

The Eucharist as a Thanksgiving and a Wedding Feast

Come, receive Me that you may live and enjoy everlasting happiness in the kingdom of My Father Who is your Father also. This I have obtained for you through My Body and Blood sacrificed for you on Calvary and become your Food and Drink in the Holy Mass offered constantly for you.

Do not disappoint My hopes for I have waited long, oh so long for you. Bring joy to My Heart by letting Me come into yours. It is I alone Who can bring you happiness for only in Me is joy found in its fullness. Come, that you may have life. (Words of Jesus to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, letter to her spiritual director, Fr. Paul F. Leibold. All letters are copyright protected and may not be reproduced without expressed written permission.)

At the September, 1920 6th National Eucharistic Congress in Bergamo, Italy, Fr. Angelo Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, spoke on the theme, **“The Eucharist and the Virgin Mary.”** He presented the intimate relationship of Eucharistic and Marian devotions, citing the Canticle of Canticles 2:2-3: **“As a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among women”**, with the lily symbolizing the pure Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception. The following line reads: **“As an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my lover among men”**, pointing to Jesus as the tree laden with the fruit of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood; He is the tree at the center of all life. The imagery recalls that of the enclosed Garden of Paradise in the Book of Genesis where the first woman and the first man lost the gift of intimacy with God and sanctifying grace for all mankind when they disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit from the tree in the center of the Garden. Genesis also records God’s promise of a new woman, a new Eve, from whom would come a new man, a new Adam, to crush the head of the ancient serpent who had seduced Adam and Eve into that original sin that brought separation from God and death to all their posterity. On another tree that new Adam would be nailed and would pour out His Precious Blood to cleanse the world from sin and free mankind from everlasting death, restoring our filial relationship to God as a Father to us all. His Blood is our life, given to us in every Eucharist where Christ’s death on Calvary is made sacramentally present under the form of a sacrificial meal which becomes our pledge of salvation and the resurrection of the body. Unlike the forbidden fruit in the first garden, the Body and Blood of Jesus is the fruit in the new enclosed garden of Christ’s Church, His Bride, and is made present on our altars and is given to us in Holy Communion as a means to eternal life. **“Unless you eat My Flesh and drink My Blood you shall not have life within you.”** **It is the one fruit we must eat to live! Jesus is the one and only Savior of the world!** Reference: <http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2017/08>

The Eucharist is not only food for our pilgrim journey through the desert storm of life, but a wedding feast, a foretaste of the wedding banquet of the Lamb of God with His Bride, His Church, in the eternal jubilee of heaven. We are Christ’s bride collectively as His Mystical Body, wed to Him in the bond of His Blood, and individually, as each is called to a unique holiness through union with Him in the deepest recesses of our souls. Not only are we called into His Presence but He stoops to make His Dwelling place within us. Nowhere

is His Indwelling Presence more awesome, more intimate, more real than in His Eucharistic Presence which makes of our bodies, like Mary's, a tabernacle of the Indwelling God. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, the Eucharist is the source and the summit of the Christian life.

As we understand the inseparable bond of mother and child, of the Virgin Mary and Jesus, it is expected that the apparitions of Our Lady of America to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil should be interspersed with visions and locutions with Jesus who called Himself a beggar for love, for our love. Let us ponder His words to Sister Mildred on July 11, 1954, along with the words at the beginning of this piece. **"I have waited long, oh so long for you.... Come, that you may have life."**

I am a beggar for love, but how few give to Me the means by which to satisfy My divine hunger. I hunger for the love of My own, and I receive the crumbs no other would accept. (Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, The Dairy, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Pg. 6.)

The word **"Eucharist"** means **"thanksgiving."** In our lowliness we have nothing of our own to give to God in gratitude for all He has given to us, for nothing we have is of our own making. God, in His infinite goodness, not only sends us food from heaven to sustain us but gives us the most perfect gift to offer back to Him in atonement for our sins and in gratitude for His great kindness towards us. He gives us His very best, Himself, in the gift of His Son, a testimony to His love which is unfathomable, unconditional and totally selfless, a testimony to the self-giving nature of Love Itself. In the words of a classical song, "Love ain't love until you give it away." While we gather our poor offerings and our poor selves, let us unite them with the gift of infinite worth, the gift of the Son Who is so pleasing to the Father, and say, **"Thank you, God, for all you have done for me. Take all I have and all I am, for it already belongs to you, and make of me a praise of glory to Your Most Holy Name. Amen."**

As we have written previously, Sister Mildred was asked by Our Lord if she would be willing to suffer for souls. These sufferings came in many ways, even attacks from the devil, the "ole boy", as she called him. She writes to her spiritual director how Our Lord came to her during one of these painful attacks.

