

# The Cup of the New Covenant

MISSIONARIES OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD  
No. 18, April 2005

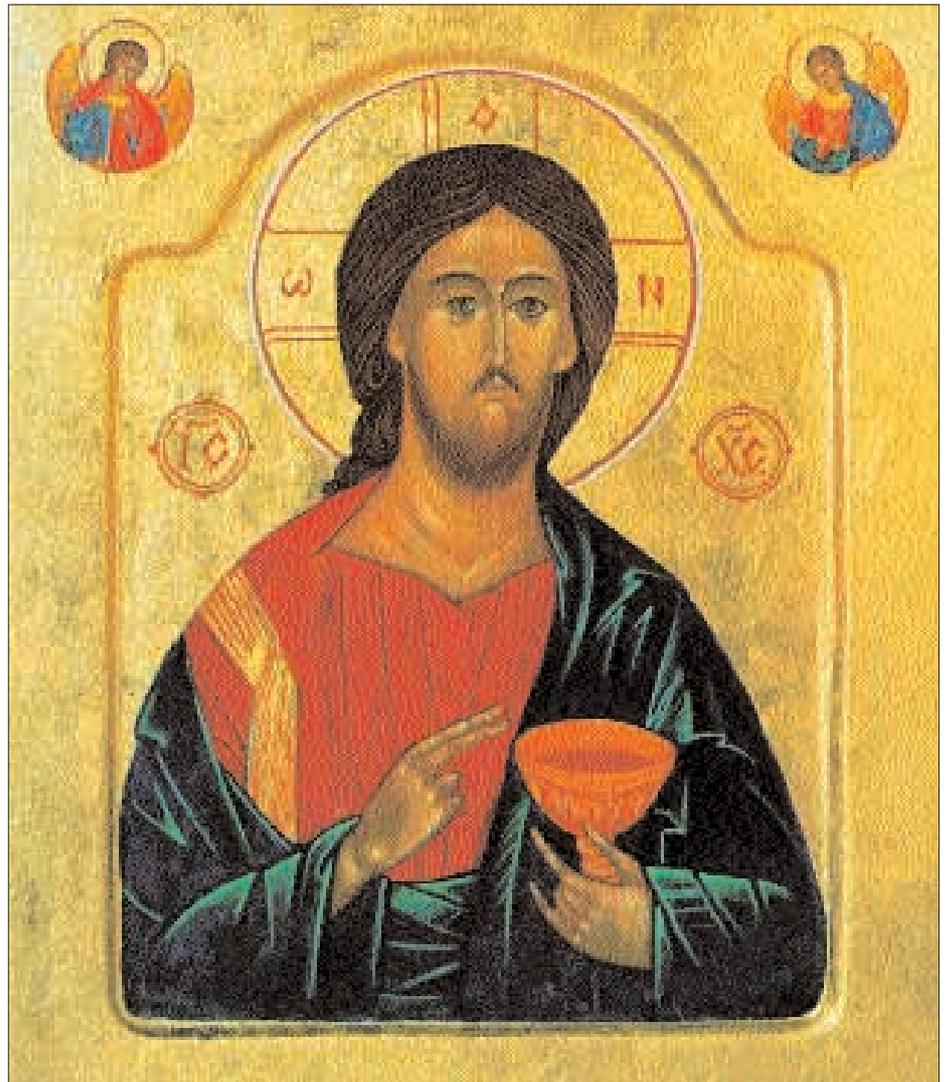
## The Eucharist

by Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S.

In his message to the world's religious women and men on February 2nd, the Holy Father called all consecrated persons to deepen our daily participation in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Citing the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* he reminds us that "by its very nature the Eucharist is at the center of the consecrated life, both for individuals and for communities. It is the daily viaticum and source of the spiritual life for the individual and for the Institute" (#95).

Our Normative Texts speak of the centrality of the Eucharist: "Since the Blood of Christ is the loftiest sign of his paschal mystery, which is sacramentally renewed in the Eucharist, it is especially honored by full partici-

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by Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S.

As this special Year of the Eucharist unfolds in our Church, we need to explore the many facets of a Eucharistic spirituality in our lives. For the C.P.P.S. family, this is of special importance, since the Eucharist – especially as the “cup of suffering and the cup of blessing” – is a central

aspect of Precious Blood spirituality. How Eucharistic spirituality is connected with our charism of preaching the Word also needs to be explored.

A fruitful place to begin is Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter *Mane*

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*nobiscum* (“Stay with us”), by which he inaugurated the Year of the Eucharist on October 7, 2004. The Letter is rich in thought about the Eucharist, and should be studied again and again during this Year.

### THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The Pope reminds us of the significance of what the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called the “table of the word.” (Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 51) The celebration of the Eucharist, with its Liturgy of the Word, is an important site of the presence of Christ among the faithful who are gathered to give thanks and praise. Our *Normative Texts* express explicitly that our charism is the “Ministry of the Word” in all its dimensions. This carrying the Gospel to all peoples by our words, our witness, and our deeds is a Eucharistic presence, a presence that must be accompanied by respect, care, and adequate preparation. As we have renewed our apostolate in light of that Word, it behooves us to reflect upon that Word not just as information or even revelation, but of the very divine presence which is embodied in that Word. Our preaching, our witness to what the Word means for us, and the deeds that flow from heeding its call must be steeped in that sense of Divine Presence.

### THE CULTURE OF THE EUCHARIST

The Pope also speaks in the Letter of a “culture of the Eucharist” (no. 26). We are already familiar of his frequent pronouncements – since the encyclical *Evangelium vitae* – about the culture of life and the culture of death. In C.P.P.S. circles, especially through the writings of Fr. Barry Fischer, we have explored the meaning of these “cultures” for our own spirituality and ministry. What is a culture of the Eucharist?

The Pope suggests that such a culture is guided and shaped by a transcendent point of reference – name-

**“The amazement [of the disciples at Emmaus] happens again to us when we experience that moment when reconciliation takes place and wounds are healed, and we see the hand of God at work.”**

ly, God who is the Creator of all things – that puts all of created reality in perspective. This perspective, he says, “commits us constantly to giving thanks for all that we have and are.” A culture of the Eucharist, therefore, calls forth within us the

from ourselves—promoting a culture of generous spirit and of dialogue is an important contribution to the world today. Christ is our peace (cf. Eph 2:14), breaking down the walls of hostility that divide us. Christ it is who makes peace by the blood of his cross (Col 1:20). Surely such a focus on peacemaking and reconciliation is at the heart of a Precious Blood spirituality.

