



Multiplication of the loaves and fishes - Abbatial Church of St. Ouen, Rouen (France)

The Most Substantial Banquet

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In creating man with the need to eat, God established nutrition as the means of sustaining natural life. This reality is an image of the life of grace, which is also maintained by a heavenly food: the Eucharist.

I – Food Is Connatural to Man

Life in Paradise afforded man manifold pleasures and joys; the harmonious arrangement of all things filled him with well-being. Our first parents were surrounded by numerous priv-

ileges which God granted them so that the happiness of earthly existence would lead them to love Him more perfectly. One of these delights, perhaps rarely considered, yet noteworthy, was the ease with which they could enjoy the best of foods. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that food being part of the divine mandate (cf. Gn 2: 16), man would have sinned if he did not eat.¹ It was not necessary to work in order to prepare this food; nature itself offered them delicacies, ready to be eaten. Proof of this is that when Adam was expelled from Eden, he heard this decree from God: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread” (Gn 3: 19). This punishment reveals that he had formerly eaten it without toil, although we do not know exactly how.

With original sin, man lost this and many other benefits, as St. John Chrysostom reflects: “It was as if God said to him: My intention in bringing you into the world was that you should live your life without pain or toil, difficulty or sweat, and that you should be in a state of enjoyment and prosperity, and not be subject to the needs of the body but be free from all such and have the good fortune to experience complete freedom. Since, however, such indulgence was of no benefit to you, accordingly I curse the ground so that it will not in future yield its harvest as before without tilling and ploughing; instead, I invest you with great labour, toil and difficulty, and with unremitting sickness and fatigue, so that you will achieve nothing except by sweat, so that under pressure from these you may have a continual lesson in keeping to limits and recognizing your own nothingness.”²

Despite the severity of the rebuke, God mercifully united clemency with rigour, and did not reduce humanity to scarce sustenance. We see how, over the centuries, in view of man’s necessities, He made His blessings over a people, a group or a family coincide with easy and abundant production of food. For example, promising a land to the Jews as a sign of the Covenant, he emphasized that it would flow with “milk and honey” (cf. Ex 3: 8,17; Dt 6: 3; Nm 13: 27).

Food, a human delight

Plentiful food of good quality imparts gladness. We feel this reality, for example, when we enjoy a particularly tasty dish at a good restaurant; we leave satisfied and in good spirits. A charming vignette, along this line, is related of St. Ignatius of Loyola. He liked to invite the young Benedetto Palmio to participate in his meals because it pleased him to see someone eat so well; he would encourage him to eat as much as he wanted without restraint.³ In any culture, important social events such as graduations or weddings are commemorated with a banquet, inviting family and friends to celebrate around a plenteous table. It is true that food is essential for life and maintaining health, but this is not its highest function. It fills the social role of favouring cordiality among those participating in a meal together, facilitating understanding among people.

When Prince Talleyrand, the great French diplomat, had important matters to discuss with representatives of other nations, he would ask the king to send his personal cook and to provide him with the best national culinary specialties in terms of wines, champagnes and cheeses. It was while feasting at a well-laden table that complex diplomatic issues were resolved. An amusing comment he made to Louis XVIII before the crucial Congress of



The Wedding Feast in Yport, by Albert Fourié, Fine Arts Museum of Rouen (France)

Vienna, registers his belief in the efficacy of this method: “Sire, I need pots and pans more than written instructions.”⁴ At times, the table facilitates interaction and the harmonizing of dispositions more effectively than words.

It was most fitting, therefore, that the Holy Church choose for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi a Gospel narrative in which the Creator of Heaven and Earth offers His followers an incomparable meal. It is a foretelling of the spiritual banquet of His Body and Blood, in which He is at once the Divine Host and the Food. Could there be, around a table, a more intimate and sublime banquet?

II – Portentous Miracle Preparing For the Eucharist

The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves is the only one reported in all four Gospels, a detail expressive of its importance. It took place at the apex of Our Lord’s public life and was largely responsible for sealing His fame in Israel as a Prophet and Wonderworker. On this occasion, accompanied only by the Apostles, He went to the secluded region of Bethsaida Julia, northeast of Lake Tiberias. It was shortly after the death of St. John the Baptist, instigated by Herod— whose searching gaze was now turned to the Divine Redeemer, an infinitely greater Personage than the Precursor. This ruler awaited an opportunity to meet Jesus; motivated, it seems, by shallow or malevolent intentions. But, in His wisdom, He Who searches the depths of hearts knew of this man’s cunning. And “with this rapid departure, it seems that Jesus intended to evade the tetrarch’s vicinity,”⁵ comments Fillion. However, although the pretentious Herod missed the occasion he had hoped for, the same lot did not befall the people who soon learned the whereabouts of the Master, and set out by land to meet Him.

The reward of those who seek the Kingdom of God

At that time, Jesus welcomed the crowds ^{11b} and spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing.

What led the crowd to follow Our Lord? As the Evangelists narrate, not one sick person who approached Him with faith se-



Multiplication of the loaves and fishes - Church of Saint-Suplice, Fouguères (France)

eking a cure was left unattended. This impressed public opinion, especially at a time when medicine was still rudimentary, which lent the miracles even more impact. Our Lord overcame the limitations of science with a mere glance or laying on of hands, either by His desire or His touch, healing everyone instantly. These people were awed by the divine signs shining through Christ's humanity and followed Him, seeing that His teachings deserved total belief and reverence.

¹² Now the day began to wear away; and the Twelve came and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, to go into the villages and country round about, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a lonely place."

