in the Church, file to the altar to receive communion and yet, out in the world, they do not look at each other as brothers and sisters? Historical experience has shown how incompatible

racial discrimination is with the Eucharist in a Catholic community, as was the case in Apartheid South Africa or in the era of racial segregation in the USA.

Communion means that we cannot ignore taking note and being concerned about worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist. St Paul has been clear on this. Recent debate about the church being open to those who may have distanced themselves from the Eucharist is useful. But it cannot mean that we can continue wallowing in sin and receiving Holy Communion on the excuse that nobody should judge us or that God is merciful. Rather, the emphasis on the mercy of God which is very much part of this Jubilee Year of God's Mercy should move us to repentance, which is the key to accessing the mercy of God. The woman caught in adultery, in the gospel of John, 8:3-11, was forgiven by Jesus. But at the same time, she was also told to "go and sin no more". We cannot continue to deceive ourselves since God cannot be deceived.

In this debate about the mercy of God, we must admit that we are all under his loving compassion. No one is really worthy to receive the Holy Communion. That is why we have a penitential rite at the beginning of mass. And when before communion we solemnly announce: "Oh Lord I am not worthy...", it is not a figure of speech, but a sincere admission of our spiritual inadequacy. But nevertheless, the Church has guidelines which set limits to the level of "unworthiness" that is compatible with a fruitful reception of Holy Communion. The traditional requirement of being "in a state of grace" cannot be jettisoned without spiritual negative consequence at both personal and ecclesial levels. Therefore, those who freely offer or accept what is inappropriately called "eucharistic hospitality" to whoever cares to come to the communion rails seem to me to be inflicting serious damage on the sanctity of the Holy Eucharist. In my country, in public masses with many non-Catholics in attendance, it is our pastoral practice to make a clear public announcement before communion that only Catholics that are properly prepared

should come forward to receive communion. We do not believe that this is a place for any kind of false "political correctness". It seems that in many places today, there is a need to recover the sense of outrage about whatever may be tantamount to "sacrilege".

### **PART 3**

#### **THE EUCHARIST IN DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR AND SUFFERING**

In this presentation, I shall take the idea of "Dialogue with the poor and suffering" to mean that we reflect and find out the relevance of the Eucharist for persons who are living in poverty and in suffering. Although poverty and suffering often go together, we shall maintain some distinction between them in these reflections.

##### **3.1. THE EUCHARIST AND THE POOR**

There are different types of poverty in our world: material poverty, spiritual poverty, social poverty, etc. But the most immediate poverty that we need to address in our present context is material poverty, which sometimes becomes misery and inhuman standard of living. Such poverty is NOT inevitable. Rather, it is due to human failures, like bad distribution of earth's goods because of injustice and greed. God has provided enough resources for the needs of all of us. Here comes to mind the famous saying of Mahatma Gandhi that there is enough for our needs, not for our greed. It is our responsibility that everyone receives his/her own due so that we all might live in dignity. Much is being said today about social justice, but unfortunately the gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow. This makes the misery of the poor more acute and unbearable, as they live side by side with those who live in affluence or see the high living standards of the affluent in the mass media as unattainable utopia. This discrepancy is not only between

nations but also within nations. What about within the church itself? We cannot, unfortunately, say that our church is a perfect model of a just world. This is where the Eucharist becomes immediately relevant. The Eucharist stresses the goodness of God who gives himself to humanity. He loves the world so much that He gave His only Begotten Son to us. Jesus His son makes Himself poor so that we may be rich. *"You are well aware of the generosity which our Lord Jesus Christ had, that although he was rich, he became poor for your sake, so that you should become rich through his poverty."* (II Cor. 8:9) The Eucharist is the clear expression of His love for all His creatures. Therefore, it is a source of encouragement to the poor to know that God is good and takes care of His own. The Eucharist stresses the need for sharing among God's children starting from those in the church. We are reminded once again of the concerns and warning of James in his Epistle. (James 2: 14-26)

But there is also Spiritual Poverty. This should not be confused with what Jesus means when He says *"Blessed are you who are Poor in Spirit"*. Lk. 6:20 Rather we are talking of a spiritual poverty that is a lack of spiritual values, expressing itself in form of selfishness. Pope Francis in this year's message on World Day of Peace stresses an aspect of this spiritual poverty when he speaks of indifference as a major cause of unhappiness in the world and a great obstacle to peace. So people are not only selfish. They simply do not care about others. When they do not care about others, they cannot have a good sense of justice and not to talk of solidarity.

There is therefore a link between material poverty and spiritual poverty. This explains the dramatic contradictions in our world of today. The Eucharist challenges us to spiritual upliftment to see one another as brothers and sisters, children of the same Father, who is in heaven. It also helps the poor to see some

sense in what they are going through, the deprivations that they are suffering. This is where we can talk of those who are "poor in the spirit".

The church is supposed to be a sacrament of the presence of God in our world. In the question of justice in our world, the church should be where the Eucharist is seen at work. The church should be the sign, a model of how the Eucharist meets the needs of the poor. In our Eucharistic Assembly, the poor must be given their dignity and in our Eucharistic banquet, the concern for the needs of the poor must go beyond the church door into the world out there. Here again, the admonitions of both St Paul and St James come to mind.

It is often said that the church must have a preferential option for the poor, that we should not only work for the poor but also walk with them. (3) This is easier said than done. But it is certainly possible that we organize our church in such a way that the poor with whom we share the same Eucharist will feel our solidarity and care in the concrete affairs of daily life. How this is done will depend largely on concrete situation on the ground.

