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Apostolic letter for the Eucharistic Year

"Stay with us, Lord," John Paul II's apostolic letter for the Eucharistic year, has been introduced at the Vatican. According to Cardinal Arinze, the Pope's letter "will help guide the Church to celebrate this special year with the greatest possible fruits."

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Pope John Paul's Apostolic Letter "Mane Nobiscum Domine" ("Stay with us, Lord"), addressed to the

bishops, clergy and faithful of the Church on the occasion of the October 2004-October 2005 Year of the Eucharist, was presented today in the Holy See Press Office by Cardinal Francis Arinze. The Letter, in Italian and dated October 7, feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, has an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion.

The prefect of the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments, recalled that the Holy Father announced the celebration of a Year of the Eucharist throughout the Church during Mass at St. John Lateran Basilica on the June 10, 2004 solemnity of Corpus Christi. Calling today's 30- page Letter "beautiful and incisive," the cardinal added that it "will help guide the Church to celebrate this special year with the greatest possible fruits."

Cardinal Arinze pointed out that "the underlying theme of the Apostolic Letter is the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus." In fact, the Apostolic Letter starts: "'Stay with us, for it is towards evening'. This was the heartfelt invitation that the two disciples, walking towards Emmaus the very evening of the Resurrection, issued to the Wayfarer who had joined them along the road. Filled with sad thoughts, they could not imagine that that stranger was their very Master, by now risen."

"The Year of the Eucharist," he added, "will see the Church especially committed to living the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus continues to walk with us and to introduce us to the mysteries of God, opening us up to the deep meaning of Sacred Scriptures. At the summit of this encounter, Jesus breaks for us 'the bread of life'."

"Many times during his pontificate," said the cardinal, "John Paul II has invited the Church to reflect on the Eucharist, ... especially last year in the Encyclical 'Ecclesia de Eucharistia'. ... The Pope mentions two principal events that illuminate and spell out the beginning and the end of the year of the Eucharist: the 48th International Eucharistic Congress that will be held in Guadalajara, Mexico the week of October 10 to 17 and the 11th General Assembly of the Synod of bishops which will take place in the Vatican October 2-29, 2005."

Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino, the secretary of the Congregation, expounded on the historical reading of John Paul II's text.

In the first part of his talk, "Begin again from Christ," the archbishop recalled that "the Church depends on our faith in Christ. In other historical

periods, but perhaps even more today, the temptation of man is to reduce the Master to his own dimensions. Sometimes with the best intentions for dialogue, we risk 'diminishing' Christ, undermining the faith in its mystery in the Word made flesh." In explaining the second point, "A contemplative Christianity," he spoke of the signs of regression in spirituality in modern times and he said that "in this new historic situation, the Pope has emphasized the urgency of making the Christian community aware of the treasures of Christian contemplation."

In his last point, "The urgency of example", the prelate affirmed: "The Pope is concerned about reminding the Christian community that the faith must be translated into witness. . We must not be surprised that an Apostolic Letter on the Eucharist does not touch upon the contemplative and celebratory

aspects but makes strong statements about the Christian commitment in history, especially in building up peace and in service to the needy."

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