

open one's heart: it's not something mechanical that can be programmed. Pray that this happens with many young people, with the grace of the Holy Spirit and the help of true human friendship.

"Finding Christ" means being attached to him, ever more closely, as the branch to the vine (*Jn* 15:1-8). "Being built up in Jesus Christ," explains Benedict XVI in his message for the 26th World Youth Day, "means responding positively to God's call, trusting in him and putting his word into practice . . . Listen to him as a true friend with whom you can share your path in life."

"Loving Christ," finally, means finding the strength needed to love others, and to want to love always more. It means being "built up" in Christ, letting the Holy Spirit shape in us the image of the Word Incarnate, who offers himself for all men and women. The Pope's words challenge us to seek forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in order to receive Christ's love—a sacrament that Benedict XVI himself will celebrate in Madrid, as an eloquent testimony to divine mercy. And this love means letting ourselves be loved by Jesus in the Eucharist, so as to bring him afterward to many other people.

I ask Our Lady of Almudena, Mother of God and our Mother, for myself and for everyone, that she obtain for us the joy of a new conversion, a new beginning on the path of faith, so that, knowing ourselves to be weak but at the same time strong in faith (*Col* 2:7), we may believe in the love of our Father God and feel

ourselves to be truly daughters and sons of God in Christ.

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Interview on the Italian Eucharistic Congress, *Zenit*, Rome (September 12, 2011)

Why is the Eucharist the "center and root of the life of every Catholic?"

Putting the Eucharist at the center of Christian life means putting Christ at the heart of everything. In the Eucharist we are called to enter into the love of the Blessed Trinity. Making the Holy Mass the center of our interior life, unites us to Jesus and, in him, to the whole Church, to all mankind.

This was the constant teaching of St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, who said: "If the Tabernacle is at the center of your thoughts and hopes, how abundant, my son, will be the fruits of holiness and apostolate!" The Eucharistic Jesus is the culmination of his gift of himself to mankind. Therefore, if we identify ourselves with him, he will transmit to us the same desire to increase our gift of self and our service to others.

How important, in the charism of Opus Dei, is the practice of Confession and the Eucharist?

In the spirit of Opus Dei, the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist have the importance the Church gives them: like all Catholics, we try to be penitent and Eucharistic, with the frequent practice of Confession and daily participation in Holy Mass.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is closely linked to the Eucharist. Confession entails the awareness of being sinners, with faith in God's mercy. Jesus purifies us with his Blood shed on the Cross for us, so that we can participate more faithfully in the Sacrifice of Calvary that is made present each day in the Holy Mass.

Both sacraments fill the soul with joy and peace, just as the good thief, who could see Jesus with his own eyes on Calvary, felt impelled out of contrition to acknowledge his sins, and thus attained eternal salvation.

I insist: Confession has a very important role in Christian life, because it is a sacrament of joy and the entranceway to the peace and happiness found in the Eucharist.

The [Italian] National Eucharistic Congress is underway. What suggestions do you have on how to make the practice of Confession and Communion more vibrant and widespread?

The Church has always taught that in the Tabernacle we find strength, the strongest refuge against our fears and worries. It is not enough for each of us, individually, to seek and find our Lord in the Eucharist. We need to "infect," by our

witness, as many other people as possible, so that they too discover this incomparable friendship.

Spiritual communion is a great help in preparing for Eucharistic communion. In order to be men and women who are aware of our divine filiation, we need to receive Christ, if possible, every day.

As far as Penance is concerned, I consider it very important for priests to make themselves generously available to hear confessions: an available confessor, a confessional "with a green light," is a "hand" reaching out to us for our conversion.

Regarding this point, Benedict XVI recently suggested that we follow "the example of the great saints of the past, from St. John Mary Vianney to St. John Bosco, from St. Josemaría Escrivá to St. Pius of Pietrelcina, from St. Joseph Cafasso to St. Leopold Mandich" (Address to the participants in a course organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary, 2011).