This very International Eucharistic Congress is a gathering of people from all over the world; rich and poor nations, of all races and cultures. Is this not an opportunity to challenge ourselves to express concrete and meaningful outreach to the victims of the criminal injustice that seems to be ruling the financial and economic relationship in our world of today? Can we celebrate the Eucharist together in this international Eucharistic Congress with all pomp and pageantry and allow everybody to crawl back into our respective oases of poverty and misery, or affluence and indifference? The miracle of the loaves and the fish in the gospel is very pertinent in this regard. It starts with pity, concern, mercy. Jesus looked at the crowd and had mercy on them. He asked his disciples to do something instead of complaining at the inadequacy of available resources. There should be action! Do something! Do not say the problem is too much, you cannot feed everybody, or

that what we have would not make any difference. Jesus does not want to hear such lame excuses. And God is challenging us: "Do the little you can with the right spirit and God will do the rest." The miracle of the loaves can be repeated over and over again in our world of today if there are generous hearts among the disciples of Jesus ready to share what they have with those in greater need. God himself is superabundance. At the end, not only will the hungry be fed, but many baskets of leftovers will be collected. (4)

### **3.2. THE EUCHARIST AND THE SUFFERING**

Suffering is very much part of human life and there are many kinds of suffering, be it physical, emotional or even spiritual. Invariably suffering is linked with pain. The Eucharist shows us Jesus hanging on the cross, sharing our human state of suffering. This is not only on the cross of Calvary. The whole earthly life of Jesus was certainly NOT marked by affluence and comfort. You can start even from his birth in the manger of Bethlehem and his life of hard labour with Joseph the Carpenter of Nazareth, ever before we begin to talk of the culminating event of his passion and death on the cross. Whether you believe in Jesus or not, whether you share the Eucharist or not, most people will have their share of human suffering. The good news is that Jesus carrying our burden of suffering gives meaning and purpose to whatever suffering we may be carrying especially for His own sake. It becomes redemptive both for ourselves and for others. The Eucharist and Calvary have always been together. As Jesus was instituting the Eucharist at the Last Supper, He had in mind Calvary that was to take place the next day. "This is my blood shared for you. Do this in memory of me". As Christians suffer with Christ, they come into union with him. Sharing in his cross, we can hope to share his glory. Here again, we must remember the witness of the martyrs both ancient

and modern, and the heroic model of a man like St Ignatius of Antioch, anxiously looking forward to his being crushed at the Colosseum in Rome.

The Eucharist has often been a source of strength and courage for Christians under persecution for the sake of Christ. It has also sometimes removed from them the fear of suffering.

Beyond that, it will appear that in some cases, the pain of suffering is actually removed by the suffering of Christ through the Eucharist. We have vivid illustration of this in the wonderful stories of the passion of many martyrs down through the ages. An example is the letter of the Vietnamese martyr, St. Paul Le-Bao-Tinh quoted in the Office of Readings on the feast of the Vietnamese Martyrs celebrated on November 24th:

"The prison here is a true image of everlasting hell: cruel tortures of every kind - shackles, iron chains, manacles, as well as anguish and grief. But the God who once freed the three children from the fiery furnace is with me always: he has delivered me from these tribulations and made them sweet, for his mercy is for ever. In the midst of these torments, which usually terrify others, I am, by the grace of God, full of joy and gladness, because I am not alone - Christ is with me." It is with this joyful mood that he and his companions embraced their atrocious martyrdom. I have personally encountered similar cases, especially when visiting repented or even innocent prisoners in condemned cells awaiting execution.

In our world of today full of suffering, we need to increase our devotion to the Holy Eucharist and our celebration of it especially among those who suffer. Here we might consider how much we do to make the Eucharist available to the poor living in slums or in remote villages. What about those who live in prisons and detention camps? Wherever possible, those who are suffering should be able to contemplate the face of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Eucharist has been described as the *Sacramentum Caritatis*, which is the title of the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI, issued in February 2007, after the Synod of Bishops on the Holy Eucharist. It is the mystery of the Charity of God. That God can love the world so much that He gave His only Son and designed this way to make His Son available to us using the species of bread and wine is a great mystery of God's love. That is why it is also a *Mysterium Fidei* – the Mystery of Faith. I think, on an occasion like this, as we gather here from all over the world as Catholics, we should not forget that there is the greater part of the world out there for whom the Eucharist must also be meaningful. As we celebrate Mass, we are reminded that the Blood of Jesus was given to us in the Chalice, and poured out "for us and for many for the forgiveness of sins". The "many" is the crowd out there who are probably not Christians, who probably may never go near a Church. And if they come near a church, they will probably not qualify to receive Holy Communion. We should not forget that the Eucharist that we celebrate is not only for us who receive Communion but also for all those who participate in the sacrifice of the Mass. And above all, it is also for the people of this world both living and dead for whom the Sacrifice of Calvary is daily represented on our Altar. That is why the Eucharist becomes the hope of the world today in the midst of all the bad news we are hearing; terrorism and the fear of a world war and the anxieties over climate change and the future of our planet. Jesus gives hope as He offers himself to us in the Holy Eucharist. For this we must remain forever grateful.

***Oh Sacrament Most Holy, Oh Sacrament Divine,  
All Praise and all Thanksgiving, Be Every moment Thine!***