In the midst of this horror, Our Lord appeared before me showing His burning Heart. He smiled at me and in a most encouraging manner thanked me for suffering this for His sake. Just think of it, Father, God thanking His very small creature for simply doing her duty. What exquisite manners He has. I was ashamed because I thought of the many times I neglect to thank Him for all His great mercy.

On September 26-27, 1957, Our Lady exhorted her beloved sons, the priests, to live an extraordinary imitation of Jesus, the Eternal High Priest, modest in dress and detached from the manners of a man of the world, for it is through them that the grace of the sacraments is given to souls.

Dear sons, I ask you to practice self-denial and penance in a special manner, because it is you who must lead my children in the way of peace. Yet this peace will come only by way of the sword, the flaming sword of love. If, therefore, you love my Son and wish to honor me, heed my admonition and be the first to give the example of a life of penance and self-denial. Thus, by sanctification from within you, you will become a bright and burning light to the faithful, who look to you for help and guidance. (Diary, Pg. 20.)

The early Church Father Origen spoke of the priesthood of the laity, quoting St. Peter who spoke of the faithful as a chosen race, a royal, priestly, holy nation, people whom God has ransomed. Because we are a priestly people, he says we, too, must offer sacrifice to God, but to offer it with dignity, with garments that are pure and different from the common clothes of other men. He says we need the “divine fire.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Church Fathers, Ignatius Press, 2008, Pg. 41.)

Who of us is not familiar with that saying of St. Augustine’s, **“Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O Lord,”** which addresses the hunger for Himself that God has placed in all of us who have been made in His image and likeness. This is the God-ache deep within us that only God can fill; it is like a wound that will not heal until God heals it. St. Augustine gives us this beautiful passage about this hunger which should set our hearts on fire with longing to taste and eat this Bread come down from heaven to be for us a bit of heaven on earth.

Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new; late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The lovely things kept me far from you, though if they did not have their existence in you, they had no existence at all. You called and cried aloud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours. (Pope Benedict XVI, Church Fathers, Pg. 183.)

It is in the Eucharist that Jesus satisfies our hunger and thirst for God as fully as possible until we partake of the wedding feast of heaven. Nothing can be more real or more intimate than becoming what we eat, the living body of Christ. The Eucharist is how Jesus stays with us on earth while He rejoices in heaven and waits to celebrate with us there.

What Moses gave you was not the bread from heaven; it is my Father who gives you the real bread from heaven. For the bread that God gives is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world....Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him to life on the last day. For my flesh is the real food, my blood is the real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him. (John 6:32, 54-55.)

On April 3, 1981, Our Lady lamented to Sister Mildred over those for whom the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass no longer has meaning.

They have lost that spiritual sensitivity of reaching out and touching the wounded hand of my Son. In a special way, during the Holy Sacrifice Jesus comes in close contact with those who meet Him in a profound act of faith in a deep sense of His Divine and human presence. It is a great loss when one loses the spiritual sight of the Son that the Father sent to guide us into the Eternal Vision. (Diary, Pg. 40.)

We can only imagine the reverence Mary had each moment she spent in Jesus' Presence here on earth and continues now in heaven. Because without her there would be no physical Body of Jesus to be present in the Eucharist, she is revered as Our Lady of the Eucharist. Let us ask her to cover our hearts with her own so Jesus must enter us by way of her and take the same delight in her in our flesh as He did at the Annunciation when He first took flesh in her and she became His Monstrance, His tabernacle. How can we fathom so great a gift? How can we thank Him enough here or hereafter?

But why do you come to me? Who am I that you should offer me yourself? How does a sinner dare to appear before you? And how do you graciously come to the sinner? You know your servant, and you know that he has in himself no good thing for which you should grant him this grace. I confess therefore my own selfishness and sinfulness, and I give you thanks for your exceeding great love. ...

O sweet and tender Jesus, what reverence, what thanksgiving is due to you with perpetual praise for the receiving of your sacred body and blood. This is dignity that no one is able to express. ...You are the Saint of saints, and I am the worst of sinners. Look how you stoop down to me. I am not worthy to look at you, but you come to me. You want to be with me. You invite me to your celebration of Communion. ... You, O Lord of all, who have need of nothing, have desired to dwell in us. You have consecrated and instituted this mystery of Communion for both your honor and for a symbol of your death which gives us life. Rejoice, O my soul, and give thanks to God for so great a gift and precious comfort left to us in this vale of tears.

(Thomas A Kempis, THE IMITATION OF CHRIST in today's language, Worthy Inspired, 2015, Pgs. 29-31.)

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