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Deacons in the Year of Faith: Toward a Lifetime of Faithful Service
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Faith and the Holy Eucharist in the Life of Deacons

- Introduction
 - The teaching of the Church is that Jesus in the Eucharist is the Source and Summit of any life that's truly Christian. To be truly Christian, our lives must flow from Jesus in the Eucharist and be directed to him. Otherwise we're not living a truly Christian life.
 - In this Year of Faith, directed toward a renewal of the Church and all believers, there needs to be a renewal of Jesus in the Eucharist as the source, summit, root and center of our faith. The Mass is one of the greatest means to grow in faith, but we have to learn to celebrate the Mass more and more with faith, to approach our Eucharistic Lord with faith and the love with which he through the Mass seeks to strengthen us.
 - Litmus test for whether we're living a Eucharistic life is whether we can live without the Eucharist.
 - SC 95 (*Sacramentum Caritatis*): At the beginning of the fourth century, Christian worship was still forbidden by the imperial authorities. Some Christians in North Africa, who felt bound to celebrate the Lord's Day, defied the prohibition. They were martyred after declaring that it was not possible for them to live without the Eucharist, the food of the Lord: *sine dominico non possumus*. ... These martyrs of Abitinae, in union with all those saints and beati who made the Eucharist the centre of their lives... teach us to be faithful to our encounter with the risen Christ. We too cannot live without partaking of the sacrament of our salvation.
 - Deacons in a particular way are to this have a "Eucharistic amazement," to have not only a deep understanding of the liturgy, but make their whole lives liturgical.
 - JP II Detroit, 1987: As ministers of the altar you must be *steeped in the spirit of the liturgy*, and be convinced above all that it is "the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed and at the same time the source from which all her power flows"
 - In the Basic Norms for the Formation of Deacons, it says that the love with which deacons are called to exercise their *diaconia* is meant to flow from Jesus in the Eucharist:
 - 73. The source of this new capacity to love is the Eucharist, which, not by chance, characterises the ministry of the deacon. In fact, service of the poor is the logical consequence of service of the altar. Therefore the candidate will be invited to participate every day, or at least frequently, within the limits of his family and professional commitments, in the celebration of the Eucharist and will be helped to penetrate ever deeper into its mystery. Within the context of this Eucharistic spirituality, care will be taken to give adequate appreciation to the sacrament of Penance.
 - The Directory on the Life and Ministry of Deacons add:
 - The centre of this spiritual itinerary must be the Holy Eucharist since it is the touchstone of the deacon's life and activity, the indispensable means of perseverance, the criterion of authentic renewal and of a balanced synthesis of life. In this way, the spiritual formation of the deacon will reveal the Holy Eucharist as Passover, in its annual articulation in Holy Week, in its weekly articulation on Sunday and in its constant articulation at daily Mass.
 - So much of the Deacon's loving service involves the Holy Eucharist, and so it's even more important that they approach the Eucharist with faith:
 - Directory on the life and ministry of Deacons: "As an ordinary minister of Holy Communion, (126) the deacon distributes the Body of Christ to the faithful during the celebration of the Mass and, outside of it, administers Viaticum to the sick. He is equally an ordinary minister of exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament and of eucharistic

benediction. It falls to the deacon to preside at Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest.”

- To talk about prayer and faith is to introduce the old Latin aphorism, *Lex credendi lex orandi* — Our faith flows into our worship and in turn our worship nourishes our faith. We pray what we believe. The beauty of the liturgy must reflect the beauty of the faith. Veritatis Splendor:
 - SC 34: The Synod of Bishops reflected at length on the intrinsic relationship between eucharistic faith and eucharistic celebration, pointing out the connection between the *lex orandi* and the *lex credendi*, and stressing the primacy of the *liturgical action*. The Eucharist should be experienced as a mystery of faith, celebrated authentically and with a clear awareness that "the *intellectus fidei* has a primordial relationship to the Church's liturgical action."
 - To increase our faith, we must increase our prayer, and the greatest prayer of all is Jesus' own in the Mass.
- Throughout this conference on faith and the Eucharist, I'd like to ponder some of the insights of St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest teacher of our faith in the history of the Church after Jesus himself, whose love for Jesus in the Eucharist nourished his own faith and helped him to nourish the world. He wrote in his famous *Adoro Te Devote* about the Eucharist, "Fac me tibi semper magis credere." Make me always believe in you (in the Eucharist) more!" That is a specific request for us during this year of faith in which we cry out "adauge nobis fidem!," increase our faith, Lord!
- As we did with prayer, we will ponder the subject of the Holy Eucharist, both the Mass and the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist by means of the Mass, from the eight different descriptions of faith found in *Lumen Fidei*. This will help us, I hope, to pray the Mass with greater faith so that the Mass may help us to grow more deeply in faith in this Year of Faith and beyond.
- But before we look at how we can improve grow in faith by improving our seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and all the other senses of Jesus in the Eucharist, none of them — and all of them combined, are adequate to the mystery into which we're about to enter. St. Thomas wrote in his *Pange Lingua*, "Praestet fides supplementum Sensuum defectui," may faith grant a supplement for what fails the senses. He also talks about the key role of faith in grasping this mystery at all: "Verbum caro, panem verum, Verbo carnem efficit: Fitque sanguis Christi merum, Et si sensus deficit, Ad firmandum cor sincerum Sola fides sufficit." If our senses fail — and they do — the only thing that is capable of strengthen a sincere heart is faith.
- Faith is a personal entrustment to God in response to his total entrustment to us
 - We can begin this section with some thoughts of the greatest teacher of the faith after Jesus in the history of the Church who is also one of the greatest Eucharistic mystics, whose
 - In the *Adoro Te Devote* he described the exchange we find in the Holy Eucharist.
 - God's part: "Pie pellicane Iesu Domine..."
 - Our part: "Tibi se cor meum totum subiicit, Quia te contemplan, totum deficit." To you my whole heart subjects itself, for in contemplating you it loses itself totally."
 - In *Sacris Solemnis*, "O res mirabilis: manducat Dominum pauper, servus et humilis"
 - In *Lauda Sion*, "Sumit unus, sumunt mille: quantum isti, tantum ille: nec sumptus consumitur."
 - We talk about this marvelous exchange in the beautiful prayer when the water is mixed with wine: "Per huius aquae and vini mysterium," ... "through the mystery of this water and wine,..."
 - We focus first on Jesus' gift, which is a free gift.
 - B16: Jesus looks at his Passion, death and Resurrection with full awareness. He wishes to spend with his disciples this Supper, that has a quite special character and is different from other meals; it is his Supper, in which he gives something entirely new: himself. In this way Jesus celebrates his Pasch, anticipating his Cross and his Resurrection.
 - B16: Jesus offers and communicates himself in the bread and in the wine. But how can all this happen? How can Jesus give himself at that moment? Jesus knows that his life is about to be taken from him in the torture of the cross.... With the gift of the bread and of the wine that he offers at the Last Supper, Jesus anticipates his death and his Resurrection, bringing about what he had said in his Good Shepherd Discourse: "I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have

power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father” (Jn 10:17-18). He therefore offers in anticipation the life that will be taken from him and in this way transforms his violent death into a free act of giving himself for others and to others. The violence he suffered is transformed into an active, free and redemptive sacrifice.

- SC 8. The Eucharist reveals the loving plan that guides all of salvation history (cf. *Eph* 1:10; 3:8- 11). There the *Deus Trinitas*, who is essentially love (cf. *1 Jn* 4:7-8), becomes fully a part of our human condition. In the bread and wine under whose appearances Christ gives himself to us in the paschal meal (cf. *Lk* 22:14-20; *1 Cor* 11:23-26), God's whole life encounters us and is sacramentally shared with us. God is a perfect communion of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At creation itself, man was called to have some share in God's breath of life (cf. *Gen* 2:7). But it is in Christ, dead and risen, and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, given without measure (cf. *Jn* 3:34), that we have become sharers of God's inmost life. (16) Jesus Christ, who "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God" (*Heb* 9:14), makes us, in the gift of the Eucharist, sharers in God's own life. This is an absolutely free gift, the superabundant fulfilment of God's promises. The Church receives, celebrates and adores this gift in faithful obedience.
- Now we turn to our own. Rom 12. *Logike Latreia*.
 - SC 70. The mystery "believed" and "celebrated" contains an innate power making it the principle of new life within us and the form of our Christian existence. By receiving the body and blood of Jesus Christ we become sharers in the divine life in an ever more adult and conscious way. Here too, we can apply Saint Augustine's words, in his *Confessions*, about the eternal *Logos* as the food of our souls. Stressing the mysterious nature of this food, Augustine imagines the Lord saying to him: "I am the food of grown men; grow, and you shall feed upon me; nor shall you change me, like the food of your flesh, into yourself, but you shall be changed into me." (198) It is not the eucharistic food that is changed into us, but rather we who are mysteriously transformed by it. Christ nourishes us by uniting us to himself; "he draws us into himself." Here the eucharistic celebration appears in all its power as the source and summit of the Church's life, since it expresses at once both the origin and the fulfilment of the new and definitive worship of God, the *logiké latreía*. Saint Paul's exhortation to the Romans in this regard is a concise description of how the Eucharist makes our whole life a spiritual worship pleasing to God: "I appeal to you therefore, my brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (*Rom* 12:1). In these words the new worship appears as a total self-offering made in communion with the whole Church. The Apostle's insistence on the offering of our bodies emphasizes the concrete human reality of a worship which is anything but disincarnate. The Bishop of Hippo goes on to say that "this is the sacrifice of Christians: that we, though many, are one body in Christ. The Church celebrates this mystery in the sacrament of the altar, as the faithful know, and there she shows them clearly that in what is offered, she herself is offered." Catholic doctrine, in fact, affirms that the Eucharist, as the sacrifice of Christ, is also the sacrifice of the Church, and thus of all the faithful. This insistence on sacrifice – a "making sacred" – expresses all the existential depth implied in the transformation of our human reality as taken up by Christ (cf. *Phil* 3:12).
 - SC 71 Christianity's new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (*1 Cor* 10:31). Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here the intrinsically eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape. The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace to reflect the image of the Son of God (cf. *Rom* 8:29ff.). There is nothing authentically human – our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds – that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by

Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of God is the living man (cf. *1 Cor* 10:31). And the life of man is the vision of God. (203)

- We live this reality in the Offertory. We're called to prepare for Mass with this in mind, and make of ourselves the sacrifice of Abel. We pray for it specifically in Eucharistic Prayer III: "Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you: by the same Spirit graciously make holy these gifts we have brought to you for consecration, that they may become the Body and + Blood of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ at whose command we celebrate these mysteries." We're asking not only that the bread and wine be consecrated but all our own gifts, including the total gift of ourselves, together with the bread and wine.
- We also see ponder it in Eucharistic Prayer IV after the consecration: "Look, O Lord, upon the Sacrifice which you yourself have provided for your Church, and grant in your loving kindness to all who partake of this one Bread and one Chalice that, gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit, they may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory"
- Faith is a light
 - We turn now to the second of the prisms with which we are called to understand the Mass so that we might grow in faith through the Mass. Faith is a light that allows us to see differently, it allows us to see the invisible realities, it allows us to see things as they really are, it allows us ultimately to see with the eyes of Christ. The growth in faith is a growth in this vision, but in a sense, because of the blindness caused in us by sin, we need God's grace to see and our healing is like the healing of blind man in Bethsaida (Mk 8:22-25) who after Jesus had led him outside the town, spit in the dirt, and, laying his hands on him, anointed his eyes with the spittle said, in response to Jesus' question whether he could see, "I see people looking like trees and walking." Jesus then laid his hands on him a second time, his sight was restored and he could see everything distinctly. Our healing is progressive like that blind man. Little by little we see more and more, provided that we continue to walk and look by faith.
 - In his beautiful exhortation *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, Blessed John Paul II said that the Eucharist is a mystery of light that allows us to see the whole mystery of our faith with new lenses:
 - John Paul II, MND: "The account of the Risen Jesus appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus helps us to focus on a primary aspect of the Eucharistic mystery, one which should always be present in the devotion of the People of God: The Eucharist is a mystery of light! What does this mean, and what are its implications for Christian life and spirituality? Jesus described himself as the "light of the world" (*Jn* 8:12), and this quality clearly appears at those moments in his life, like the Transfiguration and the Resurrection, in which his divine glory shines forth brightly. Yet in the Eucharist the glory of Christ remains veiled. The Eucharist is pre-eminently a *mysterium fidei*. Through the mystery of his complete hiddenness, Christ becomes a mystery of light, thanks to which believers are led into the depths of the divine life. ... The Eucharist is light above all because at every Mass the liturgy of the Word of God precedes the liturgy of the Eucharist in the unity of the two "tables", the table of the Word and the table of the Bread. This continuity is expressed in the Eucharistic discourse of Saint John's Gospel, where Jesus begins his teaching by speaking of the mystery of his person and then goes on to draw out its Eucharistic dimension: "My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (*Jn* 6:55). We know that this was troubling for most of his listeners, which led Peter to express the faith of the other Apostles and of the Church throughout history: "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life" (*Jn* 6:68). In the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, Christ himself intervenes to show, "beginning with Moses and all the prophets", how "all the Scriptures" point to the mystery of his person (cf. *Lk* 24:27). His words make the hearts of the disciples "burn" within them, drawing them out of the darkness of

sorrow and despair, and awakening in them a desire to remain with him: “Stay with us, Lord” (cf. v. 29).

- We talk about the Eucharist as a mystery of light that illumines our faith throughout the Eucharistic prayers that form the heart of the prayer of the Mass.
 - In this Morning’s Mass, when we used the third Eucharistic Prayer for Various Needs, we prayed, “Grant that all the faithful of the Church, looking into the signs of the times by the light of faith, may constantly devote themselves to the service of the Gospel.” That is the prayer of the Mass throughout the Year of faith, that we look at everything through the light of faith to devote ourselves anew to the service of the Gospel.
 - We ask something similar in the first Prayer for Various Needs that God will renew the Church through the light of the Gospel.
 - In the Preface for Eucharistic Prayer IV, we note that God dwells in unapproachable light and yet seeks to fill us with his blessings and bring joy to us by the glory of his light, the light we encounter in the celebration of the Mass.
 - And we pray in almost every Eucharistic prayer that those who have died may come to see the light of God’s face forever, the light that was so bright it made Moses’ face radiant and seeks to make us radiate that same holy light.
- We pray in this way because our eyes need to open through faith to the realities we’re celebrating. St. Thomas pointed to this in so many of his beautiful and rich Eucharistic hymns.
 - In the Adoro Te Devote, he wrote:
 - “Adoro te devote, latens Deitas, Quae sub his figuris vere latitas.” God truly exists hidden under the appearances of bread and wine. This is a greater concealment that happened even at the crucifixion, as he goes on to pray: “In Cruce latebat sola Deitas. At hic latet simul et humanitas.” Whereas only Jesus’ divinity was hidden on Calvary, in the Eucharist, both his divinity and his humanity are hidden. Yet Thomas speaks for all the faithful when he says, “Ambo tamen credens, atque confitens...” Nevertheless I continue to believe in and confess both realities.
 - The greatest prayer with regard to our sense of light with the help of the light of faith comes in the last verse of this beautiful hymn, ““Iesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio, Oro, fiat illud, quod tam sitio, Ut te revelata cernens facie, Visu sim beatus tuae gloriae.” O Jesus, whom I now behold veiled, I pray that what I now thirst for will be done, that discerning under the appearance that you are revealed, I may be blessed with the sight of your glory.” That’s a prayer not only for the hereafter but for the embryonic eschaton that is every Mass.
 - St. Thomas wonders about the same realities in his *Lauda Sion Salvatorem*: “Quod non capis, quod non vides, animosa firmat fides, praeter rerum ordinem. Sub diversis speciebus, signis tantum, et non rebus, latent res eximiae.” Lively faith affirms what you do not understand or see, that the greatest things are hidden only under different species, hidden only under signs not things (because the species of bread and wine no longer have reality after the consecration.” We need this lively faith to see and believe these truths.
- We see this whole process happen in Emmaus, when the disciples leaving Jerusalem disconsolate are met by Christ and over time, as their hearts are warmed, they begin to sense his presence before it all dawns in the Breaking of Bread, when Christ celebrates Mass and disappears after the consecration. It tells us that their eyes were opened. That’s what faith facilitates.
- So in this Year of Faith, it’s important that we beg for a new set of eyes with which to see what really occurs at Mass, Who is really hiding, that we encounter personally in the Mass the one who is Light from Light. The Book of Revelation is a book that helps us to interpret what is happening in the Mass and to see it a little bit more from the perspective of heaven. To grow in faith through the Mass I’d encourage you to look at the book of Revelation with this Eucharistic key. One great text in English that helps us to do that is Scott Hahn’s *The Lamb’s Supper*. Because of his knowledge of Sacred Scripture, when he attended Mass as a Protestant on the campus of

Marquette, he couldn't believe how his eyes were opened to the true meaning of the Catholic Mass, because it was our participation here on earth in what the Book of Revelation points to.

- Among the most important realities to see in the Mass, I think would be the following:
 - To see all the angels and saints praying the Mass with us. At the Sanctus, we explicitly remember Isaiah's vision of all the cherubim and seraphim around God's throne singing. Likewise the entire heavenly host is present. We'll return to this in a moment.
 - To see Jesus in the Gospel saying live the words being proclaimed, or, if they're a description of what he did, to imagine his doing that right now where Mass is being celebrated.
 - To see Jesus in the Upper Room saying the words of consecration, on the Cross giving us his body and blood, and having his body returned in the empty tomb as he is placed within us.
 - To imagine the faith of the Blessed Virgin Mary attending the Masses of St. Peter, St. John and the other apostles, and to grasp how she received anew with incredible reverence the same Son whom she had carried in her womb for nine months.
 - To picture Jesus himself at the end of Mass sending us out just like he sent out his first apostles and disciples.
- I want to return to this sight, this vision of what's happening at Mass. There's a Bolivian woman named Catalina Rivas whom many believe receives mystical revelations of our Lady and our Lord as well as has received the sacred stigmata. She's a controversial figure not just because anyone who claims to be receiving messages from God not to mention the Lord's sacred wounds will have skeptics, but also because she has had a major conversion in her life and some of her early writings bear resemblances to a Mexican priest's published works. Regardless, her book "the Holy Mass" in which she documents what she claims Our Lord and our Lady explain to her what is really happening during the Mass, has been given a clear imprimatur from her bishop in Cochabamba and seems, in my opinion and in the opinion of many other theologians who have looked at it, not inconsistent at all with any of the faith and customs of the Church. I'd like to share the insights found in her book, because I think they will help us to see what's happening at Mass more clearly and how we should prepare to live the Mass. It's a lengthy passage but worth our time. Here's what she wrote:
 - When I arrived at church on the feast of the Annunciation, the Archbishop and priests had already processed out of the sacristy. The Virgin Mary said in her soft, sweet, feminine voice: "Today is a day of learning for you. I want you to pay close attention to what you experience today, for you will be sharing it with all of mankind."
 - The first thing I noticed was the distant sound of beautiful choir voices. The music seemed to draw nearer, then recede like the sound of the wind. The Archbishop began Mass. When he reached the penitential rite, the Blessed Virgin said: "Now ask the Lord from the bottom of your heart to forgive you your sins, for they are offensive to Him. This way you will be able to participate worthily in the privilege of attending Holy Mass." I thought, "Surely I am in a state of sanctifying grace. Didn't I go to confession last night?" But the Blessed Mother answered: "You think you have not offended God since last night? Let Me remind you of a couple of instances... And you say you have not hurt the Lord? You arrived here at the last minute, when the celebrants were processing to the altar to say Mass. You were going to take part without preparing yourself... Why do you come at the last minute? Come earlier to pray and ask the Lord to send His Holy Spirit, that He may grant you His peace and cleanse you of the spirit of the world, your worries, problems, and distractions. It is He who disposes you to the proper experience of so sacred a moment... This is the greatest of all Miracles. You are about to experience the moment when God the Most High bestows His supreme gift upon you, yet you are unable to appreciate it."
 - Since this was a feast day and the Gloria was to be recited, Our Lady said: "Glorify and bless the Holy Trinity with all your love. Acknowledge yourself as one of his creatures."
 - Now came the Liturgy of the Word. The Virgin Mary bade me repeat: "Lord, today I desire to listen to Your Word and yield abundant fruit. May Your Holy Spirit clean the