### EUCHARISTIC AMAZEMENT

Paragraph 29 of the Letter speaks of Eucharistic amazement. It was such amazement that overtook the disciples at Emmaus when they realized who the Stranger was who was breaking bread with them (Luke 24:31f). Such amazement happens again to us when we experience that moment when reconciliation takes place and wounds are healed, and we



Celebrating the Eucharist at St. Gaspar Bhavan, Bangalore, India

realization that all we have and are comes to us as a gift. That sense of having received such gifts evokes in us a sense of generosity and openness to others who are also so gifted. It creates, the Pope says, a culture of dialogue.

In a world so marked by division by ethnic and religious conflict, by unremitting competition in all phases of life, by fear or disdain of immigrants and other people different

see the hand of God at work. The utter and enduring amazement that God loves us so deeply should characterize our every dealing with other people, especially those others whom we do not understand or from whom we feel alienated.

A word that is being used these days for situations where people with different cultural backgrounds can live together harmoniously is “*conviven-*

Brazil to mark those moments when people really engage one another, learn from one another and live together. The Pope evokes this same idea in his Letter when he reminds us of the words of Palestrina's great motet "O Sacrum Convivium in quo Christus sumitur" – "O Holy Convivencia, in which Christ is received." To celebrate the Eucharist is to live together in the experience of a deep bonding with the Lord and the whole Church. It is that experience that constantly feeds that culture of the Eucharist, that living in Eucharistic amazement.

### A PROJECT OF SOLIDARITY FOR ALL OF HUMANITY

As central as this experience of living together in harmony is, the Pope reminds us of the importance of what happens beyond the confines of the Church. The Eucharist is "an expression of communion in the church's life; it is also a project of solidarity for all of humanity" (no. 27). If we, as a Eucharistic people, are indeed "sign and sacrament" to the world, "sign and sacrament" of the unity of all people (*Lumen gentium*, 1), then our Eucharistic life must be expressed in solidarity with all of humanity. We as the C.P.P.S. family have in recent years reflected often upon the "cry of the Blood," that is, how a poor and suffering humanity cry out all around us for redemption and liberation, and how the Blood of Christ calls us to respond. Recent events such as the conflict in Darfur and the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean remind us of the vulnerability and the pain of the world's poor, and summon us into action. But our task is not only to respond to emergencies that arise. We are called, the Pope reminds us,

**"If we, as a Eucharistic people, are indeed 'sign and sacrament' to the world, 'sign and sacrament' of the unity of all people (*Lumen gentium*, 1), then our Eucharistic life must be expressed in solidarity with all of humanity."**



Members of the Province of the Pacific offer Eucharist at their Provincial Assembly in 2002

into a *project of solidarity* for all of humanity. We must not only respond to immediate human needs, but also create the conditions for a greater and enduring solidarity.

Take Africa, for instance. There are many immediate needs created by poverty, illness, and the consequences of civil conflict. Recently the European Union, under the leadership of the United Kingdom, has been calling upon the world to build such a project of solidarity with the continent of Africa. The crushing burden of external debt, the AIDS pandemic, and continuing ethnic and civil conflict can conspire to make much of the world want to forget about Africa altogether. Building a project of solidarity would entail addressing these issues in a way that would not allow them to be repeated or to continue. Living in a project of solidarity is a concrete way of living the "bond of charity" that St. Gaspar called us all to do.

The Pope offers his own list of the needs to be addressed in a project of solidarity. He mentions specifically, poverty, hunger, disease, the loneli-

**"Within the context of our Precious Blood spirituality, we must embrace the cup of suffering that is the bitter drink of so many in the world. And we also lift up the cup of blessing, giving praise to God for the gift of life that marks us as creatures."**

ness of the elderly, the hardships faced by the unemployed and by immigrants (no. 28). How well we address these issues, he says, "will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our eucharistic celebrations is judged."

A Eucharistic spirituality calls us to many things: to praise, to adoration, to communion, to the struggle for justice. Within the context of our Precious Blood spirituality, we must embrace the cup of suffering that is the bitter drink of so many in the world. And we also lift up the cup of blessing, giving praise to God for the gift of life that marks us as creatures. This Year of the Eucharist is an opportunity to deepen our communion with God and all of humanity. ♦

# TAKE THIS CUP...

## A Reflection on Communion from the Cup

Neither of my parents drank alcoholic beverages very often, so these potent potables just weren't around the house very much when I was growing up. Perhaps because it was so unusual, we children always wanted to have some wine when my parents would serve it on special occasions. Never mind that it was always diluted and that we didn't even like the wine – we simply wanted to take part in this special sign of festivity. This is my earliest recollection of wine: festal occasion, wanting to share, feeling a part of the larger adult group. Communion from the Cup has this same effect – on this festal occasion of the Eucharistic banquet we share with one another a most unique communion and Communion.

After the Second Vatican Council paved the way for liturgical reforms, drinking from the Cup was initially permitted only on rare occasions. For example, the bride and groom were allowed to share in the Cup at their nuptial Mass and religious at their profession Mass. Over time this Eucharistic sharing has become more and more common, now in most parishes being offered on all Sundays and in many parishes and communities at daily Mass as well. Truly, receiving the Host alone is receiving the whole Christ; this has been the Church's position for many centuries. However, receiving only the Host bypasses the significant symbolism drinking from the Cup conveys. Let us look at some of that symbolism to come to a deeper appreciation of both the gift and challenge of receiving from the Cup.

### **RICHER SYMBOLISM**

As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states so clearly,

by Sister Joyce Ann Zimmerman, C.P.P.S.

“Holy Communion has a fuller form as a sign when it is distributed under both kinds” (*GIRM 2002* no. 281; almost all documents dealing with the Eucharist from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* onward mention this fuller symbolism). This document goes on to mention two specific ways the sign is fuller: (1) “the new and eternal Covenant is ratified in the Blood of the Lord” and (2) “the relationship between the Eucharistic banquet and the eschatological banquet in the Father’s Kingdom” is more apparent.

