

BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis****Spirituality and eucharistic culture***

77. Significantly, the Synod Fathers stated that "the Christian faithful need a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and their daily lives. Eucharistic spirituality is not just participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life." (216) This observation is particularly insightful, given our situation today. It must be acknowledged that one of the most serious effects of the secularization just mentioned is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living – "as if God did not exist" – is now evident to everyone. Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived "according to the Spirit" (*Rom 8:4ff.*; cf. *Gal 5:16, 25*). It is significant that Saint Paul, in the passage of the *Letter to the Romans* where he invites his hearers to offer the new spiritual worship, also speaks of the need for a change in their way of living and thinking: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). In this way the Apostle of the Gentiles emphasizes the link between true spiritual worship and the need for a new way of understanding and living one's life. An integral part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life is a new way of thinking, "so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (*Eph 4:14*).

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

A Generation of Seekers pgs 6-7

Religious seekers in the United States live within a culture that in some important ways provides support for belief in God while at the same time also discourages and corrodes the faith in practice. It is encouraging that many are finding the move to secularism to be an unsatisfactory approach and continue to search for a deeper meaning in life.

Particularly encouraging is that a number of young people, who had once drifted away from faith, today are seeking a connection with a church community. Among the many causes of this hunger for God, two stand out: the experience of having children who need a proper education and upbringing, and the experience of one's own longing for direction, meaning, and hope.

Catholicism in the United States continues to attract thousands of new members each year as the Holy Spirit works through the Church to awaken a thirst for the Lord. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, the pastoral process for initiating new members into the Church, is ministering to great numbers of seekers. The Church is leading them to knowledge of the truths of faith, to the celebration of the Seven Sacraments, to commitment to the moral life—including the forming of a social conscience—and to the practice of prayer, and at the same time, the Church responds to their desire for community.

The Church does more than welcome new members; she forms disciples. Seekers can begin to find in the Church fulfillment of their heart's desires. They are invited to undertake a spiritual journey that is focused on Jesus Christ and his Kingdom of salvation, love, justice, and mercy. Jesus reminds us that this Kingdom is already in our midst, and as his disciples we are called to assist him in bringing it to its fullness.

This is the Church's invitation to seekers who want to discover a satisfying answer to their spiritual hungers. Her invitation is rich: to seekers, old and new, and to those who might label themselves as alienated or indifferent, the Church offers Jesus Christ and his love, the fulfillment of hope. The Church offers a way of belonging that teaches truths that free one from sin and its power. The Church initiates members into an intimate relationship with God—

indeed, into a participation in the divine life —where one will find genuine joy and fulfillment. This is all possible because of Jesus Christ and his love.

BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*

33. With regard to the personnel who carry out the Church's charitable activity on the practical level, the essential has already been said: they must not be inspired by ideologies aimed at improving the world, but should rather be guided by the faith which works through love (cf. *Gal* 5:6). Consequently, more than anything, they must be persons moved by Christ's love, persons whose hearts Christ has conquered with his love, awakening within them a love of neighbour. The criterion inspiring their activity should be Saint Paul's statement in the *Second Letter to the Corinthians*: "the love of Christ urges us on" (5:14). The consciousness that, in Christ, God has given himself for us, even unto death, must inspire us to live no longer for ourselves but for him, and, with him, for others. Whoever loves Christ loves the Church, and desires the Church to be increasingly the image and instrument of the love which flows from Christ. The personnel of every Catholic charitable organization want to work with the Church and therefore with the Bishop, so that the love of God can spread throughout the world. By their sharing in the Church's practice of love, they wish to be witnesses of God and of Christ, and they wish for this very reason freely to do good to all.

35. This proper way of serving others also leads to humility. The one who serves does not consider himself superior to the one served, however miserable his situation at the moment may be. Christ took the lowest place in the world—the Cross—and by this radical humility he redeemed us and constantly comes to our aid. Those who are in a position to help others will realize that in doing so they themselves receive help; being able to help others is no merit or achievement of their own. This duty is a grace.

The more we do for others, the more we understand and can appropriate the words of Christ: "We are useless servants" (*Lk* 17:10). We recognize that we are not acting on the basis of any superiority or greater personal efficiency, but because the Lord has graciously enabled us to do so. There are times when the burden of need and our own limitations might tempt us to become discouraged. But precisely then we are helped by the knowledge that, in the end, we are only instruments in the Lord's hands; and this knowledge frees us from the presumption of thinking that we alone are personally responsible for building a better world. In all humility we will do what we can, and in all humility we will entrust the rest to the Lord. It is God who governs the world, not we. We offer him our service only to the extent that we can, and for as long as he grants us the strength. To do all we can with what strength we have, however, is the task which keeps the good servant of Jesus Christ always at work: "The love of Christ urges us on" (*2 Cor* 5:14).

Scripture Reflection

John 17:20-26

²⁰"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,

²¹so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

²²And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one,

²³I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

²⁴Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am* they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

²⁵Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me.

²⁶I made known to them your name and I will make it known,* that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."