

EUCHARIST AND LIFE.

(Reflections proposed to Men's Leadership Forum, New York, 26 April, 2011).

With paschal faith and joy, I greet you, members of the Men's Leadership Forum and your guests, wish you the graces of Easter and thank you for inviting me to share some thoughts with you on our Catholic faith.

Let us focus on the Holy Eucharist and our Daily Life. The Holy Eucharist, sacrifice and sacrament, is central in our lives. In our celebration of this mystery, the forthcoming new English translation of the Roman Missal needs to be understood and welcomed. The Eucharist sends us on mission. For every citizen, and especially for a professional, it is particularly important to live out a synthesis between religion and professional life. These will now be the points for our reflection.

1. Eucharist, Sacrifice and Sacrament.

The night before he suffered for us on the Cross, our beloved Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gave to his Church the inestimable gift of himself in the Holy Eucharist. While he was at supper with his Apostles, "he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me'. And likewise the chalice after supper, saying, 'this chalice which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood'" (Lk 22:19-20; cf Mt 26:17-29; Mk 14:12-25). And St Paul in his account adds: "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the chalice, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:25-26).

As sacrifice, the Holy Eucharist is a sacramental re-presentation of the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is a sacrifice of adoration, praise and thanksgiving to God for the work of creation. In the Mass, Jesus associates the Church with himself, so that the lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work are united with those of Christ and with his total offering. They thus acquire a new value which they would not otherwise have (cf *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1368). The Mass is also a supreme act of petition for all our needs, spiritual and temporal.

As sacrament, the Holy Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ offered at Mass, received by us in Holy Communion, and adored by us in the tabernacle. In this most holy Sacrament “the Body and Blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really and substantially contained” (*Council of Trent*: DS: 1651; cf CCC, 1374). For those who receive Holy Communion when they are well prepared, the fruits are tremendous: increase of grace and union with Christ, separation from sin, resistance to temptation, strengthening of Christian life, unity of the Church, and ticket to heaven.

2. Centrality of the Holy Eucharist.

The Holy Eucharist is at the centre of Christian worship and life. It is “the fount and apex of the whole Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). The other Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders and Matrimony) are celebrated within the Mass, or they are a preparation for it (Penance and the Anointing of the Sick). Major acts of Church worship, such as the profession of monks and nuns, the dedication of a church or altar, ceremonies of Beatification and Canonization and the inauguration of a new Pope or Bishop, are all celebrated in the Mass.

The Eucharistic celebration has a central place in our individual lives. It is the centre of our day and our week, because at Mass we all learn to offer ourselves through Christ, with Christ and in Christ. As Sunday is the heart of the week, so the Eucharistic celebration is the heart of Sunday. It is the major event celebrated by the parish or the diocese.

Commemorations and milestones in our lives in community are also centred on the Eucharistic celebration. Such are, for example, anniversaries and jubilees of Baptism, Wedding, Religious Profession, Priestly Ordination and the deaths of our dear ones. Parish feasts; diocesan events and national days are also solemnized with the Holy Mass.

3. The Revised English Translation of the Roman Missal.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) decreed, for very good reasons, that, in addition to Latin, the vernacular can be used in the Latin Rite liturgy. Translations into the various world languages began in the 1960s and 1970s. The Roman Missal itself in its Latin typical editions has been enlarged in 1975, 2002 and slightly amended in 2008.

For many reasons, a revised translation of the Roman Missal into the various languages was ordered from Rome by the document, *Liturgiam Authenticam* in 2001. Most of the earlier translations were done following the principle of *dynamic equivalence* laid down in a document, *Comme le prévoit*, in 1969. With thirty years experience, the Church has seen that this principle is not ideal; it tends to approximation and paraphrasing; it lends itself to ideas of the translator; and it often does not retain the flavour of the original Latin. The ICEL (International Committee for English in the Liturgy), an initiative of eleven national Bishops' Conferences, has worked on the revised translation with its worldwide body of experts and consultants. It has cooperated with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments and with its committee *Vox Clara*. The completed work was submitted to the Holy Father in April, 2010. In each country, the revised translation will come into use at a date established by the Bishops of that country. In the USA that will be on the First Sunday of Advent, 27 November, 2011.

