

UNDERSTANDING THE MASS LEADS TO ACTIVE AND REVERENT PARTICIPATION

IN ORDER TO ENRICH your response, I invite you first to take time to review the doctrine of the Eucharist. Consider taking time to explore the appropriate sections of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Strive to get behind the externals of the Mass. Grow in understanding of how God manifests his presence in multiple ways. Renew your awareness of how in the Mass Christ, as Priest, gives perfect worship to his Father on our behalf; of how the Father is delighted to give back to us, his other sons and daughters, the self-same gift of Jesus—Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Be sure you understand the importance of uniting your mind and heart to the action of Christ. Reflect anew on how the Eucharist naturally draws forth from us reverence and awe.

Our internal participation of mind and heart will be manifested externally. We will be ever more enthusiastic in our prayer and sung response. We will prepare to read the word of God carefully or listen attentively, allowing the Holy Spirit to open our minds and touch our hearts. Lectors and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist and altar servers will practice and prepare the ceremonies so that all may be carried out with the dignity and solemnity befitting the Sacred Mysteries. The ushers and greeters will assist and welcome people as the brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ which they are.

Among these brothers and sisters will be some who cannot receive Holy Communion. Some may be conscious of serious sin and have need first to receive sacramental confession; others may have some impediment, such as a second marriage which is not recognized as valid by the Church. I urge anyone who faces such distress to avail yourself soon of whatever remedies the Church offers. In the meantime, you, too, are invited to participate in the Eucharist and the Church's prayer to the degree you can.

You are still members of the Body of Christ. Christ and his Church love you. Embrace wholeheartedly the pastoral counsel of the U.S. bishops: "All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another." (1996) It is Christ who invites us to live in Him. May we all embrace one another in love as we journey in faith.



CELEBRATING THE JUBILEE IN THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

IN JUNE 2000, THE Holy Father will lead the World Eucharistic Congress in Rome, climaxing on the feast of Corpus Christi, June 25. This feast of the Body and Blood of Christ will be celebrated in a special way at our Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament. Our hope is that on Saturday evening, June 24, all the parishes of our diocese will be able to celebrate at about the same time in their parish church the Mass of Corpus Christi to be followed possibly by a procession of the Blessed Sacrament.

We will prepare for this by celebrating a Diocesan Eucharistic Congress the weekend of March 24-26, the feast of the Annunciation of Our Lord. I will ask that a delegation from each parish join

us at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament (in English) or at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Sacramento (where simultaneously, the Congress will take place in Spanish).

In addition, since most people will not be able to make a pilgrimage either to Jerusalem or Rome, I am designating twelve churches in our diocese as Holy Year Pilgrimage Churches. People who visit and pray at any of these churches, individually or in groups, may gain the same blessings and indulgences attached to pilgrimages made to Jerusalem or Rome. The parishes of pilgrimage churches will be working with our Auxiliary Bishop, Bishop Richard Garcia, to prepare a special service for sometime during the Holy Year. These churches are:

Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sacramento
St. Patrick, Grass Valley
St. Joseph, Marysville
St. John the Baptist, Chico
Sacred Heart, Red Bluff
St. Joseph, Redding
St. Joseph, Yreka
Sacred Heart, Susanville
St. Theresa, South Lake Tahoe
St. Patrick, Jackson
St. Vincent Ferrer, Vallejo

Throughout the Great Jubilee, with all its activities, let us strive to hear Christ's voice and to open our hearts and minds more fully to his love and direction, for Jesus alone is "the way and the truth and the life." (Jn 14:6) If, as he declares, Jesus is the door to fullness of life, then let us enter:

"I am the gate for the sheep... whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture... I came so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." (Jn 10:7-10)

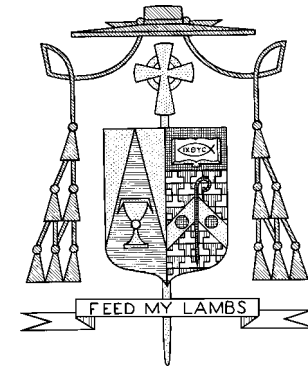
Praised be Jesus Christ!

