

Cardinal Arinze's Presentation of Apostolic Letter for Eucharistic Year

John Paul II's "Mane Nobiscum Domine"

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 8, 2004 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is a translation of the address that Cardinal Francis Arinze gave today when presenting John Paul II's apostolic letter "Mane Nobiscum Domine." The text of the letter, published in Italian, has not yet been translated into other languages. The cardinal is the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

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On June 10, 2004, during the solemn Mass held in front of St. John Lateran Basilica, on the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, the Holy Father announced the Year of the Eucharist, which will be observed throughout the Church from October 2004 to October 2005. Now the Pope has given us a beautiful and incisive apostolic letter, "Mane Nobiscum Domine," to assist and guide the Church to benefit as much as possible from the Eucharistic Year.

The Letter has an Introduction, four chapters, and a Conclusion.

Introduction

In the introduction, the Holy Father draws on the Gospel scene of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and makes it the theme of the whole apostolic letter. After explaining that the Year of the Eucharist follows in the wake of Vatican Council II and the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (Chapter 1), the Pope concentrates on the Eucharist as a mystery of light (Chapter 2); as source and manifestation of communion (Chapter 3); and as principle of mission (Chapter 4).

The Year of the Eucharist will commit the Church particularly to live the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus continues to walk with us and to introduce us in the mysteries of God, opening us to the profound meaning of the sacred Scriptures. At the culminating moment of encounter, Jesus breaks the "bread of life" for us.

Many times during his pontificate, John Paul II has invited the Church to reflect on the holy Eucharist, following the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, the ecumenical councils, and his predecessors. He did so in particular last year in the encyclical letter "Ecclesia de Eucharistia." This apostolic letter invites the Church to take up that letter again.

The Holy Father mentions two important events that shed light on and mark the beginning and end of the Year of the Eucharist: the 48th International Eucharistic Congress, which will be held next week in Guadalajara (Mexico), from October 10-17, and the 11th General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will take place in the Vatican from October 2-29, 2005. The Year also includes World Youth Day, which will be held in Cologne from August 16-21, 2005.

The Pope has entrusted the observance of the Year of the Eucharist to the pastoral attention of bishops. The profundity of the Eucharistic mystery is such that the Year of the Eucharist not only will not interfere with the pastoral programs of each local Church or diocese but, in fact, will illuminate them effectively. The Eucharistic mystery is the root, foundation and secret of the spiritual life of each of Christ's disciples, as well as of every initiative of a local Church. Therefore, the Eucharistic dimension of these pastoral initiatives or programs must be accentuated.

Chapter 1: In the Wake of Vatican Council II and the Jubilee

The Holy Father emphasizes that the Year of the Eucharist intensely expresses concentration on Jesus Christ

and the contemplation of his face, which is characterizing the pastoral journey of the Church, especially since Vatican Council II. In Christ, the Word made flesh, not only has the mystery of God been revealed to us, but the mystery of man has also been unveiled to us.

John Paul II developed this theme in his first encyclical, "Redemptor Hominis." He referred to it again in 1994 in "Tertio Millennio Adveniente," to prepare the Church for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. In that document, he said that the Jubilee was an "intensely Eucharistic" year (No. 55). This Eucharistic theme continues in other documents, as in "Dies Domini" and, especially, in "Novo Millennio Ineunte," the "programmatic" apostolic letter for the third millennium, and in "Rosarium Virginis Mariae," the apostolic letter with which the Year of the Rosary was inaugurated, on October 16, 2002. In the spring of that year the Holy Father gave us that pearl of an encyclical, "Ecclesia de Eucharistia," signed on April 17, 2003, during the solemn celebration on Holy Thursday of the "Mass of the Lord's Supper" [...].