Our Lord taught: "Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well" (Mt 6: 33). The crowd, in consonance with this divine counsel, accompanied Jesus on that occasion in the certainty that He was an extraordinary Prophet. They desired healing, but they also sought the truth of doctrine and wanted to know more of God and eternal realities.

The Apostles, however, were concerned with material arrangements. It did not occur to them that if the Master cured, He could also perform other miracles, and perhaps they even feared being sent to obtain food for the large crowd. Therefore, they were quick to advise Our Lord to send the people away, in a veiled attempt to escape this responsibility. Now Our Lord obviously could have satisfied everyone's hunger, for whoever can heal the lame, blind or deaf-mute can also cure a much lesser malady called hunger. However, with the intention of forming the Apostles, He gave an unexpected answer.

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Corpus Christi Procession in the Cathedral of Seville, by
Jenaro Pérez Villaamil
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Our Lord puts the Apostles to a test

¹³ But He said to them, “You give them something to eat.” They said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish— unless we are to go and buy food for all these people.” ^{14a} For there were about five thousand men.

The Saviour commanded the Apostles to feed the multitude to test them, because He already knew what He would do (cf. Jn 6: 6). But disbelieving, they commented, like Philip (cf. Jn 6: 7), that even two hundred silver denarii would be insufficient to distribute a piece of bread to all present—five thou-

sand men, besides women and children, who added significantly to that number. And even if they had enough money, where would they find such a quantity of bread at that late hour? St. Andrew also underscores the difficulty, saying that the only food vendor in the crowd was a boy with five loaves and two fish (cf. Jn 6: 8-9). “He believed,”—says St. John Chrysostom—“that the Author of miracles would do but little with little, and that with more He could do more, which was clearly not so.”⁶

Being God, Our Lord had absolute control over matter and could make creatures from nothing; He did not even require the five loaves and two fish, since His will was sufficient to produce the food that would satisfy the crowd. “Indeed, it was equally simple for Him to make a quantity of bread appear from much or little, since He had no need of primary matter.”⁷ Nevertheless, He asked the Apostles for what was available, even if only these meagre supplies. Let us learn from the example that this passage offers, not to deny the little we have when Jesus asks for it, remembering that it may be a pretext for Him to perform great marvels.

^{14b} And He said to His disciples, “Make them sit down in companies, about fifty each.” ¹⁵ And they did so, and made them all sit down.

In this simple recommendation, the Divine Master manifests His perfect sense of order. To avoid commotion and rush, and to execute the distribution in a calm and even ceremonious way, He had the people sit in groups. Moreover, St. John Chrysostom observes that He did so “to show that before one eats, one should give thanks to God.”⁸

A miracle that is an image of the Eucharist

¹⁶ And taking the five loaves and the two fish He looked up to Heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. ^{17a} And all ate and were satisfied.

It is difficult to not relate the gestures of Jesus in this scene with those He used later to institute the Sacrament of the Eucharist. He was thus preparing the multitudes for the great mystery that would be revealed in short order. The magnitude of the mir-

acle is indicated by the words: “They all ate and were satisfied” or, as St. John writes, “as much as they wanted” (Jn 6: 11). We can assume that each of them obtained enough, not only to satisfying the hunger of the moment, but also to take some home with them. This immense benefit flowed, in the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, “from the inexhaustible stores of divine power.”⁹

^{17b} *And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces.*

Again the Gospel text reveals Our Lord’s approval of order and even of cleanliness; and as a lover of discipline, He allowed no leftovers to remain on the ground. These collected remainders filled twelve baskets, which Jesus wanted to coincide with the number of the Apostles, so that they themselves would carry these loads and verify the full extent of the miracle so unforeseen by them. “This occurred with sights on instructing the disciples. [...] For this reason it happened that the number of baskets were exactly equal to the number of Apostles. [...] I do not marvel only at such a great quantity of bread, but also at the exact amount left over, which was exactly what He desired; neither more nor less.”¹⁰

This demonstrated Our Lord Jesus Christ’s power over matter and food in general, and specifically over bread, by the way He multiplied it according to His plans, not allowing even the fragments to be overlooked. When He later instituted the Eucharist, He also did not want the particles of the consecrated Bread to be treated disrespectfully, as certain unbelievers do who uphold the Real Presence in the Eucharistic species only during the liturgical act. Equally noteworthy is that He did not permit anything to be thrown away. This is a symbolic principle to teach us that we should not let anyone be lost. Even if a soul is treading the paths of sin, we must make every effort to recuperate it, because this is the divine longing: “Of those whom thou gavest me I lost not one” (Jn 18: 9).

He wanted this miracle to have all of these features to facilitate an understanding of the great gift that He would soon bestow: the Blessed Eucharist. His power over bread being demonstrated, it was clear that, if He wished, He could withdraw this original substance and make it give way to His Body, Blood, Soul

and Divinity,¹¹ while retaining the same accidents of taste, appearance, texture and smell. Thus, Jesus created the conditions for people with faith to correspond to the incomparable invitation that He had prepared from all eternity.

III – The Immense gift of the Eucharist

This episode considered here, flowing from the pen of St. Luke, served as a basis for the Gospel of St. John, where it is proved, from the sequel of the narration, that Our Lord had the formal revelation of the Eucharist in mind with this miracle. The multiplication of the loaves is but a pale—though meticulously planned—introduction, chosen by the Redeemer to expose the Eucharistic theme and develop it with extraordinary clarity in the discourse on the Bread of Life (cf. Jn 6: 22-59). This is why it is recalled by the Church for the celebration of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi.

