



It is a great gift that the Lord has given us by bringing us together here in the Upper Room for the celebration of the Eucharist. I greet you with fraternal joy and I wish to express my affection to the Oriental Catholic Patriarchs who have taken part in my pilgrimage during these days. I want to thank them for their significant presence, particularly dear to me and I assure them of a special place in my heart and in my prayers. Here, where Jesus shared the Last Supper with the apostles; where, after his resurrection, he appeared in their midst; where the Holy Spirit descended with power upon Mary and the disciples, here the Church was born, and she was born *to go forth*. From here she *set out*, with the broken bread in her hands, the wounds of Christ before her eyes, and the Spirit of love in her heart.

In the Upper Room, the risen Jesus, sent by the Father, bestowed upon the apostles his own Spirit and with his power he sent them forth to renew the face of the earth (cf. Ps 104:30).

To go forth, to set out, does not mean to forget. The Church, in her going forth, preserves the *memory* of what took place here; *the Spirit, the Paraclete, reminds her* of every word and every action, and reveals their true meaning.

The Upper Room speaks to us of *service*, of Jesus giving the disciples an example by washing their feet. Washing one another's feet signifies welcoming, accepting, loving and serving one another. It means serving the poor, the sick and the outcast, those whom I find difficult, those who annoy me.

The Upper Room reminds us, through the Eucharist, of *sacrifice*. In

every Eucharistic celebration Jesus offers himself for us to the Father, so that we too can be united with him, offering to God our lives, our work, our joys and our sorrows... offering everything as a spiritual sacrifice.

The Upper Room also reminds us of *friendship*. “No longer do I call you servants – Jesus said to the Twelve – but I have called you friends” (*Jn 15:15*). The Lord makes us his friends, he reveals God’s will to us and he gives us his very self. This is the most beautiful part of being a Christian and, especially, of being a priest: becoming a friend of the Lord Jesus, and discovering in our hearts that he is our friend.

The Upper Room reminds us of the Teacher’s *farewell* and his *promise* to return to his friends: “When I go... I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (*Jn 14:3*). Jesus does not leave

us, nor does he ever abandon us; he precedes us to the house of the Father, where he desires to bring us as well.

The Upper Room, however, also reminds us of *pettiness*, of *curiosity* – “Who is the traitor?” – and of *betrayal*. We ourselves, and not just others, can reawaken those attitudes whenever we look at our brother or sister with contempt, whenever we judge them, whenever by our sins we betray Jesus.

The Upper Room reminds us of *sharing*, *fraternity*, *harmony* and *peace* among ourselves. How much love and goodness has flowed from the Upper Room! How much charity has gone forth from here, like a river from its source, beginning as a stream and then expanding and becoming a great torrent. All the saints drew from this source; and hence the great river of the Church’s

holiness continues to flow: from the Heart of Christ, from the Eucharist and from the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, the Upper Room reminds us of the birth of the *new family*, the Church, our holy Mother the hierarchical Church established by the risen Jesus; a family that has a Mother, the Virgin Mary. Christian families belong to this great family, and in it they find the light and strength to press on and be renewed, amid the challenges and difficulties of life. All God's children, of every people and language, are invited and called to be part of this great family, as brothers and sisters and sons and daughters of the one Father in heaven.

These horizons are opened up by the Upper Room, the horizons of the Risen Lord and his Church.

From here the Church goes forth, impelled by the life-giving breath of

