



“CHRIST IN YOU, OUR HOPE OF GLORY”

The Eucharist: source and goal of the Church’s mission

Theological and pastoral reflections in preparation for the
51st International Eucharistic Congress Cebu, Philippines,
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CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The International Eucharistic Congress	3
B. Significance of the 51 st IEC	3
C. Impact on the life of the Church	4
D. The Congress in Cebu and the people of Asia	5

II. The Eucharist: Christ's work of redemption realized

A. The mystery... Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:24-29)	7
B. The mystery proclaimed... that all may receive Christ	7
C. The Eucharist: Christ present among us	8

III. The Eucharist: source and goal of the Church's mission

A. Eucharist as sacrament of love, sign of unity, bond of charity	9
1. Christ's presence in the Eucharist	9
2. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit	9
3. Transformed and sent to transform	10
B. The Eucharist and mission	10
1. Introductory rites	11
2. Liturgy of the Word	12
3. Presentation of the gifts	13
4. The Eucharistic prayer	14
5. Communion	15
6. The dismissal: "Ite, missa est"	16

IV. The Church's mission in Asia. Mission-in-dialogue

A. Dialogue as the privileged mode of mission	18
B. Elements of dialogue in mission	19
C. On proclamation and dialogue	20
D. The Eucharist, source and goal of dialogue	21

V. Mission in dialogue with peoples and cultures

A. Inculturation and mission	23
B. Popular Piety in the Church's dialogue with the cultures of Asia	25
C. The Eucharist in the Church's dialogue with cultures	27

VI. Mission in dialogue with religions and religious traditions

- A. Dialogue of life and heart 29
- B. The primacy of witnessing 30
- C. Unity and Christian hope 31
- D. The Eucharist in the Church’s dialogue with other religious cultures 31

VII. Mission in dialogue with the poor

- A. Preferential option for the poor 33
- B. Implications and consequences 33
- C. The response called for: work for them, walk with them 34
- D. The Eucharist in the Church’s dialogue with the poor 35

VIII. Mission in dialogue with the youth

- A. The Church’s future and her today 37
- B. The youth and the challenge to be a “good soil” 37
- C. Forming the young 38
- D. Primary agents and workers 39
- E. The Eucharist in the Church’s dialogue with the youth 40

IX. Mary and the Eucharist in the Church’s mission

- A. Mary, exemplar and mother of the Church-on-mission 42
- B. Mary in the Church’s missionary dialogue 43
- C. Mary and the Eucharist in the Church’s mission 46

X. *Spes Gloriam*

- A. The Eucharist and the “glory of God” 48
- B. The messianic banquet 48
- C. The love of God embraces humanity 49

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The International Eucharistic Congress

The IEC is intended to be a *station*—a kind of a “stopover” on a journey—where a local Church community gathers around the Eucharist to celebrate, render honor, and pray in the presence of the Lord in his Eucharistic Mystery. To this sacred event, she invites nearby local Churches and other Church communities from all over the world for the IEC is intended to be an affair of the universal Church. The *Rituale*¹ for the celebration of the Congress demands that the actual celebration of the Eucharist be truly the center of all that takes place at the Congress itself, so that everything points to it and prepares for it.

A deeper understanding of and a stronger commitment to the Eucharistic mystery is fostered through catechetical sessions, celebrations of the Word, prayer gatherings, and plenary assemblies. For these and for the other activities connected with the Congress, a program will have to be previously laid down. Such program is intended to clearly articulate the themes for the celebrations, meetings, processions, prayer, and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in suitable chapels or other places of worship.

All the components and details of the Congress should manifest an underlying vision of “Eucharistic Ecclesiology” which is oriented toward *communion* and *oneness* in the community that is the Church and which naturally seeks to reach out to all, especially those who are at the fringes of society, drawing them back until there will only be one flock under the one Shepherd, Jesus Christ.²

B. Significance of the 51st IEC

At the Eucharistic “station” in Cebu City in 2016, pilgrims from all over the world will gather with the faithful of the Philippines and especially those of Cebu. This universal assembly will be an authentic sign of communion in Christ Jesus and of oneness in faith and love which the Church in this country offers to all believers and all Christian disciples from all over the world.

The Congress is intended to serve the entire People of God in its pilgrimage in history. It is a great ecclesial event at which, through experiences of celebration, teaching, and fellowship, the Church all over the world will be reminded that the Eucharist is the “source

1 ROMAN RITUAL, *De Communionem et de Cultu Mysterii Eucharistici extra Missam* (1973), 112.

2 Cf. VATICAN II, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) on the Sacred Liturgy, 2; citing Jn 10:16.

and summit”³ of her life and action. The Eucharist will be held out in a particularly clear way as the constantly renewed and abiding presence of the Paschal Mystery which is the “eschatological event” *par excellence* in the whole Church’s worship and life.

C. Impact on the life of the church

“*Christ in You, the Hope of Glory. The Eucharist, Source and Goal of the Mission*” is the great theme of the 51st IEC in Cebu. Proceeding from the Letter of St. Paul to the Colossians (1:24-29), the theme is meant to bring to fuller light the bond among the *Eucharist, Mission, and Christian Hope*, both in time and eternity. Today, there is a shortage of hope in the world as perhaps never before in history. Thus humankind needs to hear the message of our hope in Christ Jesus. The Church must proclaim this message today with renewed ardor, utilizing new methods and expressions.⁴ With these features of a “new evangelization” the Church must seek to bring this message of hope to all, but especially to those “who, though baptized, have drifted away from the Church and live without reference to the Christian life.”⁵

The 51st IEC is envisioned to provide the participants opportunities for experiencing and understanding the Eucharist as a transforming encounter with the Lord in his word and in his life-giving sacrifice of himself—that we may have life and have it to the full (cf. Jn 10:10). It is intended to be an occasion for the discovery and rediscovery of the faith— “that source of grace which brings joy and hope to personal, family and social life.”⁶ This international gathering holds the promise of generating a more courageous and decisive carrying out of the Christian mission in the world and the society that are becoming more and more indifferent and hostile to the faith and to the values of the Gospel. This encounter with Christ in the Eucharist can be source of hope for the world when, transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit into the likeness of Him whom we encounter, we set out on a mission to transform the world with our zeal to bring to those who need most the same acceptance, forgiveness, healing, love, and wholeness that we ourselves received and experienced.

3 *Ivi*, 10. Cf. VATICAN II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (LG) on the Church, 11.

4 Cf. John Paul II, *In Portu Principis, ad episcopos Consilii episcopalis Latino-Americani sodales* (9 marzo 1983), n. 3, AAS 75, par. 1, p. 778.

5 BENEDICT XVI, *Homily at the Eucharistic Celebration for the solemn inauguration of the 13th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* (7 October 2012).

6 *Ibid.*

D. The Congress in Cebu and the people of Asia

The 51st IEC should, in a specially radiant and effective way, proclaim the mystery of Christ considering the place of the Faith and of the Church in Philippine history. The Church in the Philippines has a providential vocation for mission particularly in Asia, a vocation so constantly affirmed by the Roman Pontiffs.⁷ The presence and active involvement of the Catholic laity in the various sectors of society, ecclesiastical and pastoral affairs included, bears a great potential to influence the socio-political and economic landscape in the manner of leaven in the dough. Poverty and lack of employment opportunities push many Filipinos to migrate to other countries both within and outside Asia, but when they do they bring their Christian faith along with them and share it with the people with and for whom they work, more perhaps by their examples and values than by their words. The Philippine Church, then, is a source of hope in a special way precisely as “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” among the Peoples of Asia, as Pope Paul VI affirmed in his 1970 visit to the Philippines.

In 1937, Manila hosted the 33rd IEC, the first ever in Asia. That Congress, so movingly successful, was surely the most important international religious event ever held in the country at that time. The 51st IEC which will take place in 2016 promises to be of such great importance as well. It forms part of the “nine-year novena” which the faithful in the Philippines are celebrating in preparation for the joyous and historic observance of the 500th anniversary in 2021 of the coming of the Christian Faith and of the Christian Church to the country.

In the year 1521, the King and Queen of Cebu were baptized by the Spanish missionaries.⁸ The natives embraced the Christian faith with considerable ease and enthusiasm on account of their deep and natural religiosity. Their initial faith was nurtured by the sacraments, most especially the Holy Mass, notwithstanding that until the early 20th century it was celebrated in a language not understood by the great majority.

The Christianization of this land, realized in a remarkably short span of time, has made the Philippines the biggest Catholic country—with more than 80% of our people baptized in the Faith—in this part of the world. Filipino Catholics through the centuries developed a high regard for the Eucharistic celebration.⁹ The life and activities of the typical

7 This special mission vocation of the Philippines in Asia was articulated by Pope Paul VI during his pastoral visit to the Philippines in 1970 and by Pope John Paul II during the 1995 World Youth Day held in Manila.

8 Based on the account of Antonio Pigafetta, an Italian nobleman who kept a daily chronicle of the voyage taken by five Spanish ships under the command of the Portuguese Ferdinand Magellan for the then King of Spain, Charles V: *Relazione del primo viaggio al globo terraqueo* (English translation: A. Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage. A Narrative Account of the First Circumnavigation*, trans. R. Skelton, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969).

9 Cf. CBCP, Pastoral Letter *Landas ng Pagpapakabanal* on Filipino Spirituality (2000), n. 62; Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (1997), n. 1669.

parish, whether of spiritual, social, or service orientation, are centered on the Eucharistic liturgy. Patronal feasts of towns and villages (*barangays*) are celebrated with a multitude of Masses and abundant feasting with food and merry-making. Marriages, deaths, and the anniversaries thereof, are usually celebrated with the Holy Mass. Indeed, Filipino family and community events are not complete if not graced by the Eucharistic celebration. Catholic groups usually begin and conclude their gatherings, be they of social or apostolic nature, with the Holy Mass. The Mass has become perhaps the most familiar religious activity in Filipino society.¹⁰

The liturgical reform of Vatican II has brought about a number of steps forward in the way Filipinos celebrate the Eucharist. The texts of the Mass have been translated in almost all of the major local languages around the archipelago. The participation of the lay faithful has improved considerably not only in terms of actively responding and singing in celebrations, but also by undertaking various liturgical ministries.¹¹

Yet it has to be admitted candidly that while there are rays of light, there are also shadows in how the Eucharist has figured in the Filipinos' life of faith. Much still remains to be desired in terms of a proper understanding of the Eucharist by the faithful, as well as in an adequate sense of community in celebrating it. But that which has been pointed out as most urgently needing to be acted upon is the observable dichotomy between worship and life.¹²

Thus a special note of humble and joyous gratitude to the Lord, joined with eager expectation, will mark this Congress. It will give special meaning to the Filipinos' celebration of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, of the gift of his body and blood for the life of the world and the life of the nation. But it will also be a privileged opportunity to bring the Filipino Catholic faithful to a renewed understanding, celebration, and living out of the Eucharistic faith.

Now that Asia is becoming a new center of history in the contemporary world, the holding of the 51st IEC in its midst is an opportunity to radiantly manifest the continent's special and unique calling as a Church of love, communion, and mission. Given the multi-dimensional context in which the Asian Church accomplishes its mission, the continent has become a fertile field where the mystery of the Incarnation continues to be realized through genuine inculturation that brings the Christian faith to an authentic dialogue with the various Asian cultures, religions, and races.

10 Cf. *Landas ng Pagpapakabanal*, n. 62; *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, n. 1669.

11 *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, n. 1670.