The profound significance of the miracle is in the fact that God created man with a nutritive need—as was alluded to at the beginning—since He would offer Himself as food. He Who could have created us to subsist on thin air, for example, willed that we



Stephen Narni

Eucharistic Celebration in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, 24/2/2016

have the necessity of eating, to make it clear that just as nourishment is the natural basis of natural life, the essence of the life of grace is in the Eucharist.¹²

A Banquet for the soul

The Eucharist is the sacred banquet—the “*sacrum convivium*”¹³ according to the beautiful antiphon composed by St. Thomas Aquinas for the Divine Office for this Solemnity—in which we partake in a special *convivium* with Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a divine banquet because it is offered by God, and realized with God, for God. Incomparably more than excellent champagne, Russian caviar, or any other conceivable delicacy, what is offered at the table of the Eucharist is the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Saviour. It is God Himself, giving Himself to us as food of infinite value, the effects of which the limitations of our intelligence cannot grasp. It is the *mysterium fidei*. If St. Thomas says that the least participation in the life of grace surpasses the whole universe,¹⁴ what of the Creator of grace Himself? The Eucharist is, therefore, the most important of all the Sacraments regarding substance, since it consists in God Himself, the Author of grace, while the others contain a certain instrumental power which is a share of Christ’s power.¹⁵ This is why, the Angelic Doctor moreover teaches, all other Sacraments exist by reason of the Eucharist, although it is not the door to the others, as is Baptism.¹⁶ All the riches of the earth are as dust compared to the Blessed Sacrament. What an extraordinary manifestation of God’s love for us!

The effects of this sublime Sacrament

What, then, is the union with Our Lord that is produced by such an elevated gift? The Gospel says: “As the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats My flesh shall live by Me” (Jn 6: 57). Whenever we are in God’s grace, He abides in us and we abide in Him, for by His divinity, He is the only One Who can dwell in us. This union is intensified at the moment of Communion, when, beyond the indwelling of the Holy Trinity, is added the presence of the Glorious Body, Blood and Soul of Our Lord Jesus Christ: “*mens impletur gratia*,”¹⁷ the soul is

filled with grace. “In this Sacrament sins are purged away, virtues are increased, the soul is saturated with an abundance of spiritual gifts,”¹⁸ affirms the Angelic Doctor. It is a real wellspring of every grace, so that strictly speaking, one Communion would suffice to make us saints!

This union is so elevated that it is difficult to find an example in nature approximating this supernatural reality. A dry sponge that becomes immediately soaked when immersed in water says something, but union with Christ in the Eucharist is much greater, because with the sponge, the water occupies only its empty spaces while in the Eucharist, He ‘soaks’ us up completely. To use another image, it is as if all our blood were drawn out through one of our veins while the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ were introduced into another. In order to express this sublime reality, St. Cyril of Alexandria proposes the metaphor of wax: “As one melted wax added to another blends perfectly, becoming one wax, also whoever receives the Body and Blood of the Lord abides with Him so closely that Christ is in him and he in Christ.”¹⁹ It is so strong a union that it could be called a ‘mutual interpenetration,’ which lasts as long as the Eucharistic species remain in us.

It is with reason that St. Thomas continues, in the same antiphon, by aptly observing that in the Eucharist “a pledge of future



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Corpus Christi Altar, by Master of Vallbona de les Monges - Museum of National Art of Catalonia, Barcelona (Spain)

glory is given us.”²⁰ In fact, to arrive at this glory, there are a number of conditions, and receiving Holy Communion is one of them. While on earth, we live outside our true homeland, Heaven. God has us undergo the sufferings of this valley of tears because He will give us so much glory that if we had not experienced suffering, we would judge ourselves unworthy of the prize given, which is truly so far beyond us.

IV – Let the seed grow!

We know that it is from a seed that a mature tree develops. Grace is the seed of glory. If in this life we are faithful to the graces that maintain us in the practice of virtue and obedience to God’s Law, we are protecting this seed which will germinate. It is sufficient to plant it and give it adequate care for it to develop. Conversely, small acts of envy, comparisons, petty lies, or worse still, mortal sin, rob the germ of its vigour and prevent it from becoming a tree in other words, from blooming into eternal glory. What should we do to protect our seed, so that it will become a fruitful tree? We should receive Communion frequently. Communion is a pledge of future glory; it is like a certificate signed by God that will open the gates of Heaven for us. All who partake in the Body and Blood of Our Lord will resurrect on the last day and obtain eternal happiness, for He promised: “He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day (Jn 6: 54). It is He Who will resurrect us. And just as we believe that He is in the Host and the consecrated Wine, and that He really is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity Incarnate, Who died on the Cross to redeem us and now sits at the right hand of God the Father, we should also believe with complete certainty in His promise that we will be resurrected in our glorious body if we follow His counsel.

However, we can regretfully attest that this gift is forgotten and sometimes even scorned. Most people—when not entirely abandoning Jesus in the tabernacle—do not give sufficient value to the Eucharist and neglect Holy Communion. If

we discovered, for example, that by taking a certain mysterious elixir daily we would be transformed into the richest, most beautiful or most intelligent person in the world, we would be willing to make any sacrifice to obtain such a drink. The Eucharist, however, is not about becoming more rich, beautiful or intelligent, but rather, about receiving the greatest richness, beauty and intelligence possible: eternal happiness.

Our Lord alerts us to the value of this gift in the parable of the banquet (Mt 22: 2-14), in which a king invites his subjects to attend a grand feast. God calls all men to the eternal banquet, which begins here on earth, with the Eucharist. We may receive Communion whenever we like. The Blessed Sacrament is available to us in countless churches and yet many still imitate the wicked subjects of the parable, who preferred to look after their own affairs and leave the king alone. If we had the chance to receive Communion only once during our life we could deem our entire existence as well spent. And He offers Himself to us every day... What unfathomable mercy!

