AMDG JMJ

The Holy Eucharist and Mary

International Eucharistic Congress

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Archbishop of New York

"O Sacrament Most Holy
O Sacrament Divine,
all Praise and all Thanksgiving
be every moment thine!

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord,
be it done unto me according to Thy Word!"
"And the word became flesh,
And dwelt among us!"

My dear friends in Christ: It is an honor and a joy to be here with you!

New York, my hometown, and the United States of America, send love and the solidarity in prayer to this *51st International Eucharistic Congress* here in Cebu, Philippines.

I've met so many of your parents, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, cousins and neighbors, on the sidewalks of New York, and some of them have come here on pilgrimage with me. We Catholics at home love our Filipino neighbors! We welcome them! We need them! We are grateful to them! We appreciate their warmth, joy, loyalty to family, and passionate Catholic faith.

We especially are touched by their devotion to the *Holy Eucharist,* and their radiant, tender love of *Mary,* the blessed mother of Jesus.

Well, what do you know? That's my topic this beautiful morning: *The Holy Eucharist and our Blessed Mother.*

Tomorrow we will celebrate the feast of Saint John Bosco, who taught his poor abandoned young people that there are two strong signs of Catholic identity: a firm belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and, two, a tender love of Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

The great American evangelist, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, preached that "the mark of a genuine Catholic is the ability to detect the divine in a mother holding her baby in a manger at Bethlehem; and in the bread and wine miraculously transformed at Mass."

Then Pope Francis advised seminarians in Rome that, before they went to bed each night, they were to do two things; say "Good night" to both Jesus in the tabernacle, and to Mary, our mother.

As our evangelical Christians say, I'm "preaching to the choir here," for the wonderful people of Asia love Jesus in the arms of His Mother, and in His Real Presence in the Eucharist.

Pueblo amante de Maria was the title to the hymn for the International Eucharistic Congress held in Manila eight decades ago.

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"Behold the Handmaid of the Lord!

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And the Word become flesh,

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Here's what I want to do: I want to speak of the Holy Eucharist as *sacrifice, meal, and presence.* I'll explain how Mary animates each of these three ways of looking at the *gift and mystery* of the Eucharist. Okay?

I *The Eucharist as a Sacrifice*

"Every time, then, that you eat this bread and drink this chalice, you proclaim the death of the Lord; " writes Saint Paul to the Corinthians, as we hear proclaimed every year on Holy Thursday, the very evening the Eucharist was instituted.

There is, you see, an intimate connection between the Mass and the Sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

That's why we call it "the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!"

In our ancient Catholic belief, the Eucharist is the renewal of that supreme sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, on that Hill called Cavalry, on that Friday strangely termed good.

Does that mean that the cross was not the definitive, once – and - for – all saving act of our redemption? Of course not!

What it does mean is that the death of Jesus on the Cross is so definitive, so dramatic, that it is *infinite* and *eternal.*

The sacrifice of Jesus, God the Son, to God the Father, that sacrifice offered on an altar of a wooden cross, that sacrifice that was so potent that it hid the sun, quaked the earth, raised the dead, and changed hearts, that sacrifice of oblation, praise, atonement, supplication, and contrition, that sacrifice still goes on, at every Mass, and we're sucked-up into it, we are united to it.

Before I left New York to come on pilgrimage here to Cebu, I visited one of my priests who was dying. There he was in bed, shaking with fever, struggling to breathe, with tubes and wires going into him. There in front of him was a hospital tray with a chalice of wine, a wafer of bread, a missal, a candle, and a cross. When I came in he remarked, "I'm dying, Cardinal Dolan; I'm hurting bad; I'm on the Cross with Jesus; and this is the best altar I've ever had!" He knew that the Mass allowed him to recapture the sacrifice of Calvary, and that his dying was united to that of Jesus.

As a young priest in a parish, I spent the night at the hospital bed of a six-year old girl from the parish who had fallen off her bike and bashed her head in. The doctors told us she would probably not make it. The family and I prayed all night. Finally, at 6am, I told the dad, "Vince, I have to go offer 6:30 Mass at the parish."