12 Cf. Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1990), n. 103.

II. THE EUCHARIST: CHRIST'S WORK OF REDEMPTION REALIZED

A. "The mystery... Christ in You, the hope of glory" (Col 1:24-29)

Having been told that the Colossians were "adapting" Christianity to their culture and their beliefs, Paul had to assert with firmness that Christ possesses the fullness of redemptive power (1:19). Everything in the world is made for the sake of Christ. Right from the opening chapter of this letter, Paul applies the words "all" and "everything" to Christ over and over again.¹³

This important Pauline teaching is echoed without ambiguity by the Vatican Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy as it affirms that the great works that God wrought among the people of the Old Testament were but a preparation for the work that Christ was to accomplish in order to redeem humankind and give glory to God.¹⁴ The Paschal Mystery of his passion, death, and resurrection was to be the central cause of salvation. It was "by dying that he has destroyed our death, and by rising that he has restored our life."¹⁵ By the mystery of his dying and rising Christ has indeed become our hope of glory. For the Holy Spirit whom he handed over as he breathed his last on the Cross (Cf. Jn 19:30) brought forth "the wondrous sacrament of the whole Church"¹⁶ so that just as Christ was sent by the Father, so also does he send his Church, the community of his disciples, to continue proclaiming his work of redemption.¹⁷

B. The mystery proclaimed... that all may receive Christ.

The Mystery has to be proclaimed unceasingly so that all may receive Christ and all may be presented to Christ (Cf. Col 1:28). Paul considers himself a minister of the Gospel of hope that is meant to be preached to every creature under heaven in order to bring to completion the Word of God, the mystery which used to be hidden but now manifested (Cf. Col 1:23, 25-26). Paul took upon himself the mission that Christ sent his apostles to do: "that by preaching the gospel to every creature they might proclaim that the Son of God, by his

13 Cf. especially Col. 1: 15-20.

14 Cf. SC, 5.

15 Preface I of Easter.

16 From the prayer after the seventh reading of Easter vigil; cf. SC, 5.

17 Cf. SC, 6.

death and resurrection, had freed us from the power of Satan and from death and brought us into the kingdom of the Father.”¹⁸

The Gospel was to be preached, however, not only by word, but also by means of sacrifice and sacraments, around which the entire liturgical life evolves. Hence, through the power of the Holy Spirit, men and women are plunged into Christ’s Paschal Mystery. By gathering together regularly to listen to the apostles’ teaching and to eat the supper of the Lord, they proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. The Church is constantly built up into a sacrament of communion and oneness as she constantly comes together to celebrate the Paschal Mystery: reading those things “which were in all the scriptures concerning him” (Lk 24:27), and celebrating the Eucharist in which “the victory and triumph of his death are again made present”.¹⁹

C. The Eucharist: Christ present among us

For the Church to accomplish such a great work, “Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations.”²⁰ In the Eucharist, he is present to continually bring people to communion with himself and to fellowship with one another. In the person of the minister, in their gathering together, in the proclamation of the Word, and in the Eucharistic species of Bread and Wine, Christ continues to unite, to forgive, to teach, to reconcile, to offer himself for our redemption, and therefore, to give life. It is precisely for this that he instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood—to be the embodiment and realization of the plan of salvation that culminated in the sacrifice of the Cross, to be a living memorial of his saving death and resurrection.

18 *Ivi.*

19 SC, 6, quoting from the Council of Trent, Session XIII, *Decree on the Holy Eucharist*, c. 5 (DENZINGER, 1644).

20 SC, 7.

III. THE EUCHARIST: SOURCE AND GOAL OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION

A. EUCHARIST AS SACRAMENT OF LOVE, SIGN OF UNITY, BOND OF CHARITY²¹

1. Christ's presence in the Eucharist

That which Christ accomplished through his life, preaching, and, above all, his Paschal Mystery, continues to be present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. Indeed that which in him was visible has passed on to the Church especially in her sacraments.²² Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ continues to enrich us with his life and, united with his own, we are able to offer worship acceptable to the Father by means of signs perceptible to the senses.

The Eucharist therefore is the perpetual embodiment of what Christ has given to his Church by his total gift of himself.²³ It has become the sacrament of his love for which he gave himself up to death, death on the Cross (Cf. Phil 2: 8). It has become the sign of the unity for which he prayed on the night before he died: "Father, may they be one as you and I are one"(Jn 17:21). It has become the bond of that charity which he demands of his disciples in what he gave them as his new commandment (Cf. Jn 13:34). It is all this that he asks of his disciples to do "in memory" of him. Sacrament of love, sign of unity, bond of charity: Christ intends the Eucharist to be.

2. The transforming power of the Holy Spirit

For the Eucharist to become the sacrament of Christ's love, effective sign of unity, and bond of charity, the Holy Spirit is invoked upon the bread and wine so that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ (consecratory epiclesis). A little later in the celebration the same Holy Spirit is invoked on the assembly so that they may become "one body, one spirit in Christ" (communion epiclesis).

So great indeed is this mystery! By the action of the Holy Spirit, the fruits of the earth and work of human hands are transformed to become life-giving bread and spiritual drink. By the action of the same Holy Spirit, those who eat and drink of the Body and Blood of Christ are transformed into the one Body of Christ. They are then sent forth to transform their families, their places of work, the society, and the world. The Eucharist transforms the

21 Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Tractatus in Ioannem*, VI, n. 13, cited in SC, 47.

22 Cf. LEO MAGNUS, *Tractatus LXXIV.2*, ed. A. CHAVASSE (CCL 138A) Turnhout 1973, p. 457: "*Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit in sacramenta transivit...*"

23 Cf. SC, 47.

assembled community into “a communion of life, charity and truth” in order to become “an instrument for the redemption of all and as the light of the world and the salt of the earth.”²⁴ For in the Eucharist, “the one whom the Father has sent to do his will (cf. *Jn* 5:36-38; 6:38-40; 7:16-18) draws us to himself and makes us part of his life and mission.”²⁵

3. Transformed and sent to transform

That which they received (the Body of Christ), they are called to become.²⁶ The Eucharist has an intrinsic missionary dimension on account of its institution. For at the Last Supper, not only did Christ take the bread and the cup of wine for these to become life-giving bread and saving cup. He also washed the feet of his disciples which he bade them to do to one another (Cf. *Jn* 13:14). Their washing one another’s feet in humble and loving service will have to be a mirror of Christ’s entire life of service and mission. Transformed by their encounter with the Lord in his Word and in his Body into people of service and charity, the faithful are sent to transform their communities into living and life-giving fellowship. The Eucharist realizes its nature and purpose when it transforms places and people into communities of love and service.

B. THE EUCHARIST AND MISSION

Along the same vein, it was after they felt their hearts burning within them by the words they heard from the Risen Christ and by recognizing him “in the breaking of the bread” that the disciples of Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:30-32) felt the urge to go in haste to share with all the brethren the joy of their meeting with Him.²⁷ Partaking of the “bread broken and shared” in Eucharistic communion, the Christian individual and community cannot remain indifferent to the call to share and give of oneself to become bread for the life of the world. For this reason, “the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the most effective missionary act that the ecclesial community can perform in world history.”²⁸ Every part of the Eucharistic celebration reveals an inseparable connection between communion and mission

24 LG, 9.

25 BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (VD) on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church (20 September 2010), n. 91.

26 Cf. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermon* 272:13-14, in E. Rotelle (ed.), *The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century*, part III, vol.7, trans. E. Hill, New York 1993, 300-301: “So if it’s you that are the body of Christ and its members, it’s the mystery, meaning you, that has been placed on the Lord’s table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply Amen, and by so replying you express your assent.”

27 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, General Audience (21 June 2000); cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (DD) on keeping the Lord’s Day Holy (5 July 1998), 45.

28 *Ibid.*

by which the Church emerges as both sign and instrument of unity (cf. LG 1). It will be worthwhile to see some parts of the Eucharistic celebration and how the mission is constitutively contained therein.

1. INTRODUCTORY RITES

“When the people are gathered...”²⁹ Having come from various places, circumstances and situations, we are formed by the various elements of the Introductory Rites into an assembly of worship.³⁰ Our coming together in response to God’s call is already the first movement of the creative power of the Eucharist by which we become God’s covenanted People. The priest’s greeting “*The Lord be with you*” or its equivalent is a solemn declaration that we are now formally an assembly for God’s worship, the Lord’s dwelling place. “*The Lord be with you*” is at the same time a statement of faith: that Christ, the risen Lord, the sender of the Holy Spirit, is truly present in the assembly at the celebration of Holy Mass! The same words are part of the greeting of the Angel unto the Blessed Mother as he announced that she has been chosen to bear the “Emmanuel—the God who is with us” in her womb (cf. Luke 1:28).

The Holy Spirit whom Christ, the Risen Lord, sends at Holy Mass is the One who enables us to remember the great favors that God has done for us. With our hearts filled with gratitude and praise, we are then empowered by the same Holy Spirit to lift up our hearts and voices in prayer and praise. As on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit unites the assembly as Church, gives power to the word of God, consecrates bread and wine into the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, and transforms us into Christ through Holy Communion.

The words of the greeting are therefore very comforting: they reassure us that our assembly is graced with the presence of the Risen Christ and of the Holy Spirit he sends. In this Eucharistic assembly, Christ meets us in the person of the priest, and he wants us to see him in the person of one another. He speaks to us when the Scripture is read. He gives himself to us in the sacred signs of bread and wine. To become a worshipping community that encounters the Lord, we are helped by certain rituals and prayers—a common song, common movements, common posture and gestures, common prayers, and even common pauses for silence.

The various elements of the Introductory Rites are intended to establish unity among those who have gathered, dispose themselves to listen properly to God’s word, and to celebrate the Eucharist worthily, always in view of sending them forth as instruments of

29 *The Order of Mass*, in the *Roman Missal*, third typical edition, n. 1.

30 Cf. R. CABIÉ, *The Order of Mass of Paul VI*, in *The Church at Prayer 2: The Eucharist*, Collegeville 1986, 193.

unity, proclaimers of the word, and bread broken and shared for the life of the world. The Introductory Rites constitute the beginning of the movement of being chosen, called, and formed into an *ekklesia*, a priestly people that God will send “to proclaim the glorious works of him who called them from darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pt 2:9).

2. LITURGY OF THE WORD

Having thus been disposed by the introductory rites, the faithful now listen to the proclamation of the Word.³¹ God and his people engage in “a dialogue in which the great deeds of salvation are proclaimed and the demands of the covenant are continually restated.”³² God speaks and expects a response. The dynamic course taken by the proclamation, meditation, explanation, and assimilation of the Word is intended to make out of the assembled community “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (Jas 1:22), heralds and not only recipients of divine revelation.³³ For the word of God has the power to illumine human existence, compel its hearers to take an inward look at themselves and out into the world, and stir an irresistible impulse to engage oneself in the world toward the realization of justice, reconciliation, and peace.³⁴ Special help in this regard is expected from well-prepared homilies through which God seeks to reach out to his people through the preacher and which display God’s power through human words. Delivered by a pastor who truly knows his people and who communicates well, “the homily can actually be an intense and happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God’s word, a constant source of renewal and growth.”³⁵

The Holy Spirit who causes the Word of God to be proclaimed also empowers the faithful to hear, understand, and carry it out in their lives. Having received the Holy Spirit at Baptism and Confirmation, they are called to conform their way of life to what they celebrate in the liturgy. By the witness of their lives, the faithful are sent out to be the bearers of the same Word they heard so that it “may speed on and be glorified and that God’s name be exalted among the nations.”³⁶ Indeed, the words of eternal life that we receive in our encounter with the Lord in the Eucharist are meant for everyone.

31 Cf. *General Introduction to the Lectionary for Mass*, 2nd ed., (21 January 1981), n. 6, 7.

32 POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World (24 November 2013), 110; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), 22.

33 *General Introduction to the Lectionary...*, 6. Cf. VD, 91.

34 *Ivi*, 99.

35 Cf. EG, 135.

36 *General Introduction to the Lectionary...*, 7.

3. PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS

Preferential Love for the Poor. The Vatican II reform on the Mass restored an ancient practice involving the assembly offering bread and wine for the Eucharistic sacrifice.³⁷ The last documentary witness to such practice was the Roman *Ordo* of the seventh century³⁸ which informs us that the presider chose a loaf from what was offered and took an amount of wine just enough for communion; the rest was placed on a credence table for distribution to the poor.³⁹ Dropped off for many centuries, the practice was restored by the Vatican II reform not only as an added opportunity for active lay participation but as an affirmation of the early Church's laudable practice expressing her special concern for the poor.