Thanksgiving with Mary

Mindful of this sublime reality, how should we make our thanksgiving after receiving Communion? It should be an ecstasy of love! It should be made with all care and devotion, profoundly and seriously, filled with piety, awe, and fiery enthusiasm; not an empty chatter, interrupted by distractions, and oblivious to the treasure we carry within us.

With what recollection and adoration would Mary Most Holy have received Communion! Prof. Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira wrote a beautiful prayer to Our Lady, which represents the supplication of a believer who wants to receive the Eucharist with sentiments similar to hers: "My Mother, when Jesus was within thy inner enclosure, thou hadst countless things to say to Him; yet, see the inadequacy of what I say when I receive Him in the Blessed Eucharist! Therefore, I beg thee to speak on my behalf, my Mother, and tell Him all that I want to say but cannot. Adore Him as I wish I could adore Him; render Him the thanksgiving I would wish to render. Make Him acts of reparation, for my sins

and those of the whole world, with an ardour of reparation that I, unfortunately, do not have.”²¹

Following Our Lady’s example, let us be very attentive in making our thanksgiving: deeply aware of how we should thank Jesus, praise Him and worship Him, without forgetting to ask forgiveness for our faults. May this Solemnity of Corpus Christi serve as the ideal occasion for our hearts to catch fire with a deeper love for the Holy Eucharist, since it is in this heavenly Food that we will find the strength to face the difficulties of life, until we reach eternal happiness. Guided by the peerless example of Mary, let us be convinced that He is pleased with the thanksgiving of a sinner who clothes himself in her merits: “We must ask Our Lady to be spiritually present in our Communion so that the infinite space that separates us from her Divine Son will somehow be filled, and He will come to us glad that we had recourse to His Mother. Then He will say to us: ‘You are a child of Mary, my Mother; ask of Me whatever you wish.’”²² Besides the individual requests that we can



Thanksgiving after Communion in the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, 23/2/2016

and should make, let us implore the grace of fruitfully doing everything in our power for the greater glory of God and the exaltation of the Holy Church. ✧

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- 1 Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.97, a.3, ad 3.
 - 2 ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. *Homiliae in Genesim*. In *Cap. III Genes.*, hom. XVII, n.9: MG 53, 146.
 - 3 Cf. GARCÍA-VILLOSLADA, SJ, Ricardo. *San Ignacio de Loyola, Nueva Biografía*. Madrid: BAC, 1986, p.598.
 - 4 CASTELOT, André. *Talleyrand ou le cynisme*. Paris: Perrin, 1980, p.536.
 - 5 FILLION, Louis-Claude. *Nuestro Señor Jesucristo según los Evangelios*. Madrid: Edibesa, 2000, p.205.
 - 6 ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. *Homilia XLII*, n.2. In: *Homilías sobre el Evangelio de San Juan*, vol. II: 30-60. Madrid: Ciudad Nueva, 2001, p.141.
 - 7 Idem, *ibidem*.
 - 8 Idem, p.141-142.
 - 9 ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA apud ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Catena Aurea*. In *Lucam*, c.IX, v.10-17.
 - 10 ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM. *Homilia XLII*, n.2. In: *Homilías sobre el Evangelio de San Juan*, op. cit., p.143.
 - 11 Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*, III. q.75, a.4.
 - 12 Idem, q.79, a.1.
 - 13 ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Officium Corporis Christi "Sacerdos."* *Vesp.II*, antiph. ad *Magnificat*.
 - 14 Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Summa Theologiae*, I-II q. 113, a.9, ad 2.
 - 15 Cf. Idem, q.65, a.3.
 - 16 Cf. Idem, *ibidem*.
 - 17 ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Officium Corporis Christi "Sacerdos,"* op. cit.
 - 18 Idem, noct.1, lect.2.
 - 19 ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. In *Ioannis Evangelium*, L.IV, c.2: MG 73, 365.
 - 20 ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Officium Corporis Christi "Sacerdos."* *Vesp. II*, antiph. ad *Magnificat*.
 - 21 CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Conference*. São Paulo, March 24, 1984.
 - 22 CORRÊA DE OLIVEIRA, Plinio. *Mane nobiscum Domine*. Dr. Plinio. São Paulo. Year XIII. N.143 (Feb., 2010); p.17.

Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity...

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

Our Lord Jesus Christ, truly present in the Holy Eucharist, comes in contact with us in an entirely unique way: from soul to soul! Christ comes to us when we receive Communion. In the following pages, Dr. Plinio suggests to us an efficacious and pious way to make the best use of the graces that we receive during this divine convivium.

When I was a boy, a child would be asked during Catechism class whether he believed that Our Lord Jesus Christ was truly present in the Holy Eucharist. The answer that he was supposed to give still resounds in my ears even today, being very beautiful like all the responses of the Catechism: “I believe that He is present in Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity”

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not possess a human body and a divine soul: His Soul was human like ours. If He had not had a human soul, He would not have been truly a man. He is the God-Man, with two natures, the human and the divine, being the human being hypostatically united to the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity.

To receive Communion well, we must have in mind the following truth: we do not see Our Lord Jesus Christ, but He is present in the Holy Eucharist just as He was in the House of Nazareth, at Bethany – with Martha and Mary – and in the sacred arms of the Most Holy Virgin when on the Cross.

And in Communion Our Lord Jesus Christ interpenetrates us.

Caro Christi, caro Mariæ

What is the force of the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in us when we take Communion?