interior of my heart so that Your Word may grow and mature in it..." Then Our Lady said: "I want you to attend to the readings and homily. Remember Holy Scripture says that the Word of God does not return to His mouth without bearing fruit. If you are attentive, something of what you have heard will remain with you. Try all day long to recall the words that made an impression on you. It may be two verses, or the entire Gospel reading, or perhaps only a single word. Whatever it is, savor it for the rest of the day. It will become a part of you. That is the way to change your life, by allowing the God's Word to transform you."

- Soon it was time for the Offertory, and the Blessed Virgin said: "Pray in this manner: 'Lord, I offer You all that I am, all that I have, all that I am able to do. I entrust everything to Your Hands... Almighty God, transform me by the merits of Your Son. I beg You on behalf of my family, my benefactors... all those who struggle against us, and those who have commended themselves to my poor prayers.'"
- Suddenly, figures I had not noticed before began rising out of the pews. It was as if another person were coming out of the side of each person sitting in the Cathedral. Before long, the building was full of beautiful young beings clad in snow-white robes. They moved to the center aisle and processed toward the altar.
- Our Blessed Mother said: "Observe. They are the Guardian Angels of everyone present here. This is the moment when your Guardian Angel brings your offerings and petitions before the Lord's Altar."
- I was utterly astonished. These beings had beautiful faces, radiant beyond imagining. Despite the feminine-like beauty of their faces, their bodies, hands, and stature were clearly masculine. Their bare feet seemed to glide over the floor. Some of them carried golden, bowl-like objects that gleamed with a golden-white light. The Virgin Mary said to me: "These are the Guardian Angels of those who are offering up this Holy Mass for many intentions. They know what the Divine Liturgy means. They have something to offer to the Lord... Avail yourself of this moment to make an offering of yourself. Offer your sorrows, your pains, your hopes, your sadness, your joys, and your petitions. Remember the Mass has infinite value. Therefore, be generous with your offerings and petitions."
- Behind the first group of angels came others who had nothing in their hands... The Virgin Mary said: "These are the angels of those present here who never have anything to offer. They have no interest in experiencing each liturgical moment of the Mass. They have no gifts to bring to the Lord's Altar."
- At the end of the procession came other angels with sorrowful-looking expressions. They walked with their hands joined in prayer, their eyes downcast. "These are the Guardian Angels of those who are present here but who do not wish to be; that is, those who have been forced to come, who come out of a sense of obligation but without any real desire to take part in the Holy Mass. The angels walk sadly because they have nothing to bring to the Altar, except their own prayers... Do not sadden your Guardian Angel. Ask for much; ask for the conversion of sinners, for peace in the world, for your families, your neighbors, for those who ask for your prayers. Ask; ask for much, not only for yourselves, but for others as well. Remember the offering that most pleases the Lord is the one in which you offer yourself as a holocaust, so that upon His descent Jesus may transform you by His own merits. What do we have to offer the Father on our own? Nothing but sin. But the offering of ourselves united to the merits of Jesus, that offering is pleasing to the Father."
- The Preface came to a close. Suddenly, as the assembly sang, "Holy, Holy, Holy..." everything visible behind the celebrants vanished from view. To the Archbishop's left, extending behind him in a diagonal line, a host of Angels appeared: small angels, big angels, angels with enormous wings, angels with small wings, wingless angels. Like the others, they were clad in white robes not unlike those worn by the priests and altar boys. All knelt, hands joined in prayer, heads bowed reverently. Beautiful, well-blended voices broke forth as though from numerous choirs. They sang in unison with the people, Holy, Holy, Holy...

- The moment of the Consecration – that most marvelous of Miracles – drew near. Another great multitude appeared in a diagonal line behind the Bishop, this time to his right. They were similarly clad, but in various shades of pastel: rose, green, light-blue, lilac, and yellow. Their faces were blissful and shone radiantly. All seemed to be of the same age. Somehow you knew they were of different ages, but their faces looked the same – without wrinkle and joyous. They too knelt down at the intoning of the Sanctus, “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...” Our Lady said: “These are the Saints and the Blessed of Heaven. Among them you will find the souls of your relatives who already enjoy the Beatific Vision.” Then I saw Her, at the Archbishop’s right elbow, one step behind him. She hovered over the floor, kneeling on an exquisite piece of fabric, clear and bright, like pellucid water. Hands joined, she looked attentively and respectfully at the celebrant. From that position, she murmured directly into my heart, without looking at me: “It surprises you to see Me standing behind the Archbishop, does it not? This is as it should be. For all the love that My Son bestows upon Me, He has not accorded Me the honor of confecting the daily Miracle with My hands as priestly hands do. Because of this, I feel a deep respect for priests and for the miracle that God accomplishes through them. This compels Me to kneel behind them.”
- Before the Altar, shadows of people appeared, all in gray, their hands raised. The Holy Virgin said to me: “These are the blessed souls of Purgatory, who await your prayers in order to be refreshed. Never cease to pray for them. They pray for you, but they cannot pray for themselves. You must pray for them, in order to help them leave Purgatory, that they may be with God and enjoy Him for eternity.” Mary added: “Now you have seen it; I am here all the time. People go on pilgrimages to the sites of my apparitions. That is good, because they will receive many graces there. But at none of my apparitions, at no other site, am I more present than at the Altar during Holy Mass. You will always find Me at the foot of the Altar, where the Eucharist is celebrated. I remain at the foot of the Tabernacle, with the angels, because I am always with Him.”
- To see Our Blessed Mother’s beautiful face at the intoning of the Sanctus, to see all those others present, faces radiant, hands joined, eagerly awaiting the Miracle that is ever made present – to see this was to be in Heaven itself. “And to think there are those who can be distracted in conversation at such a moment. It hurts me to say that many remain standing, arms crossed, paying homage to the Lord as if they were His equal. Tell men especially that they are never more manly than when they bend their knee to God.”
- The celebrant pronounced the words of the Consecration. Though he was a man of average height, he began suddenly to grow in stature. A supernatural golden-white light seemed to suffuse him. It proceeded to envelop him completely, growing especially bright around the face. Because of this, I could not make out his features. As he raised the Host, I saw his hands. The back of them showed marks from which great beams of light emanated. It was Jesus! It was He, wrapping His Body around the celebrant. It was as if He were lovingly surrounding the hands of the Archbishop. The Host began growing to enormous size. Upon it, the marvelous face of Jesus appeared. He looked down upon His people. Instinctively, I bowed my head, but Our Lady said: “Do not look down. Look up; view and contemplate Him. Exchange your gaze with His and repeat the Fatima prayer: ‘Lord, I believe, I adore, I trust and I love You. I ask pardon for those who do not believe, who do not adore, or trust, or love You.’ Now tell Him how much you love Him. Pay homage to the King of Kings.”
- It seemed to me that I was the only one looking at Him as He gazed down from that enormous Host. But then I understood that this was how He gazes at every person. He loves all with a boundless love. Then I bowed my head to the very floor, as did all the Angels and Heavenly Saints. As the celebrant lowered the Host, it returned to its normal size. Tears ran down my cheeks. I could not recover from my astonishment. As the Bishop repeated the words of the Consecration of the wine, lightning appeared from the heavens... The church walls and ceiling had vanished. All was dark but for that brilliant light from the Altar.