The commemoration of the institution of the Eucharist at the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday gives place to a procession of gifts by the faithful at which, together with the bread and wine, gifts intended for the poor are presented.⁴⁰ The recommended chant to accompany this action heightens this particular message of the preparation of the gifts: "*Ubi caritas est vera, Deus ibi est.*" [= *Where there is charity, God is there.*] This evening's Eucharist, being a memorial of its institution, is a good model for all Eucharistic celebrations in this regard. It teaches us that the mission of caring for the poor and underprivileged is at the heart of the Eucharist liturgy. As we grow in our genuine care for the poor and the needy, the Eucharist comes to be manifested ever more clearly as the sacrament of love. The intimate connection between the Eucharist and the Church's mission to care for the poor is expressed succinctly in the lapidary words of St. John Chrysostom: "Do you," he asks, "wish to honor the Body of Christ? Then do not allow it to be scorned in its members, in the poor, who have nothing to clothe themselves with. Do not honor him in church with silk and then neglect him outside when he is cold and naked... What does Christ gain from a sacrificial table full of golden vessels when he then dies of hunger in the persons of the poor?"⁴¹

Concern for Creation. The Vatican II reform on the Mass attached prayer formularies based on Jewish table-prayers to the action of placing the gifts on the altar: *Blessed are you,*

37 Cf. J. JUNGSMANN, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origin and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)* 2, trans. F. Brunner, New York 1951, 2-3. Jungsmann relates this ancient practice to Irinaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome, and Cyprian. A small portion of the gifts of bread and wine offered by the assembly was set apart for the Eucharistic sacrifice. The rest was distributed later to the poor.

38 *Ordo Romanus* I, in M. ANDRIEU (ed.) *Les Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age II. Les textes (Ordines I – XIII)*, (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense. Études et documents 23), n. 78-84, p. 93-94.

39 Cf. JUNGSMANN, *The Mass...* 2, 6-8.

40 The rubrical indication reads: "At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, there may be a procession of the faithful in which gifts for the poor may be presented with the bread and wine."

41 *In Matthaem hom.* 50,3-4, PG 58, 508-509.

Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have the bread (the wine) we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life (our spiritual drink). These prayer formularies are an expression of praise of God for the creation of the world and for human collaboration in the production of bread and wine—symbols of life and fellowship—that in the Eucharist will become the medium of Christ’s living and life-giving presence in the midst of the assembly and in the world.

But they also constitute a sending forth on a prophetic mission. Worship cannot be indifferent to the concern for the environment and natural resources. To “bless the Lord, God of all creation” is to thank God for the earth, his creation, which is our sustenance. The world is not mere raw material to be utilized simply as we wish—all the way to depletion and wastage. It is for all of God’s children to live on in a manner that befits precisely that dignity. To “bless the Lord, God of all creation” entails raising a prophetic voice against the greed of human hearts and hands in the defense of the earth and its resources, and of those who fall victim to nature’s revolt when exploited irresponsibly.

4. THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

Forming the Body of Christ: Bread and Assembly. At two special moments of the Eucharistic liturgy, the Holy Spirit is invoked in an explicit way. At the consecratory epiclesis, the Holy Spirit is invoked upon the gifts of bread and wine so that they “may become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eucharistic Prayer III). At the communion epiclesis, the same Holy Spirit is invoked upon the assembly so that by partaking of the body and blood of Christ, they “may be filled with his Holy Spirit and become one body, one spirit in Christ” (EP III). Nowhere could be found a clearer articulation of Christ’s and the Church’s vision of the Eucharistic mystery: the Church celebrates the Eucharist in order to be constantly built up into the “**Body of Christ**”. The bread and wine have to become the “Body of Christ” in order to form those who partake of it into the “Body of Christ”. Thus, through the Eucharistic mystery the Church enters into history as the Body of Christ, given up for the life of the world.

From as early as the second half of the first century, we find this expressed in a prayer that the Church has kept in her treasury of Eucharistic texts: “As this broken bread was scattered over the hills and then, when gathered, became one mass, so may thy Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom”.⁴² For the early Church, what was most crucial about the Eucharistic celebration is that it caused them to “gather together”. Their faith conviction was that it is in being “gathered together” (= *ekklesia*) that salvation comes upon them. It is in seeing themselves as the “one Body of Christ” that the healthy members felt sensitive to the pain and sufferings of the sick members and thus felt impelled

42 W. RORDORF-A. TUILIER, *Didache: La Doctrine des Douze Apôtres* (Sources Chrétiennes 248) Paris² 1998.

to help them in their needs. The Eucharist sends the Church on a mission of carrying out justice in the world by forming the gathered assembly into the “One Body of Christ” where division and apathy toward the suffering are put in question.

Emerging from the Eucharistic celebration, each of the Christian faithful, and the whole Church for that matter, carries the mission of keeping the Body of Christ intact and of restoring it to health when rendered sick by indifference and discord.

5. COMMUNION

Breaking of the Bread. At the Last Supper Jesus took the bread and broke it. He gave the broken pieces to his beloved disciples as he said: “Take this... this is my Body to be given up for you.” In the Eucharist the priest does this same action of Christ. He breaks the bread as a sign of the love of Christ whose body is “broken” for us. Whenever this action takes place in the celebration of the Eucharist, we are reminded of the painful death Christ had go through out of his love for us. We who receive the broken bread are reminded that for us to live, Christ had to die. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we must “become ever more conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is for all, and that the Eucharist thus compels all who believe in Christ to become ‘bread that is broken’ for others, and to work for the building of a more just and fraternal world.”⁴³ This is how Christ desires to give life to humanity and to the world for all time: that we do “this” (= breaking, sharing, loving) in memory of him. Each of us is truly called, together with Jesus, to be bread, broken for the life of the world.

Addressing the people of Asia, Saint John Paul II commended the extraordinary capacity for self-giving and sacrifice—that is, martyrdom—manifested by numerous Asians through the centuries, as he continues to challenge present-day Asian Christians to be ready to do the same if the situation calls for it.⁴⁴ The continent has been a generous donor to the Church and to the world of men and women who eloquently proved the truth of the faith by bravely facing the most violent of deaths and showed the beauty of the same faith even in the midst of the ugliest forms of persecution. Saint Paul Miki and his companions, Saint Lorenzo Ruiz and his companions, Saint Andrew Dung Lac and his companions, Saint Andrew Kim Taegon and his companions, Augustine Zhao Rong and his 119 companions, and Saint Pedro Calungsod—all Asians—gave tangible form to the Eucharistic faith that makes whole by being broken.

The Communion Meal. In the Eucharist, the “Body of Christ” realized in the Eucharistic assembly becomes food for others. The Eucharistic action brings into being a

43 BENEDICT XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (SAC) on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission (22 February 2007), 88.

44 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (EA) on Jesus Christ the Savior and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia (6 November 1999), 49.

body that is consumed, that is, broken and given away to nourish a hungry world. The Eucharist sends the Christian faithful out of themselves to offer the same to be food for the world. In the Eucharist, the act of consumption is reversed and becomes an act of *kenosis*, or self-emptying. Becoming part of Christ's body is to descend with Christ into the broken human condition, to empty oneself taking the "form of a slave" (Phil. 2:7).

The great capacity for self-sacrifice that characterizes the people of Asia will not have much significance unless it is coupled with the readiness to share. One's self-emptying finds significance only when by it, another person is made full. Christ emptied himself so that we may be filled with his life, and that we may have it abundantly (Cf. Jn 10:10). Saint John Paul II tells us of specific areas where this sharing should be done especially during this time in this part of the world.⁴⁵ The situations in which refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and overseas workers often find themselves in their host countries—friendless, culturally estranged, linguistically disadvantaged and economically vulnerable—ask for a welcoming home where in their weariness and burden they may find comfort and rest. May Christian communities in whatever country and locality be such welcoming and restful homes for them. The Eucharistic banquet sends us forth to share what we have so that no one in our communities may be found wanting.

6. THE DISMISSAL: "ITE, MISSA EST."

The dismissal rite concludes the Eucharistic celebration and sends the assembly forth. There are those who relate this mission-sending character of the dismissal rite to the fact that both the words "Mass" and "mission" are derived from the Latin verb *mittere* (= to send). It is also significant that this rite is described as one that dismisses the people "to go out and do good works, praising and blessing God".⁴⁶

In an earlier discussion on the Introductory Rites, it has been said that those who form the assembly are gathered, disposed to listen to God's word and to take part in the Eucharistic meal worthily, always in view of sending them forth as instruments of unity, heralds of the Good News, and as bread, broken and shared for the life of the world. Now, at the dismissal rite, they are told, "Go, [the assembly] is sent." As in the story of the disciples of Emmaus, the encounter with the Risen Christ in his word proclaimed and in the breaking of the bread has the innate power to transform the assembly into enthusiastic and zealous heralds of the Lord. The fellowship they experienced, the Word they heard, and the Eucharistic meal they shared together, are now to be brought into the world in the form of coherent witness. Witness means that through our actions, words, and way of being, that Person we give witness to—the Lord Jesus Christ who gathered us, spoke to us, and gave

45 *Ivi*, 34.

46 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 90.

his body to us as life-giving Bread—makes himself present.⁴⁷ Witnessing to Christ means that people we meet at work, at home, and elsewhere in the world are able to experience his consoling words, his healing, his unifying, and life-giving presence, because we are there.

The dismissal at the end of the Mass sends us indeed with an invitation and a charge to work for the spread of the Gospel and to imbue society with Christian values.⁴⁸ There is to be an uninterrupted continuity from the Mass just celebrated and our mission as Christians in the world.⁴⁹ The prayers after Communion express this uninterrupted continuity which is the fruit of authentic Eucharistic participation: “that we may lay hold of your redemption both in mystery and in the manner of our life.”⁵⁰ With this continuity, the Church always emerges as a mystery of communion and mission inasmuch as the Eucharist which is at the heart of her existence and mission is the sacrament of communion and mission *par excellence*.

The celebration of the Eucharist, and every part of it, shows that the missionary responsibility of the Church is instilled in her nature. Being a community-in-mission is part of her identity. The Church realizes this identity both in her life of worship, whereby she ritually proclaims that Christ has saved the world by his Paschal Mystery, and in her life of service, whereby she affirms the saving presence of Christ in human and world affairs.

47 Cf. SAC. 85.

48 Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum Domine* (MND) for the Year of the Eucharist, October 2004-October 2005 (7 October 2004), 24.

49 Cf. SAC, 51.

50 Post-Communion prayer for the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time: “*ut redemptionis effectum et mysteriis capiamus et moribus.*”

IV. THE CHURCH'S MISSION IN ASIA. MISSION-IN-DIALOGUE

A. Dialogue as the privileged mode of mission

In the concrete context of Asia, the Church, which is always and everywhere a community-in-mission by virtue of her origin and relationship with Christ,⁵¹ is called in a very special sense to undertake her missionary mandate in a spirit of dialogue. Such dialogue as a particular approach to mission is not only necessitated by the multiracial, multilinguistic, multireligious, and multicultural reality of Asia on account of which peoples should be in constant conversation among themselves to ensure their peaceful coexistence. This mode of missionary engagement has its root, rather, in the Trinitarian economy of redemption and call to communion whereby the Father engaged humanity in a loving dialogue of salvation with Himself through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵² Dialogue is the way God realized his plan for our redemption in and through His Son who “became man, shared our human life and spoke in a human language to communicate his saving message.”⁵³

There is no other way, therefore, for the Church to realize her missionary mandate from her Master and Lord (Cf. Jn 13:14) than by a dialogue of salvation with all men and women which was the essential character of the divine initiative for redemption and communion.⁵⁴ The Vatican II's vision for the way the Church is to undertake her mission in the modern world likewise reflects a dialogical engagement with diverse races, languages, religions, cultures, and socio-political structures.⁵⁵ This is true in a particular way in Asia where she has to engage in dialogue with “those who share her belief in Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour” but also with “followers of every other religious tradition, on the basis of the religious yearnings found in every human heart”.⁵⁶

Already at their first Plenary Assembly, the Bishops of Asia have discerned what special configuration this dialogue in the context of mission in Asia should have: “continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions,—in brief, with all the life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots

51 Cf. SC, 6.

52 Cf. EA, 29.

53 *Ibid.*

54 Cf. PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, *Dialogue and Proclamation. Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (19 May 1991).

55 Cf. GS, especially nn. 23.42; VATICAN II, Decree *Ad Gentes* (AG) on the Mission Activity of the Church (7 December 1965), esp. nn. 5 and 10.