Let us imagine Our Lord at the immaculate and most pure breast of Our Lady. The Most Holy Virgin, through the natural phenomenon of generation, gave Him elements for His Body to be constituted. Being God, from the very first instant of His Incarnation He possessed intelligence, maintaining direct, exalted and unfathomable communication with the Most Holy Trinity, and constantly received the devotion of Our Lady, who knew that the Redeemer was present within Her. During the months of gestation, Our Lady was forming the Body of Jesus and making ever greater acts of adoration and of love, for she understood the process through which He was passing.

His Sacred Flesh and Blood were the immaculate flesh and blood of Mary Most Holy.

Caro Christi, caro Mariæ, theologians tell us: the Flesh of Jesus is the flesh of Mary. The physical presence of Our Lord in the immaculate womb of the Most Holy Virgin was so intimate and interior that it caused as it were an interpenetration of souls, as well as an interpenetration of bodies. And this made His presence extraordinarily fruitful in sustaining, to an ever greater degree, the luminous and crystalline mountain of sanctity that was Our Lady.

Christ present in us through the Holy Eucharist

It is by means of the analogy with the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of Mary Most Holy that we can, then, comprehend the Eucharistic presence in ourselves.

He enters into us and, while He remains, there exists His influence over our entire being. And as our being is composed of body and of soul, He mysteriously enters into sanctifying contact with our soul. And since our soul is the highest, most noble, and most essential thing that we have, this is the extraordinary blessing that each one of us receives at the moment of Communion.

During the period in which the sacred species remain in us without being corrupted by the process of digestion, we have Our Lord present in us, acting mysteriously in our soul.

In order to understand the action of Our Lord on our soul during Communion, let us call to mind a very beautiful event related by the Gospel. ¹

Jesus was walking, and a sick woman who wished to be cured by Him, seeing the multitude of people surrounding the Divine Master who wanted to hear Him or see Him or be made free of some malady, was unable to get near Him, so she touched His holy tunic from behind. Jesus turned and asked: “Who touched Me?”, because – the Gospel tell us – He felt that power had gone out from Him and passed to another person.

In other words, He perceived that a force – in this case, we are evidently speaking of a vital force – had gone out from Him and, having been transmitted to that woman, had cured her.

Now, if a person with Faith touching His tunic can be cured, what does it signify to receive Him wholly within us? It is a grace that cannot be measured.

Contact from soul to soul

Let us imagine a person who goes every day to someone’s house for conversation. If that someone is distinguished, illustrious, eminent, holy, he will honour the house. Much more important than this, however, is the convivium of soul with soul. While the two are conversing, something of the talent, the nobility, the excellence, the virtues or the sanctity of the soul of the host is communicated to the visitor.

To an immensely greater degree, Holy Communion provides us with those same benefits, because Our Lord has a far more intimate contact with us than a mere visitor in our house. To have Him enter our body and there to have contact with our soul is to be interpenetrated by Him.

Let us suppose that Our Lord Jesus Christ were to now enter this auditorium. We would have the most dramatic possible reaction: all of us would prostrate ourselves in order to give passage to Him!

The Gospel speaks to us of the various aspects of Our Lord. Those that touch me most deeply are the two natures. One is when



Last Supper.
Paray le Monial - France

He addresses Himself to the Eternal Father; His words are most beautiful and humble. He is God, but also Man. And if we were to see a man like ourselves praying in such a manner, with such humility, but at the same time with that same intimacy, we would feel ourselves almost transported by that ray of light into the interior of the Most Holy Trinity. Let us imagine that He were standing on the platform of this auditorium and, in the words of the Gospel, lifting His eyes to Heaven and saying in a loud voice: “My Father...” before beginning to pray...

For me, Our Lord’s prayers are more beautiful than His sermons and everything else He did. It is natural, when He was speaking with the Eternal Father, that He would say things that are more



Our Lady of the Most Holy Sacrament.
Minas Gerais - Brazil.

beautiful than when He was speaking to us, though He addressed to us words so admirable that they will never cease to be studied until the end of the world.

Let us suppose further that, besides praying, He were to gaze upon and address words to Our Lady – for me, that is the second most touching thing. The Redeemer’s last glance towards Her from the Cross, what a marvellous thing it was! They looked upon each other and said, one to the other, things expressive of the utmost of their mutual convivium. No-one will know the splendour of that exchange of glances until the end of the world!

If we were to see here Our Lord speaking with the Eternal Father and then with Our Lady, we would erect a chapel in this place.

I have said that it was necessary to consider Whom we are going to receive and the immense honour, the incalculable benefit granted to us by that One who enters into us in such a manner and Who establishes that union with us.

Generous visit

We should not only be conscious of the honour, but also of the kindness. Our Lord, in the Holy Eucharist, spends hours and hours alone locked in a tabernacle, isolated in a chapel were only the lamp of the Most Holy Sacrament is lit. Very often people pass in front of the church and none of them stop in to pray, and

He waits there in expectation of someone who will come to communicate. The Redeemer, then, gives Himself to anyone, enters into his body and makes contact with his soul for the sake of doing him good.

St. Peter said concerning Our Lord this phrase that appears to me very elegant, being both simple and astonishingly profound: “*Pertransiit benefaciendum* — He did good things everywhere He went”.² Wherever He went, He received most sinful people with kindness. Consequently, we must trust during Communion that He is not a sinful judge but a generous father, a healer with an infinite power and desire to pardon us.

Act in accordance with your condition as a slave of Our Lady, inspired by the spirituality of St. Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, who prepared himself for Communion in union with Her and asking Her for the necessary graces. This is how I prepare myself, saying to the Most Holy Virgin: “My Mother, prepare me for this Communion, instilling only good ideas and good impulses in my soul, so that I may be conscious of the extraordinary thing that is about to happen and the immense honour that I am going to receive. It is because you pray that Your Son will come to me.”

All things are possible when in union with Our Lady.