- Suddenly, there, suspended in the air, was the Crucified Jesus. I saw Him down to the lower part of His torso. The horizontal beam of the Cross was borne up by large, strong hands. From out of this brilliant light burst forth a smaller light. It was like a small, very bright dove. After flying swiftly around the Church, it came to rest on the left shoulder of the Archbishop, who still looked like Jesus, for I could make out His long hair, His luminous wounds and His large body...
- I was able to contemplate His face, battered arms and torn flesh. His right side had a gaping wound from which blood gushed out to the left and right. It looked like water, but it had a brilliant sheen to it, more like jets of light emanating towards the faithful... At that moment the Virgin Mary said: "This is the Miracle of Miracles. I have told you before that the Lord is not constrained by the limits of time and space. At the moment of the Consecration, the entire assembly is brought to the foot of Calvary at the very instant of Christ's crucifixion."
- As we were about to pray the Our Father, the Lord spoke to me for the first time during the liturgy: "Wait, I want you to pray from the deepest recesses of your being. Take this moment to bring to mind the person or persons that have done you the greatest harm in your life. Clasp them to your bosom and tell them with all your heart: 'In Jesus' Name I forgive you and wish you peace. In Jesus' Name, I ask for your forgiveness and wish you my peace.' If the person is worthy of that peace, then he will receive it and feel the better for it. If he is incapable of accepting that peace, then peace will return to your heart. But I do not want you to receive or offer peace if you are not able to forgive and feel that peace in your heart first. Be careful what you do," continued the Lord, "when you repeat in the Our Father: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' If you are capable of forgiving but not forgetting, as the saying goes, then you are placing conditions upon the forgiveness of God. You are saying: 'You forgive me only as I am capable of forgiving, but no more'."
- The celebrant said, "... grant us peace and unity..." and, then, "The peace of the Lord be with you all ." Suddenly, I saw a very intense light shining between some of the people and those whom they embraced... I could truly feel the embrace of the Lord in that light. It was He who embraced and gave me His peace, because at that moment I had been able to forgive and rid my heart of all rancor against others. That is what Jesus wants, to share with us that moment of joy, by clasping us to His bosom and wishing us His Peace.
- The time came for the celebrants to receive Communion. When the Archbishop took Communion, the Virgin Mary said: "This is the moment to pray for the Priest and his concelebrants. Say together with Me: 'Lord, bless them, sanctify them, help them, purify them, love them, watch over them and support them in Your Love.' Remember all the priests of the world, pray for all the consecrated souls."
- The people rose from their pews to receive Communion. The moment of the Great Encounter had come. The Lord said to me: "Wait a moment; I want you to observe something." An inner impulse made me look up at a woman who was about to receive Communion... When the Priest placed the Sacred Host on her tongue, a flash of golden-white light pierced her. It came out of her back, suffusing it, then her shoulders, then her head. The Lord said, "This is how I rejoice when I embrace a soul that receives me with a clean heart." He spoke as one who was truly happy. When I went to receive Communion, Jesus told me: "The Last Supper marked My greatest moment of intimacy with My own. In that hour of love, I established what in the eyes of men might be seen as the greatest act of madness. I instituted the Eucharist. I made Myself a prisoner of Love, desiring to remain with you until the end of time. My Love could not bear the thought of you remaining orphans, for I loved you more than life itself."
- On returning to my seat, I knelt down, and the Lord said to me: "Listen!" A moment later, I heard the prayers of the woman seated in front of me. She had just received Communion... Jesus said in a sad voice: "Did you hear her prayer? Not once did she tell Me she loved Me. Not once did she thank Me for the gift of bringing My Divinity down to

level of her poor humanity, that I might then raise her up to Myself. Not once did she say, 'Thank You, Lord.' It was merely a litany of requests. So it is with almost all those who receive Me. I died out of love for you, then rose again. Out of love I wait for each of you. Out of love I remain with you. But you do not realize that I too need your love. Remember that in this sublime hour of the soul I am the Beggar of Love.”

- When the celebrant was about to impart the Blessing, the Holy Virgin said: “Be attentive, take care. Instead of the Sign of the Cross, you make any old sign. Remember that this blessing might be the last one you will ever receive at hands of a priest. You do not know, upon leaving this place, if you will die or not... Those consecrated hands are blessing you in the Name of the Blessed Trinity. Therefore, make the Sign of the Cross with respect, as though it were the last you make in your life.”
 - At the end of Mass, Jesus asked me to stay with Him a while longer. He said: “Do not be in such a hurry to leave. Stay a while in My company. Take delight in it and give Me an occasion to take delight in yours.” Then I asked Him, “Lord, tell me truly, how long do You stay with us after Communion?” The Lord replied: “For as long as you wish. If you speak to Me throughout the day, exchanging words with Me during your daily chores, I will listen to you. I am always with you. It is you who leave Me. You leave the Mass and the day of obligation is behind you. You have observed the Lord’s Day and now it is over... I read the deepest secrets of your hearts and minds. But I enjoy your telling Me about your life, your allowing Me to be a member of your family, being your closest friend. If you only knew how many graces you lose by not giving Me a place in your life!”
 - Jesus said to me: “You should exceed the angels and archangels in virtue, because, unlike you, they do not have the joy of receiving Me as nourishment. They drink a drop from the Spring, but you, who have the grace of receiving Me, have an entire Ocean to drink from.”
 - The Lord also spoke to me with pain in His heart about those who meet Him out of habit, who have lost their sense of awe at each encounter with Him. Routine makes many people lukewarm so that they have nothing new to tell Him when they receive Him. He also told me that there are many consecrated souls who have lost their enthusiasm over loving the Lord. They have turned their vocation into a job, a profession to which nothing is given beyond the minimum demanded of them.
 - Then the Lord spoke to me about the fruits that ought to come from frequent reception of Communion. There are people who receive the Lord daily, but whose lives do not change. They spend many hours at prayer, doing many works, yet they do not continue to grow in love. A life that does not mature cannot bear true fruits for the Lord. The merits received in the Eucharist should yield fruits of conversion in us. They should bear fruits of charity toward our brothers and sisters.
- Faith is a new way of hearing
 - Our third prism to grow in faith through the faithful participation in the lex orandi of the Mass is through hearing. Just as in faith as a whole, “hearing” would be the most important of the senses with regard to the faithful living of the Mass. Don’t take my word for it; take the angelic doctor’s.
 - St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Adoro Te Devote* wrote, *“Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur, Sed auditu solo tuto creditur.”* “Having seen, touched and tasted one is deceived about you. But only through hearing can it be believed in full,” he says. Then he goes on to say why: *“Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius, Nil hoc verbo veritatis verius.”* I believe whatever the son of God has said. Nothing is truer than the word of truth. We believe in the reality because we have heard Jesus himself speak about it. This is my body. This is the chalice of my blood. My body is real food. My blood is true drink. Unless you grow on my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you. We believe based on the word of God who cannot deceive us.
 - We’ve already talked about the importance of hearing with regard to the Emmaus scene, but I’d like to cite Blessed John Paul II’s words, which reemphasize the point about how we are to pay attention to the liturgy of the Word at Mass, which introduces us into the mystery of faith, which is a mystery not just of light but of sound. In *Mane nobiscum Domine*, he said, “It is significant that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, duly prepared by our Lord’s words, recognized him at

table through the simple gesture of the 'breaking of bread.' When minds are enlightened and hearts are enkindled, signs begin to "speak". The Eucharist unfolds in a dynamic context of signs containing a rich and luminous message."

- In this Year of Faith, we're called to bring a new and improved type of hearing to the Mass. We know that everywhere in the world on a given day the Mass basically contains the same readings of Sacred Scripture and the same proper and common prayers. And yet the words don't always "sound" the same, either in the mouth of the one articulating them or in the ears of the one receiving them. There are more and less faithful ways of proclaiming the words of prayer and receiving those same words. In this Year of Faith, it is important for us to focus on both of these.
- This was one of the big emphases of Pope Benedict XVI to revitalize the Sacred Liturgy. He talked about both poles. In a catechesis on prayer in the liturgy, he termed it the *ars celebrandi*, the art of celebrating:
 - "The first requirement for a good liturgical celebration is that there should be prayer and a conversation with God, first of all listening and consequently a response. St Benedict, speaking in his Rule of prayer in the Psalms, pointed out to his monks: *mens concordet voci*, "the mind must be in accord with the voice". The Saint teaches that in the prayers of the Psalms words must precede our thought. It does not usually happen like this because we have to think and then what we have thought is converted into words. Here, instead, in the liturgy, the opposite is true, words come first. God has given us the word and the sacred liturgy offers us words; we must enter into the words, into their meaning and receive them within us, we must attune ourselves to these words; in this way we become children of God, we become like God. As *Sacrosanctum Concilium* recalls, "in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds be attuned to their voices, and that they cooperate with heavenly grace lest they receive it in vain" (n. 11). A fundamental, primary element of the dialogue with God in the liturgy is the agreement between what we say with our lips and what we carry in our hearts. By entering into the words of the great history of prayer, we ourselves are conformed to the spirit of these words and are enabled to speak to God.
- He developed the point in his apostolic exhortation on the Holy Eucharist, *Sacramentum Caritatis*:
 - SC 38: In the course of the Synod, there was frequent insistence on the need to avoid any antithesis between the *ars celebrandi*, the art of proper celebration, and the full, active and fruitful participation of all the faithful. The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*. The *ars celebrandi* is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness; indeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers, called to take part in the celebration as the People of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (cf. *1 Pet* 2:4-5, 9)
- We can ponder in greater depth both of these dimensions to faithful hearing. He responded in a 2006 Question-and-Answer session with priests to a question from Fr. Vittorio Petruzzi who had asked about the *Ars Celebrandi*:
 - I would say that there are different dimensions. The first dimension is that the *celebratio* is prayer and a conversation with God: God with us and us with God. Thus, the first requirement for a good celebration is that the priest truly enters this colloquy. In proclaiming the Word, he feels himself in conversation with God. He is a listener to the Word and a preacher of the Word, in the sense that he makes himself an instrument of the Lord and seeks to understand this Word of God that he must then transmit to the people. He is in a conversation with God because the texts of Holy Mass are not theatrical scripts or anything like them, but prayers, thanks to which, together with the assembly, I speak to God.
 - It is important, therefore, to enter into this conversation. St Benedict in his "Rule" tells the monks, speaking of the recitation of the Psalms, "*Mens concordet voci*". The *vox*, words, precede our mind. This is not usually the case: one has to think first, then one's thought becomes words. But here, the words come first. The sacred Liturgy gives us the words; we

must enter into these words, find a harmony with this reality that precedes us. ...

