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Conclusions of the Synod

On October 23 the Pope closed the synod of bishops that was dedicated to the Eucharist. This, the final message of the synod, was posted on the Vatican's web site.

10/30/2005

The final message of the Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was made public today. The document, entitled "The Eucharist: Living Bread for the Peace of the World," has been published in

several languages, given below are extracts from the English- language version:

"Called to Rome by Pope John Paul II, of venerable memory, and confirmed by His Holiness Benedict XVI, we have come from the five continents of the world to pray and reflect together on the Eucharist, 'Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church.' The goal of the Synod was to offer proposals to the Holy Father that might help him to update and deepen the Eucharistic life of the Church. We have been able to experience what the Holy Eucharist has been from the very beginning: one faith and one Church, nourished by one bread of life, in visible communion with the successor of Peter.

"The fraternal sharing among the bishops, the auditors, and also the ecumenical representatives, has

renewed our conviction that the Holy Eucharist animates and transforms the life of the particular Churches of the East and West, as well as the many human activities in the very different circumstances in which we live. We have sensed a profound joy in experiencing the unity of our Eucharistic faith in the midst of the widespread diversity of rites, cultures and pastoral situations. The presence of so many brother bishops has allowed us to experience, in a more direct way, the richness of our different liturgical traditions that makes the depths of the unique Eucharistic mystery shine forth.

"We invite you, dear Christian brothers and sisters of every confession, to pray more fervently that the day of reconciliation, and the full visible unity of the Church, might come in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in conformity with Jesus'

prayer on the eve of His death: 'That all may be one'."

"We also extend our thanks to all the people of God, whose presence and solidarity we have felt during these three weeks of prayer and reflection. The local Churches in China, and their bishops who were not able to join us in our work, had a special place in our thoughts and prayers."

LISTENING TO THE SUFFERING OF THE WORLD

"The meeting of the Synod has been an intense time of sharing and witnessing to the life of the Church in the different continents. We have been made aware of extreme situations and suffering generated by wars, hunger, different forms of terrorism and injustice, which touch the daily life of hundreds of millions of human beings. The explosive violence in the Middle East and in Africa has reminded us that the

African continent has been forgotten by the public opinion of the world. Natural disasters, which seem to have multiplied, force us to look upon nature with greater respect and to strengthen our solidarity with those suffering peoples.

"We have not remained silent before the consequences of secularization, present above all in the West, that lead to religious indifference and various expressions of relativism. We have remembered and denounced situations of injustice and extreme poverty that are in evidence everywhere, but especially in Latin America, in Africa and in Asia. All this suffering cries out to God, and challenges the conscience of humanity. ... We also direct our thoughts to those who govern nations that they take diligent care to provide access to the common good for all. We ask that they be promoters of the dignity of every

human being, from conception till natural death. We ask them to enact laws which respect the natural rights of marriage and the family. For our part, we will continue to participate actively in a common effort to generate lasting conditions for genuine progress for the whole human family, where no one is lacking his or her daily bread."

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME

"From its beginnings, the Church has remembered the death and resurrection of Jesus with the same words and actions of the Last Supper, asking the Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the Body and into the Blood of Christ. We firmly believe and we teach in the constant tradition of the Church that the words of Jesus pronounced by the priest at the Mass, in the power of the Holy Spirit, effect what they

signify. They bring about the real presence of the Risen Christ."

"Forty years after Vatican Council II we wanted to examine to what extent the mysteries of the faith are adequately expressed and celebrated in our liturgical assemblies. The Synod reaffirms that Vatican Council II provided the necessary basis for an authentic liturgical renewal. It is necessary now to cultivate the positive fruits of this reform, and to correct abuses that have crept into liturgical practice. We are convinced that respect for the sacred character of the liturgy is transmitted by genuine fidelity to liturgical norms of legitimate authority. No one should consider himself master of the Church's liturgy."

LIGHTS IN THE EUCHARISTIC LIFE OF THE CHURCH

"Many of the interventions have reported positive and joyful events,

for example: the renewed consciousness of the importance of the Sunday Mass; the increase in the number of vocations to the priesthood and to consecrated life in various places of the world; the powerful experiences of World Youth Days, culminating at Cologne in Germany; the development of numerous initiatives for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament almost everywhere in the world; the renewal of the catechesis on Baptism and the Eucharist in the light of the Catechism of the Catholic Church; the growth of movements and communities forming missionaries for the new evangelization."

"We thank God that in many countries where priests were not present, or were forced underground, the Church is now freely able to celebrate the Holy Mysteries. The freedom to preach the Gospel and the renewed fervor of

testimony are little by little reawakening the faith in areas profoundly de-Christianized. We affectionately greet and encourage all those who continue to suffer persecution. We also ask that in those places where Christians are a minority group, they be allowed to celebrate the day of the Lord in complete freedom."

CHALLENGES FOR A EUCHARISTIC RENEWAL

"The life of our Churches is also marked by shadows and problems which we have not ignored. In the first place, we think of the loss of the sense of sin and the persistent crisis in the practice of the Sacrament of Penance."

