



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY
OF THE PONTIFICAL COMMITTEE
FOR INTERNATIONAL EUCHARIST CONGRESSES**

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 11 November 2010*

*Your Eminences,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am pleased to greet you at the end of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses. I cordially greet each one of you, in particular the President, Archbishop Piero Marini, whom I thank for his courteous words at the start of our meeting.

I greet the National Delegates of the Bishops' Conferences and, in a special way, the Irish Delegation led by Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin, a city in which the next International Eucharistic Congress will soon be taking place, in June 2012.

Your Assembly has paid great attention to this event, which also fits into the programme of renewal for the Church in Ireland. The theme "The Eucharist, communion with Christ and among ourselves", calls to mind the centrality of the Eucharistic Mystery for the growth of the life of faith and for every authentic process of ecclesial renewal. While the Church is a pilgrim on earth, she is a sacrament of communion with God and of unity among men and women (*cf.* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1).

For this purpose, she has received the Word and the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, from which she "ever derives her life and on which she thrives" (*ibid.*, 26).

The gift of Christ and of his Spirit, which we receive in the Eucharist, fulfills with superabundant fullness the yearnings for fraternal unity that dwell in the human heart and at the same time raises them far above the simple experience of human conviviality.

Through communion with the Body of Christ the Church becomes increasingly herself: a mystery of “vertical” and “horizontal” unity for the entire human race. The seeds of disintegration, which daily experience shows are so firmly rooted in humanity because of sin, are opposed by the generating power of unity of Christ's Body. The Eucharist, continually forming the Church, also creates communion among men and women.

Dear Friends, there are several felicitous circumstances that make your work more meaningful now and in the time to come. This Assembly, as Archbishop Marini said, is taking place on the 50th anniversary of the Eucharistic Congress in Munich that marked a turning point in the understanding of these ecclesial events by formulating the idea of *statio orbis*, which will be taken up later by the Roman Rite: *De sacra Communionem et de cultu Mysterii eucharistici extra Missam*.

As Archbishop Marini said, I had the joy of taking part in that gathering personally as a young theology professor and of seeing this concept develop.

In addition, the Dublin Congress in 2010 will have the features of a Jubilee; it will in fact be the 50th, and will likewise be held 50 years after the opening of the Second Vatican Council to which the theme explicitly refers, recalling Chapter 7 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*.

The International Eucharistic Congresses now have a long history in the Church. Through the characteristic form of the *statio orbis* they highlight the universal dimension of the celebration. Indeed, they are always a celebration of faith around Christ in the Eucharist, the Christ of the supreme sacrifice for humanity. Those who take part in them are not only the faithful of one particular Church or nation but also, as far as possible, come from various parts of the globe.

It is the Church which is gathered around her Lord and her God. In this regard the National Delegates have an important role. They are called to sensitise their respective Churches to the event of the Congress, especially in the period of its preparation, so that fruits of life and communion may flow from it.

A task of Eucharistic Congresses, especially in today's context, is to make a special contribution to the new evangelization, promoting mystagogical evangelization (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 64), which is carried out at the school of the Church in prayer, on the basis of the Liturgy and through the Liturgy. However, every Congress also has in itself an evangelizing inspiration in a more strictly missionary sense, so that the pair “Eucharist-mission” has become part of the guidelines proposed by the Holy See.

The Eucharistic Table, a table of sacrifice and of communion, thus comes to represent the centre of outreach of the Gospel leaven, a driving force for the construction of human society and a pledge of the Kingdom to come. The Church's mission is in continuity with Christ's: "as the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21).

And the Eucharist is the main goal of this missionary continuity between God the Father, the incarnate Son and the Church which journeys on through history, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, a pastoral and liturgical guideline. Since the Eucharistic celebration is the centre and culmination of all the various manifestations and forms of devotion, it is important that every Eucharistic Congress know how to involve and integrate in accordance with the spirit of conciliar reform all the expressions of Eucharistic devotion *extra missam* rooted in popular devotion, and with the associations of the faithful inspired by the Eucharist in various ways.

All the Eucharistic devotions, also recommended and encouraged by the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, (nn. 10;47-52) and by the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, should be harmonized in accordance with a Eucharistic ecclesiology oriented to communion.

In this regard too the Eucharistic Congresses are a help for the ongoing renewal of the Church's Eucharistic life.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Eucharistic Apostolate to which you devote your efforts is very precious. Persevere in it with commitment and enthusiasm, bringing life to and spreading the Eucharist devotion in all its expressions.

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