- To the extent that we have interiorized this structure, comprehended this structure, assimilated the words of the Liturgy, we can enter into this inner consonance and thus not only speak to God as individuals, but enter into the "we" of the Church, which is praying. And we thus transform our "I" in this way, by entering into the "we" of the Church, enriching and enlarging this "I", praying with the Church, with the words of the Church, truly being in conversation with God.
- This is the first condition: we ourselves must interiorize the structure, the words of the Liturgy, the Word of God. Thus, our celebration truly becomes a celebration "with" the Church: our hearts are enlarged and we are not doing just anything but are "with" the Church, in conversation with God. It seems to me that people truly feel that we converse with God, with them, and that in this common prayer we attract others, in communion with the children of God we attract others; or if not, we are only doing something superficial.
- Thus, the fundamental element of the true *ars celebrandi* is this consonance, this harmony between what we say with our lips and what we think with our heart. The "*Sursum corda*", which is a very ancient word of the Liturgy, should come before the Preface, before the Liturgy, as the "path" for our speaking and thinking. We must raise our heart to the Lord, not only as a ritual response but as an expression of what is happening in this heart that is uplifted, and also lifts up others.
- In other words, the *ars celebrandi* is not intended as an invitation to some sort of theatre or show, but to an interiority that makes itself felt and becomes acceptable and evident to the people taking part. Only if they see that this is not an exterior or spectacular *ars* - we are not actors! - but the expression of the journey of our heart that attracts their hearts too, will the Liturgy become beautiful, will it become the communion with the Lord of all who are present.
- Of course, external things must also be associated with this fundamental condition, expressed in St Benedict's words: "*Mens concordet voci*" - the heart is truly raised, uplifted to the Lord. We must learn to say the words properly.
- Sometimes, when I was still a teacher in my Country, young people had read the Sacred Scriptures. And they read them as one reads the text of a poem one has not understood. Naturally, to learn to say words correctly one must first understand the text with its drama, with its immediacy. It is the same for the Preface and for the Eucharistic Prayer.
- It is difficult for the faithful to follow a text as long as our Eucharistic Prayer. For this reason these new "inventions" are constantly cropping up. However, with constantly new Eucharistic Prayers one does not solve the problem. The problem is that this is a moment that also invites others to silence with God and to pray with God. Therefore, things can only go better if the Eucharistic Prayer is said well and with the correct pauses for silence, if it is said with interiority but also with the art of speaking.
- It follows that the recitation of the Eucharistic Prayer requires a moment of special attention if it is to be spoken in such a way that it involves others. I believe we should also find opportunities in catechesis, in homilies and in other circumstances to explain this Eucharistic Prayer well to the People of God so that they can follow the important moments - the account and the words of the Institution, the prayer for the living and the dead, the thanksgiving to the Lord and the *epiclesis* - if the community is truly to be involved in this prayer.
- Thus, the words must be pronounced properly. There must then be an adequate preparation. Altar servers must know what to do; lectors must be truly experienced speakers. Then the choir, the singing, should be rehearsed: and let the altar be properly decorated. All this, even if it is a matter of many practical things, is part of the *ars celebrandi*.
- But to conclude, the fundamental element is this art of entering into communion with the Lord, which we prepare for as priests throughout our lives.

- It's important to ponder a little the *Ars Celebrandi* for deacons. The National Directory for the Formation, Ministry and Life and Permanent Deacons in the United States gives a beautiful summary of all that the deacon is called to do, aligning his heart to his words and actions:
 - During the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, the deacon participates in specific penitential rites as designated in the *Roman Missal*. He properly proclaims the Gospel. He may preach the homily in accord with the provisions of Canon Law. He voices the needs of the people in the General Intercessions, needs with which he should have a particular and personal familiarity from the circumstances of his ministry of charity. The deacon assists the presider and other ministers in accepting the offerings of the people—symbolic of his traditional role in receiving and distributing the resources of the community among those in need—and he helps to prepare the gifts for sacrifice. During the celebration he helps the faithful participate more fully, consciously, and actively in the Eucharistic sacrifice, may extend the invitation of peace, and serves as an ordinary minister of Communion. Deacons have a special responsibility for the distribution of the cup. Finally, he dismisses the community at the end of the eucharistic liturgy. Other liturgical roles for which the deacon is authorized include those of solemnly baptizing, witnessing marriages, bringing *viaticum* to the dying, and presiding over funerals and burials. The deacon can preside at the liturgies of the word and communion services in the absence of a priest. He may officiate at celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours and at exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. He can conduct public rites of blessing, offer prayer services for the sick and dying, and administer the Church's sacramentals, as designated in the *Book of Blessings*.
- He alluded to the fact that this art involves not just the priest celebrant but others who pronounce the words of the liturgy. He focused on this a little bit more in *Sacramentum Caritatis*:
 - SC 45. I ask that the liturgy of the word always be carefully prepared and celebrated. Consequently I urge that every effort be made to ensure that the liturgical proclamation of the word of God is entrusted to well-prepared readers. Let us never forget that "when the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people, and Christ, present in his own word, proclaims the Gospel" ... If it is to be properly understood, the word of God must be listened to and accepted in a spirit of communion with the Church and with a clear awareness of its unity with the sacrament of the Eucharist. Indeed, the word which we proclaim and accept is the Word made flesh (cf. *Jn* 1:14); it is inseparably linked to Christ's person and the sacramental mode of his continued presence in our midst. Christ does not speak in the past, but in the present, even as he is present in the liturgical action. In this sacramental context of Christian revelation, knowledge and study of the word of God enable us better to appreciate, celebrate and live the Eucharist. Here too, we can see how true it is that "ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ"
- Let's turn now to the active participation, which is supposed to take place both in those saying the words as in all those hearing them. This is one of the most important things that need to be communicated in the Year of Faith with regard to faithful participation in the Sacred Liturgy.
- This fruitful participation is what we pray for in Eucharistic Prayer I, that our participation in Mass might lead to a life in which we share consciously, actively and consciously in Christ's work: "In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God: command that these gifts be borne by the hands of your holy Angel to your altar on high in the sight of your divine majesty, so that all of us who through this participation at the altar receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing
- Pope Benedict talked about what it really means in *Sacramentum Caritatis*:
 - SC 52: The Second Vatican Council rightly emphasized the active, full and fruitful participation of the entire People of God in the eucharistic celebration. Certainly, the renewal carried out in these past decades has made considerable progress towards fulfilling the wishes of the Council Fathers. Yet we must not overlook the fact that some misunderstanding has occasionally arisen concerning the precise meaning of this participation. It should be made clear that the word "participation" does not refer to mere

external activity during the celebration. In fact, the active participation called for by the Council must be understood in more substantial terms, on the basis of a greater awareness of the mystery being celebrated and its relationship to daily life. The conciliar Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* encouraged the faithful to take part in the eucharistic liturgy not "as strangers or silent spectators," but as participants "in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, actively and devoutly." This exhortation has lost none of its force. The Council went on to say that the faithful "should be instructed by God's word, and nourished at the table of the Lord's Body. They should give thanks to God. Offering the immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, they should learn to make an offering of themselves. Through Christ, the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and each other"

- SC 55: In their consideration of the *actuosa participatio* of the faithful in the liturgy, the Synod Fathers also discussed the personal conditions required for fruitful participation on the part of individuals.
 - One of these is certainly the spirit of constant conversion which must mark the lives of all the faithful. Active participation in the eucharistic liturgy can hardly be expected if one approaches it superficially, without an examination of his or her life. This inner disposition can be fostered, for example, by recollection and silence for at least a few moments before the beginning of the liturgy, by fasting and, when necessary, by sacramental confession. A heart reconciled to God makes genuine participation possible.
 - The faithful need to be reminded that there can be no *actuosa participatio* in the sacred mysteries without an accompanying effort to participate actively in the life of the Church as a whole, including a missionary commitment to bring Christ's love into the life of society. Clearly, full participation in the Eucharist takes place when the faithful approach the altar in person to receive communion.
 - Yet true as this is, care must be taken lest they conclude that the mere fact of their being present in church during the liturgy gives them a right or even an obligation to approach the table of the Eucharist. Even in cases where it is not possible to receive sacramental communion, participation at Mass remains necessary, important, meaningful and fruitful. In such circumstances it is beneficial to cultivate a desire for full union with Christ through the practice of spiritual communion, praised by Pope John Paul II and recommended by saints who were masters of the spiritual life.
- For this full, active and fruitful participation to occur, there must be preparation, a preparation Pope Benedict says has to take the form of a mystagogical catechesis.
 - SC 64. The Church's great liturgical tradition teaches us that fruitful participation in the liturgy requires that one be personally conformed to the mystery being celebrated, offering one's life to God in unity with the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the whole world. For this reason, the Synod of Bishops asked that the faithful be helped to make their interior dispositions correspond to their gestures and words. Otherwise, however carefully planned and executed our liturgies may be, they would risk falling into a certain ritualism.
 - Hence the need to provide an education in eucharistic faith capable of enabling the faithful to live personally what they celebrate. Given the vital importance of this personal and conscious *participatio*, what methods of formation are needed?
 - The Synod Fathers unanimously indicated, in this regard, a mystagogical approach to catechesis, which would lead the faithful to understand more deeply the mysteries being celebrated.
 - In particular, given the close relationship between the *ars celebrandi* and an *actuosa participatio*, it must first be said that "the best catechesis on the Eucharist is the Eucharist itself, celebrated well." By its nature, the liturgy can be pedagogically

effective in helping the faithful to enter more deeply into the mystery being celebrated. That is why, in the Church's most ancient tradition, the process of Christian formation always had an experiential character. While not neglecting a systematic understanding of the content of the faith, it centered on a vital and convincing encounter with Christ, as proclaimed by authentic witnesses. It is first and foremost the witness who introduces others to the mysteries. Naturally, this initial encounter gains depth through catechesis and finds its source and summit in the celebration of the Eucharist. This basic structure of the Christian experience calls for a process of mystagogy which should always respect three elements:

- It interprets the rites in the light of the events of our salvation, in accordance with the Church's living tradition. The celebration of the Eucharist, in its infinite richness, makes constant reference to salvation history. In Christ crucified and risen, we truly celebrate the one who has united all things in himself (cf. *Eph* 1:10). From the beginning, the Christian community has interpreted the events of Jesus' life, and the Paschal Mystery in particular, in relation to the entire history of the Old Testament.
- A mystagogical catechesis must also be concerned with presenting the meaning of the signs contained in the rites. This is particularly important in a highly technological age like our own, which risks losing the ability to appreciate signs and symbols. More than simply conveying information, a mystagogical catechesis should be capable of making the faithful more sensitive to the language of signs and gestures which, together with the word, make up the rite.
- Finally, a mystagogical catechesis must be concerned with bringing out the significance of the rites for the Christian life in all its dimensions – work and responsibility, thoughts and emotions, activity and repose. Part of the mystagogical process is to demonstrate how the mysteries celebrated in the rite are linked to the missionary responsibility of the faithful. The mature fruit of mystagogy is an awareness that one's life is being progressively transformed by the holy mysteries being celebrated. The aim of all Christian education, moreover, is to train the believer in an adult faith that can make him a "new creation", capable of bearing witness in his surroundings to the Christian hope that inspires him.
- If we are to succeed in carrying out this work of education in our ecclesial communities, those responsible for formation must be adequately prepared. Indeed, the whole people of God should feel involved in this formation. Each Christian community is called to be a place where people can be taught about the mysteries celebrated in faith. In this regard, the Synod Fathers called for greater involvement by communities of consecrated life, movements and groups that, by their specific charisms, can give new impetus to Christian formation. In our time, too, the Holy Spirit freely bestows his gifts to sustain the apostolic mission of the Church, which is charged with spreading the faith and bringing it to maturity.
- Faith is a deep mutual touch of the heart
 - Our fourth means to grow in faith through the prayerful celebration of the Mass and adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is through the mutual touch, especially the touch of the heart.
 - I've always been moved by several parts of the prayer we say on Corpus Christi as well as before Benediction: "*Deus, qui nobis sub sacramento mirabili, passionis tuae memoriam reliquisti: tribue, quaesumus, ita nos corporis et sanguinis tui sacra mysteria venerari, ut redemptionis tuae fructum in nobis ingiter sentiamus.*" We ask Jesus for the grace that as we venerate the sacred mysteries of his body and blood, we may feel within us the fruit of his redemption. We want more than to know it, or to hear those words. We are asking to be profoundly touched by it.

- I think it's important for us to appreciate this touch of Jesus if we're going to touch him back. There's a physical aspect to the touch we shouldn't ignore. In the *Pange Lingua*, St. Thomas teaches us to pray, "*Cibum turbae duodenae Se dat suis manibus*," remembering that at the Last Supper with the twelve, Jesus gave himself to them *with his own hands*. Jesus continues to do that in every Mass through the *in persona Christi* configuration of the priest to himself. But it goes beyond that. Through the accidents, the sensible qualities of the appearances of bread and wine, we are able to feel him within, in our mouths, descending into our digestive tract. One of the things I love so much about the privilege of receiving the Precious Blood of the Lord is that sometimes I can just feel the Lord descend within me, almost enter my blood stream, even on occasion, especially if I haven't eaten anything in the morning, give me a little of a buzz, which helps me to remember the sober inebriation of the Spirit that he always seeks to give us. We become united with him Body and Soul. It is the great act of the consummation of the union between bride and Bridegroom on the marriage bed of the Cross, when we the bride take within ourselves the body and blood of the Bridegroom, become one flesh with him, and are made capable in this loving communion, or "making love" with him throughout the day, letting his total self-giving love well-received overflow into all our interactions.
- But whatever physical sensations of touch there are, it's meant to lead us to a touch of faith through the heart. St. Thomas writes in the *Adoro Te Devote* about the difference between the doubting apostle's touch and our own, "*Plagas, sicut Thomas, non intueor, Deum tamen meum te Confiteor*." We don't touch his wounds in the same way Thomas did, but we are still touched by him in faith and we still reach out to touch him by confessing him as our Lord and God before others.
- In this Year of Faith, I think we can grow in this touching of the Lord by more and more physical acts of reverence for him, by our kneeling, by our reverential bows, by our pondering his union with us in the body. There's a difference between a spiritual communion and the actual reception of Holy Communion because Jesus knew that in our hylomorphic nature we needed that bodily touch. Let's ponder more and more during this Year that wisdom and be grateful for that touch!
- Faith is a form of memory, a memory of the future
 - The whole Mass is called by St. Thomas in the *Adoro Te Devote*, the "memorial of the Lord." "*O memoriale mortis Domini, Panis vivus vitam praestans homini. Praesta meae menti de te vivere, Et te illi semper dulce sapere*." We ask the Lord that through this memory, the Living Bread will bring us truly alive by helping our mind (containing our memory) live off of him and sweetly to taste him always."
 - We focus on this memory in the Eucharistic prayer. One of the clearest is in Eucharist Prayer IV:
 - "Therefore, O Lord, as we now celebrate the memorial of our redemption, we remember Christ's death and his descent to the realm of the dead; we proclaim his Resurrection and his Ascension to your right hand; and as we await his coming in glory, we offer you his Body and Blood, the sacrifice acceptable to you which brings salvation to the whole world."
 - The recent Popes have spent a lot of time on this living memory. In *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Benedict said,
 - SC 11: By his command to "do this in remembrance of me" (*Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:25*), [Jesus] asks us to respond to his gift and to make it sacramentally present. In these words the Lord expresses, as it were, his expectation that the Church, born of his sacrifice, will receive this gift, developing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the liturgical form of the sacrament. The remembrance of his perfect gift consists not in the mere repetition of the Last Supper, but in the Eucharist itself, that is, in the radical newness of Christian worship. In this way, Jesus left us the task of entering into his "hour." "The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Logos, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving."
 - So the memory is just a thing of the mind but of the whole of life.
 - Pope Benedict XVI said in his 2012 catecheses on liturgical prayer that we enter into the dynamic of Jesus' self-giving by entering into his prayer and encountering him in the present:

- We proclaim your death, O Lord, we profess your resurrection, until you come again!
 - Save us, Savior of the World, for by your Cross and Resurrection, you have set us free.
 - When we eat this Bread and drink this cup we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come again.
 - One of the ways I try to enter into the memorial of the Mass is to make present all the signs that the Lord gave us to prepare for the Mass, his remote, proximate and immediate preparation. Down at the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, Alabama, Mother Angelica had designed something similar to a Rosary walk or a Stations of the Cross that contain images of so many of the prefigurements of the Holy Eucharist. It's a very moving journey. We can recall many of those images:
 - Abel's sacrifice
 - Melchizedek
 - The Passover, particularly the unleavened bread and the sacrifice and eating of the Lamb
 - The temple sacrifices, particularly the Bread of the Presence in the Temple and the blood of the Lamb
 - Elijah's miracle with the widow of Zarephath, the ravens bringing him food, especially cake baked on hot stones
 - Elisah's miraculous feeding of a 100 men
 - Ezekiel's consumption of the Word of God
 - Jesus' own multiplication of the loaves and fish
 - This was all a prefiguration of what he himself would do on the night he was betrayed.
 - I also try to use my memory to call into the present all those who have celebrated the Mass before us, from the Last Supper, to the celebration of the Mass during the Pentecost novena in the presence of Our Lady, to St. Paul's celebrations with the Christians in Corinth and elsewhere, to the saints of the early Church, Ignatius of Antioch, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Leo and Gregory the Great, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure, Ignatius and Francis Xavier, John Vianney, John Bosco and so many other priests, as well as St. Therese, St. Clare, St. Monica and so many other tremendous participants.
 - Lastly I try to imagine the celebration of the Mass after me, celebrated by priests whose vocations God willing I would have inspired through my priesthood, to my own funeral Mass celebrated by a future bishop, to the Mass of coronation of a future American Pope, to so many other hope-filled events all the way to the eternal liturgy. All of this helps me to use my memory to enter into the *lex orandi* of the Mass with greater faith.
- Faith is a journey
 - The sixth prism is that faith is a journey and the Mass is the most important spiritual itinerary of all.
 - We've already pondered the external and interior journey of the Emmaus scene, but that is what occurs every Mass.
 - There is a clear exodus that takes place as we enter with Christ into the new and eternal Passover, Holy Thursday, Calvary, Easter, the Ascension, Pentecost all in one, which leads us to the journey of the liturgical year when all the mysteries of our faith are made present at the altar.
 - Each Mass, therefore, is that journey, as we await Christ with the Old Testament readings, encounter him in the Gospel, and see the consequences of that encounter in the New Testament epistles, the Acts of the Apostles and the Book of Revelation.
 - Each Mass is a time in which Christ is calling us to come and to go, to follow him and to send us out to help others to follow him.
 - This journey is fundamentally the interior one of conversion in the full sense we spoke about earlier. Pope Benedict mentioned this in his catecheses on praying the liturgy. It's a journey upward:
 - B16 catechesis: "I would just like to mention one of the moments during the liturgy itself; ... I am referring to the invitation that the celebrant expresses before the Eucharistic Prayer: "*Sursum corda*", let us lift up our hearts above the confusion of our apprehensions,

our desires, our narrowness, our distraction. Our hearts, our innermost selves, must open in docility to the word of God and must be recollected in the Church's prayer, to receive her guidance to God from the very words that we hear and say. The eyes of the heart must be turned to the Lord, who is in our midst: this is a fundamental disposition. Whenever we live out the liturgy with this basic approach, our hearts are, as it were, removed from the force of gravity that has pulled them downwards and are inwardly uplifted, towards the truth, towards love, towards God.

