



The Holy See

EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION AT THE LOURDES GROTTA IN THE VATICAN GARDENS

HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 22 June 1997

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have gathered here this morning like his disciples, to meet the risen Lord who calls us to strengthen our faith with his Word, to share the bread of the Eucharist and to build up the Church with the bonds of fraternal love that give life to the Christian community.

Today his Word questions our faith, which sometimes falters, causing us unfounded fears: "Why are you afraid?" he asks, "Have you no faith?" (Mk 4:40). There are many fears that torment us and can induce us to cowardice or discouragement: fear of the seeming silence of God, fear of the great world powers that claim to compete with God's omnipotence and providence, and lastly, fear of a culture that seems to marginalize the religious and Christian meaning of life by depriving it of social significance.

The Gospel scene of the boat threatened by the waves, calls to mind the image of the Church plying the seas of history, on her way to the fulfilment of God's kingdom. Jesus, who promised to remain with his own until the end of time (cf. Mt 28:20), will not leave the ship to drift. In times of hardship and trouble, she continues to hear his voice: "Courage! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). It is a call to strengthen continually her faith in Christ, and not to give in to difficulties. In moments of trial, when the "dark night" seems to obscure her way or when the storm of difficulties worsens, the Church knows she is in good hands.

The words we have heard in the second reading also urge us to trust in the Lord's presence and to renew our life as true believers: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor

5:17). In the newness of life, a gift of our Lord to all who are baptized, there is no room for uncertainty and hesitation. Trust and peace are the sign of deep communion with Jesus Christ, who died “for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Cor 5:15).

As I cordially greet everyone here, especially the students of the Pontifical Spanish and Pontifical Mexican Colleges in Rome who, with this celebration, have wished to reaffirm their adherence to the Successor of Peter, I invite all to feel the joy of the Lord’s presence in this Eucharist that we are celebrating in the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, as if desiring Mary's protection in the meeting with her divine Son. May she accompany and sustain us with her motherly intercession on our journey of faith, helping us to gain an ever deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ’s person and to taste that inner peace which comes from the firm conviction of his presence among us. Amen.

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