

Meditations: Friday of the Third Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this time of Easter. The topics are: the Eucharist divinizes us; sign of unity and bond of charity; uniting our daily life to the Mass.

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WHEN JESUS finished his discourse on the Eucharist in the synagogue, an unexpected discussion began. *The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (Jn 6:52).* Clearly, those listening have grasped the realism of the Master's words. They know that He isn't talking simply about a symbol. And the force of his words makes them uneasy. But our Lord, faced with their skeptical reaction, does not weaken his expression. On the contrary, He reaffirms the need for the Eucharist in order to have divine life within us. *Jesus said to them: "Truly, truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn 6:53).*

"In listening to this address the people understood that Jesus was not the Messiah they wanted, one who would aspire to an earthly throne. He did not seek approval to conquer

Jerusalem; rather he wanted to go to the Holy City to share the destiny of the prophets: to give his life for God and for the people. Those loaves, broken for thousands, were not meant to result in a triumphal march but to foretell the sacrifice on the Cross when Jesus was to become Bread – Body and Blood – offered in expiation.”^[1] —

In the same passage we also find a marvelous promise: *Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (Jn 6:56)*. Jesus promises us the possibility of living in God and assures us that He will remain in us. “We do not ‘humanize’ God Our Lord when we receive him: it is He who divinizes us, exalts us, raises us up. Jesus does what it is impossible for us to do. He supernaturalizes our lives, our actions, our sacrifices. We are deified.”^[2] — Hence “each time we receive Communion, we resemble

Jesus more; we transform ourselves more fully into Jesus. As the Bread and the Wine are converted into the Body and Blood of the Lord, so too those who receive it with faith are transformed into a living Eucharist... Communion opens us and unites us to all those who are one in him. This is the wonder of Communion: we become what we receive!”^[3] —

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THE EUCHARIST is called a sign of unity and bond of charity. This is because “*Holy Communion increases our union with Christ. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus.*”^[4] — In the early days of Christianity, Saint Paul described the unity that is brought about by sharing in the Eucharist: *The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?*

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:16-17). We can say therefore that the Church forms a Body. And also for these reasons, one of the names by which this sacrament is known is precisely that of “communion.”

Saint Josemaría was very aware of this strong unity grounded on the Eucharist. Therefore he asked that Jesus’ words at the Last Supper be placed on the tabernacle of the General Council of Opus Dei:

“Consummati in unum! (Jn 17:23), that they be completely one. Because it is as if we were all here,” the founder of Opus Dei said, “never leaving you day or night, in a canticle of thanksgiving and (why not?) also asking for forgiveness . . . In order to make reparation, to please, to give thanks.”^[5] —

“The Eucharist is the *sacrament of unity*. Whoever receives it cannot fail to be a builder of unity . . . Let us ask God that this *Bread of unity* may heal our ambition to be above others, to greedily hoard things for ourselves, to foment discord and criticism. May it awaken in us the joy of living in love, without rivalry, jealousy or mean-spirited gossip. And now, in experiencing this Eucharist, let us adore and thank God for this greatest of gifts: the living memorial of his love, that makes us one body and leads us to unity.”^[6] —

AS THE LIVING FATHER sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me (Jn 6:57). Jesus’ communion with the Father is the model for our life in God. This union is shown in the desire to always unite

ourselves to his will. And, in each Eucharist, He gives us the strength to achieve this. “If we attend Mass well, surely we will think about our Lord during the rest of the day, wanting to be always in his presence, ready to work as he worked and love as he loved.”^[7] —

Through our priestly soul we can turn each day into a Mass; we can unite our daily work to the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, which is renewed on the altar. This union can be seen symbolized in the drop of water that the priest adds to the wine when preparing the offerings, saying: “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”^[8] —

The Catechism reminds us: “In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings,

prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ.”^[9] —

Christ concludes his speech in the synagogue by saying: *Whoever eats this bread will live forever (Jn 6:58)*. Jesus, who came down from heaven thanks to his mother’s welcoming response, is the living bread that gives life. “Mary of Nazareth, icon of the nascent Church, is the model for each of us, called to receive the gift that Jesus makes of himself in the Eucharist.”^[10] —

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^[1] — Benedict XVI, Angelus, 19 August 2012.

^[2] — Saint Josemaria. Notes from a meditation, 14 April 1960.

^[3] — Francis, General Audience, 21 March 2018.

^[4] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1391.

^[5] Saint Josemaria. “Gathered Together in Unity,” *In Dialogue with the Lord*, Scepter Publishers.

^[6] Francis, Homily, 18 June 2017.

^[7] Saint Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 154.

^[8] Roman Missal.

^[9] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1368.

^[10] Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 26.

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