- St. Thomas Aquinas wrote about this journey in his *Sacris Solemnis*, “*Per tuas semitas duc nos quo tendimus, ad lucem quam inhabitas.*” We turn to the Lord and we ask him to lead us step by step to the place he has made us to seek, the Light (the light of faith and then glory) where he dwells.
- This eschatological tension in the liturgy between the now and the not yet of our journey helps us to precisely to journey with the Lord in all our activities. Blessed John Paul II mentioned in *Ecclesia de Eucaristia*:
 - EE: “A significant consequence of the eschatological tension inherent in the Eucharist is also the fact that it spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us. Certainly the Christian vision leads to the expectation of “new heavens” and “a new earth” (Rev 21:1), but this increases, rather than lessens, our sense of responsibility for the world today. I wish to reaffirm this forcefully at the beginning of the new millennium, so that Christians will feel more obliged than ever not to neglect their duties as citizens in this world. Theirs is the task of contributing with the light of the Gospel to the building of a more human world, a world fully in harmony with God's plan.” We'll have a chance to ponder this more deeply in the next prism.
- More than anything, however, the itinerant nature of the liturgy of the Mass helps us to remember that as we journey through life we are not alone. The Holy Eucharist is precisely our viaticum our food for the journey to accompany us on the way. As the Angelic doctor wrote in his *Lauda Sion*: “*Ecce Panis Angelorum, factus cibus viatorum.*” The Bread of angels has become the food of the wayfarers.
- Benedict noted in *Sacramentum Caritatis* that the Eucharist is a “gift to men and women on their journey,” the guided pilgrimage that is not just supposed to point to heaven but to bring us there. He described how:
 - SC 30: If it is true that the sacraments are part of the Church's pilgrimage through history towards the full manifestation of the victory of the risen Christ, it is also true that, especially in the liturgy of the Eucharist, they give us a real foretaste of the eschatological fulfilment for which every human being and all creation are destined (cf. *Rom* 8:19ff.). Man is created for that true and eternal happiness which only God's love can give. But our wounded freedom would go astray were it not already able to experience something of that future fulfilment. Moreover, to move forward in the right direction, we all need to be guided towards our final goal. That goal is Christ himself, the Lord who conquered sin and death, and who makes himself present to us in a special way in the eucharistic celebration. Even though we remain "aliens and exiles" in this world (1 *Pet* 2:11), through faith we already share in the fullness of risen life. The eucharistic banquet, by disclosing its powerful eschatological dimension, comes to the aid of our freedom as we continue our journey.
- This is the path taken by the saints, as John Paul II reminded us in *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, who allowed Jesus to accompany them not just on the chronological and geographical pilgrimage toward heaven but on the kairetic, interior journey toward holiness: “We have before us the example of the Saints, who in the Eucharist found nourishment on their journey towards perfection.”
- The last part of this prism I'd like to mention comes at the end of the celebration of the Mass, when our triune God through the priest sends us forth with God's blessing and God's great commission. As we talked about below, we're not prepared to celebrate Mass properly unless we

intend to participate in the life of the Church, which not only has a mission but is a mission. Pope Benedict, in commenting on the words of dismissal, *Ite Missa Est*, said:

- C 51: “These words help us to grasp the relationship between the Mass just celebrated and the mission of Christians in the world. In antiquity, *missa* simply meant "dismissal." However in Christian usage it gradually took on a deeper meaning. The word "dismissal" has come to imply a "mission." These few words succinctly express the missionary nature of the Church. The People of God must be helped to understand more clearly this essential dimension of the Church's life, taking the dismissal as a starting point. As a priest friend used to say at the end of Mass, in clear violation of the liturgical norms, but nevertheless with theological depth, “The Mass is not over. It’s just beginning. Go in peace!

- Faith is a form of building

- The seventh prism of how to pray the Mass so as to grow in faith is to view the Mass as something that, like faith in general, builds us up, both individually and as a Church as a whole.
- This is an aspect of the celebration of the Mass and of the work our Eucharistic Lord wants to do in us that isn’t pondered enough. Blessed John Paul II wanted to help the entire Church grasp this aspect of the life of faith and the meaning of the Eucharist by entitling the entire second chapter of *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* to this theme. He entitled the Chapter, “The Eucharist builds the Church.” He wrote: “The Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist.” This was just an explication of how he began the entire Encyclical, saying, “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church.” The daily experience of faith, the heart of the mystery of the Church, is that the Eucharist builds us up. He spent the second chapter of the Encyclical making this clear:
 - EE: “The Second Vatican Council teaches that the celebration of the Eucharist is at the center of the process of the Church's growth. After stating that “the Church, as the Kingdom of Christ already present in mystery, grows visibly in the world through the power of God”, then, as if in answer to the question: “How does the Church grow?”, the Council adds: “as often as the sacrifice of the Cross by which 'Christ our pasch is sacrificed' (1 Cor 5:7) is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out. At the same time in the sacrament of the Eucharistic bread, the unity of the faithful, who form one body in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 10:17), is both expressed and brought about.”
 - To use St. Thomas Aquinas’ categories, Jesus’ real presence after the words of consecration is the “res et sacramentum” meant to lead to the “res” of our becoming “one body, one spirit in Christ,” by the power of the same Holy Spirit who effectuates the transubstantiation of bread and wine and the mystical incorporation of believers.
- Communion with Christ brings about communion with others.
 - EE: “Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, especially by that full sharing which takes place in sacramental communion. We can say not only that each of us receives Christ, but also that Christ receives each of us”
- This is something that far exceeds a Christocentric fraternity.
 - EE: “The gift of Christ and his Spirit which we receive in Eucharistic communion superabundantly fulfills the yearning for fraternal unity deeply rooted in the human heart; at the same time it elevates the experience of fraternity already present in our common sharing at the same Eucharistic table to a degree which far surpasses that of the simple human experience of sharing a meal.”
 - But it is important, nevertheless, that we at least start with that desire to share our lives with each other. St. Paul battled against the early Christians in Corinth, because many of them didn’t have this elementary Christian attitude:
 - 1 Cor 11:17 In giving this instruction, I do not praise the fact that your meetings are doing more harm than good. 18 First of all, I hear that when you meet as a

church there are divisions among you, and to a degree I believe it; ... 20 When you meet in one place, then, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, 21 for in eating, each one goes ahead with his own supper, and one goes hungry while another gets drunk. 22 Do you not have houses in which you can eat and drink? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and make those who have nothing feel ashamed? What can I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this matter I do not praise you. ... 33 Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. "

- Likewise, often today, that spirit of basic fraternity doesn't reign in parishes where many come to worship independently side-by-side without ever getting to know each other's names or sharing their life experiences. If pastors are being called by Pope Francis to have the smell of their sheep, then all believers are likewise because called horizontally to know what cologne and soap each other uses. Supernatural communion cannot really be formed without that natural sense of fraternity. We can't build a house without the raw materials.
- John Paul II took up these issues and said that we should be aware of this reality before we come to Mass so that we don't consume the body and blood of the Lord unworthily. He also said one of the most important reasons for Sunday Mass is precisely to build up this communion, a communion that is meant to exceed just the liturgical rite but lead to a day of Christian joy.
 - EE: "The Eucharist creates communion and fosters communion. Saint Paul wrote to the faithful of Corinth explaining how their divisions, reflected in their Eucharistic gatherings, contradicted what they were celebrating, the Lord's Supper. The Apostle then urged them to reflect on the true reality of the Eucharist in order to return to the spirit of fraternal communion (cf. 1 Cor 11:17- 34). Saint Augustine effectively echoed this call when, in recalling the Apostle's words: "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12: 27), he went on to say: "If you are his body and members of him, then you will find set on the Lord's table your own mystery. Yes, you receive your own mystery." And from this observation he concludes: "Christ the Lord... hallowed at his table the mystery of our peace and unity. Whoever receives the mystery of unity without preserving the bonds of peace receives not a mystery for his benefit but evidence against himself"." The Eucharist's particular effectiveness in promoting communion is one of the reasons for the importance of Sunday Mass.
 - When I was struggling through some ethnic issues at the last place where I was pastor, where some of the French were not very hospitable to the Portuguese, I said that unless we really sought communion with each other, we were not worthy to receive Holy Communion. If we didn't want a bond with each other, then we weren't sincerely and truthfully saying the "Amen!" Christ wanted, because that is exactly what he wants through our becoming one flesh with him: that communion is supposed to bring about the communion with other members, a communion that we have to will if we're going to be receiving Jesus in the right way.
- But the true participation in the Eucharist with faith builds up the Church not only in the present but also in the past and future. It also builds up our communion with the saints, with all those who have come before us and will come after us. This communion is one of the most important antidotes to the fragmentation that comes from the reigning secularism of the day and therefore one of our urgent most spiritual needs. Pope Benedict wrote in *Sacramentum Caritatis*.
 - SC 76-: The eucharistic mystery helps us to understand the profound meaning of the *communio sanctorum*. Communion always and inseparably has both a vertical and a horizontal sense: it is communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters. Both dimensions mysteriously converge in the gift of the Eucharist. " The eucharistic form of Christian life is clearly an ecclesial and communitarian form. Through the Diocese and the parish, the fundamental structures of the Church in a particular territory, each individual believer can experience concretely what it means to be a member of Christ's Body. Associations, ecclesial movements and new communities – with their lively charisms bestowed by the Holy Spirit for the needs of our time – together with Institutes of