Let us consider once more the entrance of Our Lord into us. Before Communion, one says: “Lord, I am not worthy that should enter into my dwelling, but say only one word and I will be saved.” In other words, I am unworthy of taking Communion, but be the ornament of the house into which You must enter, and fill it with light so that it is worthy to receive You. Once the particle is on our tongue, we make an act of adoration and immediately swallow it..

Ways to make the best use of Communion

There are, among others, two ways of taking Communion. One of them consists in having some thought that has so much interested us or preoccupied our spirit that, during the time of the action of thanksgiving, we continue to develop it.³

There exists another method that I, out of caution, always employ when I follow the first one. At times I prepare myself for

Communion very quickly, for I take daily Communion so often that these ideas easily become present to me. Upon receiving the Host, and even while having my thoughts focussed upon some point related to the Holy Eucharist, I perform the following actions whose significance I am about to explain.

Philosophically, the acts of devotion that a man may offer to God are: adoration, act of thanksgiving, reparation and petition. Even if only in passing we should fulfill these four acts by means of Our Lady, in other words, to ask Her to do them with us.

Adoration

For example, with regards to adoration: “My Mother, I know that my adoration is as nothing in comparison to Yours. Please adore Our Lord with me!”

Mary Most Holy listens to my petition. Then, I have to imagine how She, in Heaven, is adoring Him present in me. But this is not merely imagination; it is a very real thing which I must make present in my spirit.

Let us now consider something rather more complicated, but which I hope to clarify. There are various ways of understanding this adoration. One of them can be formulated as follows: Our Lady is the synthesis of the sanctities of every person who has ever lived, lives now or will ever live on Earth until the end of the world. In other words, She possesses the form of sanctity of every person to an unimaginably exalted degree. Every person is different from another, and a soul that is saved will give glory to God in a manner that has never been done before, during as well as after its earthly life. Each of us in this auditorium, from the very youngest to someone like me who is the oldest, is able to adore God and make an act of thanksgiving, reparation or petition in a way unique to him alone. And Our Lady in Her own way encompasses all of these ways.

We can, then, make the following request of Her:

“My Mother, amongst Your innumerable excellent qualities there exists a perfection through which you perform, in a most sublime manner, the actions I complete as an individual.



Dr. Plinio in a recollection period for prayers.

And in Your way of adoring God there exists a treasure that is the arch-perfection of my way of adoring Him.

“So I unite myself to You in order to adore Your Divine Son, as if I were speaking to the Redeemer through a celestial loud-speaker. Even if it be hoarse and stuttering, my voice will become delightful through having passed through Your voice, my Mother.

“I am now going to adore Him, and You, at the same time, will do so as well, but in a way incomprehensibly more perfect.”

We are able, during Communion, to adore Our Lord in some of the aspects of His earthly life. I especially admire and adore the mystery of the agony in the Garden of Olives, when His sacred Soul was crucified.

Let us, then, adore Our Lord, remembering (for example) His agony in the Garden or in the arms of Our Lady, or simply in His kindness for having visited me. I adore Him in union with the Most Holy Virgin, Who is in a certain sense the arch-I myself.

There is another manner of making adoration, in consideration of the fact that Our Lady adores the Divine Saviour in an inexpressible manner, as no other person is capable of doing.

We can say, then: “My God, I would like to adore You as Our Lady adores You. Accept my sincerity of will. I offer You all the adoration that She has for You.”

To repeat. In the first way, I referred to Our Lady adoring the Divine Saviour exactly – if one can so put it – along the same lines as when I adore Him.

But She does not limit Herself to that, for She contains all of the adorations of the present, the past and the future of humanity, including the adorations of those who sin and do not adore. Consequently, I can ask the Most Holy Virgin that She offer to Him not only my way of adoration but that of Hers, saying to Our Saviour:

“Lord, come now to my house. I have a beautiful surprise to offer You, something much greater than myself. Here is Your Mother, adoring You not only in the unique way that I know to adore, but in all the ways of adoration from all times and all places, including those which were never made, which are being presented to You through Her in my name. O my Lord, it is a most kingly present!”

These are two ways of adoration, like the obverse and the reverse of a coin.

It is possible that, by means of grace obtained through Our Lady, that what I say is touching your soul. However, it is not a matter of mere sentimental effusiveness, but is logically reasoned out like the links in a chain. If it were not reasoned out, it would have no beauty for me. Explanations lacking clear, certain, controlled, serious reasoning in accordance with the doctrines of the Church, to which we surrender ourselves with all of our soul, are not worth anything. They must be in conformity to reason within the bounds set by Faith. If they are purely based on sentiment, I do not admit them.

In fact, I am here developing a thesis... Continued in the next article. ✧

(Extract from a conference of 16/7/1977)

1) Mark 5:30.

2) Acts 10:38.

3) Compare with Dr. Plinio, no. 143, page 17.

Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity... – II

Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira

Our act of thanksgiving when we take Communion must be complete. Aside from adoring Our Lord Jesus Christ, we must also offer Him other acts of devotion. In the following text, a continuation of the article published last months, Dr. Plinio suggests to us a manner in which we can express our gratitude for such a great gift.

What is the reason for the act of thanksgiving after Communion?

Act of thanksgiving

The act of thanksgiving is an act of justice, and whoever does not do it is unjust.

Whenever we receive a very great gift, which is not the payment for a good action that we have done but goes far beyond that, we must make an act of thanksgiving.

Let us imagine a man who is a lifeguard, and must help those people who bathe in the sea. This used to be a profession. The lifeguard would accompany a group of people to the sea and prevent any one of them from being drowned. There is no question



of anyone arriving at the beach and saying to him, “you are my saviour.” For the lifeguard is a professional paid to do his job, and the person would never enter the sea without him; the lifeguard does not risk his life but instead does something very simple that is not a favour. At the end of the day, the swimmer can say: “Thank you. Goodbye, and here is your money.”