Chapter 2: The Eucharist, Mystery of Light

The Eucharist is a mystery of light for many reasons. Jesus speaks of himself as "light of the world" (John 8:12). In the darkness of faith, the Eucharist becomes for the Christian a mystery of light, as it introduces him to the depths of the divine mystery. The Eucharistic celebration nourishes the disciple of Christ with two "tables," that of the Word of God, and that of the Bread of Life. In the first part of the Mass, the Scriptures are read so that we may be enlightened and our hearts may burn. In the homily, the Word of God is illustrated and adapted for the life of the Christian in our time. When minds are enlightened and hearts burn, the signs speak. In the Eucharistic signs, in a certain sense the mystery is open to the eyes of believers. The two disciples of Emmaus recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

The Holy Eucharist is a banquet. But it is, above all, a profound sacrificial banquet: We proclaim the Lord's death; we proclaim his resurrection, and we await his coming in glory.

The Eucharist is Christ really and substantially present. This mystery must be celebrated with great faith, according to the established liturgical norms. The Year of the Eucharist that is about to begin is a propitious time to study in detail the "Institutio Generalis," namely, the general ordering of the Roman Missal in the third "editio typica" and to nourish the faithful with a rich catechesis.

The way in which we celebrate Mass must manifest our acute awareness of the real presence of Christ. Moments of silence must not be neglected. Long periods of adoration of Jesus present in the tabernacle will demonstrate our love for him. Adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament outside of Mass must be a special commitment this year in parishes and religious communities. In particular, emphasis must be placed on reparation, contemplation and biblical and Christocentric meditation. The solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ must also be celebrated with a procession, as a proclamation of our Eucharistic faith.

Chapter 3: Eucharist, Source and Manifestation of Communion

The disciples of Emmaus asked the Lord to stay "with" them (see Luke 24:29). Jesus did something more. He gave himself in the holy Eucharist to remain "in" them: "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). Eucharistic Communion is an intimate sharing between Christ and the one receiving Communion. St. Paul said to the Corinthians: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

The Eucharist also manifests ecclesial communion and calls the members of the Church to share their spiritual and material goods. This ecclesial communion is manifested beautifully in the bishop who celebrates with his presbytery in the cathedral church, with the full participation of the People of God.

In this Year of the Eucharist special importance must be accorded to Sunday Mass in the parish.

Chapter 4: Eucharist, Principle and Plan of Mission

The two disciples of Emmaus, after having recognized the Lord, "rose that same hour" (Luke 24:33) to communicate the wonderful news. The encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist leads the Church and every Christian to give witness and to evangelize. We must thank the Lord and not be reluctant to show our faith in public. The Eucharist leads us to solidarity with others, making us promoters of harmony, peace and especially of sharing everything with the needy.

The Year of the Eucharist must lead the diocesan and parish communities to a particular concern for the different manifestations of poverty in the world, such as hunger and sicknesses, especially in developing nations, the loneliness of the elderly, unemployment and the sufferings of immigrants. This criterion of charity will be the sign of the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations.

Conclusion

The Holy Father prays that this Year of the Eucharist will be for all a precious opportunity to reach a renewed awareness of the incomparable treasure that Christ entrusted to his Church.

It corresponds to the pastors of local Churches to elaborate specific initiatives. The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments will offer useful suggestions and proposals. The Pope does not ask that extraordinary things be done, but rather that all initiatives be characterized by great spiritual depth.

Priority must be given to Sunday Mass and Eucharistic adoration outside of Mass.

John Paul II exhorts all members of the Church -- bishops, priests, other ministers, seminarians, consecrated persons, lay faithful, especially young people, to do what they can to make the Eucharistic Year a success. He prays to the Virgin Mary, whom he looks to as his model, that she be imitated also in her relationship with this most holy mystery.

While the Church prepares to begin the Year of the Eucharist, in this beautiful apostolic letter "Mane Nobiscum Domine," signed on October 7, 2004, we find our guide, the light that enlightens us, our star, encouragement and guide on our journey.

[Translation by ZENIT]