### **NEW COVENANT IN THE BLOOD**

In the Old Testament times covenants were common and, indeed, God entered into a number of covenants with humanity – for example, with Adam (Gn 1:26-30), Noah (Gn 9:8-17), Abraham (Gn 15:4-6; 17:2-10). Most telling, how-

ever, is the one with Moses when the sign of the ratification of the covenant is the sprinkling of blood upon the people (Ex 24:8): “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words of his.” This sprinkling of blood is a sign of shared life; the covenant is sealed with life. In Hebrew thought, blood was the seat of life and, since God is the source of life, sprinkling with blood indicated a unique, covenantal relationship consisting of communion in life with God.

Both Matthew (Mt 26:28) and Mark (Mk 14:24) mention the Cup at the Last Supper in relation to covenant. But it is Luke (Lk 22:20) and Paul (1 Cor 11:25) who specifically mention a *new* covenant. Now it is no longer the blood of a sacrificed animal which seals the covenant, but the Blood of the divine Son. Further, the communion in life with God possible with the Old Testament covenant is taken one step further in this new covenant – through the Blood of Christ we now share uniquely in divine life itself, we are raised to a new covenantal relationship with God as daughters and sons, and are given the same promise of risen life as was bestowed upon the divine Son.

Communion from the Cup is an ongoing, tangible way we immerse ourselves in the ratification of the new covenant in Christ’s Blood. It is a celebration of the *gift* of a unique and unprecedented relationship with God through which we now participate in divine life and the very mission of Christ himself. Moreover, drinking deeply is a *challenge* to be faithful to our new identity in Christ and this mission with which we have been entrusted. Our participation in

**“Through the Blood of Christ we now share uniquely in divine life itself, we are raised to a new covenantal relationship with God as daughters and sons, and are given the same promise of risen life as was bestowed upon the divine Son.”**

the Blood of Christ is a participation in his very act of redemption.

## ESCHATOLOGICAL BANQUET

In many cultures wine has long been associated with feasting, even in countries where wine is daily table fare. Its alcoholic content warms the body, brings joy to the heart, and loosens the tongue for more intimate conversation and community. Drinking from the Cup is a way to remind us that this is a joyous feast in which we are called to share in the Lord's table, to "come, without paying and without cost, [to] drink wine ... " (Is 55:1). Drinking from the Cup is a

**"Drinking deeply is a challenge to be faithful to our new identity in Christ and this mission with which we have been entrusted."**

reminder that this is a *messianic* banquet, a feast during which we already share in the eschatological abundance of heaven. Drinking from the cup reminds us that God offers us the fullness of life already and now at the same time it is a pledge of the fullness of everlasting life to come. Drinking from the Cup helps us connect the abundance of this Eucharistic banquet with the God-gift abundance of the eschatological banquet. It is already heaven on earth.

Interestingly enough, however, for those of us dedicated to the Precious Blood, we know there truly is a cost to drinking from the Cup and a most demanding challenge; so we really don't come "without cost." In that act of drinking we unite ourselves with the Lord in a most profound way so as to give ourselves over for others in the same total way that he gave himself for us. The joy of feasting strengthens us for the demands

**"The 'cost' of drinking from the cup isn't money, but our own life poured out for others just as Christ's life was poured out for us."**

of discipleship and promises us that God will nourish us to complete the mission entrusted to us by Christ. The "cost" of drinking from the cup isn't money, but our own life poured out for others just as Christ's life was poured out for us. In this we capture perhaps the most profound aspect of Precious Blood Spirituality: by pouring out our life as did Christ, we unite ourselves in a most intensified way with those whom Christ showed us how to love and thus become one with them in him.

### TAKE THIS CUP...

Communing from the Cup is both a gift and a challenge. It is a gift because it is a most profound gesture of the new life and covenant which has been offered us in Christ. It is a

challenge because drinking from the Cup is drinking from the well of Jesus' self-giving which urges us to give our own self for others.

Perhaps this is why too many are reluctant to drink from the Cup – somehow they know its cost. For those of us dedicated to the Precious Blood, drinking from the Cup is a reminder of our new relationship with God, of the saving mission entrusted to us, of the life already shared now, and the promise of its fullness yet to come. But even more importantly, drinking from the Cup is a shared bond of *life*, a bond sealed in a new covenant of Blood poured out and expressed in love and fidelity.

With so much at stake, how can we pass the Cup by? ♦



# EUCCHARISTIC CONTEMPLATION

by Ernest Ranly, C.P.P.S.

The Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum, Domine* of Pope John Paul II has declared October 2004 through October 2005 the Year of the Eucharist. The letter gives a succinct summary of how the Holy See has prepared us for this Eucharistic year. We are grateful. While some of the previous Vatican documents may be heavily concerned with rubrics, doctrine, history, and discipline, the underlying theme is solid and true: the Church makes the Eucharist and the Eucharist makes the Church.

For this issue of *The Cup of the New Covenant* I have been asked to focus on Eucharistic contemplation outside of Mass, a consistent theme in the papal documents. Over the past few years I have, in several books and smaller publications, addressed two themes: Eucharistic contemplation as such and how to pray personally the very liturgical prayers we find in the Roman Missal. Here I want to present these two themes within the context of own missionary Congregation, a religious institute or society of the apostolic life.