56 Cf. EA, n. 29.

deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own”.⁵⁷ This has been referred to as the “triple dialogue” since thirty years ago⁵⁸ but which has remained valid until the present time: dialogue with the cultures of the Asian people, dialogue with their religions, and dialogue with the life-situations of poverty, powerlessness, of suffering and victimhood, which is the lot of a great number of people among them.⁵⁹

B. Elements of dialogue in mission

This triple dialogue has to be undertaken “as a witnessing to Christ in **word** and **deed**, by reaching out to people in the concrete reality of their daily lives.”⁶⁰ As regards witnessing to Christ in word, that is, in the explicit proclamation of the Gospel of salvation, the use of stories and other narrative forms hold greater promise of effectiveness,⁶¹ for most Asians are able to relate better with “an evocative pedagogy, using stories, parables and symbols.”⁶² The First Asian Mission Congress held in Chiang Mai, Thailand in October 2006 recalled with fondness and with much gratitude that Jesus himself taught by using parables and insightful vignettes that revealed the depths of God’s reign—that he is God’s love story in the flesh!⁶³ Stories have a special power to make understood even the deepest mysteries of the faith, to transform perspectives and values, to form community, and to establish fellowship.

Witnessing to Christ in deed, on the other hand, means that this triple dialogue is to be undertaken by concrete actions of service in favor of justice, peace, and human dignity leading the poor and the disadvantaged to integral development and liberation. Both modes of engagement (word and deed) entail dialogue of life, immersion into the situation of the people to whom the Good News of salvation is to be proclaimed, sensitivity to their culture, respect and receptivity toward all human persons, constant and sympathetic listening, development of human relationships, and patience in learning. This dialogue in mission,

57 FEDERATION OF ASIAN BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE (FABC), *Evangelization in Modern Day Asia. First FABC Plenary Assembly (1974)*, in *For All the Peoples of Asia 1. FABC Documents from 1970-1991*, ed. F. J. Eilers, Quezon City 1997, n. 14.

58 It was in the First FABC Plenary Assembly, held in Taipei on April 22-26, 1974, that this threefold dialogue was first articulated, cf. *For all the Peoples of Asia*, vol. 1, Manila: IMC Publications, 1984, pp. 25-41.

59 Cf. FABC, 7th Plenary Assembly (2000), in *For All the Peoples of Asia III*, n.4.

60 Bishops’ Institute for Missionary Apostolate I (Baguio), n. 5.

61 EA, 20.

62 *Ibid*; cf. Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops, *Relatio post disceptationem*, 15.

63 *Telling the Story of Jesus in Asia. The Message of the First Asian Mission Congress*, Chiang Mai, Thailand (18-22 October 2006).

moreover, asks for a spirituality of stewardship that seeks to defend the integrity of creation in favor of those who are bound to suffer most when destructive calamities result from the abuse of the environment and natural resources or when the goods of the earth are not equitably distributed.

Dialogue in mission therefore asks for the spirituality of the evangelizer that consists in constant reference to the person and ways of Jesus, reverence toward the Spirit, prayerful discernment, quest for personal kenosis, prayer and the presence of God, compassion, and capacity to guide others in the life of grace and holiness.

C. On proclamation and dialogue

This dialogue is not an end in itself; it is in view of sharing and receiving. It disposes one to respect others and to recognize their giftedness. It enables one to listen to what the others are expressing in and through their lives of the goodness of God.⁶⁴ “Throughout the various stages of dialogue, the partners will feel a great need both to impart and to receive information, to give and to receive explanations, to ask questions of each other.”⁶⁵ For their part, Christians in dialogue should be ready to offer their faith, to give an account of the hope that is within them (1 Pt 3:15) in answer to their dialogue partners’ expectations that were created by the dialogue. Dialogue is always in view of proclamation and sharing of one’s faith and hope in Christ. There can be no true evangelization without the proclamation of Jesus Christ and of his saving Death and Resurrection.⁶⁶ One cannot share what he/she does not have. To fruitfully engage in this dialogue, Christians should deepen their faith in Christ and in his Paschal Mystery, purify their attitudes, clarify their language and render their worship more and more authentic.⁶⁷

All stages of such dialogue and proclamation must be motivated by love. Christians have to proclaim and share their faith in Christ because of this love and not merely out of obedience to the Lord’s mandate. On the other hand, the followers of other religions can be expected to want to share the riches of their faith as well. The same spirit of Christian charity is necessary to open oneself to be enriched by the sharing of the other. Concerning this, the Bishops of Asia have a timely and important clarification: “Dialogue does not call for giving up one’s commitment, bracketing it or entering into easy compromises. On the contrary, for a deeper and fruitful dialogue, it is even necessary that each partner be firmly committed to

64 Cf. *Faith Encounters in Social Action IV* (Kuala Lumpur), 12.

65 *Dialogue and Proclamation...*, 82.

66 *EG*, 110; cf. *EA*, 2 and 19; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), 22.

67 *Dialogue and Proclamation...*, 82.

his or her faith.”⁶⁸ All dialogue implies reciprocity and aims at banishing fear and aggressiveness.⁶⁹

D. The Eucharist, source and goal of dialogue

In the life of the Church, the Eucharist stands as both the source and goal of this dialogue. By our participation in the Eucharistic celebration we enter into a communion of life with the Triune God because we are inserted into the dialogue of life and salvation that began in history and now perpetuated in liturgical mystery in the power of the Holy Spirit. The various elements of the celebration engage our body, our senses, our consciousness, and our affectivity in that dialogue which unfolds enabling us to share in the rhythm of Christ’s life offered for our salvation. By gathering and forming an assembly of worship we respond to the Father’s summons to be his covenanted People. By listening to and assimilating the Word proclaimed we engage in a dialogue whereby the Father heals, forms, and enriches us with his life and love, especially with the help of a homily which, on account of its Eucharistic context, surpasses all forms of catechesis because it leads up to sacramental communion.⁷⁰

In a singular way, we enter into a dialogue of life with the Triune God by eating Christ’s body and drinking his blood, for responding to our prayer of epiclesis the Father sends the Holy Spirit through His Son upon the bread and wine so that they may become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Emerging from the Eucharistic gathering, we are sent to continue and extend this Trinitarian dialogue of life and salvation in the form of loving service especially toward the least, the last, and the lost.⁷¹

The dynamic movement of the celebrative action, then, (gathering-word-meal-mission) makes us realize that the Eucharist is the living memorial of the dialogue that took place in the entire life and ministry of Jesus Christ but which finds its climax in the Paschal Mystery of his suffering, death, and resurrection and final glory. It was a dialogue that constitutes both an act of obedience to the Father (ascending movement) and compassion towards weak sinners (descending movement), a sacrifice of both adoration (ascending movement) and service (descending movement).⁷²

68 Bishops’ Institute for Interreligious Affairs IV/7 (Tagaytay), n. 10.

69 *Dialogue and Proclamation...*, 82.

70 EG, 137; cf. DD, 41.

71 Cf. EA, 24.

72 Cf. FABC, *Living the Eucharist in Asia. Final Document of the IX FABC Plenary Assembly* (10-16 August 2009).

In Asia, where the characteristic mode of Church's existence is that of dialogue, the Eucharist shines forth as "a unique experience of God's dialogue with us and our response to God: a dialogue of life, a dialogue of love."⁷³ That in the Eucharist Christ invites everyone to a table fellowship where he shares his life through his words of love and healing and through a meal that deepens loving relationship among those who call the same God their "Father" means much for a people whose culture gives pride of place to close family ties that are kept intact and strengthened by parental counsel and family meals.⁷⁴ That Christ offers himself as bread that satisfies all hunger and drink that quenches all thirsts and gives joy will warm the heart of the many in this continent whose daily existence is marked by insufficiency of the basic necessities.⁷⁵ The Eucharist should be a constant reference point for the local Churches of Asia in their continuing missionary dialogue with local cultures, religions, with the poor, and the youth since the divine-human dialogue that transpires within it is the seed and vision of the whole of her mission.

73 *Ibid.*

74 Cf. CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES, Pastoral Letter *Landas ng Pagpapakabanal*, on Filipino Spirituality (2000), 71-74.

75 *Ivi*, nn. 75-76.

V. MISSION IN DIALOGUE WITH PEOPLES AND CULTURES

The mission of the Church in Asia has to be undertaken in dialogue with a wide variety of cultures. Not only is Asia the earth's largest continent and home to almost two-thirds of the world's population; it is also host to an intricate mosaic of many cultures, languages, beliefs, and traditions.⁷⁶ Calling to mind an observation voiced out by the bishops of Asia,⁷⁷ the Holy Father Pope Francis pointed out afresh the manifold challenges that are being brought to bear on Asian cultures, among them, the new patterns of behavior caused by over-exposure to various forms of mass media and traditional values, including the sacredness of marriage and the stability of the family, being undermined by some damaging elements of the media and entertainment industries.⁷⁸ This, in addition to the fact that Christianity has remained to be the minority religion in this continent attributed to its being perceived as “too Western” and an “instrument of colonial domination”.⁷⁹ Thus by necessity the Christian mission in Asia has to include a dialogue between the Gospel and the Christian faith on one hand and the culture of the Asian people, on the other, the desired result of which is faith that is inculturated and culture that is evangelized.⁸⁰

A. INCULTURATION AND MISSION

A theological and pastoral imperative. The intent to engage in inculturation in Asia is motivated by a vision: that of genuine Christian communities in Asia – Asian in their way of thinking, praying, living, and in communicating their own Christ-experience to others.⁸¹ Toward this vision, inculturation is not merely a matter of option; it is rather a theological and pastoral imperative. The mystery of the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery are at once the foundation and the model for the deep insertion of local Churches in the surrounding

76 EA, 6.

77 *Ivi*, 7.

78 EG, 62.

79 A. J. CHUPUNGO, *Mission and Inculturation: East Asia and the Pacific*, in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. G. Wainwright-K. B. Westerfield Tucker, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 665.

80 Cf. *Consultation on Evangelization and Inculturation*, in *For All the Peoples of Asia III. FABC Documents from 1997-2001*, ed. E.-J. Eilers, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002, p. 218.

81 Cf. *Conclusions of the Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church* (Hong Kong, 3 March 1977), in *For All the Peoples of Asia I. FABC Documents from 1970-1991*, ed. G. B. Rosales-C. G. Arevalo, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997, p. 70.

cultures, in the aspects of their life, celebration, witness and mission.⁸² The Son of God became man, a Jew, and thus became part of the history, culture, traditions, and religion of the Jewish people. The Church, too, should incarnate herself in every race and culture where she finds herself. She must become part of every people among whom she finds herself implanted “for the same motive which led Christ to bind himself, in virtue of his incarnation, to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom he dwelt.”⁸³ The Church must be assimilated into the life of a people that receives her; she cannot remain a stranger to them. She must incarnate herself in such a way that she can be regarded not only as the Church that is in Asia, but as the Asian Church; not only as the Church that is in the Philippines but as the Filipino Church.

Such incarnational stance, rather than jeopardizing the universality of the Church, will even foster such universality. Through the faith of the Church and through the celebration of his work of redemption, Christ continues to incarnate himself in the various races and cultures. He is the universal Savior because he can make himself part of the concrete realities of every particular people and there bring them redemption. The Church, too, is truly universal because she can incarnate herself in the concrete realities of every local Church. When she incarnates herself, she enriches both the local people and herself. Incarnation brings about mutual enrichment to the people who receive the faith and to the Church who incarnates herself.

In dialogue with the cultures of Asia. By proclaiming the Gospel and celebrating worship using the cultural realities of a people, the Church is continuing in time and space the dialogue of salvation initiated by God and brought to a culmination when he uttered his Word in a very concrete situation.⁸⁴ Inculturation is not a mere device to make her faith, worship, and life attractive and acceptable to a local people. Carrying out a dialogue with the cultures of Asia means to make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of our peoples so that they can live in a way that is uniquely Asian, that is, truly as a local Church of Asia. The Gospel is preached to them using living symbols, images, realities, and stories that are part of their day to day existence as a people. They receive the Word, make it the principle of their lives, values, attitudes, and aspirations. They are helped to understand and experience their faith and to celebrate worship in a way that reflects the

82 *Church Issues in Asia in the context of Evangelization, Dialogue and Proclamation. Conclusions of the Theological Consultations (Thailand, 3-10 November 1991),* in *For All the Peoples of Asia II. FABC Documents from 1992-1996*, ed. F.-J. Eilers, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997, p. 201.

