



# *Apostles for Today*

## *Prayer and Reflection - June 2013*

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### *THE EUCHARIST SOURCE OF THE NEW EVANGELISATION*

The idea of the Eucharist as source in the above title is taken literally from n. 5 of the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* of the Second Vatican Council. References of a similar nature and content can be found in other documents, such as *Lumen Gentium*, 11: “the Eucharistic sacrifice, ...the fount and apex of the whole Christian life” and in the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 31: “the Eucharist is the centre and summit of the Church's life”.

To understand the theological foundation of these affirmations, it is sufficient to ask what constitutes and what is the purpose of evangelization. The Second Vatican Council (LG 7) always responds that the main purpose is that all be conformed to Christ "until Christ be formed in them". Moreover, the command of Jesus to the Apostles was: “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age*” (Mt 28:19-20).

The mission of the Church is, therefore, in continuity with the mission of Christ because He sends his disciples into the world to continue the work of salvation accomplished by him. Christians of every generation, therefore, are called to bring the message of Christ to their contemporaries and to empower them to attain a personal encounter with the Saviour who is present in his Church - in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist - until the end of time.

The Second Vatican Council wanted to remind us of this explicitly: "As members of the living Christ, incorporated into Him and made like unto Him through baptism and through confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful are duty-bound to cooperate in the expansion and spreading out of His Body, to bring it to fullness as soon as may be"(AG 36). The Church constantly draws strength to fulfil this mission from the Eucharist, from the experience of Communion with the crucified and risen Christ. In fact, every encounter with Him in the Blessed Sacrament intensifies in the faithful their commitment to cooperate with the saving plan of God. St. As Saint Paul teaches, participating in the Eucharist means being involved in the proclamation of the salvation brought about by Christ: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes"(1 Co 11:26).

But the Eucharist not only urges the Church and every Christian to proclaim by word and deed this salvific event "to all nations" (Mt 28:19), "to every creature" (Mk 16:15); but also inserts the Church, and through it, the whole of creation, into the mystery celebrated. In fact, in communion with Christ and his redemptive sacrifice, every Christian is called to offer his or her very life - body, blood and all that daily existence involves -prayers, work, joys and sufferings, works of charity, of apostolate, of service to others and to society - with Him and like Him, for the salvation of all humanity (cf. Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:24). Cf. Angel Garcia Ibañez, *L'Eucaristia, dono e mistero*, pp. 659-660). Thus, it is clear that we must perceive the intimate and unbreakable link between the two essential realities of the Church, the missionary and the Eucharistic-sacramental. The power inherent in evangelisation fully employs the extraordinary power coming from the Word of God, which finds its full realisation in the Eucharist, because in evangelization the Word of God is proclaimed and in the Eucharist it is realised. Every liturgical

action and especially the Eucharist, recalls the history of salvation and re-enacts for the life of the faithful the entire Trinitarian plan of salvation. Evangelization brings it to attention and the Eucharist causes it to be experienced, felt, effects it for the good of the faithful, and requires that our lives bear witness to it.

It is clear that, for a good part of those who call themselves Christians, the only moment or occasion to be evangelised is their participation in the Sunday Eucharist, and at this point we recall what St. Justin says in his First Apology, " on the day called Sunday, all... gather together,... and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read;... **then,... the one who presides over the assembly delivers a speech with an exhortation to imitate these good examples.**" Let every baptized person then, in order to be an apostle and evangelist as St. Vincent urged all, listen to the Word of God with humility and simplicity, welcome it with joyful gratitude, and live it with ever-renewed fervour. Let every Christian have an ever-deeper awareness of the inherent duty of every baptised person to proclaim the Word which has been received, experienced and celebrated to his or her brothers and sisters, near and far. And this is in order to lead them to the Table of the Eucharistic, the centre, core and inexhaustible source of the life and mission of the Church. From the Eucharist, from the intimate encounter with the Risen Christ, springs the commitment to be real evangelisers: we recall how the eyes of the disciples of Emmaus were opened and they recognized Jesus only when he took the bread, broke it and gave it to them. After this encounter the two disciples were able to return to Jerusalem immediately and joyfully in order to tell other disciples what had happened to them and how they had recognized him at the breaking of the bread. The Eucharist gave them the strength to become evangelizers (cf. Lk 24:30-35).

In summary: the missionary impulse of the Church has its roots in the commandment of the Lord Jesus; such an impulse has grown constantly from communion with Him, who is truly present in the Eucharist. For this reason we can say with certainty that the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's mission.

***Reflecting, let us ask ourselves:***

- *Are we as members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate truly conscious that we cannot be apostles of the new evangelization unless we constantly nourish ourselves with the Eucharist?*
- *Is our relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist limited to participation in the Eucharistic celebration or do we know how to draw strength and guidance also through Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament?*
- *How do we express our relationship with the Eucharistic Jesus in our daily life, in our apostolic commitment? Does the love of Christ really impel us to go beyond what is convenient to reach the margins, to enter into a communion of practical solidarity with the spiritually and materially poor and needy?*

**PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, who have made the sacrament of your Body and Blood the source of the Spirit that gives life, make your Church, as it breaks bread in your memory, the seed of a renewed humanity, to the praise of God the Father. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

*The Eucharistic Sisters of St. Vincent Pallotti*