+ WILLIAM K. WEIGAND
Bishop of Sacramento

*Given this 8th day of September 1999,
the feast of the Birth of the Virgin Mary.*

Reflections on the Great Jubilee of Jesus Christ and the Eucharist

—by Most Rev. William K. Weigand



OPEN WIDE THE DOORS TO CHRIST

Dear Friends in Christ:

SOON WE WILL BEGIN the special Holy Year for which we have been preparing the last three years—the Great Jubilee of Jesus Christ. This Year of Favor of the Lord will continue throughout the year 2000, and until the feast of the Epiphany, January 6, 2001. Rejoice we must, as we begin the 3rd millennium of human history centered in Jesus Christ.

At Christmas midnight Mass in 1974, at St. Peter's Basilica, I was privileged to be one of the priests accompanying Pope Paul VI as he opened the Holy Year door and led us through the door to celebrate Mass and inaugurate the Holy Year of 1975. Pope John Paul II will do the same this Christmas. Millions of pilgrims will pass through this Holy Year door during the year 2000, as a symbol of their desire to follow Christ more closely. Likewise, at the midnight Mass at our own Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, I will open and pass through the designated Holy Year door there. I find this symbolism to be both simple and powerful.

Our Holy Father urges us to open wide the doors of our inner sanctuaries to Christ by each of us recommitting ourselves to Jesus, our one Savior and Lord. At the same time, the pope asks us during this Jubilee of the Incarnation to focus on Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. The Christ of the Incarnation is the same as the Christ of the Eucharist. The Incarnation and the Eucharist are thus connected.

I, myself, am delighted to focus on the Eucharist since I have had a very strong attraction to Christ in the Eucharist since I was young. I was blessed with parents who loved the Church and had a strong faith in the Mass. I do not recall even once in all the years I was growing up that we ever missed Sunday Mass. Even hunting, fishing, and family vacations were planned in such a way that Mass could be attended. You can imagine how this influenced me and my vocation.

But I did not really think much about a religious vocation until I was in the fifth or sixth grade. At this time, I felt drawn to step out on my own and go to serve the 6:30 a.m. Mass each morning during Lent. I got up on my own and walked the 1.5 miles each way alone. I am still amazed that I did this. But day-by-day in word and Sacrament, Jesus gradually drew me to himself that Lent—and my vocation was sealed from that time on. (A friend of mine who joined me about half way through Lent that year also became and remains a priest.) From that time on, the Lord in the Eucharist has had a fierce and shocking hold on my heart.

JUBILEE OF THE INCARNATION

THE GREAT JUBILEE MARKS the birth of Jesus, the triumphal entry of the Incarnate Son of God into the world, the work of his hands. The opening prayer from the Christmas Mass at Dawn contains a provocative expression which brings a tone of excitement to the Jubilee.

"Your eternal word leaped down from heaven in the silent watches of the night, and now your Church is filled with wonder at the nearness of her God."

The idea of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity leaping down into the arms of humankind suggests that God is enthusiastic about coming to dwell with us in human form. It brings to mind a child who leaps from some height toward an adult, trusting he will be caught. Indeed, the prologue to St. John's Gospel indicates God's extraordinary level of trust in making this leap. Can we not say that humanity's ambiguous response is reflected in the story of the Church for two millennia and in the story of our own personal faith journeys? Giving an unequivocal, "Yes," to Emmanuel (God-with-us) and being filled with wonder at the nearness of our God is yet to fully happen.

This leaping down of the Word into our midst astounds us. We are free to receive God, or not, to allow God to be the Lord of our lives, or not. The leaping God of the Incarnation, who is beyond our control, who declines to meet our expectations and who seems to plan his arrivals so poorly, is shocking in his infinite love. The Incarnation compels us to grapple with the unconditional and gratuitous nature of God's love for us.

Without always knowing it, our hearts long and search for God. At this time of God's special grace, Christ says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him and he with me." (Rev. 3:20). Let us open wide the doors to Christ.



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO
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What is our own response to Jesus when his action and words so clearly indicate that service of others is forever an expected consequence of the Eucharist?

