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## LIVING IN COMMUNION

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Each one of our liturgical celebrations could have as main mission to place us in a position of deep relationship with one another, in deep communion with the poor and the suffering, in communion with the whole Church, in order to reveal the gentleness of God. This communion, this unity is not an option; is a primary requirement of faith in Christ Jesus. *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* (Jn. 13:35) The Third Diocesan Eucharistic Congress taking place June 12, 13, and 14 of this year gives us a very special opportunity to deepen this particular dimension of our lives.

### Fraternal Communion

By gathering together as church and listening to the Word of God we can dare to affirm with strong faith and great joy: *Good news has been given to us, the news of our salvation: freedom, light, and liberation are given to our world just as they were given 2000 years ago. Jesus continues to come our way so that we may live in deep communion with one another.* Every liturgical celebration reminds us of this. In a text that will very soon be thirty-five years old, the Fathers of Vatican Council II state that the liturgy is an exercise of the priestly function of Jesus and that every liturgical celebration, inasmuch as it is the work of Christ the Priest and of his body the Church, is the greatest sacred act above which no other Church action can be as effective in the same way and to the same degree. Christ is always there, close to his Church. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass and in the person of the minister. He is present through his virtue in the sacraments, to such an extent that when one baptises it is Christ himself who baptises. He is present in his Word because he is the one who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Finally, Christ is present when the Church prays and sings the psalms, for he has promised that wherever two or three are gathered in his name he is their among them. (Cf. *Constitution on the Liturgy*, N<sup>o</sup>. 7)

### MYSTERY OF FAITH

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council proclaimed that *At the Last Supper, on the night that he was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.* (Ibid. N<sup>o</sup>. 47) The celebration of Mass marks in a special way this marvellous presence of Christ and of his body which is the Church. We are the body of Christ, and there are ministers chosen by Jesus for service to the Body of Christ, servants of the Word, servants of unity, servants of communion. Together we are charged with revealing the gentleness of God.

### THE MISSION OF BEING JESUS

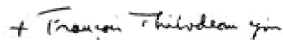
In an article written in the magazine *Univers*, we read the following: *The Church has for mission to be Jesus, flesh of God, in the midst of men and women of today. Its mission is to gather the baptised for common prayer and to work so that the table of humankind may be filled to abundance. The Church holds this mission from Jesus who*

said, 'Go... feed them yourselves.' Go to the poor, to the excluded, to the oppressed, and love them. Love them with that love which the Father has loved me and which is now within you. The Lord of the Beatitudes does not remind us of anything other than to love the men and women of every nation as he did, with him and in him. 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Mt. 25:40) The Messiah of the poor became poor himself not to lower himself but to witness to the glory of God. God is love, and love alone can confirm that the requirements of social justice mentioned by the prophets are requirements of God Himself. Because they are consecrated in Love we must reach out to the poor with the greatest respect. We must make ourselves humble so that our compassion, our solidarity, and our thirst for justice and truth are truly an expression of our condition as servants of Love.

## **SERVANTS OF GENTLENESS**

To live in fraternal communion with one another, with our brothers and sisters, with the poor and the suffering is to witness to our condition as servants of love. We must often pray for priests and future priests, we must do so every day, and we must continue to love them and support them in the different pastoral tasks at hand. Do not insist that they always be present everywhere; they are not many. But while recognising that they are human, continue to require that they be holy, holy men on the road to sanctity. More than ever, in the course of our pastoral restructuring, continue to be active partners in the mission that is ours of revealing to others the kindness of God. Continue to pray for me, your bishop. Without your prayer, your friendship, your support, it would be impossible for me to exercise my episcopal ministry among you. I tell you very honestly, it is not a human task but an apostolic ministry that can be exercised only with the help of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus the Messiah of God, the consecrated one of God, and through the constant action of the Holy Spirit, we are in communion with God, with the Church, with the poor and the suffering, and with one another.

Have a good week!



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