

life. The first is: *Deo omnis gloria!* All the glory to God. This was his rule of conduct when he lived on earth, and it is what he continues to do now in heaven, with the perfection proper to souls who enjoy the vision of God. The image that we see today is an eloquent sign of this.

The second aspiration is: *Regnare Christum volumus!* We want Jesus to reign. It is an echo of a text from John's Gospel—inscribed in the open book held by one of the angels—that St. Josemaría heard in his soul, in a particularly clear way, on one occasion when he was celebrating Mass: *Et ego, si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnes trabam ad meipsum.* He understood then with unusual clarity, as he wrote several times, the precise meaning of the mission of the men and women of Opus Dei in the heart of the Church: to contribute to placing Christ at the summit of all human activities by sanctifying their professional work and the ordinary circumstances of their life.

I have already referred indirectly to the third aspiration, which in some sense sums up Opus Dei's whole mission, when I recalled St. Josemaría's first night spent in Rome. It expresses his very close union with the Church and the Pope, a union to which the Prelature of Opus Dei feels itself specifically called: *Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam!* All with Peter to Jesus through Mary. This aspiration contains in it the "three great loves" of a Catholic. By God's grace, it continues to resound daily in the hearts and on the lips of millions of people.

Before closing, I would like to thank the sculptor, Romano Cosci, for having captured so well a typical expression of St. Josemaría, a saint who always sought the protection of our Lady. I refer to his hands opened in a gesture of welcome, attentive to our needs. I see his gesture as an invitation to go to him in all the moments of our earthly pilgrimage, with the most lively confidence of being heard. Thank you.

Vatican City October 6, 2005

*At the Eleventh Ordinary General
Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.*

Holy Father, venerable brothers in the episcopate, my dear brothers and sisters:

Instrumentum Laboris, in no. 34, emphasizes the importance of the sense of the sacred in the celebration of the Eucharist. I would like to present here some points for reflection that it might be useful to study, in order to find specific ways of helping the faithful to grasp more clearly the sacred character of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The liturgy nourishes the faith of the people of God. Therefore, any loss or diminishing of the sacred character of the celebration of the Eucharist could affect faith in Christ's presence in the Blessed Sacrament; while, in contrast, a renewed stress on the sacredness of this great mystery would help strengthen the

faith of the People of God and assist them in their efforts to lead a holy life. This is the spirit of the Second Vatican Council which, in striving to increase Christian life among the faithful and foster the union of all who believe in Christ, felt the need to take a special interest in the liturgy.¹

Instrumentum Laboris rightly affirms that the application of the liturgical reform according to the spirit of the Council has helped further the participation of the faithful in the celebration of the Christian mystery. Nevertheless, it also points out that mistakes have occurred, due precisely to a weakening of the sense of the sacred character of the celebration of the Eucharist. Because of its sacramental nature, the Eucharist demands certain specific signs and words, and these, therefore, must not be neglected or abandoned without prejudice to God's plan for the sacrament.

As no. 42 in the General Dispositions for the Roman Missal emphasizes, one must take care to ensure that the established norms provide for the common spiritual good of the People of God, rather than for the personal tastes or preferences of the celebrant.

Instrumentum Laboris contains a list of abuses, and I think the need exists to try to eliminate them, through the application of the directives provided in the *Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum*. These abuses, which are mentioned in the document, should serve as a point of departure for our reflection. But it would also be opportune to

examine certain norms whose application, without being an abuse in itself, presents aspects that are clearly negative and that in fact favor abuses.

For example, some aspects involving Masses with a great number of concelebrants merit being considered more deeply, both to defend faith in the Eucharistic mystery, as well as to foster the sacred attitude, both interior and exterior, of the concelebrants. And this is not only a matter of the obvious difficulties of a practical nature. Because of the great number of priests, it can happen that many find themselves outside the sanctuary and, at times, are so far removed from the altar that they cannot even see it. In these cases the altar-priest relationship is very weak; the words *hoc/hic* of the consecration lose their significance, since they are not applicable to such distant realities. The difficulty of saying the words of the consecration simultaneously generates more than a few doubts of a symbolic/sacramental order. In addition, the presence of many concelebrants outside the sanctuary can cause in the faithful a certain confusion regarding the difference between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood.

Thinking also of celebrations where a large crowd of faithful is present, I ask myself—inspired by an idea expressed by the then Cardinal Ratzinger in his book *Guardare al Crocifisso*—if it might not be opportune to avoid general distribution of Communion when this cannot be done in a dignified manner.²

1. Cf. Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 1.

2. Joseph Ratzinger, *Guardare al Crocifisso*, Jaca Book, Milan 2005 (2nd ed.) p. 86.

To confront these problems, and others that cannot be dealt with now in this brief presentation, perhaps it would be necessary to study the suitability of new norms, because experience shows that it is not enough to recall the present norms: that is to say, some of these ought to be revised.

A recovery of the sense of the sacred in Eucharistic celebrations, stemming from a true love for Christ and a sincere devotion, would foster in the whole Church an increase in Christian practice, in priestly vocations, and in missionary zeal, and also help strengthen the spiritual life of the People of God, both clergy and laity. If we restore the respect, devotion and love that we should always have towards the Mystery of the Eucharist, it would become a source of life and attraction for many souls who have distanced themselves from the faith, and also for non-Catholics and non-Christians.

Murcia November 11, 2005

*At the Eucharistic Congress at
the Catholic University of
St. Anthony.*

The Eucharist and Penance

Theological and Pastoral Reflections

To begin my talk I would like to cite some words of St. Josemaría Escrivá, a holy priest who passionately loved the two sacraments that I will focus on. He was speaking at a time of the year quite close to the one in which we now find ourselves, because it was a time close to Christmas.

“Christmas season, first days of 1939. To be reborn and continue forward, to begin and carry on. In material things inertia means not changing: not moving what is at rest, not halting what is moving. But in spiritual matters, to carry on and continue forward is never inertia. We return to the same, always the same: God with us, the Christ Child. And, guided by the Angels, we go to adore the God Child, whom our Lady and St. Joseph present to us. Through all the ages, from every corner of the earth, weighed down and yet spurred on by the work of all human activities, magi will continue arriving at the Bethlehem ever present in the tabernacle. Put care into your work; prepare your offering—your work, your duty—for the Epiphany of each day.”¹

This is my aim: to nourish our eagerness to draw close to “the Bethlehem ever present in the tabernacle,” in order to grow in our knowledge of the august sacrament of the Eucharist, protected by the love that Mary and Joseph had for Jesus. We will do so with an eagerness to speak to Emmanuel, God with us, and with the desire to receive him with our body and

1. St. Josemaría Escrivá, cited in *The Way: Critical Historical Edition*, edited by Pedro Rodríguez, Rialp, Madrid, 2004, 3rd ed., p. 1051.