83 AG, 10.

84 Cf. *Letter of Participants of the First Bishops Institute for Missionary Apostolate*, Baguio City, Philippines, 27 July 1978, in *For All the Peoples of Asia I. FABC Documents from 1970-1991*, ed. G. B. Rosales-C. G. Arevalo, Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997, p. 94.

values they hold dear, using expressions that are part of their culture. After all, the language, rites, and symbols of Christian worship always have their origin in a culture and will always derive meaning from that culture. Liturgical history attests to the integration of cultural elements drawn from the different peoples with which the Church came into contact in the course of several centuries.⁸⁵ Worship of a particular Christian community cannot but take on the cultural expressions of the local people. In this way they become the Body of Christ in this particular time and place.

By this dialogue, the Gospel is inculturated, and their culture is evangelized. By this, too, they are built up as a truly local Church which is the “here and now” realization and enfleshment of the Body of Christ in the life of this particular people. It is a community that is unique in itself but is in communion with other communities which likewise possess their own uniqueness. With them it professes the one faith and shares the one Spirit. With them it shares the one sacramental life, the same Eucharist, but celebrates it in her particular way. On the other hand, a truly local Church is the most effective way to inculturate the Gospel and the Worship that celebrates it.

The Church in Asia must regard with openness those that the local culture can contribute to authentic Christian spirituality: a richly developed prayer of the whole person in unity of body-psyche-spirit; prayer of deep interiority and immanence; traditions of asceticism and renunciation; techniques of contemplation found in the ancient eastern religions; simplified prayer-forms and other popular expressions of faith and piety easily available even to simpler folk, whose hearts and minds so readily turn to God in their daily lives. The Spirit is leading the churches of Asia to integrate into the treasury of our Christian heritage all that is best in our traditional ways of prayer and worship. This is Asia’s gift of prayer to the Church.

B. POPULAR PIETY IN THE CHURCH’S DIALOGUE WITH THE CULTURES OF ASIA

The discourse on the Church’s dialogue with cultures in the concrete context of Asia will not be complete without consideration of the many forms of popular piety that abound among the peoples of the continent. Followers of practically all cultures and religions are so drawn to worship, religious festivals, and popular devotions that their existence and practice among Asians cannot be ignored in the mission of evangelization, especially in the task of inculturating faith and worship.⁸⁶ Such forms of popular piety “manifest a thirst for God which only the poor and the simple can know”⁸⁷ and they make people “capable of

85 Cf. CHUPUNGO, *Op. cit.*, 662.

86 Cf. EA, 22.

87 EN, 48.

generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism, when it is a question of bearing witness to belief”.⁸⁸

To give importance to popular piety and its various forms in the context of the mission in Asia means, first, to recognize the power of popular piety to communicate the Gospel and to draw people to worship. Second, the Church in Asia is challenged to allow some of the linguistic and ritual elements of popular piety to be integrated into the people’s worship so that they will feel more at home at it and experience it as God encountering them in the very concrete realities of their lives. In others words, there is need to bring the liturgy and popular piety to a mutually enriching exchange whereby “the yearning expressed in prayer and charisms found in our countries today may be channeled with clarity and prudence” and “popular religiosity, with its symbolic and expressive wealth, can share its creative dynamism with the liturgy”.⁸⁹

Popular piety in the mission of the Church. It was by introducing the devotion to the Sto. Niño and to the Blessed Mother that the Spanish missionaries had a considerably easy time making the Filipinos accept the Christian faith and embrace it in great numbers. Popular religiosity has always been the stronghold of Catholicism among the Filipinos. Because of the Filipinos’ attachment to their religious devotions, they did not abandon the Christian faith even when they rebelled against the Spanish friars who introduced it to them. When the educational system in the country was controlled by American Protestant teachers, the Filipinos did not turn away from Roman Catholicism. The proselytizing activities of fundamentalist sects among Catholics were largely unsuccessful because these sects have no sympathy for their devotions. The story of the Christian faith in the Philippines has always included religious devotions. It is a fact that “much of what Filipino Catholics know of Catholic doctrinal truths and moral values is learned through the sacraments and devotional practices.”⁹⁰ Moreover, the practice of certain forms of popular devotions have always provided occasion and structure for organized works of charity for the poor.

On account of this and many other similar mission stories, the Church encourages a sympathetic stance toward popular piety: “to approach it with the gaze of the Good Shepherd, who seeks not to judge but to love; to recognize and appreciate the theological life present in the piety of Christian peoples, especially among the poor”.⁹¹ It is to be

88 *Ibid.*

89 LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES, *The Puebla Document* (1979), n. 465.

90 CATHOLIC BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES, *New National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines*, Manila 2007, n. 308.

91 EG, 125.

promoted and strengthened because it possesses an evangelizing power that should not be underestimated, for do so is to fail to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit.⁹²

In practice, this sympathetic stance may mean the integration of aspects (linguistic and ritual) of popular religiosity with the liturgy especially for those communities with longstanding tradition of popular religiosity. The result is that the people are able to experience something familiar during the liturgy and popular religiosity becomes an authentic vehicle of the Gospel. Inculturation in this case, a healthy dialogue between liturgy and culture, gives a human countenance to the liturgy and a more solid foundation to popular religiosity.

C. THE EUCHARIST IN THE CHURCH'S DIALOGUE WITH CULTURES

While Asia is home to a wide variety of cultures, values, and traditions, there are cultural elements that are common among them: close family ties, filial reverence, family meals, sacredness of God's word (deposited in sacred writings), hospitality, and leadership exercised as service and readiness to sacrifice, among others. In the concrete context of Asia, the Eucharist is a potent starting point for the mission of reaching out to its many peoples, as well as the goal to aspire for in the same mission. The Asian people will have no difficulty seeing in the Eucharistic celebration the values they hold dear in common.

The Eucharist as meal very clearly upholds family relationship and hospitality so highly valued by most Asian people. It will be fruitful to present the Eucharist as the family meal where God gathers his children together to feed them with his Word and with the Body of his Son, a meal where the children are able to thank and praise their Father for his immense love for them, where they can confidently express their needs, where they are in the company of their brothers and sisters, and many others who constitute their extended family.

The Eucharist as sacrifice can be very meaningful for most Asians considering how they usually perceive leadership, e.g. the leadership exercised by parents toward their children, of elder brothers and sisters toward their younger siblings, of village heads toward their constituents, by the host of a feast towards his/her guests. It is a leadership that is exercised in service and with readiness to sacrifice for the sake of one's charge. Among poor families in the Philippines, it is not uncommon for parents to let their children eat first before they do, if there is hardly enough food on the table, to be sure that no one among the children goes hungry. Nor is it uncommon that an elder brother or sister gives way to the younger siblings for the opportunity to go to school if the family does not have enough

92 *Ibid.*

resources to send all children to school. Or the eldest may never get married, choose to work all his or her life, to send all siblings to school.

The Eucharist will mean much for most Asians because it expresses many of the cultural values that they treasure very dearly. The Eucharist, celebrated well as both meal and sacrifice, is the best way to proclaim the Good news of God's offer of salvation through the sacrifice of his Son to the point of self-sacrificing death, of God's invitation to make us all part of his family, of God's unending desire to enrich us all by his life-giving Word and Body broken and shared that we may live. The Eucharist too is the best way to motivate a spirit and consciousness of mission in view of sharing the same richness, meaning and life to others.

VI. MISSION IN DIALOGUE WITH RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Close to its being multi-cultural, Asia is also home to a wide array of religions and religious cultures. Asia is birthplace and host to the world's major religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, as well as of many other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Shintoism.⁹³ There are also other traditional or tribal traditions which are practiced with varying degrees of structured ritual and formal religious teaching. The mission of the Church in Asia should be undertaken in dialogue with religions and religious cultures.

A. DIALOGUE OF LIFE AND HEART

The Seeds of God's Word.⁹⁴ In her dialogue with the multi-religious countenance of Asia, the Church takes on the attitude of deepest respect and honor toward the other religions and faiths, acknowledging that these have somehow been instrumental in drawing people to God.⁹⁵ As she endeavors to keep strong her rootedness in the Christian faith, she also seeks to better understand the life, doctrine, tenets, and rituals of other religious traditions in order to engage them in a mutually enriching and respectful encounter. These great religious traditions, after all, enshrine spiritual, ethical, and human values that are expressions of the presence of God's word and of the Holy Spirit's continuing creative activity in the world. Our forebears' most profound religious experience as well as the noblest longings of their hearts have been deposited in them, while present adherents continue to draw meaning, guidance, and strength from them.

Patterned After the Incarnational Plan of Salvation. This positive disposition toward other religious cultures in the continent conforms with the incarnational plan of salvation whereby Christ embraced everything that is human (except sin) in order to assume them within the radius of his redeeming love and power.⁹⁶ It was within the religious tradition of Israel that Christ revealed the mystery of God and accomplished his saving mission. His

93 EA, 6.

94 Cf. AG, 11.

95 Cf. VATICAN II, Declaration *Nostra aetate* (NA) on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (28 October 1965), 2.

96 Cf. AG, 10.

Apostles and the earliest foreign missionaries of the Church had the same dialogical stance in the face of the varied religious cultures of the Greco-Roman world.

In an ecumenical and missionary spirit. In its desire to “strengthen whatever can help to call all mankind into the Church’s fold,”⁹⁷ the Church enjoins all Christians to assume an attitude of openness toward other religious traditions and discover “with gladness and respect those seeds of the Word which lie hidden among them.”⁹⁸ Moreover, she encourages them to use cultural forms, teaching, arts, architecture, melodies, languages, and sciences of the other religious traditions, provided that these are not incompatible with the Gospel and the Christian faith, to praise the glory of the Creator.⁹⁹

This attitude of openness and sharing will enable Christians to discover and therefore appreciate the heart and soul of their fellow Asians and the most genuine expression of the same. Far from placing their Christian faith on shaky ground, this dialogue with other religious cultures and traditions will motivate Christians to find authentic ways of living and expressing their own Christian faith amidst the adherents of other faiths. It will help them discover the many riches of their own faith which they might not have seen before. This dialogue will help them discern in the light of God’s word how their faith in Christ can be enriched by the other religious traditions, what in these religious cultures must be purified, healed and made whole before being absorbed into the practice of the Christian faith.

B. THE PRIMACY OF WITNESSING

Given the multi-religious context of Asia, the evangelizing mission will have to consist, first of all, of witness given to the Father’s love in a simple and direct way.¹⁰⁰ This means that, by living like Christ, Christians and Christian communities are called to draw their non-Christian brothers and sisters to faith in the one God revealed by Christ. Most of the time, this may be in the form of presence and solidarity with people to make them feel cared for and wanted in their poverty and misery. It may be to respond to people’s needs as Christ would do in the gospel, making them feel welcome and more important than institutions and structures. “Perhaps this attestation of God will be for many people the unknown God whom they adore without giving him a name, or whom they seek by a secret call of the heart

97 SC, 1.

98 AG, 11.

99 *Ivi*, 22.

100 Cf. EN, 26.

when they experience the emptiness of all idols. But it is fully evangelizing in manifesting the fact that for man the Creator is not an anonymous and remote power; He is the Father and we are one another's brothers and sisters in God.”¹⁰¹ In the midst of so much diversity and, many times, of conflicts of various kinds, the Church, by her own life, is called to witness to God’s call to life-giving unity and harmony and be a visible sign and instrument of such unity.¹⁰² Equipped with their Christian faith and commitment, the lay faithful have a distinctive role to play in this dialogue on account of their presence and action in the world—family, politics, education, culture, social environment. In the manner of leaven, they are enjoined to direct the course of human affairs and history to the eschatological fullness that every man and woman of goodwill hopes for.