## LITURGICAL PRAYER: A RICH TREASURY

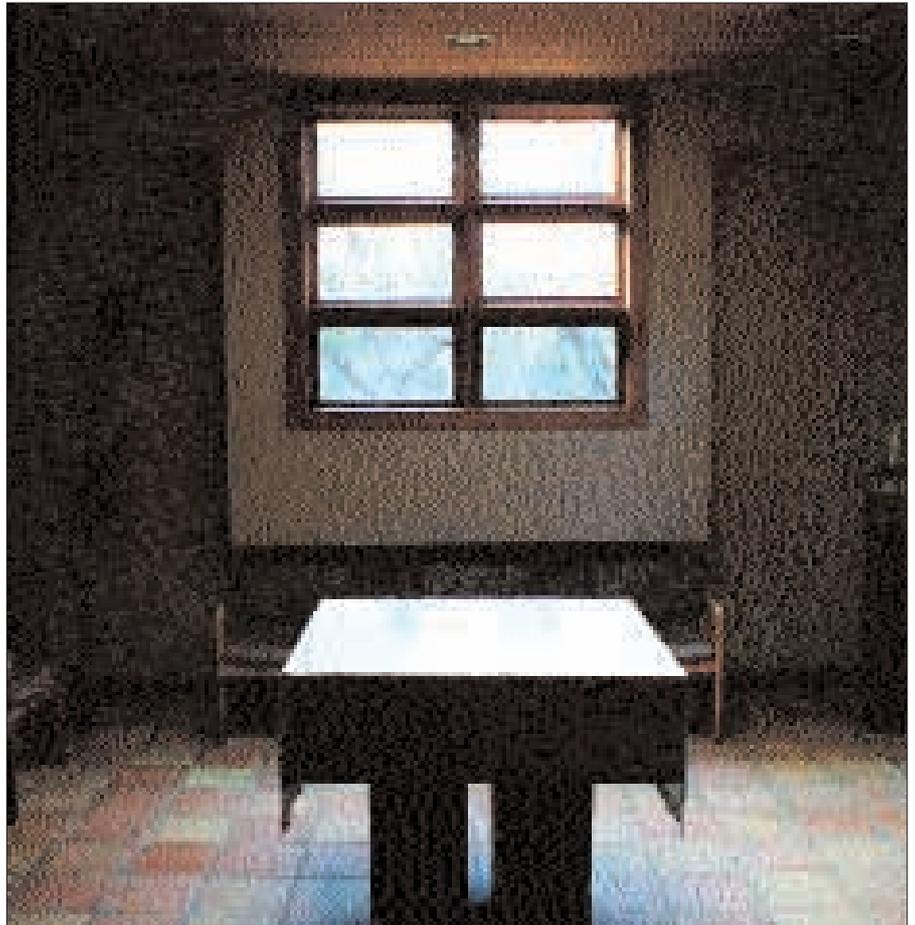
The disciples asked Jesus: “Teach us how to pray.” We may well ask: “Teach us how to pray the way the Church prays.” “Teach us how to pray in our personal (private) prayers how the Church prays in her own liturgical prayers.”

Before the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, many lay people had their own Sunday and daily missals, trans-

lations from the Latin. Now that all public services are celebrated in the vernacular, hand missals are out of

distinct and positive way of praying.

The first thing to note is that almost all the prayers of the Roman Missal are directed immediately to God our Father. As in the Mass itself, it is the



Mass Chapel, House of Prayer for Priests, Orange, California

style. Sunday handouts and missalettes are helpful liturgical guides. When groups prepare for the following week’s liturgy, the emphasis (almost exclusive) is on the Scripture readings of the day. Neither priests nor laity take the prayers from the Roman Missal as guides or models for personal (private) prayer. We are neglecting a rich treasury. We are failing to school ourselves in a very

People of God in the person of the presiding priest who offer thanksgiving, praise and sacrifice to the Father through the Son, Jesus, Our Lord. This is in sharp contrast to most prayers found in the common books of devotions. Many “devotions” are directed immediately to Jesus, to Mary or the saints. Should we not school ourselves for our personal prayers in the spirit and in the logic of the Church’s liturgical prayers?

**“The most ancient traditional prayers of the Missal are very short but very precise... the ancient prayers are far superior to the more recent wordy, elongated prayers.”**

## PRECIOUS BLOOD DEVOTIONS

This model of the Church’s prayers is especially important for our

“devotions” to the Precious Blood. It is true that in the litany approved by Pope John XXIII we address directly the Blood of Christ and we pray: “Save us.” But in the liturgy, we offer the sacrificial Blood to the Father in thanksgiving, adoration and petition. From the prologue to John’s Gospel, to the great Christological hymns of the early Christians (Ef 1, 3-14; Ef 2, 11-23; Col 1, 15-20; Phil 2, 5-11; Rom 5, 5-11) we are overwhelmed by the announcement of the Father’s plan of salvation which has been realized in the Son, “through his Blood.”

Our community’s long history of our most cherished prayer, “The Seven Offerings,” is in this tradition. We address the “Eternal Father,” to whom we offer “the Precious Blood of Jesus.” We make direct reference to the historical/incarnational moment: Blood “poured out on the cross.” We then center upon the Eucharist: “and presented in sacrifice every day upon the altar.” There follow the seven petitions, which, in content and style, prefigure the “universal prayer” or general intercessions we now use routinely at public liturgies. Yet our Congregation prayed “The Seven Offerings” a century and a half before Vatican II.

### PRAYER PAR EXCELLENCE

The most ancient traditional prayers of the Missal are very short but very precise. (Aesthetically and ascetically the ancient prayers are far superior to the more recent wordy, elongated prayers.) One difficulty today is that within the modern languages there are many variations in the translations from the original Latin.

The prayer *par excellence* is the Collect of the Mass. I take as an example the Collect from the First Sunday of Ordinary Time:

O Lord, show yourself favorable to the wishes and prayers of your people:  
give us the light to know your will

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Agenda 2005: Ogni giorno con San Gaspare del Bufalo.* Gruppo “Spiritualità del Sangue di Cristo,” editors. (Rome: Centro Studi Sanguis Christi, 2005).

*The Cry of the Blood: The Challenge of Refounding* (new English version). Barry Fischer, C.P.P.S. (Carthagen, Ohio: The Messenger Press, 2004).

*Pictorial Necrology of the C.P.P.S.*, updated through 2004. Milton Ballor, C.P.P.S. (available on CD).

*Testi Patristici sul Sangue Cristo IX: Padri Orientali del II-V Secolo (Patristic Texts on the Blood of Christ IX: Eastern Fathers of the II-V Centuries).* Edited by Tullio Veglianti, C.P.P.S. (Rome: Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 2003).

*VIII Jornadas de Espiritualidad de la Preciosa Sangre: La Espiritualidad de la Sangre de Cristo Hoy (Eighth Workshop on the Spirituality of the Blood of Christ: The Spirituality of the Blood of Christ Today).* Misioneros de la Preciosa Sangre. (Cáceres, Spain, 2004).

If you are interested in these publications, please contact the Generalate.

and the necessary strength to fulfill it.

Take note of the brevity. “Lord,” of course, is Our Lord God, Father/Mother. In Spanish we address the “Lord” with the informal or familiar form “tú.” (The English “thou” used in some older English Biblical translations is actually the now archaic familiar or informal form of the pronoun.) The prayer speaks of the “wishes (desires) and prayers of your people” but it does not go into a long list of petitions (as we are wont to do.) Our Heavenly Father/Mother knows beforehand what the children need. “Give us light to know your will.” “Give us the strength necessary to do your will.” Here are two petitions with a clear focus and an impeccable logic.

