



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS
OF GERMANY [COLOGNE, 5-9 JUNE 2013]

To my Venerable Brothers Cardinal Joachim Meisner Archbishop of Cologne
Archbishop Robert Zollitsch President of the German Bishops' Conference

The Catholics of Germany, as well as faithful from neighbouring countries, are gathered in these days on the occasion of the National Eucharistic Congress in Cologne on the theme: "*Lord, to whom shall we go?*" (Jn 6:68). The event fits into this city's long tradition of venerating the Eucharist. The city was one of the first to celebrate the Feast of *Corpus Christi*, beginning in the 13th century, with processions of the Most Holy Sacrament, and was the seat of a World Eucharistic Congress in 1909. I am therefore glad to send Cardinal Paul Josef Cordes from Rome as my Special Envoy to express my deep spiritual communion with German Catholics, and to demonstrate the universal communion of the Church. May the heavenly Father grant to all the participants abundant fruits of grace from their adoration of Christ in the Eucharist.

"*Lord, to whom shall we go?*". With this question, confronting the incomprehension of many people who were listening to Jesus and would have liked selfishly to profit from him, St Peter spoke on behalf of the faithful followers. The disciples do not stop at the worldly satisfaction of those who have eaten their fill (cf. Jn 6:26), and yet still labour for food that perishes (cf. Jn 6:27). Of course, Peter too knows hunger; for a long time he had not found the food that would have been able to satisfy his hunger. He later formed a relationship with the man from Nazareth. He followed him. He then knew his Teacher not only by hearsay. Full trust developed in Peter through daily relations with him. This is faith in Jesus; and quite rightly Peter expected from the Lord the hoped for life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10).

"*Lord, to whom shall we go?*". We too, members of today's Church, ask ourselves this question. Even though it may be more hesitant on our lips than it was on Peter's, our answer, like that of the

Apostle, can only be the Person of Jesus. Of course, he lived 2,000 years ago. Yet we can meet him in our time when we listen to his word and when we are uniquely close to him in the Eucharist. The [Second Vatican Council](#) calls this: “sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [Sacrosanctum Concilium](#), n. 7). May Holy Mass never slip into a superficial routine for us! May we draw increasingly from its depths! It is Mass itself which integrates us into Christ’s immense work of salvation, which hones our spiritual vision so that we can perceive his love: his “prophecy in action”. With this he initiated in the Upper Room the gift of himself on the Cross, his definitive victory over sin and death, which we proudly and joyfully proclaim.

Blessed John Paul II once said at a Roman Seminary to the young men who were questioning him on the profound recollection with which he was celebrating the Mass, that “we must learn how to live Holy Mass” (cf. *Visit to the Pontifical Germanic-Hungarian College*, 18 October 1981). “Learn to live Holy Mass!”. What helps us to do this is pausing in adoration in front of the Lord in the Eucharist, in the Tabernacle, and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

“*Lord, to whom shall we go?*”. Lastly, several people of our day still ask this question — lucidly or with an understanding that is still unclear — who are seeking the Father of Jesus Christ. The Redeemer wants to respond to them through us who, thanks to Baptism, have become his brothers and sisters and, in the Eucharist, have received the strength to carry out together his mission of salvation. With our life and with our words we must proclaim to them that along with Peter and the Apostles we have recognized: “*Lord, you have the words of eternal life*” (cf. Jn 6:68). Our witness will set them on fire, just as we were set on fire by Christ. All of us, bishops, priests, deacons, religious and lay people, have the task of bringing God to the world and the world to God.

Encountering Christ, entrusting ourselves to Christ, proclaiming Christ — are the pillars of our faith that are concentrated ever anew in the focal point of the Eucharist. The celebration of the Eucharistic Congress, in this [Year of Faith](#), announces with renewed joy and certainty: the Lord of the Church lives within her. With my cordial greeting, I warmly impart to you all the Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 30 May 2013, Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Franciscus PP