

Encounter with Jesus

"Jesus has remained in the Eucharist to remedy our weaknesses, our doubts, our fears. Above all, he is there to teach us to love, to draw us to his Love." A new article on Christian life.

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Stay with us, for it is towards evening and the day is now far spent. [1]

"This was the insistent invitation that the two disciples journeying to Emmaus on the evening of the day of

the resurrection addressed to the Wayfarer who had accompanied them on their journey. Weighed down with sadness, they never imagined that this stranger was none other than their Master, risen from the dead. Yet they felt their hearts burning within them (cf. *Lk* 24:32) as he spoke to them and ‘explained’ the Scriptures. The light of the Word unlocked the hardness of their hearts and ‘opened their eyes’ (cf. *Ibid.* 31). Amid the shadows of the passing day and the darkness that clouded their spirit, the Wayfarer brought a ray of light which rekindled their hope and led their hearts to yearn for the fullness of light. ‘Stay with us,’ they pleaded. And he agreed. Soon afterwards, Jesus’ face would disappear, yet the Master would ‘stay’ with them, hidden in the ‘breaking of the bread’ which had opened their eyes to recognize him.”[2]

This is how Saint John Paul II's letter for the Year of the Eucharist begins. The scene of the disciples at Emmaus is a timely one: God who comes to meet us on the path of life. He always comes to bring comfort and, in difficult moments, to restore our joy and hope.

Once he had accomplished his mission, our Lord disappeared and left those two disciples in Emmaus alone—but alone only in appearance, to those who see only with bodily eyes. In reality, he has remained, for everyone and for all time, in the Eucharist, so that the scene at Emmaus is repeated once and again in our lives—whenever we need it.

“Jesus has remained in the Eucharist to remedy our weaknesses, our doubts, our fears, our anxieties; to cure our loneliness, our perplexity, our discouragement; to accompany us on our way; to uphold us in our

struggle. Above all, he is there to teach us to love, to draw us to his Love.”^[3]

How easy it is to draw close to the Tabernacle when we contemplate the wonder of a God who has become man, who has remained with us! We go to open our heart and be comforted like the disciples in Emmaus. When we go to our Lord with this trust, the Eucharist becomes a necessity for us. It becomes the center and root of our interior life and, as an inseparable consequence, the soul of our apostolate.

Wasn’t our heart burning?

The fruitfulness of our apostolate depends on our union with Christ. By ourselves we cannot do anything: *sine me nihil potestis facere*.^[4] Each of us knows our own littleness and frequently we experience our shortcomings. Besides, the

exhaustion of an intense day of work or the difficulties that we encounter in our apostolate may at times lead us to lose sight of the greatness of our Christian vocation, and the flame that burns in our heart for the apostolate may die out.

In the Eucharist we encounter the strength that sustains us, because there we encounter Him. It is a personal meeting in which Jesus gives himself to us and grants us his effective help. Every time we go in need to pray before the Tabernacle, Christ, just as he did with the disciples at Emmaus, gives meaning to our life, restores our supernatural outlook, comforts us in our difficulties and fills us with apostolic zeal. *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.*^[5] With our Lord we can do all things, *quia tu es Deus fortitudo mea.*^[6] “In this Sacrament it is clear that Christ’s Blood redeems us, and also nourishes us and delights us.

Christ's Blood washes away all sins (cf. *Mt* 26:28) and restores the soul's purity (cf. *Rev* 7:14). His Blood begets women and men with chaste bodies and clean hearts (cf. *Zech* 9:17). It is Blood that inebriates and intoxicates us with the Holy Spirit, and loosens our tongues to sing and narrate the *magnalia Dei* (*Acts* 2:11), the mighty works of God.”[7]

Union with Christ intoxicates us with the Holy Spirit, filling our hearts. We are impelled to proclaim God's marvelous deeds, to communicate our joy to others, with the zeal of Christ himself. “*Did our hearts not burn within us as he talked to us on the road?* If you are an apostle, these words of the disciples of Emmaus should rise spontaneously to the lips of your professional companions when they meet you along the ways of their lives.”[8]

We grow in our love for Christ through the many acts of Eucharistic piety that form part of the Church's tradition: the Holy Mass, prayer (whenever possible, done before the Tabernacle), visits to the Blessed Sacrament, meditating on Saint Thomas Aquinas' hymn *Adoro Te Devote*, frequent spiritual communions, the joy of discovering Tabernacles when we pass them on the street.... All this is a true encounter with Christ from which we draw new strength for our interior struggle and apostolate.

Our union with Christ reaches its high point when we receive him in Holy Communion. At that moment we meet him in the fullest and most intimate way, becoming more and more *ipse Christus*. Let us take advantage of this encounter to speak with him about our friends and ask him to stir their hearts. "Jesus has remained in the Sacred Host for us so

as to stay by our side, to sustain us, to guide us. And love can only be repaid with love. How could we not turn to the Blessed Sacrament each day, even if it is only for a few minutes, to bring him our greetings and our love as children and as brothers?”[9]

This reality is compatible with not receiving any sensible consolation in our prayer or going through a period of greater dryness in our interior life. That is the moment when we encounter our Lord on the Cross, an indispensable element for our apostolate. “If we are to really become Eucharistic souls and prayerful souls, we need to be united habitually to the Cross, seeking and accepting mortification.”[10]

