



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

Saint Peter's Square

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Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning.

In the last Catechesis I emphasized how the Eucharist introduces us into real communion with Jesus and his mystery. Now let us ask ourselves several questions that spring from the relationship between the Eucharist that we celebrate and our life, as a Church and as individual Christians. *How do we experience the Eucharist?* When we go to Sunday Mass, how do we live it? Is it only a moment of celebration, an established tradition, an opportunity to find oneself or to feel justified, or is it something more?

There are very specific signals for understanding how we are living this, how we experience the Eucharist; signals that tell us if we are living the Eucharist in a good way or not very well. The first indicator is our *way of looking at or considering others*. In the Eucharist, Christ is always renewing his gift of self, which he made on the Cross. His whole life is an act of total sharing of self out of love; thus, he loved to be with his disciples and with the people whom he had a chance to know. This meant for him sharing in their aspirations, their problems, what stirred their soul and their life. Now we, when participating in Holy Mass, we find ourselves with all sorts of men and women: young people, the elderly, children; poor and well-off; locals and strangers alike; people with their families and people who are alone.... But the Eucharist which I celebrate, does it lead me to truly feel they are all like brothers and sisters? Does it increase my capacity to rejoice with those who are rejoicing and cry with those who are crying? Does it urge me to go out to the poor, the sick, the marginalized? Does it help me to recognize in theirs the face of Jesus? We all go to Mass

because we love Jesus and we want to share, through the Eucharist, in his passion and his resurrection. But do we love, as Jesus wishes, those brothers and sisters who are the most needy? For example, in Rome these days we have seen much social discomfort either due to the rain, which has caused so much damage to entire districts, or because of the lack of work, a consequence of the global economic crisis. I wonder, and each one of us should wonder: I who go to Mass, how do I live this? Do I try to help, to approach and pray for those in difficulty? Or am I a little indifferent? Or perhaps do I just want to talk: did you see how this or that one is dressed? Sometimes this happens after Mass and it should not! We must concern ourselves with our brothers and sisters who need us because of an illness, a problem. Today, it would do us such good to think of these brothers and sisters of ours who are beset by these problems here in Rome: problems that stem from the grave situation caused by the rain and social instability and unemployment. Let us ask Jesus, whom we receive in the Eucharist, to help us to help them.

A second indication, a very important one, is the grace of *feeling forgiven and ready to forgive*. At times someone may ask: "Why must one go to Church, given that those who regularly participate in Holy Mass are still sinners like the others?". We have heard it many times! In reality, the one celebrating the Eucharist doesn't do so because he believes he is or wants to appear better than others, but precisely because he acknowledges that he is always in need of being accepted and reborn by the mercy of God, made flesh in Jesus Christ. If any one of us does not feel in need of the mercy of God, does not see himself as a sinner, it is better for him not to go to Mass! We go to Mass because we are sinners and we want to receive God's pardon, to participate in the redemption of Jesus, in his forgiveness. The "Confession" which we make at the beginning is not "pro forma", it is a real act of repentance! I am a sinner and I confess it, this is how the Mass begins! We should never forget that the Last Supper of Jesus took place "on the night he was betrayed" (1 Cor 11:23). In the bread and in the wine which we offer and around which we gather, the gift of Christ's body and blood is renewed every time for the remission of our sins. We must go to Mass humbly, like sinners and the Lord reconciles us.

A last valuable indication comes to us from the relationship between the Eucharistic Celebration and *the life of our Christian communities*. We must always bear in mind that the Eucharist is not something we make; it is not our own commemoration of what Jesus said and did. No. It is precisely an act of Christ! It is Christ who acts there, who is on the altar. It is a gift of Christ, who makes himself present and gathers us around him, to nourish us with his Word and with his life. This means that the mission and the very identity of the Church flows from there, from the Eucharist, and there always takes its shape. A celebration may be flawless on the exterior, very beautiful, but if it does not lead us to encounter Jesus Christ, it is unlikely to bear any kind of nourishment to our heart and our life. Through the Eucharist, however, Christ wishes to enter into our life and permeate it with his grace, so that in every Christian community there may be coherence between liturgy and life.

The heart fills with trust and hope by pondering on Jesus' words recounted in the Gospel: "he who

eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (Jn 6:54). Let us live the Eucharist with the spirit of faith, of prayer, of forgiveness, of repentance, of communal joy, of concern for the needy and for the needs of so many brothers and sisters, in the certainty that the Lord will fulfil what he has promised us: eternal life. So be it!

Greetings :

I welcome the pilgrims from the Czech Republic. I am delighted to welcome Cardinal Dominik Duka and Cardinal Vlk, a veteran fighter and defender of the faith in the Czech Republic, as well as the Bishops of the Czech Episcopal Conference on their visit *ad limina Apostolorum*. Dear brothers, convey my greeting to your priests, men and women religious and lay faithful. I assure you of my prayer for you and for those the Lord has entrusted to your care. Pray for me too. As I bless the Rosaries for the Palladium of the land of Bohemia, from my heart I impart to you and to the Czech Church the Apostolic Blessing.

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Denmark, Hong Kong and the United States. May Jesus Christ confirm you in faith and make you witnesses of his love and mercy to all people. God bless you all!

I extend a special thought to *young people*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*. This Friday we will celebrate the feast of Sts Cyril and Methodius, evangelizers of the Slavs and Patrons of Europe. May their witness help you, dear *young people*, to become in every environment missionary disciples; may it encourage you, dear *sick people*, to offer up your suffering for the conversion of sinners; may it be an example for you, dear *newlyweds*, to make the Gospel the founding rule of your family life.