C. UNITY AND CHRISTIAN HOPE

A respectful and loving dialogue with other religious cultures is always in view of proclaiming Christ in the spirit of sharing one’s greatest treasure. In the concrete multi-religious context of Asia, this should be the ideal form of evangelization where, in humility and mutual support, we seek to share with our non-Christian brothers and sisters that fullness of Christ which is God’s plan for the whole of creation, in its entirety and in its great and wonderful diversity. The common quest for God and for the fraternal bond shared by all humans will always be a source of hope that one day the whole human family may be gathered as one under the fatherhood of the one God.

D. THE EUCHARIST IN THE CHURCH’S DIALOGUE WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS CULTURES

Family, reconciliation, sharing of life, solidarity, hospitality, service, love of nature, silence and contemplation are just some of the precious values that are shared in common by the people of Asia, regardless of religious persuasion. In our Eucharistic celebrations, these values are present and are upheld in a beautiful and powerful way. Our Eucharistic participation should sharpen our longing to secure these highly treasured values and spur us on to concrete actions that realize them among and in the midst of our Asian neighbors. Our Eucharistic participation should increase in us the conviction that it is God’s dream to gather us all once more as his children into his one Family and translate this conviction into dialogue and prayerful discernment, unrelenting efforts to announce this Divine dream to the “housetops,” and follow them through with effective actions of service that both diminish

101 *Ibid.*

102 LG, 1.

the oppressive effects of sin on our people's lives and usher in peace and well being where they can enjoy in fuller measure the dignity that is theirs by God's design.

For the Eucharist, on one hand, has the purpose of building up "those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ."¹⁰³ In the concrete mission of the Church in multi-religious Asia, on the other hand, the Eucharist marvelously strengthens the Christians' resolve and power "to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd."¹⁰⁴

103 SC, 2.

104 *Ibid.*

VII. MISSION IN DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR

The mission of the Church in Asia has to be undertaken in dialogue with the poor. This is because while the continent is rich in culture and its people are rich in human and religious values, a great multitude of them live in situations of poverty, powerlessness, marginalization, victimization, and suffering. They are poor not because their continent lack natural and material resources but because they are deprived of access to material goods and resources which they need to live with dignity and ensure a stable future for themselves and their families. Oppressive and unjust social, economic, and political structures keep them from enjoying the rich natural patrimony of their lands.

A. PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

In the face of the particular situation in Asia where multitudes are poor and have no access even to basic necessities to live a life worthy of their human dignity, the Church in Asia has a special calling to be a Church of the poor. She must have the poor, the deprived, and the oppressed at the forefront of her life and mission. As in the case of the Church's dialogue with cultures, the Church's dialogue with the poor is a theological and moral imperative. The primary reason why the Church has to take on this preferential option for the poor is the very example of Christ who became poor and "who identified himself with them in a special way" (cf. Mt. 25:40): "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."¹⁰⁵ It is called a preferential love not to exclude anyone but to express that the poor, the deprived, and the exploited have a priority claim to the Church's attention, services, and resources. The Sacred Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments, are replete with attestations to the fact that the poor have always occupied a privileged place in God's heart, not the least, in the life and mission of Christ of which the Gospels are eloquent testimonies.¹⁰⁶

B. IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

The bishops of Asia have for many years discerned that the Church in Asia must increasingly be "a Church of the poor" with all its implications and consequences.¹⁰⁷ To be a

105 EA, 34; cf. EG, 186.

106 Cf. EG, 187.

107 Cf. ASIAN BISHOPS' MEETING, *Message of the Conference* (Manila 1970), in FAPA 1, p. 5. Quite clearly, since that meeting, the Spirit has been leading the discernment of the Church in Asia that the Church of Asia must increasingly become the Church of the poor.

Church of the poor implies, first, that those who have been placed as shepherds of God's flock in Asia must lead a life of simplicity by which the poor can perceive that their pastors share in their poverty. By this simplicity of life, too, which is a luminous sign of the Gospel in action, the poor will feel the genuine and heartfelt closeness of their shepherds and will feel more free to run to them for help and guidance.

A second implication of the Church's preferential love for the poor is that she should engage in active interventions for the liberation and promotion of the situation of the poor. It means being in the service of human development and of life itself—engaging in the important work of healthcare, education, and peacemaking. This is a call that concerns everybody, not reserved to a few: “You yourselves give them something to eat!” (Mk 6:37).”¹⁰⁸ It also means promoting a disposition of solidarity among all—that “new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few... which is the spontaneous reaction by those who recognize that the social function of property and the universal destination of goods are realities which come before private property.”¹⁰⁹

The third implication of the Church's preferential option for the poor is that she has to take a prophetic stance against the negative consequences of economic and cultural globalization, the ongoing impact of foreign debt especially upon the livelihood of the poor, and the environmental damage brought about by scientific, economic and technological progress. This program “for progress” often creates massive harm to human beings and families, especially the poor. There are many human, cultural and ethical/moral issues involved, which the Church and Christians must give attention to. Concerning oneself with these pressing matters is part of “mission” in our time.

C. THE RESPONSE CALLED FOR: WORK FOR THEM, WALK WITH THEM

The First General Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in 1974 challenged the Church (and local Churches) in Asia to “a continual endeavor to become more and more the Church of the ‘*anawim*,’ a Church (which) does not merely work for the poor in the manner of a beneficent institution, but labors truly with the poor, sharing their life and their aspirations, knowing their despair and their hope, walking with them in their search for authentic humanity in Christ Jesus.”¹¹⁰

108 Cf. EG,188; cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH, Instruction *Libertatis Nuntius* (6 August 1984), 11.

109 EG, 188-189.

110 FABC, *Evangelization in Modern Day Asia. Statement of the First Plenary Assembly*, in *For all the Peoples of Asia 1*, Documents from 1970-1991 *cit.*, p. 15.

The first step that the Church had to take in working for and walking with the poor of Asia was to identify who and where these poor are and what kind of poverty they were suffering from. They are the homeless families who abound in city streets or build temporary shelters in slums. They are refugees fleeing their war-torn countries or oppressive regimes in their native land, or immigrants and overseas workers who, in search of better livelihood opportunities for their families, often find themselves friendless, culturally estranged, linguistically disadvantaged, and economically vulnerable. They are indigenous and tribal peoples who are often discriminated against on account of their culture, color, race, caste, economic status, or because of their way of thinking. They are the women who are victims of domestic violence or are being traded like commodities in prostitution, tourism, and entertainment industries. They are the children who have never experienced peace right in their homeland and who fall victim to various forms of intolerable exploitation and violence, like paedophilia and child labor.¹¹¹ But they are also those who are kept from realizing their full potentials and talents because of limited opportunities for education and gainful occupation in their countries, or none at all.

The Church has to work not only for them in the manner of dole-out and relief goods after the onslaught of a typhoon or an earthquake, but also with them, involving them in the task of transforming those structures that perpetuate their poverty and deprivation. It also involves genuine commitment and effort to bring about social justice in our societies—actions that are fed with prayer and discernment so that such actions will always be genuinely motivated by God’s will to liberate his people with no intrusion by any God-less ideology.

D. THE EUCHARIST IN THE CHURCH’S DIALOGUE WITH THE POOR

In the Church’s dialogue with the poor, the Eucharist, on one hand, upholds and reaffirms values that negate causes of poverty. It confronts selfishness and greed which are the roots of many forms of injustice, with the self-sacrificing love of Christ. It calls into question apathy and individualism which desensitize people from feeling the pain of the poor and suffering, by Christ’s invitation to be a family calling the one God as ‘Our Father’. It confronts oppressive totalitarian leaderships which put political and economic advantages above people, with Christ’s leadership of service—that of the Master and Lord who washed the feet of his disciples (cf. Jn 13:13). Above all, the Eucharist challenges utilitarianism, consumerism, and materialism which treat the poor and the weak as commodities and tools that can be used for one’s gain and pleasure, with Christ’s self-donation that breaks and shares oneself so that others may live. For “each celebration of the Eucharist makes

111 EA, 34.

sacramentally present the gift that the crucified Lord made of his life, for us and for the whole world.”¹¹² From our participation in the Eucharist, we are sent forth to be witnesses of God's compassion towards all our brothers and sisters.¹¹³

On the other hand, Jesus is encountered in the Eucharist as the “Bread of life” (Jn 6:35). He is such by being both the “Word that comes from the mouth of God” (cf. Deut. 8:3) and the living bread that came down from heaven” (Jn 6:51), the “bread for the poor” received in the proclamation of the scriptural Word and in Holy Communion. He is the “daily bread” we pray for in the ‘Our Father’. In Holy Communion, Jesus gives himself as our bread to feed us. And so, we in turn should go to our brothers and sisters who are hungry, and become bread to feed them in compassion and love, in the works of mercy, in giving life, and giving it abundantly. The celebration of the Eucharist indeed abounds with such indications of how the Eucharist expresses Christ’s and the Church’s preferential option for the poor as she realizes her mission in Asia.¹¹⁴

112 SAC, 88.

113 *Ibid.*

114 See *Section III. B Eucharist and Mission*, especially on the Preparation of the Offerings, the Eucharistic Prayer, and Communion.

VIII. MISSION IN DIALOGUE WITH THE YOUTH

Asia is considered the continent of the youth since almost two-thirds of its population are young people and it is home to about 60 per cent of the world's young people. Moreover, majority of these youth and children are poor. Mission in dialogue with the youth of Asia entails placing them among the priorities in the pastoral solicitude of the Church because of their important but delicate standing in society and in the Church.

A. THE CHURCH'S FUTURE AND HER TODAY

For the Church, young people are not only the future of the world but are her present precious treasures.¹¹⁵ The Church recognizes that she has to deal with young people not only as the adults of tomorrow but more importantly the reality of today. The Church takes upon herself the responsibility of preparing and forming the young for their future roles as holders of the reins of leadership in the various areas of life. With their youthful energies, enthusiasm, and resourcefulness, however, they are even now dynamic agents of change and therefore source of hope in society and in the Church.

But they are also the most vulnerable to many destructive forces in the society and often fall victims to structures of exploitation. More than ever before, the realities that impinge themselves upon our young people today are both many and varied. Globalization, political changes, and the media explosion radically affect the lives of the youth in every part of Asia.¹¹⁶ Youth of all backgrounds, urban and rural, poor and rich, educated and uneducated, employed and unemployed, the organized and unorganized, are all being tossed about by the waves of contemporary culture. The youth are, therefore, also the Church's today. They should be among the present pastoral priorities of the Church. But the Church can already engage them in creative and productive ministry to others, especially among their fellow youth.

B. THE YOUTH AND THE CHALLENGE TO BE A 'GOOD SOIL'

Candidly admitting that many and complex problems confront young people in the continent today, the Churches of Asia are enjoined to "remind the young of their

115 FABC, *Youth, Hope of Asian Families. Statement of the 4th Asian Youth Day, 30 July – 5 August 2006, Hong Kong*, in *For all the Peoples of Asia 4. Documents from 2002-2006*, Quezon City: Claretian Publications 2007, p. 167.

116 FABC, *A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service*, in FABC Documents from 1997 to 2001, *cit.*, p. 9-10.

responsibility for the future of the society and of the Church, and to encourage and support them at every step to ensure that they are ready to accept that responsibility.”¹¹⁷ Suitable and adequate pastoral care should be extended to them, above all, by “sowing the truth of the Gospel on them as a joyful and liberating mystery to be known, lived, and shared with conviction and courage.”¹¹⁸ But since the world they live now is full of rocks and thistles, not to mention the scorching heat, youth pastoral care also involves helping young people to be a “good soil” where the seed of God’s Word can spring up, take root, grow, and bear fruit a hundredfold (cf. Mt 13:1-8).

Youth pastoral care will mean accompanying them in their journey, which is not easy, on account of the rapid and drastic changes that are happening around them but also of the dramatic changes they are going through physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually at this stage of human development. This kind of pastoral care is directed toward preparing the ground before the sowing, softening it, making it receptive. It also seeks to strengthen them against the many influences and distractions that compete for their attention and energies and can choke the initial growth of the faith in them. This aspect of pastoral care is necessary even before the sowing of God’s Word or simultaneous with it—that they may be a good soil where the seed of God’s Word can spring up, take root, grow, and bear abundant fruit.