Leading others to a Eucharistic encounter

“The two disciples of Emmaus, upon recognizing the Lord, ‘set out immediately’ (*Lk 24:33*), in order to

report what they had seen and heard. Once we have truly met the Risen One by partaking of his body and blood, we cannot keep to ourselves the joy we have experienced. The encounter with Christ, constantly intensified and deepened in the Eucharist, issues in the Church and in every Christian *an urgent summons to testimony and evangelization.*”[11]

“We need, through our apostolate, to ‘infect’ many others, the more the better, so that they also seek and maintain that unparalleled friendship.”[12] To do apostolate is to put people before Christ: to lead them to a meeting with the Master, as Andrew led Peter or Philip led Nathaniel.[13] Therefore, we have to lead our friends to the *places where Jesus passes by*, provoking an encounter so that they can be cured like the man born blind, comforted

like the disciples at Emmaus, or called as Matthew was.

Our heart is filled with joy when we carry out a deep apostolate of Confession and the Eucharist with the people around us. When there is real friendship it is easy to talk about God with our friends. “Our eyes are opened, as were those of Cleophas and his companion, when Christ breaks the bread; and, though he vanishes once more from sight, we too will find strength to start out once more—though night is falling—to tell the others about him, because so much joy cannot be kept in one heart alone.”[14]

Fostering a “culture of the Eucharist”

For many people, their first meeting with Jesus will be our own example, our life that seeks identification with Christ. We will be instruments to bring them to the Master. The

example of a consistent Christian life is attractive to others; therefore we should not be afraid to show ourselves as Christians and act as such in the middle of the world. As Saint John Paul II stressed:

“Christians ought to be committed to bearing more forceful witness to God’s presence in the world. We should not be afraid to speak about God and to bear proud witness to our faith. The ‘culture of the Eucharist’ promotes a culture of dialogue, which here finds strength and nourishment. It is a mistake to think that any public reference to faith will somehow undermine the rightful autonomy of the State and civil institutions, or that it can even encourage attitudes of intolerance.”[15]

Giving external witness to our faith is our right as citizens and our duty as Christians; it is conduct in accord with the dignity of the person and a

response to the longing that all men have in their hearts to know the truth. "You made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."[16] Leading people to an encounter with the Truth is the greatest good we can do for them, a good that frees them and is never intolerant: *You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.*[17] Our witness as Eucharistic souls will provide the light that helps others to draw close to the Light. "When they draw near the village, he makes as if he is going on, but the two disciples stop him and practically force him to stay with them. They recognize him later when he breaks the bread. The Lord, they exclaimed, has been with us! ... Every Christian should make Christ present among men. They ought to act in such a way that those who know them sense the *bonus odor Christi*, 'the good aroma of Christ.' People should be able to

recognize the Master in his disciples.”[18]

The calling, result of the encounter

“Seeing the sad state of ignorance that exists, even among many Catholics, let us think, my daughters and sons, about how important it is to explain to people what the Mass is and what it is worth, the dispositions we should have on receiving our Lord in Holy Communion, the need we feel to go and visit him in the tabernacle, and the value and meaning of the ‘good manners of piety.’[19] Here we see an inexhaustible and fruitful field for our personal apostolate.”[20]

If our life is truly Eucharistic, if our whole day revolves around the Holy Sacrifice and the Tabernacle, we will find it natural to give doctrine to those around us and to bring them to Christ in the Eucharist. “When we meet together around the altar to

celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, when we contemplate the sacred Host in the monstrance or adore it hidden in the Tabernacle, our faith should be strengthened; we should reflect on this new life we are receiving and be moved by God's affection and tenderness.”[21]

A person who draws close to the Eucharist encounters Christ personally and is ready to receive his call, the same call the first twelve received and so many others who encountered Christ on their path: *come and follow me.*

“In the Eucharist Jesus gives us a sure pledge of his presence in our souls; of his power, which supports the whole world; of his promises of salvation, which will help the human family to dwell forever in the house in heaven when time comes to an end. There we shall find God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy

Spirit: the Blessed Trinity, the one and only God. Our whole faith is brought into play when we believe in Jesus, really present under the appearances of bread and wine.”^[22]

[1] *Lk 24:29.*

[2] Saint John Paul II, Apostolic letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, October 7, 2004, no. 1.

[3] From the Prelate, *Letter*, October 6, 2004, no. 8.

[4] *Jn 15:5.*

[5] *Phil 4:13.*

[6] *Ps 43[42]:2* (Vulgate).

[7] From the Prelate, *Letter*, October 6, 2004, no. 8.

[8] Saint Josemaria, *The Way*, no. 917.

[9] Saint Josemaria, *Furrow*, no. 686.

[10] From the Prelate, *Letter*, October 6, 2004, no. 36.

[11] Saint John Paul II, Apostolic letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, October 7, 2004, no. 23.

[12] From the Prelate, *Letter*, October 6, 2004, no. 35.

[13] Cf. *Jn* 1:40-45.

[14] Saint Josemaria, *Friends of God*, no. 314.

[15] Saint John Paul II, Apostolic letter, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, October 7, 2004, no. 26.

[16] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, 1, 1, 1.

[17] *Jn* 8:32.

[18] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 105.

[19] Saint Josemaria, *The Way*, 541.

[20] From the Prelate, *Letter*,
October 6, 2004, no. 35.

[21] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 153.

[22] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 153.

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