"Nevertheless, the lack of priests to celebrate the Sunday Eucharist worries us a great deal and invites us to pray and to promote priestly vocations more actively. Some

priests, undergoing great difficulty, are forced to celebrate many times and to move from one place to another to best meet the needs of the faithful."

"Various forms of celebration already exist in different continents that suffer from a lack of priests. Yet, the practice of 'spiritual communion,' dear to the Catholic tradition, can and should be better promoted and explained so that the faithful may be helped both to communicate sacramentally in a better way and to bring genuine consolation to those who, for various reasons, cannot receive the Body and Blood of Christ in communion. We believe that this practice should help people who are alone, especially the handicapped, the aged, those in prison and refugees.

"We know the sadness of those who do not have access to sacramental

communion because their family situations do not conform to the commandment of the Lord. Some divorced and remarried people sadly accept their inability to take sacramental communion and they make an offering of it to God. Others are not able to understand this restriction, and live with an internal frustration. We reaffirm that, while we do not endorse their choice, they are not excluded from the life of the Church. We ask that they participate in Sunday Mass and devote themselves assiduously to listening to the Word of God so that it might nourish their life of faith, of love and of conversion. We wish to tell them how close we are to them in prayer and pastoral concern."

"We have also observed that in certain areas there is a lessening of the sense of the sacred that affects not only the active and fruitful participation of the faithful at Mass,

but also the manner in which the celebration takes place and the quality of the witness that Christians are called to give. ... The fact of de-Christianization calls for a better formation to Christian life in families so that sacramental practice is revitalized and genuinely expresses the content of the faith. We therefore invite parents, pastors and catechists to work toward re-establishing a strategy for evangelization and education in the faith at the beginning of this new millennium.

"Before the Lord of history and the future of the world, the poor of every generation and of today, the ever-increasing number of victims of injustice and all the forgotten of this world challenge us. They remind us of Christ's agony, until the end of the world. These sufferings cannot remain extraneous to the celebration of the Eucharistic Mystery which summons all of us to work for justice

and the transformation of the world in an active and conscious fashion, on the basis of the social teaching of the Church that promotes the centrality and the dignity of the human person."

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES

"The Holy Eucharist is the gift of love, an encounter with the God who loves us and a spring welling up to eternal life. Bishops, priests and deacons, we are the first witnesses and servants of this love.

"Dear Priests, ...we ask you to be, with us and following the example of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, 'humble workers in the vineyard of the Lord,' following a consistent priestly life."

"We remember with gratitude the commitment of the permanent deacons, catechists, pastoral workers

and numerous lay people who work for the community."

"We greet and thank all consecrated people, that chosen portion of the vineyard of the Lord who freely witness to the Good News of the Spouse who is coming. Your Eucharistic witness in the service of Christ is a cry of love in the darkness of the world."

"Dear young people, ...we have great trust in your capacity and your desire to develop the positive values in the world, and to change what is unjust and violent. Please count upon our support and our prayer so that we may together accept the challenge to build the future with Christ."

"To all young seminarians, ... we wish to express our hope that their formation will be permeated by an authentic Eucharistic spirituality.

"Dear Christian married couples and your families, your vocation to holiness begins as the domestic Church, and is nourished at the Holy Table of the Eucharist. Your faith in the Sacrament of Marriage transforms your nuptial union into a Temple of the Holy Spirit, into a rich source of new life, generating children, the fruit of your love. We have often spoken of you at the Synod because we are conscious of the fragility and the uncertainties of the world today."

"To the sick and the handicapped, ... in your suffering of body and heart, you participate in a special way in the sacrifice of the Eucharist and you are privileged witnesses of the love which comes from it."

THAT ALL MAY BE ONE

"The Holy Father Benedict XVI has restated the solemn commitment of the Church to the cause of

ecumenism. ... We all feel the sadness of separation which prevents the common celebration of the Eucharist. We wish to intensify the prayer for unity within communities, the exchange of gifts between the Churches and ecclesial communities, as well as the respectful and fraternal contact among everyone, so that we may better know and love one another, respecting and appreciating our differences and our shared values. The precise regulations of the Church determine the position we are to take on sharing the Eucharist with brothers and sisters who are not yet in full communion with us. A healthy discipline prevents confusion and imprudent gestures that might further damage true communion.

"As Christians, we are close to the other descendants of Abraham: the Jews, who were the first to inherit the Covenant, and the Muslims. In

celebrating the Holy Eucharist, we also believe that we are, in the words of Saint Augustine, 'a sacrament of humanity'."

CONCLUSION: PEACE FULL OF HOPE

"We thank God for this Eleventh Synodal Assembly which, convened forty years after the Second Vatican Council, has made us go back to the source of the mystery of the Church. We thus end the Year of the Eucharist on a high note, confirmed in unity and renewed in apostolic and missionary enthusiasm."

"At the end of this Synod we experience that peace full of hope which the disciples of Emmaus, with burning hearts, received from the Risen Lord. They arose and returned in haste to Jerusalem, to share their joy with their brothers and sisters in the faith. We hope that you will go joyfully to meet Him in the Holy

Eucharist, and that you will experience the truth of His words: 'And I am with you until the end of the world'."

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