It is fair to ask what advantages are offered by this revised translation. Here are some. This translation is sensitive to the scriptural resonance of some liturgical texts, such as "from the rising of the sun to its setting", "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof". The translation reflects the adoration of God who is transcendent and reverence for his supreme majesty which come out very clearly in the Latin original. Repetition which is characteristic of the Latin Rite is retained, for example, in *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*, or in triple professions in the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*. Intelligibility is an important consideration in translations, but it is not an unqualified, supreme requirement, because every major statement of faith, or *symbol* of the faith, is bound to include some words or concepts not immediately understood by everyone. An example is *consubstantial* with the Father, which is the word in the *Credo* that the Church finally decided upon in the Council of Nicea in 325 to describe the relation of the Son to the Father.

Liturgical texts are very important because they state the faith of the Church. A time-honoured saying is *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which originates from Prosper of Aquitaine in the fifth century. The law of prayer is the law of faith. The Church believes as she prays. The liturgy is a constitutive element of the holy and living Tradition (cf CCC, 1124). It therefore matters very much what words the Church uses in her worship.

While no translation is perfect, there are many fruits to be hoped for from this revised English translation of the Roman Missal: deepening in our faith, greater helps to adoration from the liturgical texts, nourishment of the virtue of piety, healthy influence of liturgical prayer on our personal prayer and one English text for the entire English-speaking world.

To become reality, the cooperation of everyone will be required. The first requirement is that you possess a copy of the missal and study it, especially in the ordinary every day parts that involve dialogue between priest celebrant and people. The whole altar missal will run to more than 1,200 pages. But handy missals or parts thereof should soon be available for the lay faithful. There are several explanatory and other guides and cassettes prepared by the United States Bishops' Conference Secretariat of Divine Worship in Washington D.C. And some dioceses and parishes have organized information and guidance seminars. What you should not allow is that somebody who does not like one or other aspect of the translations, and who is actively organizing opposition to the Missal, succeeds in recruiting you to his bandwagon of discontented Catholics. This new translation is the best available and officially approved one. Thank God for it. Join millions in profiting from it.

4. Eucharist and Mission.

The Eucharistic celebration sends us on mission. It sends us to evangelize. At the end of the Mass the deacon, and in his absence the priest, says to us: "Go, the Mass is ended". This order of "sending the troops", is often not properly understood. It does not mean: "Our celebration is over. Go home now to rest". It rather means: "Our celebration of the mysteries of Christ is over; go now to live and share what we have received, what we have heard, what we have meditated, what we have sung and what we have prayed. Go now and live the Mass".

Because the missionary dimension of the Eucharistic celebration is not so clear to all in this last directive at the end of Mass, the Synod of Bishops which discussed the Holy Eucharist in Rome in 2005 requested the Holy Father to make clearer alternatives available. This was done in the revised Roman Missal in 2008. After consulting the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the Holy Father added the following three alternatives to *Ite Missa Est*: "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord", or "Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life", or simply, "Go in peace".

The conclusion that we are to draw is that the Eucharistic celebration sends us to evangelize and to live Christian solidarity with the needy. This means that the Mass sends us to live what we have celebrated everywhere: in our families, in our place of work and recreation, in science and culture, in politics and government, and indeed in our entire lives. This includes parents evangelizing their children, colleagues sharing their faith with colleagues, politicians speaking and voting in a way that makes them recognizable as undiluted Catholics, and writers and journalists spreading the Gospel in their *areopagus*.

The related and second wing of what we are sent to do is Christian solidarity with people in need. Our Lord tells us that the last judgment will be based on charity, whether we loved him in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned (cf Mt 25). The Venerable Pope John Paul II who will be beatified next Sunday tells us that the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebration can be judged from how we come to meet the needs of the poor (cf *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 28). And Pope Benedict XVI makes the same point in his first encyclical letter: "A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 14).