This is how the Church prays in her public liturgy. Can we not take these prayers from the Missal (and from

the Liturgy of the Hours) into the silence of our rooms or before the Blessed Sacrament and then open our hearts to the deeper mysteries of God’s love?

### ENTERING THE EUCHARISTIC PRESENCE

Our time spent in Eucharistic contemplation can take on many dimensions. One of my booklets refers to the Old Testament for many examples of how God, “the Faithful One,” remained present to the people. Moses spent forty days and forty nights in the awesome presence of the Lord on Mount Sinai in an obscure but transparent cloud. This same Presence later passed on within the Tent of Meeting, the special “Tabernacle” outside the camping grounds of the nomadic, wandering people. God was with the people, “a



First Mass of Fr. Virgilio da Mata Martins in Malhadal, Portugal

pillar of smoke by day, a pillar of fire by night.” The Tent of Meeting (Tabernacle) was with the people in the time of the judges and the early kings. With Solomon’s Temple, the Presence now was within the Holy of Holies, where on the Day of Expiation or Day of Atonement, only the High Priest could enter with the blood of animals.

How, then, do we, the Family of the Blood of Christ, enter into the Eucharistic presence?

From Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Order of Preachers (and please note that they are *preachers*) we have the motto: “*contemplata aliis tradere.*” “Share with others what has been contemplated.” Properly understood, this is an excellent guide. But at times the saying has been badly interpreted to mean that from abstract studies and individual inspiration one can move directly into pastoral programs and spiritual direction. Today more than ever, we

must always return to personal experience, to listening to others, accepting hard historical/social/economic realities of the times. Along with Pope John XXIII we must read “the signs of the times.”

### CONTEMPLATION AND MISSION

Many of us still operate within the logic of “see, judge, act.” In this case, after a day’s work of frustration and confrontation with the injustices of the world, sharing our people’s poverty, we will place ourselves before the Lord with the “wishes and prayers” of our people. But it is also there that we begin to see “light,” “to judge” what is to be done, what is the will of God. Father Michael McCabe, S.M.A., in his magisterial address to extraordinary C.P.P.S Assembly in September 2004, states several times that to participate in God’s mission “our first challenge is one of contemplation.” Discernment

of the presence of the spirit in our missionary work “is essentially an exercise in contemplation.”

As members of a religious society of the apostolic life, missionary preachers of the Word of God, we should be the first to say with Peter: “To whom can we go? You alone have the words of eternal life.” ♦

**“After a day’s work of frustration and confrontation with the injustices of the world, sharing our people’s poverty, we will place ourselves before the Lord with the ‘wishes and prayers’ of our people.”**

# CHRIST IN OUR MIDST

## The Social Dimension of Eucharistic Adoration

As a member of an Anglican contemplative order of the Precious Blood, whose central symbol of our life is a watch before the Blessed Sacrament in adoration, thanksgiving, and intercession, I have been invited to share with you some perceptions on the social dimension of Eucharistic adoration.

The Eucharist's central symbolism is that we break and then share a single loaf and drink from one cup. The image is that of sharing in what has a unity: "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one..." (*Didache 9:4*). We are sharing "in communion" with "... because we all have a share in this one loaf" (*1 Cor 10:17*). We join in the sacramental meal, the point of human entry into the mystery of the covenant.

### A TRANSFORMING PRESENCE

Christ's presence cannot be conjured or constrained to the sacramental action of the Eucharist alone, that recognition of Christ's risen presence in the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup, as in the story of the disciples at Emmaus (*Lk 24*). When we participate in the silent act of adoration before the altar, the cross, and the Blessed Sacrament, and when we listen to his word, we perceive the abiding presence of Christ and we can experience continuing transformation of the self.

When we adore, we gaze, we marvel, the presence that attracts our attention also gazes upon us, and we are "being transformed into the same image" (*2 Cor 3:18*). Our being is expanded, our fears, prejudices and boundaries are broken down by the Source of all love and mercy, "...now in Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart...have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ" (*Eph 2:13*). It is poignant to remember that Jesus shared his last common meal, which became our sacrament, with those who betrayed him.

by Sister Elizabeth Mary, S.P.B.

If we wait and watch in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, in the spirit of expectant contemplative silence and emptiness, being hollowed and hallowed before the source of all life, we are drawn into the ever-deepening *koinonia* or fellowship: "we who are many are one body in Christ" (*Rom 12:5*). When we are empty of ourselves and "live through love in his presence" (*Eph.1:4*) we are open to another's need. It is in entering that deep struggle of moving beyond my needs, anxieties, and conflicts, in "not [let-

of his love was revealed in the outpouring of his life, his blood, on the Cross. So our calling is *to be present in love for others*, the heart of our contemplative life. It is from the heart that love flows: the heart, the very vessel, the space, from which the life blood flows: The Precious Blood freely given for all. To *be* in that space and to allow our hearts to be expanded is to be true to our vocation.

### FREEDOM OF THE SACRED WITHIN

Truly to love and to hold others in love before the source of all life is to allow oneself and one's perceptions to be opened, hollowed, and stilled.

"Our being is expanded, our fears, prejudices and boundaries are broken down by the Source of all love and mercy,"

ting] God and the world fall apart from one another" (Rowan Williams) that the reconciling truth of the Eucharist can be born.

### SUFFERING: A PATH TO EMPATHY

Jesus in his own suffering and dying person held together God and the world. In His resurrection there are no doors that can be locked before him, as the embodiment of God's mercy he can be found everywhere. So a deep empathy with the joys, pains, sorrows and sufferings of others envelops one's sense of self; to pray is to hold the mystery of life before the creative, redemptive and sanctifying Blood of the risen Lord. When we seek God alone, then others are set free.

I believe that spiritual journey of our foundress, Mother Millicent Mary, led her to realise the greatest gift to another is to *be* with and alongside another in prayer, empowering the other with the grace given through our praying presence. Christ lived his life for others and the greatest expression

It is to free that sacred space within, to share in the joys and pain and suffering of others which life brings.