THE INCARNATION AND THE EUCHARIST

WHEN WE CONSIDER THE connection between the Incarnation and the Eucharist, or again, the Paschal Sacrifice and the Sacred Banquet made possible through the presence of the Word made flesh among us, then the prayer from the Christmas Mass at Dawn becomes even more relevant. One of the invocations from the penitential rite in the Mass declares, “*You come in word and sacrament.*” We may say that the Eternal Word, incarnate in Jesus Christ, leaps down into the assembly gathered for Eucharist, leaps down again in word and sacrament so that his holy word can come alive and his Body and Blood and Sacrifice of the cross can become truly present. He still comes with enthusiasm, making present his perfect praise of the Father in the name of all humanity, trusting that by faith he will be received into welcoming hearts.

As in the Incarnation, so also, in the Eucharist, God takes the initiative. It is the action of God which is of primary importance. Our participation in the Eucharistic celebration is not an end in itself, but the means by which we join Christ in his eternal act of praise of the Father. Acknowledging this truth should provoke us to a greater commitment to an active and conscious union of our minds and hearts with Christ’s perfect offering of himself in our name to the Father. We assent—say “*amen*”—to what Christ does. We are at our very best in the Mass because Jesus unites our offering of our deficient, broken lives to his own perfect offering of himself—symbolized by the drop of water which the priest commingles with the wine at the offertory—the whole later becoming transformed into Christ’s Real Presence.

Yet, this Sacrifice and Sacred Banquet is like the Incarnation, unnerving in its own way. The Gospel indicates that some disciples were so appalled by the idea of eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood of Christ that they “*went away and no longer accompanied him.*” On that occasion, Jesus posed the question, “*Does this shock you?*” We need to engage this question honestly; we need to allow ourselves to be a bit troubled and yet ready to echo Peter’s reply when challenged by Jesus if he and the others would go away too: “*Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God.*” (Jn 6:61, 66-69) Truly amazing is the continuing expression of God’s love for us, experienced in the intimacy of our Communion with God—and thus with one another which has profound implications for us called by Christ to be a Eucharistic people.

COMMITMENT TO SERVICE AND EVANGELIZATION

PETER WAS SHOCKED AND dismayed at the Last Supper when Jesus started washing the apostles’ feet. What is our own response to Jesus when his action and words so clearly indicate that service of others is forever an expected consequence of the Eucharist? How do we feel about the sharing in the one Bread and one Cup that makes us one? Does it alarm us to acknowledge that all who are called by Christ to this holy Supper become one with us in a kinship deeper than that of human family of origin, tribe, clan, gender, social class, political persuasion, ethnicity? Are we dismayed that we have no choice about this outcome of holy unity if we let our Eucharistic Lord have his way with our hearts? Having received Communion with the Lord, we are sent forth, committed and graced to live in love and service of others; sent forth to give witness to Christ’s love and life-giving presence in the secular world in which we live and work.

The logic of the Eucharist also commits us, therefore, to the service of *evangelization*. The Incarnate Son of God leaped down for all members of the human family and offered himself for the redemption of all. Our active participation in this Sacrifice and Sacrament of God’s love obligates us to go forth and in some way to share Christ’s love and life with others. There are so many people who do not know Christ. There are so many others who have allowed their hearts to grow cold and need a friend to invite them back into the embrace of Christ’s love. During the Great Jubilee of Jesus Christ, Pope John Paul II urges us to take up the *new evangelization* with something of the fervor of the first believers 2000 years ago. Our world needs Christ as truly as did theirs. *Our times need us to be evangelizers.*

Is it not overwhelming to think that “we become what we eat” in the celebration of the Eucharist, resulting in our becoming Christ’s body for the world? This consideration has specific and very real consequences for who we are and how we live. Our human reality, lived in union with Christ, is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived. Because of the Incarnation, our presence leads in a mysterious way to another very Real Presence. Emmanuel, who once came in human flesh to share with us all things except sin, is still with us. The enfleshment of God continues in space and time through the Eucharist and in the members of Christ’s Body, the Church.