5. Christian and Citizen.

As almost all of you are professional men, a point that should be stressed is the importance of unity between religion and life. It is the same person who is Christian and citizen. Unity and synthesis between religious duties on the one hand, and civil responsibilities on the other, are part of what it means to be an authentic Christian. Religion is not to be reduced to a one-hour Mass attendance on Sunday morning. The Sunday Eucharist should spread its influence on the entire life of the Christian every day as a husband, a father, an investment banker, a portfolio manager or other financial professional, a medical doctor, a legal practitioner, an accountant, a writer or journalist, a film producer, a teacher, a pilot or a politician or statesman.

This means that religion is to be a dynamic, unifying element in the life of a Catholic. A Catholic politician, for example, should not say: "I am a Catholic, but". No. Rather he should say: "I am a Catholic, therefore". Otherwise we could say about such an incoherent Catholic what was said of Paddy Smyth: "Paddy Smyth always went to Mass; he never missed a Sunday. But Paddy Smyth went to hell, for what he did on Monday". The mistake of Paddy Smyth is that he

understood his Catholic faith as a matter of Sunday Mass, but did not appreciate that the Eucharistic celebration should influence his stand on moral matters even in the Congress or the Senate.

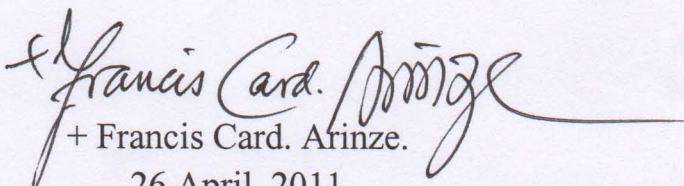
The Second Vatican Council is very clear on this point. It says that those people are mistaken “who think that religion consists in acts of worship alone and in the discharge of certain moral obligations, and who imagine that they can plunge themselves into earthly affairs in such a way as to imply that these are altogether divorced from the religious life....Let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other. The Christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties towards his neighbour and even God, and jeopardizes his eternal salvation” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43). Coming as it does from a General Council of the Church, this is a rather strong warning. The Council continues and underlines the responsibilities of the lay faithful in assuming their role in the secular world: “Laymen should also know that it is generally the function of their well-formed Christian conscience to see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city. From priests they may look for spiritual light and nourishment. Let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts, that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission. Rather, enlightened by Christian wisdom and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the Church, let the layman take on his own distinctive role” (*ibid.*).

The lay faithful are not without role models proposed by the Church by beatification or canonization. Think of political leaders and statesmen and women like St Thomas More, St Louis of France, St Elizabeth of Hungary and Saints Charles Lwanga and Matthias Mulumba of Uganda. Think of parents like St Monica, Blessed Luigi and Maria Beltrame-Quattrocchi and Blessed Louis and Zélie-Marie Martin. Think of a model mother and spouse like St Gianna Beretta-Mola and a young medical doctor Blessed Giuseppe Moscati. The Causes of Beatification of Julius Nyerere, President of Tanzania, and Mr La Pira, Mayor of Florence, are on.

The truth that we cannot run away from, is that the Catholic faith is not a contraband good to be smuggled across the customs, or to be hidden away in a closet. It is not a forbidden religion to be practised secretly. It is the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ to be announced from the house-tops, as the Scripture

would say (cf Mt 10:27; Lk 12:3), to be proclaimed at midday sunshine, and to be shared and spread by press, radio, television, internet and their derivatives. Our faith should give life and a sense of direction to our debates, positions and statements in Congress, Senate, political party caucuses, academic institutions, professional assemblies of medical and legal movers and shakers and over the pages of newspapers. Jesus has underlined the importance of public witness to him: “Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 10:32-33).

My dear members of the men’s Leadership Forum and your guests, may the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, obtain for each of you the grace of a deep Eucharistic faith and a robust living of the consequent Catholic faith in your life and profession.


+ Francis Card. Arinze.
26 April, 2011.