

STATIO CONFERENCE JUNE 2008



The Eucharist – the Centre of our Life cf. Constitutions III: 2

The highpoint of the day is the common Eucharistic celebration, for which we prepare with zeal CN 302

“You cannot bear fruit, unless you remain in me” John 15:4

My dear Sisters,

We arrange the daily schedule in all our communities around the daily holy mass and liturgy of the Hours. We are familiar with this since the day we entered the Congregation. We know very well that holy mass (daily, when ever possible) is considered as high point of the day as the Constitutions tell us. But looking into my daily life realistically: how much is this reality for me, the highpoint of the day for me?

The Father and Jesus want us to bear fruit, abundant fruit, which flows out of the union with God in Jesus Christ. In this Statio Conference I want to focus not on a theological or liturgical commentary on the Eucharist, but to see the practical value of things we do in monastic life. The Eucharist deserves to be appreciated as the source of our life in the Spirit. I have no doubt that each Sister will confirm this, but again: how much is this your truth, is it your personal source of life?

More than anywhere else we meet the Risen Christ in the Eucharist in the fullness of his saving power, bestowing his life giving grace on the assembled community and on his whole body, the Church spread throughout the world. The Eucharist commemorates, trans-temporally (meaning beyond time and through all times), the saving death and resurrection of Jesus – “Do this in memory of me”. And finally the Eucharist, celebrated continually “until he comes”, foreshadows the final assembly of the redeemed in the kingdom of God. Present, past, and future are bridged in this ritual.

And Jesus in turn draws us deeper into his mystery, the mystery of his own death and resurrection whereby he communicates the divine life to us – in as much as we are open to it. The Eucharist is the celebration of God’s saving love for all his children as we recognize it in the gradual unfolding of salvation history, including the life history of our Congregation and of each person present. As we celebrate the Eucharist we permit ourselves to be loved, saved, sanctified and conformed more completely to the image of Christ. The spiritual life of Christians follows the arc of Christ’s life, his victorious death, and his glorious return to the Father. Each *fruitful* participation in the liturgy of the Eucharist moves us further along the invisible pathway that leads from the Father who created us , along the cross and resurrection marked out by the Son, and back to the Father by the power of the indwelling Spirit who has been given to us.

Through Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, we come from the Father and return to the Father. At the centre of the process of our sanctification, at the centre of the Eucharist, stands the figure of Jesus, crucified and risen, the paschal mystery. This paschal mystery is our passage from spiritual and physical death to the fullness of life in God. By our baptismal vocation and by our religious vocation we reproduce in our own life the pattern first traced out by Christ, so that we become like Christ, to the glory of God the Father, bearing much fruit for the redemption of the whole world in Jesus Christ. The Constitutions say III: 2: *in the power of the Holy Spirit we stand with Christ before the Father on behalf of the whole world.*

The living Christ is personally present and active. To a degree that is mysteriously corresponding to our faith and love, Jesus communicates and shares with us his own risen life

by leading us through death to resurrection under the veil of sensible signs. St. Benedict's vision of the monastic vocation, as we find it expressed at the end of his Prologue, could be summarized in the word *paschalization*, making the paschal mystery present for the world. He invited his followers to share by patience in the sufferings of Christ that we may deserve to be sharers also in his kingdom.

Even in our day we cannot find any other spirituality and reality more central on which to base our entire monastic life. Only by living these three steps: letting go, surrendering, dying do we attain the fullness of life. We will see this law verified again and again in our own life, in the lives of those around us and in the history of our Congregation, of our foremothers in Ndanda. The Secular world of today influences us to values just opposite of these. But in faith we believe there is no other way to the Father than the mystery of Christ crucified and risen. And it is in the Eucharist that we encounter this mystery under its most efficacious and dramatic symbols. When monastic life centres on the mystery of Christ in the Eucharistic Celebration, an incredible force of transformation and of vitality in the community and the daily life of each individual sister is set free.

There is a correlation between the quality of our monastic community life and the quality of our liturgical prayer. Life and prayer influence one another. If there is disharmony, mistrust and a worldly spirit in the community, members will find it impossible to celebrate liturgy together in a climate of joy, peace, and fellowship. Good liturgical prayer flows from and also contributes to good community. Liturgy can strengthen the bonds of community and charity between us. The test of the genuineness, of our truthfulness, of our liturgical prayer as individuals is not our performance during the Eucharist and office, and still less our understanding of liturgy, but the *practice of our daily life*. The test is not how we behave in church but how we behave outside the church, and in particular how we relate to those whom we meet and with whom we interact during the course of the day. Do we see them as one in Christ with ourselves called as we are to offer blessing, honour, glory, and dominion to God forever and ever (Rev 5:13-14)? Do we stop to help a brother or sister in need or do we pass by, saying that the bell for office is about to ring and we cannot be late? Do we show others the gentleness, patience and cheerfulness that are continually exemplified in the lives of the saints we commemorate throughout the year? Liturgical prayer is designed to lead us ever deeper into the mystery of Christ until we live not for ourselves but for him who died for all humanity and rose again. Learning the full meaning of liturgical prayer and being transformed by it will occupy us for a lifetime. Let us spend some time during this Statio to deepen our faith in the paschal mystery and to allow Jesus to transform us in His Spirit.

Some questions for reflection:

- What does the daily Eucharist celebration mean to me?
- Do I prepare for it? How?
- Is it source and centre of my life or did it become more a daily routine?
- How do I want to deepen the faith in the celebration of the paschal mystery?
- *Letting go, surrendering, dying* how do I agree and live these three steps in my daily life to attain fullness of life?
- Do I live Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours as centre of the day around which all other activities are grouped like concentric rings and blessed?

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Credit is given to Fr. Charles Cummings, OCSO: Monastic Practices