

Director's Corner Rev. John F. Harvey, OSFS



This summary of Pope Benedict XVI's reflections on the Holy Eucharist will be beneficial to Courage and Encourage members and friends, as we strive to build a community which draws its strength from the Body and Blood of Christ.

Thoughts of Pope Benedict XVI on the Holy Eucharist

(Fr. Harvey's summary of a talk given by Cardinal Ratzinger in the Diocese of Benevento in 2002. The full talk is written in On the Way to Jesus Christ, Joseph Ratzinger, Ignatius Press 2005)

The Holy Father explores the relationship between the Mystery of the Church and the Holy Eucharist and the practical implications of this union. He makes the point that knowledge of the mysteries of Faith and our active life should go together, as Faith and Life should go together. This leads him to discuss Eucharist as a descriptive definition of the Church in its relationship to Communion, which leads to further reflections on the practical implications how these truths influence our daily life (Solidarity). Thus, he combines his thought on Eucharist, Communion, and Solidarity.

Carefully he distinguishes the Jewish observation of Passover from the Eucharist. True, the Eucharist took place at the end of The Last Supper, but the Lord did not order his disciples to repeat the Passover Meal. The Passover was the framework within which he instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist. Gradually, the Eucharist was separated from the gathering at table "as the separation from the [Mosaic] law took place and the transition was made to a Church consisting of Jews and Gentiles, but mainly of former pagans."

In this way the Eucharist acquired a distinctive form, which was combined with the Liturgy of the Word. The early Christians recognized that the essential thing that took place at the Last Supper was the great prayer of praise and thanksgiving and blessing that was ultimately derived from the LORD, and "which lent new depth to this very thanksgiving through the sacrifice of His Body and Blood."

The words of the Eucharist became the centerpiece of Eucharistic worship. "With these words he had transformed his death into the gift of himself so that we can give thanks for this death. Yes, only now is it possible to render thanks to God unconditionally, because the most horrible thing--the death of the Redeemer, and the death of us all--had been transformed by an act of love into the gift of life." This should help us Catholic Christians to understand why we do not call this sacrament "Supper" but rather "Eucharist." The Holy Father goes on to point out how the Holy Spirit guided the thought of the early Fathers with regard to the Holy Eucharist and the meaning of Communion. This brings us to the second word in the Divine Oral Tradition--Communion.

First Benedict muses on the meaning of the word *communio*. "The word *communio* (in Greek--*Koinonia*) occurred to me as the fundamental concept that expresses the very essence of the Church. The Church holds councils, but she is communion....The structure of the Church, therefore, should be described as a communion. And not as a council."

His view of the Church as a communion was not readily accepted until the Synod of Bishops in 1985. It focused on the word *communio*, calling it the Eucharistic center of the Church, and thus anchoring our understanding of the Church "in the most intimate encounter between Jesus and mankind, in his act of giving himself to us."

At first the term *communio* was understood in a horizontal sense, that is to say, "in the interconnectedness of the local churches in the give and take of their exchanges as well as the pluralism of their cultural forms of expression in worship, discipline and doctrine."

This view of the Church stressed the idea of self-determination on a wide scale within a community. Although there are elements of truth in this view, "it loses sight of the true depth of what the New Testament and Vatican II, as well as the Synod of 1985, wanted to say." In order to clarify, then, the "central meaning of the term *communio* Benedict turns to two great *communio* passages in the New Testament. The first is found in I Cor 10:16, ff. where Paul tells us: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation (in Greek *koinonia*, in Latin *communicatio*) in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all participate of the one bread". [Emphasis added.]

The concept of *communio* is anchored first and foremost

in the most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, "which is why, in the language of the Church, we still describe the reception of this sacrament today... 'as going to communion.' The meaning of this sacrament becomes immediately clear." It cannot be understood in a merely horizontal perspective. "Through this sacrament we enter, as it were, into a blood relationship with Christ, whereby blood, according to the Hebrew way of thinking, stands for 'life.' Thus, the passage declares an interpenetration of Christ's life with ours." In connection with the Eucharist "blood" also stands for self-giving, "for a life that pours itself out, so to speak, gives itself away for us and to us.... Our existence is energized in such a way that life itself should become a 'being for others,' as we can see right before our eyes in the pierced heart of Christ."