However, if someone is drowning at sea and someone throws himself into the water with great danger to himself, saving the drowning man and bringing him back to the beach, the first thing that the former is obligated to say is: “Thank you so much!” This is merely a duty of justice.

I am going to tell you of various favours that Our Lord does for us. The first: we would not exist if, through His omnipotence, He had not created us. This is more than merely saving a life. A man who saves my life postpones the death that will nevertheless arrive at the end of a certain period of time. The One who created me gave me the life of the soul, which I will never cease to possess. I, Plinio Correa de Oliveira — as a human being — will never cease to exist. As long as God is God, I will be. In Communion, He comes to me; will I not be grateful?

Second favour: He incarnated Himself, becoming a man with the same nature as each one of us. And He would do it for each one of us. That is extraordinary, and I must be thankful.

Third: Our Lord freed us from slavery and sin, shedding all of His Blood and dying on the Cross. We can think, for example, of the moment at which He said: “*Eli, Eli, lammá sabachtáni* — My Lord, My Lord, why have You abandoned Me!”¹ And then, bowing His head, Jesus died. That final sorrow, worse than all the others; that final sundering of the soul from the body; that sensation of abandonment, when even the Eternal Father seemed to have forsaken Him; everything that He suffered was, as it were, only for me, Plinio. The Redeemer is present in me; am I not going to thank Him?

Fourth: seeing the infinite distance between Him and me, Jesus gave me His Mother to be my Mother as well. When the Saviour said to St. John: “Son, behold your Mother”,² and to Our Lady: “Woman, behold your son”,³ He knew that we would one

day exist. We were given to Her, and Mary Most Holy was granted to us on that occasion. Will we not be thankful?

Fifth: He made me a member of the Catholic Church. It is a favour that words cannot describe.

Sixth: the Redeemer is present in me now. Our Lady is capable of all forms of gratitude, to an unimaginable degree. I can say, then: "Lord, I am the son of Your Mother. Through devotion, She is present in me; I have received Her. My Mother, I give Him an act of thanksgiving, just as You know how to do it in the name of all men."

Reparation

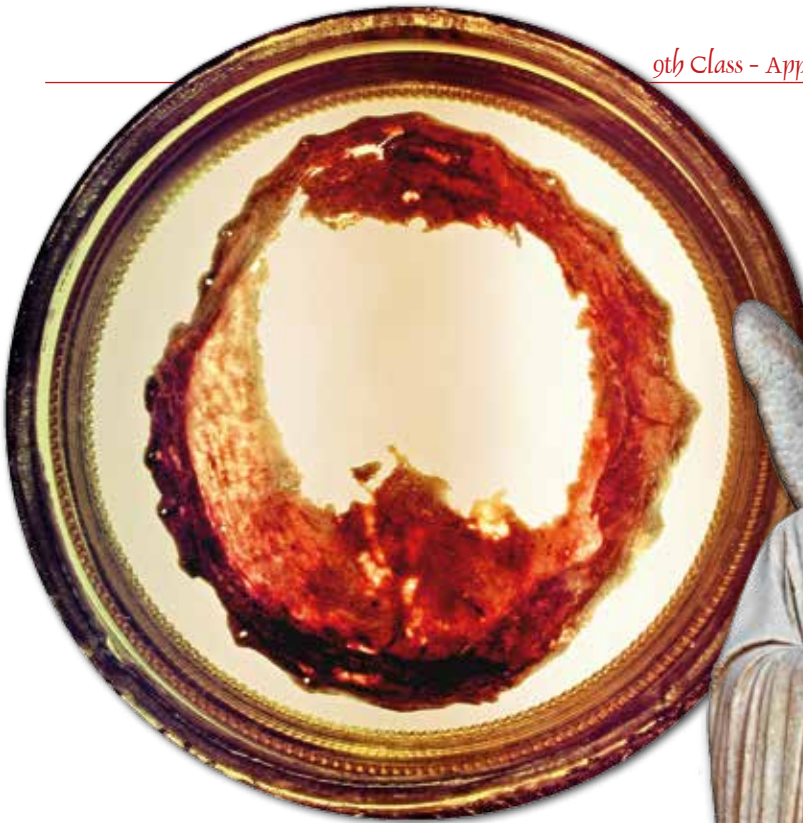
Let us now discuss reparation, which is one of the most distinguished actions that a man can perform in relation to someone who has been the object of an injustice. He who makes reparation pays tribute and, through that tribute, does justice.

Let us imagine that someone, while passing by me, says something insulting to me and I cannot defend myself. Another man, hearing of this, makes a declaration to me: "With respect to you, I would say..." and affirms the opposite of the insult. The offence has been repaired through the act of admiration and love that the second man has made to me. That is the meaning of reparation.

Reparation, in a manner of speaking, cancels out the fault that was committed.

As far as each of us is concerned, we must ask pardon and reparation for not having corresponded to grace, for example saying: "Lord, I behaved unjustly towards You on such-and-such an occasion; on another, perhaps I even sinned; this grieves me. At this moment I ask of You: please accept whatever there is in my soul that is the opposite of that sin. My thoughts wandered while listening to a sermon or a homily; please now welcome my desire to take full advantage of those things in the future. If I was cowardly in the face of one of Your enemies and did not engage in battle against him, accept my desire to be courageous. My Lord, if my desire is not enough, give me the strength to fulfill it. I was soft, fearful, negligent, deceitful. My God, it is even possible that I have been impure. Please accept my admiration for loyalty, for faithfulness. Make me pure as You are. You cured leprosy, considered the worst of diseases, as well as blindness and paralysis. You also

V. Tomiolo



S. Hollmann

cured those who were leprous, blind and paralytic of soul. Forgive the paralysis of my lazy soul, the leprosy of the impure soul, etc. (At this point it is suitable to remember various points of my examination of conscience.) Through the prayers of Mary, have mercy on me and give me the strength that I want to have. I do this to make reparation before You for the offence I have given You.”

