



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE PONTIFICAL COMMITTEE
FOR INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESSES**

Tuesday, 5 November 2002

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I am happy today to welcome, along with the members of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, the national delegates designated by the respective ecclesial authorities to take part in the Plenary Assembly going on these days in Rome. I cordially greet each of you, and especially Cardinal Jozef Tomko, President of the Committee, whom I thank for his kind words on your behalf. I also greet Cardinal Juan Sandoval Íñiguez, Archbishop of Guadalajara, the place where the next International Eucharistic Congress will take place.

Your Assembly has given special attention to the Congress, whose theme will be: "*The Eucharist, Light and Life of the New Millennium*". The millennium has just begun but already everyone clearly sees how necessary for humanity and for the Church is the light of Jesus Christ and the life he offers in the Eucharist.

The beginning is not without threatening shadows. For this reason, it is necessary to re-present to humanity "the true light that enlightens every man who comes into the world" (Jn 1,9), the Word Incarnate who wished to remain with us in such a wonderful way as he does in the Eucharist. In this sacrament, Jesus Christ is present with the gift of himself "for the life of the world" - *pro mundi vita* - for the life of our world as it is, with its lights and shadows. The Eucharist is the sublime expression of the love of God incarnate, a permanent and effective love.

2. The principal goal of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses is that of "making ever better known and loved the Lord Jesus in his Eucharistic Mystery, centre of the life of the Church and of her mission for the salvation of the world" (*Statutes*). One is dealing with a very

elevated goal for which the Committee provides, on the one hand, promoting the regular celebration of International Eucharistic Congresses, and, on the other, fostering the initiatives that contribute to increase devotion to the Eucharistic Mystery. With your apostolic endeavour, you fulfill the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, that presented the Eucharist as "the source and summit of the entire Christian life" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 11).

The International Eucharistic Congresses have a long history in the Church and have assumed ever more obviously the characteristic of the "*Statio Orbis*", that highlights the universal dimension of such a celebration. In fact, the Congress is always a feast around Christ in the Eucharist, in which the faithful, not just of a particular church or of one nation participate, but as far as possible those coming from many parts of the globe. It is the Church who is gathered around her Lord and her God.

In this regard, how much more important is the zeal of the national delegates, appointed by the authorities of the Churches of the West and of the East. They are called to sensitize their churches to the theme of the International Congress, above all in the period of preparation so that it may become an event that for the particular churches may be the source of rich gifts of life and communion.

3. The Eucharist has the central place in the Church because it "makes the Church" come into being. As the Second Vatican Council affirmed, with the words of the great Augustine, it is "the sacrament of love, sign of unity, bond of charity" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 47). St Paul says, "Because there is one bread, we who are many, are one body: for we all partake of the one bread" (I Cor 10,17). The Eucharist is the source of unity in the Church. The Eucharistic Body of the Lord nourishes and sustains his Mystical Body.

The International Eucharistic Congresses contribute to this explicitly ecclesial finality. The fact that the faithful coming from so many places can participate in the Eucharistic event symbolizes the unity and communion of the Church. The national delegates can take back to their communities the spirit of Eucharistic fervour and communion that is lived in these periods of concentration on adoration, contemplation, reflection, and sharing. The Congress, when it is lived in depth, is a fire for renewing the zeal of those who animate living Eucharistic communities and of the evangelizers of those who do not know very well the great love that is contained in the Eucharist.

4. Dearly beloved Brothers and Sisters, the Eucharistic apostolate to which you dedicate your diligent activities is certainly a reply to the Lord's invitation "*to put out into the deep*". Persevere in it with dedication and passion, inspiring and spreading Eucharistic devotion in all its forms. In your ecclesial service, may a genuine spirit of communion always guide you, as you foster an effective collaboration between the Pontifical Eucharistic Committee and the National Committees.

I accompany these wishes with the assurance of my prayer and with the Apostolic Blessing that I

wholeheartedly impart to you and your loved ones.

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