In many ways the words about bread are even more striking: "Bread stands for a bodily union with Christ, which Paul compares to the union of husband and wife (Cf. 1 Cor 6: 17-18; Ephes 5: 26-32). Paul adds that it is one and the same bread that we all receive in the sacrament. It is one and the same Christ for everyone receiving him. Better stated, it is the Lord who receives us, and makes us part of him. Concerning this Bread St. Augustine declares, from the Saint's vision: "Eat the Bread of the strong, and yet you will not change me into yourself, rather I will transform you into me." Thus, we do not assimilate this Eucharist Bread into ourselves, "but rather it assimilates us into itself, so that we are conformed to Christ, in Paul's words, as members of his body, one in him."

The implications of this union are so beautiful: "we all 'eat' the same man, not only the same thing; in this way we are all wrestled from our self-enclosed individuality, and drawn into a greater one."

Through communion with Christ, moreover, we are identified with one another, "identified and one in him, members of one another.... No more are we alongside one another, each for himself, rather, everyone else that goes to communion is for me" and I for them.

Having described the vertical dimension of Holy Communion, we now turn to its social dimension, which Benedict includes under the term Solidarity. In being joined with Christ in Holy Communion, I am united with every other communicant, with those near me, and those in all parts of the globe. "By becoming one with them I must learn to open myself toward them and become involved in their situations. This is the test of the authenticity of my love for Christ. Whenever I am united with Christ I am also united with my neighbor, and this unity

does not end at the communion rail; rather it is just beginning there.

In this way the individual element in going to communion is inseparably interwoven with our membership in the Church and in her life. Our Church does not originate from a loose confederation of communities, "but from the one bread and the one Lord. She is first and foremost and everywhere the one and only Church, the one body that comes from the one bread.... That is why her unity goes deeper than any human union could ever go.

"When the Eucharist is understood in the full intimacy of the union of each individual with the Lord, then this sacrament becomes also a social sacrament in the highest degree. The Eucharist inspires each person to be concerned with the spiritual and temporal welfare of his fellow countrymen and welfare of all other human beings. Benedict goes on to point out that the great socially committed saints were always great Eucharistic Saints. He cites Saint Martin de Porres who worked with poor blacks and spent nights before the Blessed Sacrament. Mother Teresa, likewise, with her sisters spent time before the Blessed Sacrament in the evenings and at Mass early in the day. Quoting I John, Benedict points to the one all-encompassing commandment--the commandment to love: "And so communion with the word of life automatically becomes righteous living; it becomes love; furthermore, it becomes communion with one another." Thus, one sees the connection between a deep understanding of communion and solidarity. In the social justice themes of John Paul II we note how the concept of solidarity has been transformed and Christianized from its earlier secular meanings; moreover, Benedict desires to combine them with themes of Eucharist and *communio*.

Finally, Benedict offers this descriptive definition of Solidarity: "Solidarity in this sense means standing up for one another, the healthy for the sick, the rich for the poor, the countries of the North for those of the South, in the knowledge that we have a mutual responsibility and with the awareness that in giving we receive, that we can only give that which has been given to us, which therefore never simply belongs to us for our own sake."

Benedict, however, believes that we have a long way to go before we have solidarity among the nations of the world, but it must begin with the transformation of persons through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist where Christ draws us together in the One Bread, Himself.

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Bulletin Board

Welcome Back, Angelo!

Angelo Sabella, who has worked with Courage before, assumed the responsibilities of Courage Office Manager as of August 1st, and is working full-time with Father Harvey, Frank, Pat, and Richard in New York City! Angelo's extensive administrative experience and his familiarity with Courage ministry make him a perfect fit for this position! Tina will continue to work for Courage, but now on a part-time basis, as she happily begins a new full-time job in Naples, FL. We wish both Angelo and Tina the best in their new responsibilities!

Courage Conference 2006 - A Sweet St. Louis Success!

The 18th Annual Courage Conference was held from July 27th - 30th at Saint Louis University, in St. Louis, Missouri! There were 200 people in attendance at the main conference, and at least 75 attended the Friday pastoral track for priests, seminarians, deacons, and youth ministers! We are very grateful to Fr. James Knapp, S.J., Courage Chaplain in the Archdiocese of St. Louis, for his extraordinary service in making this year's Courage Conference a success. We also thank all those who worked hard and prayed faithfully, in preparation for this year's conference! Mark your calendars now for next year's conference in Mundelein, IL, August 2nd - 5th!

Both SportsCamps are a Big Hit! (Yes, There Are 2 SportsCamps Now!)

This year's C-MAC (Courage Members Action Committee) SportsCamps were, by all accounts, very successful! The Seventh Annual Men's East Coast SportsCamp was held near Princeton, NJ, and the First Men's Mid-West SportsCamp took place at the Conference Center at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, IL. Both SportsCamps offered a safe and supportive environment for men to learn the rules of the sport, practice their skills, and compete with their teammates in softball, flag football, and basketball. Please stay tuned for informa-

tion on next year's SportsCamps!