C. FORMING THE YOUNG

The Church’s educative mission in Asia. In the great diversities that characterize the concrete context of Asia, Christian education should be such that equips the young people to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the young people of other faiths. Such education, more or less formal, consists in better educating these youth on the fundamental truths and values of their Christian faith first, then also on the fundamental truths and values of other faiths. Moreover, majority of these young people cannot afford formal education because of poverty. The Church in Asia should seek other creative ways to channel the Christian education of the young, foremost of which is catechetical instruction¹¹⁹ which enlightens and strengthens the faith, nourishes life according to the spirit of Christ, leads to intelligent and active participation in the liturgical mystery,¹²⁰ and gives motivation for apostolic activity. Other useful aids shall be the media of communication, various groups for mental and physical development, and youth associations.

117 EA , 47.

118 *Ibid.*

119 Cf. VATICAN II, Decree *Christus Dominus* (CD) on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, nn. 13 e 14.

120 SC, 14.

Journeying with the youth. But forming young people in the context of the mission in Asia consists more in journeying with them in their quest for peace and sense of meaning, in their efforts to ensure a more stable future for themselves and their loved ones, and in their battle against the enticements of false ideologies, fads, vices, and even against despair. In Asia, the highly successful World Youth Day began by St. Pope John Paul II in 1985 has its counterpart —the Asian Youth Day where young people from the various Asian countries are able to experience a strong sense of being a community through common prayer and Eucharistic celebrations, sharing of life-experiences, working together, sharing meals, and joining one another’s songs and dances. By such events, the youth come to feel that the Church is with them, walking closely with them, believing in what they can do with their youthful energies and good will, empowering them.

Journeying with the youth means recognizing the important role that they have in the Church now and as the future of the Church.¹²¹ It is to see the youth as resources and not as problems. It means listening to them and accompanying them in prayerful presence and guidance. It is to facilitate their learning from their experiences and not from ready-made answers; to involve them more in the decision-making process, and not only to ask them to implement the decisions taken by others. This surely necessitates that every country, diocese, and parish has a Youth Commission/Committee that directs and regulate these activities of the Church in behalf of the youth. Only when the youth are recognized as agents and co-workers of the evangelizing mission of the Church will their full potential blossom forth.

D. PRIMARY AGENTS AND WORKERS

Young people, including those who comprise the majority of the Asian people, are not only on the receiving end of the Church’s pastoral care and mission. Many of them are already in the forefront of the Church’s mission in her various apostolic works of love and service especially for the benefit of their fellow young people. With their enthusiasm and energy, they can, even now, be relied upon to take on active leadership roles in the programming and executing activities which concern them.

We witness today the rise and growth of associations and movements mostly made up of young people. These can be seen as the work of the Holy Spirit, who blazes new trails to meet their expectation and their search for a deep spirituality and a more real sense of

121 FABC, *A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service*, cit., p. 10.

belonging. There remains a need, however, to ensure that these associations actively participate in the Church's overall pastoral efforts.¹²²

E. THE EUCHARIST IN THE CHURCH'S DIALOGUE WITH THE YOUTH

The Eucharist, a Dialogue of Love. The Church's mission today includes directing young people toward the Eucharist for sustenance in the face of their many uncertainties and questions. For it is in the Eucharistic gathering that the Church can best engage the youth in a dialogue in which she proclaims to them the Gospel of Christ from which they get the unique and satisfying response to their most deep-seated aspirations.¹²³ From their Eucharistic encounter with Christ in word and sacrament are offered enlightenment and guidance in their quest for meaning and purpose in life. In the Eucharist, Jesus looks upon the youth with that special love that he showed upon the young man in the Gospel and invites them to follow him (cf. Mk 10:21) in his loving relationship with the Father and in his saving mission to humanity and to the world .

The Eucharist, Primary School of Christian Values. By engaging them in active participation in the Eucharist—in attentive listening, in generous and appropriate bodily expressions, in the observance of silence at the appropriate moments, or in undertaking specific ministries in the celebration—the youth can best be formed both for their future and present roles in the Church and in the society. In the Eucharistic dialogue, the Church has so much to talk about with the youth and the youth, with their energies and enthusiasm, have so much to share with the Church.¹²⁴ Around the table both of God's Word and of Christ' Body, the Church offers instruction and nourishment¹²⁵ by which young people can be prepared to be the "good soil " where the seed of God's Word can spring up, take root, grow, and bear abundant fruit. The Eucharist is the perfect school for the young where they can learn the values of presence that builds relationships and communities, of a sense of gratitude and responsibility for God's creation, and of service and sacrifice that gives life, healing, and wholeness to others.

The Eucharist as Communication. Considering the young people's attraction to various means of social communication and their adeptness in their use of the same, the Church will do well to present the Eucharist to them as the highest embodiment and ideal of communication where friendships are established and nurtured, where hopes, dreams, joys,

122 EG, 105.

123 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (CL) on the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world (30 December 1988), 46.

124 *Ibid.*

125 Cf. *General Instruction* of the Roman Missal, n. 28.

and anxieties are shared, and where noble causes and advocacies are worked out together. In the school of the Eucharist, young people will learn that communication is more than the exchange of ideas and of emotion but, at its most profound level, the giving of self in love.¹²⁶ The Church should never get tired of telling the young that Christ instituted the Eucharist as “the most perfect and intimate form of communication between God and man” which leads to “the deepest possible unity among men and women”.¹²⁷ The Eucharist is where the deepest and transforming communication takes place—in response to the prayer of invocation, the Father through his Son sends the Holy Spirit so that the bread and the wine, as also the assembly, will become the Body of Christ.

126 Cf. Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* on the means of social communication (23 May 1971), 11.

127 *Ibid.*

IX. MARY AND THE EUCHARIST IN THE CHURCH'S MISSION

As we approach the end of our reflection on the Eucharist and the Church's mission, we turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary who at the same time embodies the Eucharistic Mystery and stands as the perfect exemplar of the Church-on-mission.

A. MARY, EXEMPLAR AND MOTHER OF THE CHURCH-ON-MISSION

“Asian Christians have a great love and affection for Mary revering her as their own Mother and the Mother of Christ.”¹²⁸ Thus did Saint John Paul II recall a statement made by the Synod Fathers at their Special Assembly for Asia in 1998. The hymn for the International Eucharistic Congress held in Manila in 1937 contains a phrase that speaks of Filipinos as a people that bears a special love for Mary: “*pueblo amante de Maria*”. Such tributes affirm the special love and affection that the people in this continent have for the Mother of the Savior whom they fondly call their own Mother. The same tributes also attest to how she has figured in the missionary journey of the Church in Asia. She is the model of the Church in its mission of evangelization because of how she closely cooperated in the saving work of her Son¹²⁹ and because she exemplifies the missionary journey that the Church has taken and continues to take.

As Mary was first recipient of the Good News at the Annunciation before she brought the same Good News to Elizabeth at her Visitation and to the rest of the world at the Nativity of her Son, so is the Church also called first to be an evangelized and an evangelizing community.¹³⁰ At the foot of the Cross, Christ entrusted the Church and its mission to the care of his Mother: “Woman, here is your son” (Jn 19:26-27). “Mary is the Mother of the Church which evangelizes, and without her we could never truly understand the spirit of the new evangelization.”¹³¹

Mary, the first to be evangelized. Mary heard the word of God in the “first Gospel” proclaimed by the angel Gabriel. Her *Fiat*, her definitive “yes” to God’s call, was a total opening up of her whole self and being to God’s will. It was an act of total obedience and trust; she entrusted her life to God’s designs. By the power of the Spirit, she conceived the Son of God made man; God took on flesh in her womb. She gave God his humanity. And in faith, she joined herself wholly to the saving mission of the Son in history.

128 EA, 51.

129 SC, 103.

130 EN, 15.

131 EG, 284.

What followed in her life—the visitation to Elizabeth, the revelation given to Joseph about the child in her womb, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, the presentation of her Child in the Temple and Simeon’s prophecy, the coming of the Wise Men and the Holy Family’s subsequent flight to Egypt, the loss and finding of the child Jesus in Jerusalem, her not being able to understand so much of what was happening, and her pondering of the events and words in her heart—was her evangelization. In this way, her faith, discipleship and, above all, her spiritual motherhood that was to be her destiny, were shaped.

Mary, the Evangelizer. Visiting Elizabeth, she brought the child in her womb to the hill country of Judah. Face-to-face with Mary, the pregnant Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit” and her unborn child was moved by the Spirit (Lk 1:41, 44). And Elizabeth told her, “Blessed are you who believed...” (v. 45) to which Mary replied: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord” (v. 46). Mary drew from the treasury of words that she pondered in her heart with the Spirit, proclaiming it as Good News, as Gospel for humankind.

At the appointed time, Mary brought forth the Father’s Son made flesh from her own womb. *She gave us Jesus.* She held him up before shepherds and wise men. She placed him in old Simeon’s arms, and he knew in joy the promise of God fulfilled. Her bidding brought about the first of her Son’s *signs* at the wedding feast in Cana. Her last words there were directed to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” And she continues to address these words to all ages thereafter.

As her Son preached to the crowds, she took in his words, and pondered them in her heart, to share them later with the nascent Church. *Mother of the apostles*, she was in their midst when the Spirit came to them in the likeness of tongues of fire on that day when the Church, empowered by the Spirit, first proclaimed the Good News to all the world.

Thus Mary was the *first to be evangelized*, and the first of the disciples, as well as the first Apostle. In every age from the time of the Apostles until the end of time, she is to be present to the evangelizing Church—the Church-in-mission.

B. MARY IN THE CHURCH’S MISSIONARY DIALOGUE...

With the diverse cultures of Asia. In the Church’s mission amidst the diverse cultures of Asia, Mary is model of that genuine Christian witness which, in the multi-cultural ambit of Asia, is a more appealing and persuasive way of preaching the Gospel and the Kingdom of God than intellectual argument.¹³² It is a witness that flows from an intimate and indissoluble

132 EA, 42; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate (7 December 1990), 42.

communion with God which spurs on a person to run in haste to help a neighbor in need.¹³³ The stories of her visit to her cousin to assist her at the most difficult stage of pregnancy and of her intercession to save the young bride and groom from embarrassment at their wedding in Cana beautifully illustrate this missionary zeal that the Church should have. From the Blessed Mother the Church learns that it is primarily by her conduct and by her life—concern for people, charity towards the poor, the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, the witness of sanctity—that she will evangelize the world.¹³⁴ The Church sees in Mary that life witnessing by which “Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live.”¹³⁵

With other religious traditions. In the multi-religious context of Asia, the person and role of Mary is a point of convergence among adherents of other faiths because in her shines forth the universal value of motherhood that transcends cultures and religions. It is not surprising therefore that “throughout Asia there are hundreds of Marian sanctuaries and shrines where not only the Catholic faithful gather, but believers of other religions too.”¹³⁶ Before she is Mother of the Savior and Mother of the Church, Mary was first daughter of Adam¹³⁷ and hence shares a common nature and dignity with the rest of the human family including followers of other religions. Adherents of other faiths have no difficulty seeing in her person the model of faith. The person of Mary is one of the areas in which the Church can enter into a fruitful dialogue with Islam, one of the great religions with the biggest following in Asia, for Moslems also honor her and, at times, call on her with devotion.¹³⁸

Witness, which is the first and primary component of the Church’s dialogue with adherents of other faiths, finds a model and inspiration in Mary’s life and mission. Her life of quiet service and faithful cooperation with the divine will in uplifting the human lot, driven by faith and nourished by contemplation and attentiveness to the Word of God, is also the way for the Church-in-mission in the midst of other religious traditions.

With the Poor. Mary embodies God’s and the Church’s preferential love for the poor. She is the woman of effective service that uplifts the poor and the needy, manifested in her visit to Elizabeth and in her intervention in behalf of the young couple in the wedding at

133 Cf. EN, 41.

134 Cf. EN, 41; RM, 42.

135 EN, 21.

136 EA, 51.

137 Cf. PAUL VI, *Exploring the Mystery of the Church. Address of Pope Paul VI at the Close of the Third Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* (November 21, 1964).