The dad replied, "Father Tim, please put my little girl on the altar with you. Put her intention on the paten, and in the chalice, as you offer them up to Our Father.

He knew the Mass renewed the sacrifice of Calvary, and he saw his little daughter on the Cross with Jesus.

Now, who was there with Jesus as He was tortured on the Cross? "Near the cross stood Mary His Mother."

> "At the cross her station keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping, close to Jesus to the last."

You want to be closer to Jesus on the cross at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? Be closer to Mary, because she's right next to him.

"We adore Thee O'Christ, and we praise Thee, because by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world!"

II *The Eucharist as a Meal*

The altar is also the *table* of the *Last Supper* where God's people are still fed!

The moving miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish to feed the 5000 is but antipasto, an appetizer, to the miraculous way Jesus feeds our souls now with the Bread of Heaven at Mass.

As those two disciples on the Road to Emmaus that first Easter recognized the Risen Jesus when He sat down to eat with them, so do we recognize Jesus when He is with us at the sacred meal of the Mass.

As most of the episodes when Jesus appeared to His friends after His Resurrection took place at a meal, so does Jesus now feed us at the Supper we call the *Eucharist.*

The Mass is our family meal, especially on Sunday. The mother of our family, Mary, is always at the table with Jesus and us.

She gave birth to the Son of God in a little town called Bethlehem, which means "House of Bread." There's a hint of the Eucharist that first Christmas!

She placed Him in a manger, which means a "feed box," because Jesus was intended as bread for the world in the Eucharist.

He would work His first miracle for that newly married couple at Cana in Galilee, by changing water into wine, at her request. She is with us at another Feast we call the *Lord's Supper* when He miraculously changes bread into His Body and wine to His Most Precious Blood.

We are hungry for Holy Communion! We want to receive Him daily if we can.

Pope St. Pius X wrote, "This side of heaven, it is impossible to be closer to Jesus than by worthily receiving Him in Holy Communion."

Have you heard of Bishop Dominic Tang? In a huge country to our west, sixty years ago, Bishop Tang was arrested and placed in solitary confinement. Attempts to break him and make him renounce his faith failed.

Finally, after five years in a dark, damp, isolated cell, his captors told him he could ask for something he really wanted: a walk in the sun and fresh air? A hot shower and fresh clothes? A new, clean cell? A special meal? The chance to read his stacked up mail and even write some letters?

"Conrad Tang, what do you want?" the soldiers asked.

"I would like to say Mass!"

Back in the cell! Bang goes the door!

Yes, he wanted a special meal called the Lord's Supper, the Bread of Angels, manna from Heaven, the flesh and blood of His Lord and Savor.

"You have given them bread from Heaven! Having all delight in it!"

III *The Eucharist as the Real Presence*

Let me tell you two stories about New Yorkers:

Elizabeth Ann Seton was a deeply committed Anglican in revolutionary-era New York, happily married with five children.

In 1805 she went on a business trip to Livorno, Italy, with William, her beloved merchant-husband. Sadly, on the cruise, William came down with tuberculosis and died. The ship, of course, was quarantined, and for three months Elizabeth enjoyed the simple, gracious hospitality of an Italian family, the Fillichi's. She went with them daily to Mass, and wished she could receive Holy Communion with them. She found consolation in savoring the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, making numerous visits to the little parish church daily to speak with Jesus, to adore Him, and to ask Him to take care of her children back home, whom she desperately missed.

On the feast of *Corpus Christi,* she joined the village as they lined the streets to adore the Holy Eucharist as it passed in procession. As they fell to their knees, she heard a very proper Englishman behind her snicker, "These superstitious peasants believe that the Son of God is really present in that wafer of bread!"

Elizabeth Ann Seton dropped to her knees and whispered, "So do I."