And more still: I must consider closely the,⁴ Revolution, as well as the sins it encourages, and ask pardon of Our Lord.

Petition

The petition only comes at the end. Many people, As soon as they receive Our Lord, begin to address their requests to Him: “I want this, that, and the other thing.”

Above, relic of The Eucharistic Miracle of Lanciano.



Sometimes, watching people taking Communion in the churches, one has the impression that the first request they make is: “My God, cure my sore throat, make the bus arrive more quickly to take me home, get my spouse a promotion, make my son pass his examinations, do this, do that, do that...”

No. The requests must come at the end. And one must begin by praying for things that are good for the soul, and only afterwards for those that are good for the body. Because the soul is more valuable than the body. Then, ask for graces such as these: fidelity to one’s vocation, many flashes⁵, correspondence to grace, patience with such-and-such a person, due respect for so-and-so, etc.

And then the goods of the body. One can ask for health and a series of other things. However, the most important is to pray for the good of the soul.

Must one always pray for the good of the body?

That depends on the work of grace in our soul. At times Our Lady gives us the will to suffer some corporeal evil in order to save us from our sins or from the sins of others. In that case, we should ask Our Lady to preserve that bodily evil so that we may suffer in reparation for our faults or for those of another person. In other words, we must ask for that which is needful. For other things, no.

Whoever is tempted by envy must strongly ask for the grace not to yield to it. A man sees his colleague of the same age blazing with glory like the sun, while he himself is a faint little star that only shines a little after sunset. He thinks: “But my God, I would like so much to be that sun; what a magnificent thing it would be!” But that tempted person should instead think “My God, You have given me little, and so much to him. I give you thanks for having given him more. Give a little bit to me as well, because You are so good!”

I believe that everyone has heard tell of the case of Fr. Antonio Vieira, the famous Portuguese preacher.

He was very unintelligent, and for that reason he could not be a Jesuit, for the Company of Jesus only admitted those who possessed proven intelligence. Fr. Antonio Vieira was praying in front of an image of Our Lady – one that I have seen in a museum in Salvador, in Bahia; they put it in a museum instead of placing it on an altar – and suddenly, he felt a painful snap inside his head.

And he became, I believe, the most intelligent of men spoken of until this very day in the Portuguese language. Simply a colossus!

Mary Most Holy had attended to his petition.

How good it would be, for example, to have a photograph of that image of Our Lady and place it in a textbook! Whenever there might be any difficulty in understanding its contents, one could pray to the Virgin and reach a better understanding. One can pray at Communion for Our Lord to illuminate our intelligence.

Once all else is finished, we say “thank you very much” to Our Lord and Our Lady. It is a final act of reverence. Mary Most Holy is, in a certain way, like our mother at home. After the king has left, I say to Her: “My Mother, I thank you...” And I can also discuss the details of His visit with Her, as well as the thought that are in my soul. And afterwards we can withdraw in peace.

In my Communion, I always reverse the order a little bit. At the moment I receive the Host, I pray a Memorare to ask Our Lord – so I begin by asking for something, but it is the only petition I make at the beginning – to increase my devotion towards Our Lady; and I pray it through Her. I know that Mary Most Holy wants my devotion to Her to increase at every moment.

Those who see me receiving Communion may be certain: at the instant when the Holy Eucharist rests on my tongue, I am beginning to pray the Memorare. That never fails. Shortly afterwards, I inwardly pray the Magnificat so that, by means of Our Lady, I might demonstrate my joy that He is inside of me. This joy is a form of adoration.

Afterwards, if I do not have any particular thing to consider, I make adoration, an act of thanksgiving, reparation and petition.

Someone may ask: “Apart from increasing in his devotion to Our Lady, do you never begin to ask for anything?”

Yes, certainly; because general rules have exceptions. Our soul is alive and has inclinations. In conformity with these, a universal principle can be altered. When one is suffering from a great affliction, it is permissible to ask to be healed. For example, the adulterous woman who encountered Jesus just as some men were about to stone her. She did not begin with adoration, reparation, etc., because those individuals were stoning her. But she began by



saying: “Lord, save me because they are seeking to kill me.” He was generous and saved her.

Nothing in the Catholic Church, in Our Lord Jesus Christ, or in Our Lady is dictatorial. It is well-advised to follow the rules that have been explained here when some very lively movement of soul does not indicate to us to do otherwise.

Each one must proceed in accordance with his own mode of being. I have presented here certain principles only with the intention of helping you, not of laying out an obligatory code of conduct.

It only remains for me to desire that my listen-

ers, when they go to Communion, prepare themselves and make the act of thanksgiving with the proper care. The Church counsels us to follow these four acts of devotion, and I strongly recommend to you to do them. ✧

(Extract from a conference of 16/7/1977)

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- 1) Matt. 27:46.
 - 2) John 19:27.
 - 3) John 19:26.
 - 4) Revolution: Dr. Plinio uses this term to describe the multi-century process that has sought and still seeks to destroy the Church and Christian civilization (cf. *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, Editora Retornarei, São Paulo, 5th Portuguese edition, 254 pages.)
 - 5) Cfr Dr. Plinio, Nº 55, página 16.