Waiting before the mystery of God and longing for his enabling grace and enlightening hope to reach those in need is part of God's reclaiming: the everlasting fact of his transfiguring and self-less compassion, his unceasing creative and reconciling work.

God is with us and it is our vocation to bring God's Kingdom into this world through living from our redeemed life in Christ, in love of God, oneself, and others. ♦

"To pray is to hold the mystery of life before the creative, redemptive and sanctifying Blood of the risen Lord. When we seek God alone, then others are set free."

# INCULTURATING THE GOSPEL IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

by Dario Caal Xi, C.P.P.S.

At the beginning of the 1980's I was in Costa Rica, waiting for the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist. A little boy came up to me and asked, "Is there going to be church?" The question was awkwardly phrased, since he wanted to say, "Will there be a Eucharist?" I simply answered yes, without calling attention to his lack of precise language. He left satisfied, but I was left perplexed.

Later on, I thought: When people gather for the Eucharist, they make the church, they build the church, the church happens.

The local church fully becomes church, is totally church (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) when it celebrates the Eucharist with its bishop presiding and with the participation of all the faithful, diverse and different in their ministries, charisms, and spiritualities. The Eucharist is like the home of the church. In a very basic way, the church happens where the Eucharist is celebrated. One cannot consider the Eucharistic community as only a kind of local branch of the church. Here and now, the totality of the mystery of salvation is present. The local church does not have its source in its geography but in the Eucharist, in the communion of saints. (Cf. *Iglesia Local, Textos Ak'Kutan* No. 20, pp. 16-17)

## THE MAYAN Q'EOCHI' PEOPLE IN THE PARISH OF SANTA CATALINA, LA TINTA

The Q'eqchi' Maya are a people with "implicit ecclesiality." That is to say, in their culture there are those pillars and foundations that make them to "be church." This native "ecclesiality" gives cohesion to the celebration of the Eucharist in the context of their Mayan culture. The process of inculturating the Gospel has become the place and the standard for discovering this ecclesiality.

"The experience of the Gospel has much to do with the feet, because it depends on where one stands, whether in the mud with the poor or on carpets with the rich." On a number of occasions, we have found that one of the barriers to the process of inculturation is pastoral practice itself. Pastoral practice implies action. Thus the inculturation of the

**"When people gather for the Eucharist, they make the church, they build the church, the church happens."**

Gospel, as the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, can be undertaken and understood only with loving eyes, eyes of tenderness, of *kenosis*, of empathy, of charity. To inculturate the Gospel is to identify with following Jesus and with his feelings: it is to have the mind and self-giving of Christ. It means consciously creating anew the values of the Q'eqchi' people and to express them as something proper to them. One must take for granted and understand "otherness": sharing with the "other" his or her language and unique customs.

The inculturation of the gospel is more than theology. It is above all the experience of church, of pastoral willingness and availability. It is the expression of Christian faith in the categories suitable for a particular culture. If the Eucharist is "source and high point of Christian life," this must be believable and understood from the point of view of those forms proper to the identity of each

culture and from their particular ways of being.

## THE Q'EOCHI' COMMUNITY AROUND THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

In the parish of Santa Catalina in La Tinta, the celebration of the Eucharist with the Mayan people is a community feast, a feast of the people. We take for granted that it involves preparing and creating a spiritual ambience, as well as the psychological, physical, and religious preparation of those who participate. There should be a period of asceticism and preparation, in a context of community and cosmic reconciliation. There should be personal and community harmony that signifies wholeness in communion. There should be food prepared for the entire community, careful preparation of the gifts and the flowers, and personal attention to those who share table fellowship.

With great anticipation, the community organizes to assign and determine the distinct services that are needed to carry out the feast. All who participate are the protagonists in celebrating what takes place. For this reason, the Eucharist cannot be improvised and without prior preparation: such an approach would provoke criticism since it lacks a sense of festivity and is a sign of stinginess.

Thus one can understand that the Sacrament of the Eucharist is not treated as an activity of simple social character ("sung Masses, recited Masses, Masses of the dead, anniversary Masses, birthday Masses," etc.), that is to say, a simple "act of faith" that one uses only to dress up a social activity. (The supermarket of salvation available for the highest bidder.)

For the Q'eqchi' people there is no sense of a Eucharistic celebration

that is isolated, separated, or apart from community. One cannot celebrate a great feast without people, without joy, without food and drink, without signs and symbols that express the joy of encounter.

The parish community of Santa Catalina in La Tinta makes every effort to celebrate the Eucharist as a banquet and feast, with big tables and altar cloths, with beautiful dishes, overflowing cups, with plenty of places and plenty of food. They do not need additional faith to believe that what they eat is bread (which, of course, becomes the body of Christ). With conviction, we can say: "Blessed are you, Lord of the universe, for this bread."

In our culture, food offered to God is offered by the one who prepares it, that is to say, by the women of the home, since our women prepare the bread and wine we offer in the kitchen along with other ritual foods. They offer the "fruit of human work" among the lights of the candles and the cloud of our incense and the murmur of their prayers – the great

preamble to the Eucharistic celebration. After presenting the gifts on the altar, these women who present the offerings should go to the atrium of the church to ask God to be present, to accept being invited as the principal guest, and to accept the gifts of his people.

At the same time, there is a great summoning of the entire cosmos to complete harmony and communion. This summoning unfolds with the music of harps, violins, drums, flutes, and marimbas. The older people say that our ancestral music invokes the names of the holy mountains and they say: "*okan, hılan, wa'chin, na'chin*" ("stay and rest, O revered one"). Our celebration of the Eucharist is not an esoteric rite, since the firecrackers and skyrockets announce to the entire universe our joy for the gifts we have offered.

The priest presides in the community with the participation and the leadership of all. The community is liturgically the "celebrant" and copresider, a rainbow of communal services.

## THE SPECIAL ROLE OF WOMEN

The leadership role of women is evident in the entire Eucharistic celebration with the censer, which is not the exclusive ministry of the priest (but is nevertheless a ministry) nor one assigned to the men. The women, who from the beginning of the celebration offered the gifts of food, are also the ones entrusted with distributing the food after Eucharistic communion. They make a ceremonial toast with drinks of chocolate.

## THE OLDER MEN AND WOMEN

The older men and women of the community are the ones who preside at the great community prayer. United with the priest they intercede for the people with the fragrance of their incense. Amid the light from their candles, they direct their prayer to the four cardinal directions, signifying the re-creating of this good world that God has desired for his children from the beginning.