138 Cf. NA, 3.

Cana. Mary's example tells us to run in haste, be present where our brother or sister needs us, proclaim the Good news of the God who frees from oppression and consoles in times of affliction.¹³⁹ In Mary, the Church-in-mission finds a mother who bids her to engage in concrete works of service and compassion that truly uplift the condition of the poor, in causes that uphold justice for those who have no means to pursue it, in helping build a society where everyone, even those who have least in life, can enjoy the full measure of their human life and dignity. The poor find in Mary the heart of a mother who goes out to everyone but especially to the least among her children for they are the ones who need her most.

Such preferential love for the poor is wonderfully inscribed in Mary's *Magnificat*.¹⁴⁰ She praises the God who in her lowliness favored her among all women and generations. But she also exalts the God who has been taking up the cause of the poor and the underprivileged through all ages— dispersing the proud of heart, throwing down rulers from their thrones, lifting up the lowly, filling the hungry with good things, and sending away the rich empty-handed (cf. Luke 1:51-53).

With the Young. To the Blessed Mother, the Church entrusts the many young people and children in this continent as Christ entrusted the young disciple to his Mother at the foot of the Cross: "Woman, behold your son" (Jn 19:26). At a time in their lives when, like the young Jesus, the youth and children of today are being formed to grow "in wisdom, age and grace before God and people" (Lk 2:52), are discovering themselves and discerning their particular calling in the Church and in the world, the Church directs them to Mary echoing the words of Jesus on the Cross: "Behold, your mother" (Jn 19:27). Seeing the many young people of today as source of hope for the society and for the Church while at the same time recognizing that many of them are "troubled by anxiety, deceptions, anguishes and fears of the world as well as by the temptations that come with their state"¹⁴¹ the Church holds out to them the image of Mary who accompanied her Son from the beginning of his mission until its culmination on the Cross. In her, they will surely find a mother who cares, nurtures, and guides as she did the Son of God incarnate. With her, the Church directs the many young people of today to Christ who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life: "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn 2:5).

139 Cf. 1971 Synod of Bishops, "Justice in the World," *Introduction*.

140 f. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Mater* (RM) on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the life of the Pilgrim Church (25 March 1987), 37.

141 CL, 47.

1. MARY AND THE EUCHARIST IN THE CHURCH'S MISSION

By her special relationship with the Eucharist, Mary leads us toward this most sublime sacrament to find in it the source and goal of the Church's evangelizing mission. As in her virginal womb, the Son of God took on human nature that made him the Sacrament of the Father's love, so in the Eucharist, Christ continues to be Sacrament of the Father through the sacramentality of the Church—in the person of his minister, in the proclamation of the Word, in the assembly that prays and sings, but especially in the Eucharistic species.¹⁴² “The body given up for us and made present under sacramental signs was the same body which Mary had conceived in her womb!”¹⁴³ By being closely associated with her Son in giving himself as the Bread of Life and Living Bread for the life of the world by his sacrifice on the Cross, Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce her heart was fulfilled (cf. Lk 2:34-35).

From the school of Mary. The Church can learn from the school of Mary, the “Woman of the Eucharist,” the necessary and proper interior disposition to fruitfully celebrate and live out the mysteries of redemption:¹⁴⁴ attentive, contemplative and active presence, generous concern for the rest of the world and humanity, and openness to the eschatological fulfillment of all that humanity hopes for. Mary exemplifies the Eucharistic worship that seeks to be concretized in works of love and service and that opens the faithful to eschatological hope. For to the Christian faithful at worship, Mary stands as model in listening to the Word and taking it to heart; in praising and thanking God who has done great favors to oneself and to the rest of humankind; in bringing Christ and his gifts of joy and salvation to all that one meets, in praying and interceding for the needs of all, in nourishing the life of grace which one receives through the sacraments, in offering oneself in union with Christ's offering of himself to the Father, in imploring the coming of the Lord, and in waiting for it with vigilance.¹⁴⁵

“Do whatever he tells you!” With these words Mary continues to tell her Son's Church to take heed of his bidding to do what he did at the Last Supper and on Calvary “in memory of him”. But she also summons the Church to commitment to this most sublime Mystery by her quiet but active engagement in its apostolic mission. She was with the Apostles of her Son as they awaited in constant prayer (cf. Acts 1:14.) the coming of the Holy Spirit he promised them to be their Teacher and Guide in their mission (cf. Jn 14:16-17; Jn

142 Cf. SC, 7.

143 JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (EDE) on the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church, 56 (17 April 2003), 56.

144 *Ivi*, 53.

145 Cf. CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, *Orientations and Proposals for the Celebration of the Marian Year 1987-1988* (3 April 1987).

16:13-14). She must have been with the first generation of Christians who devoted themselves to “the breaking of the bread” (Acts 2:42). She continues to be present, with the Church and as the Mother of the Church, at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist.¹⁴⁶ The Church, therefore, never ceases to ask for her prayer (at the *Confiteor*) and to honor her (in the Eucharistic Prayer) for it is fitting that “the Eucharist, being the most sublime celebration of the mysteries of salvation worked by God through Christ in the Holy Spirit, must necessarily recall the Holy Mother of the Savior united indissolubly to these mysteries.”¹⁴⁷

Finally, with Mary the Church sings the Eucharist as her *Magnificat*, recalling the wonders worked by God in salvation history in fulfillment of the promise once made to the fathers, proclaiming the wondrous mysteries of Christ’s redemptive incarnation, death and resurrection, and awaiting the eschatological hope of glory.¹⁴⁸

146 Cf. EDE, 57.

147 CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, *Orientations... cit*, 19. Cf. SC,103; LG, 53, 57.

148 Cf. EDE, 58.

X. SPES GLORIAE

At the end of our journey, let us return to the word of the Apostle: “Christ in You, hope of glory” to discover how the Eucharist manifests, in time and in history, the glory of God in the anticipation of the coming of the Lord.

A. THE EUCHARIST AND THE “GLORY OF GOD”

The acclamation of the Eucharistic assembly after the consecration aptly concludes the manifestation of the eschatological orientation that is signified by the participation in the table of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 11: 26): we proclaim the death and resurrection of Christ “until he comes again”. The Eucharist is tension toward the goal, foretaste of the fullness of joy promised by Christ (cf. Jn 15:11). In a certain sense, it is anticipation of the final Kingdom, “pledge of future glory”.¹⁴⁹ In the trustful waiting that “the blessed hope is accomplished and our Savior Jesus Christ may come.”¹⁵⁰

The Eucharist which is at the same time seed and goal of the mission manifests the experience of the glory of God that has at its center the Paschal Mystery of Christ, his passion and death, his glorious resurrection. It is on the cross that the true glory of God is revealed to us because there the Father shows in his Son his merciful face and his love up to the point of death for the salvation of his creatures and creation.

Thus “Christ in you, hope of glory” is revealed to us as no other than the whole saving plan of God realized in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus , a plan that continues to be present in the world, through the elements of time and history but which will be accomplished when Christ shall consign the Kingdom to the Father.

From Sunday to Sunday, gathered in the name of the Lord, we celebrate the glory of God in every Eucharist. That Jesus who was crucified we now encounter-- risen, living, raised before the world who crucified him. Now death is made joyful by love and our resurrection is manifested in the efforts to love as Jesus loved. “*Gloria Dei vivens homo; vita autem hominis visio Dei*. The glory of God is man fully alive, and the life of man is the vision of God.”¹⁵¹

B. THE MESSIANIC BANQUET

The meaning of the future glory of the Kingdom that is still to come is expressed by the prophet with the image of the eschatological pilgrimage of the people to the holy mountain

149 Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, antiphon for the Magnificat, Vespers II.

150 *Roman Missal*, embolism after the Our Father.

151 IRENEUS OF LYONS, *Adversus haereses* 4, 20, 7 (SC 100/2, 648).

of God where the mission is concluded by the great Messianic Banquet prepared for all peoples and nations: *“On this mountain the Lord of hosts / will provide for all peoples, / a feast of rich food and choice wines, / juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. / On this mountain he will destroy / the veil that veils all peoples. / The web that is woven over all nations; / He will destroy death forever. (Is 25, 6-8)*

The Eucharist, prophecy of this final banquet, appears as “the sacrament of the mission accomplished” where the common desire of humanity is fed: communion with God, when and where He will be all in all, and universal brotherhood.

“There, on the holy mountain all the nations will gather to celebrate the definitive feast to the Lord. They will contemplate the face of God, they will become his people and they will praise him with pure lips: *“You are great, and you do wondrous deeds; you alone are God”* (Psalm 86:10). And to all the nations of the world God will respond with every wondrous blessing that transcends all boundaries: *“Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance”* (Is 19:25).¹⁵²

The eschatological tension present in the Eucharist encourages our historical journey, planting a seed of living hope in the daily commitment of each one to his or her particular tasks. While indeed they await the “new heaven” and a “new earth” (cf. Rev. 21:1), Christians stimulate their sense of responsibility toward the present world, making sure that they do not miss to do the duties of their earthly citizenship. At this historical moment they in fact contribute, in the light of Luke’s Gospel, to the edification of a world for the sake of man and fully responding to the will of God.

The celebration of the International Eucharistic Congress prefigures the definitive banquet at the end of time to which all are invited.

C. THE LOVE OF GOD EMBRACES HUMANITY

We go back to the Eucharist, sacrament of the presence of Jesus Christ. In it, the Lord embraces all people and realizes, though not yet in full measure, the unity of the whole creation. The mission is, in its essence, the work that goes with waiting for the great Messianic Banquet at the end of time. This movement takes its beginning from every Eucharistic assembly gathered around the table of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

Proclaiming the death of the Lord “until he comes again” (1 Cor 11:26) entails for those who participate in the Eucharist the commitment to transform their life, that it may become “eucharist”. It is precisely this transfiguration of existence united to the task for the

152 JAME CARDINAL L. SIN, *The Eucharist: Summons and Stimulus, Call and Challenge to Evangelization*, in *Christ, Light of Nations*, 45th International Eucharistic Congress; Città del Vaticano 1994, pp. 764.

evangelical transformation of the world that manifest the eschatological tension of the eucharistic celebration and of the whole Christian life: “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

Many are the demands that ask for attention on the horizon of our time: peace, justice, and solidarity in the relationships among peoples, the defense of human life. And many are the contradictions that obscure the heaven of our “globalized” world where the weak, the smallest, and the poorest have very little to hope for. Here and now the Christian hope should shine! For this too the Lord has willed to remain with us in the Eucharist, inscribing his presence with the promise of a humanity renewed by his love. Significantly, the Gospel of John, instead of narrating the institution of the Eucharist, presents the story of the “washing of the feet” in which Jesus is made Master of communion and service (cf. Jn 13:1-20). And the apostle Paul, for his part, calls unworthy the participation of the community in the Supper of the Lord when it takes place in a context of division and of indifference toward the poor (cf. 1 Cor 11:17 f).¹⁵³

In the Eucharist the diversity of culture—of languages, history and traditions—is received as an expression of human richness, of the infinite variety of the resources and of the gifts of humanity. This diversity does not hinder Christian unity but enriches and incarnates it. “*Nations shall walk by your light, / and kings by your shining radiance. / Raise your eyes and look about: / they all gather and come to you: / your sons come from afar, / and your daughters in the arms of their nurses. / For the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, / the wealth of the nations shall be brought to you.*” (cf. Is 60:3 ss).

The “wealth of the nations” are no other than the diverse cultures and religious experiences, which the peoples have created with their intelligence and their hands, the treasures of their wisdom and their secular traditions, the various and concrete ways of the human beings.

While the Messianic Banquet is prepared in which Christian communion will transcend every human border, already now, in the Eucharistic assembly, the various ethic, economic, political, and social cultures are transformed by the Spirit in a thanksgiving that points to a new civilization.

In every Mass, God pronounces his blessing upon every race and nation with prophetic words that illumine our way: “Blessed be Egypt, my people; Assyria, the work of my hands and Israel my inheritance (Is. 19:25).. Blessed be Russia, Somalia, Bolivia, China, works of my hands, and blessed Philippines, Philippines, my inheritance... Amen. Amen.”¹⁵⁴

153 Cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 20.

154 JAME CARDINAL L. SIN, *The Eucharist*, cit., pp. 766