PROLONGING THE MASS THROUGH EUCHARISTIC DEVOTIONS

WE CONTINUE TO LIVE the Mass as we go forth to our busy lives and our fast and noisy world. The Son of God who has leaped down to us goes with us. His word rings in our memory. His love and nourishment fortify us for the many challenges, difficulties and opportunities that lie before us.

We live out the Mass through our personal and family prayer which help us each day to keep our vision clear and through which we unite our daily lives with the one, eternal Sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. This one, blessed Sacrifice of Love still continues each day to pour out on us redeeming graces from the very throne of God, for whom there is no time or space. This eternal, joyful Sacrifice of Love echoes from altars all over the world at any given moment, and continually unites our prayers and self-offering with the joy-filled song of the entire heavenly host of angels and saints. Personal and family prayer and devotions, thus, help us on a daily basis to perpetuate the grace-filled action of the Mass, and they also enable us to prepare ourselves for our next Eucharistic encounter with Christ, who continues to reveal to us how shockingly loving is our Triune God.

Jesus has left us his abiding presence in the Blessed Sacrament to assist us. How privileged we are to be able to make visits to the Blessed Sacrament during the week in order to keep ourselves alive in the Eucharistic mystery of God’s presence, love and grace! How blessed we are that the Church provides us with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Holy Hours, Solemn Eucharistic Devotions, and multiple opportunities for adoration and peaceful communing with Our Savior, who has made himself our Brother and intimate Friend!

As you know, our diocese is named for the Blessed Sacrament. I cannot tell you how pleased I am by how well the Eucharist is celebrated in our parishes and by how people are increasingly availing themselves of opportunities for Eucharistic adoration. I give thanks that God seems to be drawing many young people to the Blessed Sacrament in our parishes and that vocations to the priesthood and the religious life are being discovered in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

My dear **young people**, don’t be afraid to draw close to Jesus in the Eucharist while you are still young. Jesus continues to say: “Let the children come to me.” (Mk 10:14). No one can love you and satisfy you like your Divine Friend, Jesus. No one knows your true goodness and

potential for holiness and greatness like this Brother. No one can put you in touch with the real and precious **you** like Jesus can. So, open wide the doors to Christ.

SHARING YOUR FAITH WITH OTHERS

THESE FEW REFLECTIONS ARE suggestive, not exhaustive. It is my hope that they may prompt the beginning of similar reflections in you. I believe that such reflections can enrich the life of the Church. Like Mary, we are to treasure these things and ponder them in our hearts. The Church has a keen awareness of the dignity of the laity and an appreciation of the many charisms lay men and women bring to the life of their faith communities and to their specific lay vocation to transform the temporal order in Christ. I invite you to consider, therefore, sharing with your parish and diocese your own graced reflections on what it means to you to recommit yourself to Jesus Christ as Lord of your life at this Jubilee time.

As members of a diocese named for the Blessed Sacrament, I invite you to share also what it means to you to unite yourself to the Sacrifice of Christ and to receive the Sacrament of his Body and Blood; what it means to you to live out the meaning of the Mass in the world of work, home, school, recreation and professional service. Tell us what it means to you to be a mother or father, a son or daughter, a sister or brother who is trying to accept the Lordship of Christ. Share also how the reception of Holy Communion makes a difference in your life. How does the acceptance of Christ by faith and the reception of Holy Communion apply to your life as a housewife, a student, a police officer, a computer operator, a maintenance person, a lawyer, a cook, a doctor, a nurse, a union organizer, a social justice activist, etc? How does the Eucharist assist and energize you to do your part to transform the civic and secular world in Christ, as the lay vocation intends?

Sharing your insight is a practical way of rendering service to one another and of articulating the wonderful realities being given birth again and again in the heart of the Church by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. I will ask the appropriate diocesan departments to put into place suitable procedures to gather the collective graced wisdom of the people of our diocese. It is my fervent hope that all of you faithful of the diocese may feel free to share your reflections. You will receive a respectful and a grateful hearing when you “leap” in faith to share with others who the Jesus of the Incarnation and the Eucharist is to you.

How does the acceptance of Christ by faith and the reception of Holy Communion apply to your life...?

How does the Eucharist assist and energize you to do your part to transform the civic and secular world in Christ?