Consecrated Life, have a particular responsibility for helping to make the faithful conscious that they *belong* to the Lord (cf. *Rom* 14:8). Secularization, with its inherent emphasis on individualism, has its most negative effects on individuals who are isolated and lack a sense of belonging. Christianity, from its very beginning, has meant fellowship, a network of relationships constantly strengthened by hearing God's word and sharing in the Eucharist, and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

- But the Eucharist not only builds up the Church but is also supposed to fortify all social bonds. The social implications of the Eucharistic mystery are among the most important aspects of how our Catholic faith strengthens the common good. Pope Benedict writes in *Sacramentum Caritatis*:
 - SC 89. The union with Christ brought about by the Eucharist also brings a newness to our social relations: "this sacramental 'mysticism' is social in character." Indeed, "union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own." The relationship between the eucharistic mystery and social commitment must be made explicit. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion between brothers and sisters who allow themselves to be reconciled in Christ, who made of Jews and pagans one people, tearing down the wall of hostility which divided them (cf. *Eph* 2:14). Only this constant impulse towards reconciliation enables us to partake worthily of the Body and Blood of Christ (cf. *Mt* 5:23-24). (242) In the memorial of his sacrifice, the Lord strengthens our fraternal communion and, in a particular way, urges those in conflict to hasten their reconciliation by opening themselves to dialogue and a commitment to justice. Certainly, the restoration of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness are the conditions for building true peace. The recognition of this fact leads to a determination to transform unjust structures and to restore respect for the dignity of all men and women, created in God's image and likeness. Through the concrete fulfilment of this responsibility, the Eucharist becomes in life what it signifies in its celebration. ... The sacrifice of Christ is a mystery of liberation that constantly and insistently challenges us. I therefore urge all the faithful to be true promoters of peace and justice: "All who partake of the Eucharist must commit themselves to peacemaking in our world scarred by violence and war, and today in particular, by terrorism, economic corruption and sexual exploitation." (245) All these problems give rise in turn to others no less troubling and disheartening. We know that there can be no superficial solutions to these issues. Precisely because of the mystery we celebrate, we must denounce situations contrary to human dignity, since Christ shed his blood for all, and at the same time affirm the inestimable value of each individual person.
 - SC 92: The eucharistic form of life can thus help foster a real change in the way we approach history and the world. The liturgy itself teaches us this, when, during the presentation of the gifts, the priest raises to God a prayer of blessing and petition over the bread and wine, "fruit of the earth," "fruit of the vine" and "work of human hands." With these words, the rite not only includes in our offering to God all human efforts and activity, but also leads us to see the world as God's creation, which brings forth everything we need for our sustenance. The world is not something indifferent, raw material to be utilized simply as we see fit. Rather, it is part of God's good plan, in which all of us are called to be sons and daughters in the one Son of God, Jesus Christ (cf. *Eph* 1:4-12). The justified concern about threats to the environment present in so many parts of the world is reinforced by Christian hope, which commits us to working responsibly for the protection of creation. The relationship between the Eucharist and the cosmos helps us to see the unity of God's plan and to grasp the profound relationship between creation and the "new creation" inaugurated in the resurrection of Christ, the new Adam. Even now we take part in that new creation by virtue of our Baptism (cf. *Col* 2:12ff.). Our Christian life, nourished by the Eucharist, gives us a glimpse of that new world – new heavens and a new earth – where the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven, from God, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (*Rev* 21:2).

- The Eucharist not only builds us up individually and together with others to be a Temple, a Tabernacle of God, but also helps to remind us that the world is the Lord's and its fullness. .
- Faith is a mother
 - The last prism of faith that helps us to enrich our understanding and living of the Mass so that through the *lex orandi* we may be brought into a renewed *lex credendi* is the Father as a Mother. Feeds us.
 - We mentioned earlier St. Thomas Aquinas' referring to Jesus in the Eucharist as *Pie Pellicane*, pointing not only to the nourishment Christ gives us but also how gave his life to nourish us and save our own.
 - One of the most important expressions of maternal love is through feeding. Mothers feed their children. When they're young, mothers feed children by their own breasts, with themselves, with the nutrition they themselves have digested. The Church, therefore, as it makes present for us Jesus' own substantial sustenance, nourishes us at the same time with her Eucharistic faith.
 - We spoke in the conferences about Faith and Prayer how the Church teaches us how to speak to God similarly to a mother's teaching her child how to speak, word by word, phrase by phrase, until we can do it on our own. The Church does that and more through the liturgy. Pope Benedict said in his catecheses on praying the liturgy,
 - "Thus, by participating in the liturgy we make our own the language of Mother Church, we learn to speak in her and for her. Of course, as I have already said, this happens gradually, little by little. I must immerse myself ever more deeply in the words of the Church with my prayer, with my life, with my suffering, with my joy, and with my thought. It is a process that transforms us."
 - That's what the Church does.
 - The liturgy is the great home school of the Church, where we grow up by learning how to put the faith of the Church in action. During this Year of Faith, it's important for us to be grateful for this gift, to recognize we always need to be mothered into a deeper relationship with God our Father, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit, so that we begin to live truly Eucharistic lives with our source and summit, root and center in Jesus in the Eucharist and the total transformation that most important nourishment of all will work in us. But it's also key during this year to recognize that just as daughters eventually grow up to be mothers themselves while still being mothered, that we, too, are called to exercise that spiritual maternity toward others, especially the young, but also, on occasion, those who are our age or even older. We are called to pass onto others, in digestible ways, the nutrition we ourselves have received, as our own breasts — our own hearts — expand through having been impregnated by the Word of God made flesh.
- Conclusion
 - We come to some conclusions about what we can call the particular form of the *lex orandi* the *lex celebrandae missae* and its connection to the *lex credendi*.
 - Pope Benedict wrote toward the end of *Sacramentum Caritatis* two things specifically directed toward all those living the consecrated life in the Church. He ponders the particular connection of those who unite themselves more radically to the poor, chaste and obedient Jesus with him in his supreme Eucharistic impoverishment, love and loving adhesion to the Father's will.
 - SC 81: The relationship of the Eucharist to the various ecclesial vocations is seen in a particularly vivid way in "the prophetic witness of consecrated men and women, who find in the celebration of the Eucharist and in eucharistic adoration the strength necessary for the radical following of Christ, obedient, poor and chaste." Though they provide many services in the area of human formation and care for the poor, education and health care, consecrated men and women know that **the principal purpose of their lives is "the contemplation of things divine and constant union with God in prayer."** The essential contribution that the Church expects from consecrated persons is much more in the order of being than of doing. Here I wish to reaffirm the importance of the witness of virginity, precisely in relation to the mystery of the Eucharist. In addition to its connection to priestly celibacy, the eucharistic mystery also has an intrinsic relationship to consecrated

virginity, inasmuch as the latter is an expression of the Church's exclusive devotion to Christ, whom she accepts as her Bridegroom with a radical and fruitful fidelity. In the Eucharist, consecrated virginity finds inspiration and nourishment for its complete dedication to Christ. From the Eucharist, moreover, it draws encouragement and strength to be a sign, in our own times too, of God's gracious and fruitful love for humanity.

Finally, by its specific witness, consecrated life becomes an objective sign and foreshadowing of the "wedding feast of the Lamb" (*Rev 19:7-9*) which is the goal of all salvation history. In this sense, it points to that eschatological horizon against which the choices and life decisions of every man and woman should be situated.

- And then in his final conclusions, he urges those who are consecrated to show by their Eucharistic devotion not just the possibility but the beauty of giving oneself entirely to the Lord:
 - SC 94: Jesus' gift of himself in the sacrament which is the memorial of his passion tells us that the success of our lives is found in our participation in the trinitarian life offered to us truly and definitively in him. The celebration and worship of the Eucharist enable us to draw near to God's love and to persevere in that love until we are united with the Lord whom we love. The offering of our lives, our fellowship with the whole community of believers and our solidarity with all men and women are essential aspects of that *logiké latreía*, spiritual worship, holy and pleasing to God (cf. *Rom 12:1*), which transforms every aspect of our human existence, to the glory of God. I therefore ask all pastors to spare no effort in promoting an authentically eucharistic Christian spirituality. Priests, deacons and all those who carry out a eucharistic ministry should always be able to find in this service, exercised with care and constant preparation, the strength and inspiration needed for their personal and communal path of sanctification. I exhort the lay faithful, and families in particular, to find ever anew in the sacrament of Christ's love the energy needed to make their lives an authentic sign of the presence of the risen Lord. I ask all consecrated men and women to show by their eucharistic lives the splendour and the beauty of belonging totally to the Lord.
- It's by the Eucharistic lives of priests, deacons, religious and the consecrated that we can show the whole world that what we give up is nothing compared to what the Lord gives us in return, that the way we — and they — should learn to thank the Lord for all that he has done for us is to take up with cup of salvation, call on his name, and make him our choice portion.
- We finish by returning to the words of St. Thomas, as we conclude not only this examination of how we're called to grow in faith through the Mass and the Holy Eucharist but even more broadly how in this Year of Faith we're called to live more and more by faith:
- "*Bone pastor, panis vere, Iesu, nostri miserere: Tu nos pasce, nos tuere, Tu nos bona fac videre in terra viventium.*" O good pastor, Jesus, true Bread of Life, have mercy on us. Shepherd and protect us. Make us see your good things in the land of the living (*Lauda Sion Salvatorem*). Yes, indeed, Jesus give us the light of faith so that we may see the goodness of our faith in our pilgrimage in this world and in the land where we hope to come fully alive!