Upon return home to New York, she became a Catholic, and now she's a saint, all because of her faith in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Then there's *Thomas Merton,* a drifting, agnostic intellectual at Columbia University in New York.

Thomas Merton stopped out of curiosity one day at *Corpus Christi* Church, and was there moved by the obvious faith and piety of the people at Mass. He watched as they reverently genuflected, bowed their heads at the consecration, and humbly approached Holy Communion. He saw them return to their pews transfixed, obviously in union with Christ.

"They really believe Jesus is present in that wafer of unleavened bread," he concluded. He would soon enter the church, and become a Trappist Monk, and one of the great spiritual theologians my country has ever known.

Such is the timeless faith of the Church: Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the Holy Eucharist, body, blood, soul, and divinity.

Our blessed Mother is part of this, too, my friends. See, at Mass, the mystery of the *Incarnation* continues.

What do I mean that the *Incarnation* goes on at every Eucharist: Let me try to explain:

The first mystery of our Faith is the *Most Blessed Trinity*: there is one true God, in three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The second mystery of our Faith is the *Incarnation:* the second Person of that Most Blessed Trinity, God the Son, the Eternal Word, took a *human nature,* assumed human flesh - - that's what i*ncarnation* means literally, to be "enfleshed" - - and became man. Alleluia!

Here's the question, though: who provided the *human nature* to the Son of God?

"Behold the Handmaid of the Lord!
Be it done unto me according to Thy Word!"

Who said that! Mary!

"And the Word became flesh,
and dwelt among us!"

Soon to be St. Theresa of Calcutta once spoke to priests: "You priests must feel so close to Mary. At her word, the Word became flesh at the *Incarnation*. And at your words, God the Son takes on the appearance of bread and wine, and is really present with us at Mass."

The first *Incarnation* happened with Mary's cooperation. The *Incarnation* goes on now as Jesus-is-with-us, *Emmanuel*, in the Blessed Eucharist.

Two thousand years ago,

People looked at the infant Jesus,

People looked at a poor, itinerant preacher,

People looked at His bleeding, broken, bruised body on the Cross,

and they snickered: "He cannot be Divine."

Not Mary: at Bethlehem

at Cana

at Calvary

she beheld the presence of the Incarnate Word, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity, God the Son, the Eternal Word to whom she had freely given a human nature.

Today,

People look at the host,

People gaze at the Tabernacle,

Even People who receive the Holy Communion,

sometimes snicker and say, "Some believe that this bread and wine are Divine! How silly! Not me!"

And we proclaim, with Mary, *We do believe! Amen!*

Two- and – a half years, ago, like many of you, I was with Pope Francis and millions of young people from all over the world in Rio de Janeiro. The highlight for me came on Saturday night: Jesus, really and truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, there in a huge monstrance illuminated on the altar. In front kneels the Holy Father, Pope Francis. Behind him kneel in absolute silence close to two million young people. All you could hear were the waves on the beach; all I could think of was the shore of the Sea of Galilee, where the Son of God called his first disciples, when they ask Him; "Where do you live?" And He replies, "come and see!"

The Eucharist is where He lives!
Here He is really and truly present!

The Eucharist: *sacrifice, meal, presence!*

"Here the New Law's new oblation,
by the new King's revelation,
fulfills the form of ancient *sacrifice"*

The Eucharist as *sacrifice*, with Mary there at the altar of the cross

"What He did at supper seated Christ ordained to be repeated

His Last Supper n'er to cease!"

The Eucharist as a *meal,* with Mary at Bethlehem, the "House of Bread," tenderly placing Him in a manger, where food is kept!

"Sight has failed, no thought conceives, but a dauntless faith believes,

resting on a power divine!"

The Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, as the *Incarnation,* the *Word Made Flesh* goes on, as it started with Mary's *fiat,* when she provided Him a human nature.

"Behold the Handmaid of the Lord!

Be it done unto me according to Thy Word!"

"And the Word was made Flesh!

And the Dwelt among us!

"O Sacrament Most Holy

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all Praise and all Thanksgiving,

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