When they finish the prayer of the community, they are the first to greet



Mayan women at Mass



Mayas celebrate Eucharist in Guatemala

**“... the inculturation of the Gospel, as the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, can be undertaken and understood only with loving eyes, eyes of tenderness, of *kenosis*, of empathy, of charity.”**

one another. With their word they show, express, and approve the satisfaction, harmony, and communion of what they are doing. The assembly receives communion under both kinds, a gesture of the fullness of total communion with Christ and one’s brothers and sisters. Afterwards they distribute the offerings of food and chocolate drink as a sign of accepting the sacredness of what they are doing. Once this ceremony has concluded, they dance for God, as if to say with the psalmist: “How can I pay God for all the good he has done for me?” He has given all, has made all – one can only dance before God.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration the common food is distrib-

uted. This expresses communion, goodwill, joy, festivity. To reject the food is an insult and contempt for the community, because food is the sign of communion and goodwill.

**SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CELEBRATING THE EUCHARIST**

I would recommend a stronger emphasis on preparing for the Eucharist as the festive celebration of a banquet. We should strengthen the ministry of service of the community, the servant community. We should pay special attention to the issue of harmony, reconciliation, and balance in the community prior to the celebration of the Eucharist,

which is itself the basis of social justice and of the prophetic call of yesterday, today, and always.

Finally, we should avoid the celebration of the Eucharist as something routine. We should take care to celebrate each Eucharist as if it were our first, best, and last Eucharist. ♦

**WORKSHOP FOR RECENTLY INCORPORATED BROTHERS AND PRIESTS**

July 8-17, 2005

Abbey of San Felice  
Giano dell’Umbria

(arrival and departure – Rome)

# THE EUCHARIST FROM A HEART OF STONE TO A HEART OF FLESH

When writing about the Eucharist, one takes the risk of becoming too theoretical. Without a doubt, this would destroy its deepest meaning. At this time in my life, however, I find it natural and useful to reflect on the Eucharist from the point of view of my personal experiences. I hope that the following lines will serve as a stimulus for anyone who reads them – and for myself as well.

I have never understood the celebration of the Eucharist as an external ritual or as the fulfillment of a Sunday obligation, but rather as a vital reality for my life as one who follows Jesus. I write from personal experience and I take as a point of departure the following questions: “Is the celebration of the Eucharist valid for today? Is it relevant to my joys and sorrows?”

## A NECESSARY MOMENT

The following affirmation, born of my experience of the meaning of the Eucharist, makes the connection with the preceding questions more specific: “The Eucharist is a necessary moment of encounter with the Lord in community, to renew us and to motivate us to be who we are by means of the review of our lives, listening to the Word, the participation in his life of self-giving, and the unavoidable invitation to concrete commitment to constructing his kingdom.”

The celebration of the Eucharist is a privileged moment in which my heart of stone is expanded so that it can be changed into a heart of flesh. The Eucharist is necessary for my life and not merely some accessory. I do not understand how we can be Christian without celebrating Jesus’ life given for us in the Lord’s Supper. It is a time to meet the Lord. Jesus has not left us a celebration because

by Juan Pedro Ruiz Luengo

he needs it, but rather he encourages us to continue celebrating it so that we might meet him who gave himself up completely for us. In partici-

“... I do not understand how we can be Christian without celebrating Jesus’ life given for us in the Lord’s Supper.”

pating in the sacrifice of Jesus, I also find the meaning of my life.

## THE DIMENSION OF COMMUNITY

Here we also discover the dimension of community. The Eucharistic celebration is characterized by the gathering of those who wish to follow

Jesus. The Eucharist has an incredible power to call forth intimacy, affection, and friendship among us who gather for it.

We gather around Jesus, not as individuals, but as those who have been called to follow him and to form communion.

Although I once understood the Eucharist as a celebration for those who were holy and not for sinners, I finally came to understand that the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is an invitation to follow him, an invitation not only for those who have already reached a certain level of perfection. The celebration is, in my experience, a summons from God to gather around him. We come as we are, and from different places, open to be renewed and to be motivated to make the message of Jesus our very life.

These features previously described can be found in four basic moments of the celebration, which I will try to describe in the light of my experience.



Precious Blood Church celebrates the Eucharist in Orcasitas (Madrid), Spain

### THE REVIEW OF MY LIFE

The first moment is the review of my life. I cannot come to the celebration without becoming aware of the inconsistencies and fragility of my life. The moment of forgiveness is an occasion, not only for discovering myself to be the sinner that I am, but for realizing, as I fix my gaze on God, that I am not living up to my possibilities, that I have not done that which I should have. It is not so much just a static forgiveness, but also rather a genuine awareness that I am not living in fidelity to God, not living up to all that he gave me when he created me. This is the first moment which begins to move me to openness for encounter.

### DIALOGUE WITH GOD

The second moment is listening to the Word of God. I understand the celebration not as a monologue, but as a dialogue in which God takes the initiative and comes to communicate his life in my life. It is overwhelming to think that it is God himself who addresses himself to my life and the life of the gathered community.

### BODY BROKEN, LIFE Poured OUT

The third moment is the moment of communion. Without going into all the sacramental details, I believe that the offering of the bread and wine, changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus, contains an uncompromising wisdom. Jesus makes himself present in the bread as a sign of his Body broken and offered and in the wine as a sign of his life poured out. This is how I understand communion, and it prompts a certain fear in me, because sharing in his Body and Blood is a summons. It calls us to be instruments of love and freedom.

### A STIMULUS TO MISSION

I would describe the fourth and final moment as the movement to mission. The conclusion of the Eucharist is a call to commitment. Many ways of seeing society and the person are the fruits of celebrating the Eu-

**“... sharing in his Body and Blood is a summons. It calls us to be instruments of love and freedom.”**

charist. I understand that commitment to the other, above all to the one who is in greatest suffering, and to the broken in society in which we live calls for extending the Eucharistic message of selfless giving. From my concrete experience, I live the thanksgiving of the Eucharist as a call to be a sign of communion, brotherhood, and life in whatever surroundings I may be active (the classroom, family, parish, neighborhood, etc.)