Annual Courage Women's Retreat!

The Seventh Annual Courage Women's Retreat will be held from October 12th - 15th, 2006, at a retreat center in Bethlehem, PA. The weekend will include talks by Priests and Courage members, testimonies, Confession, Mass, Eucharistic Adoration, Rosary-walks, private prayer, fellowship and games. The group discussions are bound to include lots of heart-felt sharing, laughter, and some healing tears too! Courage ladies, please plan to join your sisters in Christ for an uplifting weekend of new beginnings! Registration information can be found on the Courage website (CourageRC.net).

A Desperate Plea for Funds!

We ask the members and friends of Courage and Encourage to please consider pledging a monthly contribution to the ministry of Courage. This can easily be done by going to the Courage website (CourageRC.net) and signing up once for a regular monthly donation through PayPal, which can automatically be deducted each month from your chequing account.

Your contributions will go towards supporting the many facets of Courage ministry, such as: the production of new brochures for outreach, the provision of scholarships for the annual conference to help those who can't afford the full conference registration fee, the conversion of our videos into DVD format, the day to day operating expenses of our office, etc. Please prayerfully consider giving Courage your regular financial support!

A Tithing Challenge From Minnesota!

Peggy, a Courage member from Minnesota, is challenging other Courage members around the country and the world to commit all or part of their monthly tithes to the ministry of Courage. She herself has made a commitment to donate monthly towards Courage and hopes that her Courage brothers and sisters in Christ will do the same: *"If this ministry has helped you in any way at all, if you believe in*

what it stands for, here's a way to show your gratitude and support. Even if it's only \$5 a month - that's less than 20 cents a day!"

We are grateful to Peggy and others like her who regularly give to Courage. Faithful financial support and the prayers of our friends and members are what keep the Courage ministry running!

New Book by Fr. Harvey - Coming Out Soon!

Fr. Harvey's upcoming book **Homosexuality and the Catholic Church: Clear Answers to 100 Challenging Questions** will be published by Ascension Press. The release date has been postponed to January 2007. When the book is ready for distribution, we will advertise its availability in this newsletter and on our website CourageRC.net!

Please keep all the preparations for Father's new book in your prayers!

Fr. Harvey & His Travels!

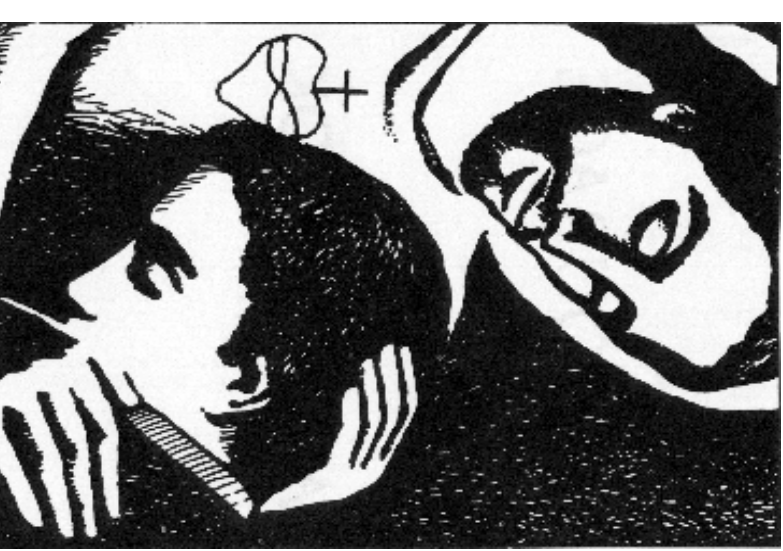
Fr. Harvey recently completed a trip to Hong Kong (with Peter Rudgeair) to spread the Good News about Courage. Father and Peter were invited there by the Diocese of Hong Kong.

Since then Father has also travelled to England and Ireland, which afforded him the opportunity to meet with the Courage and Encourage groups there.

For complete details on Father's recent adventures, please visit the Courage website at CourageRC.net. Please pray that the seeds planted during Father's visits will bear good fruit!

<p>COURAGE CENTRAL OFFICE Church of St. John the Baptist 210 West 31st Street New York, NY 10001 U.S.A. Phone: (212) 268-1010 Fax: (212) 268-7150 E-mail: NYCourage@aol.com Website: CourageRC.net OR CourageRC.org</p>

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*Heart of Jesus, Source of all consolation,
have mercy on us*

*Heart of Jesus, Delight of all the saints,
have mercy on us*

*Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,
we place our trust in thee*