My experience of the Eucharist has been and continues to be an experience rooted in life itself. The Missionaries of the Precious Blood, in fidelity to their spiritual heritage, must work to make the Eucharist a celebration of our lives in the light of the God who reveals himself in the life of Jesus, the one who breaks with the coldness of empty ritual and who enriches the celebration with his own unique meaning. ♦



The tabernacle at the Teutonic Province Center, Salzburg, Austria

pation in the Sacrifice of the Mass” (Art. C4).

During this year dedicated especially to the deepening of our appreciation of the Eucharist, we thought it appropriate to dedicate an issue of *The Cup* to this central experience of the Christian life and vital aspect of our spirituality. In many ways, the Eucharist is an eloquent synthesis of the spirituality of the Precious Blood. Along with our personal and community prayer, the Eucharist is a fundamental element needed for living our missionary vocation.

### LIVING THE EUCHARIST

The sacrament of the Eucharist is a multifaceted mystery. At different times one or the other aspect has been emphasized. When I was growing up during the years before the Second Vatican Council, the celebration of the Eucharist spoke strongly of mystery. The Mass celebrated in Latin, the celebrant for the most part with his back to the people, Gregorian Chant, and the use of incense were among some of the elements contributing to the sense of mystery. Following the Council there was increasing stress on the Eucharist as a meal shared in community. There was greater emphasis on the Mass as celebration and it was characterized by active participation, the use of the vernacular languages, new songs, dance, etc.

Today, forty years after Vatican Council II, we are probably somewhere in between these two modes of celebration. Each of us probably has a personal preference as to a manner of celebrating, but there is an aspect which I would like to recall and which is always present in the Eucharist and which is at the core of its very meaning. It is that of sacrifice.

It was this aspect which the Holy Father recalled especially in his message on the day of the Consecrated Life. “Jesus gives Himself as Bread ‘broken’ and Blood ‘shed’ so that all might “have life and have it in abundance” (cf. John 10:10). He offers Himself for the salvation of the

**“Our daily call and challenge is to live the Eucharist, to become that which we celebrate: namely, body broken and blood poured out for others.”**

entire human race. To take part in the sacrificial banquet not only implies repeating the gesture which He himself fulfilled, but drinking of the same chalice and participating as well in His very immolation. The Holy Father recalls that “as Christ becomes ‘bread broken’ and ‘blood shed,’” so every Christian – and more so every consecrated man and woman – is called to give his/her life for their brothers and sisters, in union with that of the Redeemer.”

Regardless of our personal preferences as to how to celebrate the Eucharist, what we celebrate and the commitment to which we are called when we participate in the Eucharist is the same. We are called to be a Eucharistic people. We are to live in the spirit of

**“We break the bread of our lives and shed our blood each day with Christ in generous and boundless love, in order to serve others and to build the Reign of God.”**

St. Ignatius of Antioch who wrote to the Romans as he awaited his execution for the faith: “I wish to be torn apart by the teeth of the wild beasts in order to become an instrument of Christ and bread of life for all.”

Our daily call and challenge is to live the Eucharist, to become that which we celebrate: namely, body broken and blood poured out for others. This is the profound meaning of the injunction spoken at the words of consecration: “Do this in memory of me!” To do this in the memory of Jesus is not simply to repeat mechanically a ritual gesture, but rather is a

call to let oneself be formed so as to love as He loved “unto death.”

To pronounce with faith and conviction our “Amen” is to enter into communion of life and mission with Jesus. It is a communion in the love of God.

### IN THIS ISSUE

This issue of *The Cup* offers our readers several articles on the Eucharist each reflecting on this rich mystery from a variety of viewpoints and experiences.

Our lead article by Fr. Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. offers some rich insights into the Holy Father’s Apostolic Letter, *Mane nobiscum* with which John Paul II inaugurated the Year of the Eucharist. He reflects on living a “culture of the Eucharist” within the context of Precious Blood spirituality. Fr. Schreiter’s article offers us a valuable key to reflecting on this Apostolic Letter from the perspective of our charism which calls us to the ministry of the Word, and to be promoters of communion and persons of solidarity with a suffering humankind.

Sister Joyce Zimmerman, C.P.P.S., reflects upon the meaning of communion from the Cup during the Eucharistic celebration. This ancient custom has become for us today a significant gesture and expression of our spirituality. It speaks of our new covenant relationship with God and our shared mission. At the same time, Sr. Joyce reminds us of the cost of drinking from the communion Cup: “our own life poured out for others just as Christ’s life was poured out for us.”

In his article on “Eucharistic Contemplation” Fr. Ernie Ranly, missionary in Peru and recently stationed in Bogotá, Colombia, explores different models of the Church’s liturgical prayers and how they can help us to

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enter into contemplation as the starting point for mission today.

We are happy to publish an article written by Sr. Elizabeth Mary, S.P.B., a contemplative Anglican sister. She shares with us her reflections from the point of view of a religious who spends a great deal of time before the Blessed Sacrament. She describes the social dimension of Eucharistic adoration. As we empty ourselves in the loving presence of God we become more open to the needs of others. She describes her call "to be present in love for others," the heart of contemplative life.

The celebration of the Eucharist in the indigenous cultures of Guatemala is

the focus of the reflections of Fr. Darío Caal. He explains how different elements of the Q'eqchi' Mayan culture "find a home" in the Eucharistic celebrations of the Santa Catalina Parish in La Tinta. Their celebrations are true expressions of community in which all are active participants. Women and the elders of the community are especially involved. He reminds us that the Eucharist requires a great deal of

preparation so as to be a true celebration of the life of the community.

Finally, Juan Pedro Ruiz, a seminarian of the Iberian Province, shares with us what the Eucharist means for him. For Juan Pedro the Eucharist is never just a ritual to fulfill but contains the very meaning of his life. It is a moment of communion with Jesus who communicates his life and shares his ideals. Through participation in the Eucharist, the bonds of fraternity are strengthened, and the commitment to continue the mission of Jesus is renewed.

## CONCLUSION

As persons and communities living under the banner of the Precious Blood, the Eucharist is a privileged moment for celebrating our spirituality and for renewing our charism. We are called to live the Eucharist, that is, to be Eucharistic persons and communities. Thus we break the bread of our lives and shed our blood each day with Christ in generous and boundless love, in order to serve others and to build the Reign of God. To live the Eucharist, to become that which we celebrate, is our road to holiness. ♦

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