



PONTIFICAL COMMITTEE
FOR INTERNATIONAL
EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS



Fraternity to heal the world

“You are all brothers” (Mt 23:8)

BASIC TEXT

53RD INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS
QUITO (ECUADOR), 8-15 SEPTEMBER 2024

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Presentation

The city of Quito (Ecuador) will be festively bedecked for the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress from the 8th to 15th September 2024, during which its colourful interweaving colonial streets will host thousands of people coming from all over the world to celebrate the Mystery of our faith and renew, in a joyful sharing of gifts, their love for Christ, the living Bread come down from heaven.

In view of this event of global significance, the Theological Commission of the Ecuadorian Local Committee, in collaboration with the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, has drawn up this “basic text” in the light of the theme “Fraternity to heal the world”. It is the tool offered to the Churches of Ecuador and of every country to prepare fruitfully for these Eucharistic days. Thus, human brotherhood, which is at the centre of reflection during the Congress, will not be just a dream but will be given concrete expression based on the Eucharistic celebration.

The text has the flavour of the Latin-American people’s experience of faith, a gift they desire to share with all who would like to participate in whatever way in the International Congress. The Church of Quito will be transformed into a Eucharistic tent where the table of the Word and the Bread will gather us to discover the merciful presence of God, who ardently loves us and makes us brothers, children of the same Father. The paschal gift of the Risen Lord, which is at the heart of every Mass and Eucharistic worship that derives its meaning from it, while healing our wounds will enable us to take care of every brother and sister.

We lift up our hearts in praise and ask God in Pope Francis’ words for the grace “to prepare our hearts to encounter our brothers and sisters, so that we may overcome our differences rooted in political thinking, language, culture and religion. Let us ask him to anoint our whole being with the balm of his mercy, which heals the injuries caused by mistakes, misunderstandings and disputes. And let us ask him for the grace to send us forth, in humility and meekness, along the demanding but enriching path of seeking peace” (Fratelli Tutti, 254).

+ Alfredo José Espinoza Mateus, sdb

*Archbishop of Quito and Primate of Ecuador
16 June 2023, Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

INTRODUCTION

A dream of fraternity

“*You are all brothers*” (Mt 23:8)

1. By these words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, Pope Francis wanted to illuminate the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress that will take place in the city of Quito, Ecuador.¹ These are the words of the Master exhorting the disciples to become aware of their fraternal relationship as children of the same Father. as sons and daughters of the same Father. The community of believers, by divine vocation, is called to base its human relationships on fraternal love, relationships of fraternity that must be a sign of hope for a fragmented world, a balm for healing wounds. "You are all brothers" (Mt 23:8) the Master reminds contemporary society through his Church on pilgrimage in the midst of so many peoples.
2. The context of this Eucharistic Congress expresses the urgency of fraternity to heal the world. Various countries of Latin America and of other continents are internally suffering sociopolitical instability. There still remain remnants of a historical, violent and silent colonialism, which responds to transnational interests with imperialist characteristics.² Popular demonstrations follow one another against an ever-unfair economic system in which poverty and injustice grow. “Poverty and inequality in Latin America are a wound that is worsening instead of being healed. The pandemic and its consequences, the global context exacerbated by the political, economic and military conditions, and even ideological polarization, seem to shut the doors to attempts for development and desires for liberation.”³ Europe has been alarmed at its borders by a war that recalls the horror of the great world conflicts it experienced during the 20th century when the West was divided into two large blocs with their different visions of society. From the Middle East comes news of growing tension and incessant violence. From Africa, along with an endemic poverty, boats continue to sail carrying migrants seeking asylum in a better “world” - a “world” often unreachable since they do not reach port but drown in the waters of the Mediterranean.
3. It is not merely a matter of healing relations between the various peoples inhabiting the face of the earth, but about healing the human heart’s wounds that obstruct peace and reconciliation. What has to be taken account of is “that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of

1 On the nature of the Eucharistic Congress, cf. RITUALE ROMANUM, *De Sacra Communionem et de Cultu Mysterii Eucharistici extra Missam*, [Roman Ritual: Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery outside Mass], nn. 109-112.

2 Cf. *Joint Statement on the “Doctrine of Discovery” of the Dicasteries for Culture and Education and for Promoting Integral Human Development* (30 March 2023).

3 CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIÓN SOCIAL AVANZADA, *América Latina. Diagnósticos y desafíos (Dossier Estudios Latinoamericanos)*, CISAV, [ADVANCED SOCIAL RESEARCH CENTRE, Latin America. Diagnoses and challenges (Latin American Studies Dossier)], (Querétaro 2023), 23.

comforting the other. On this boat... are all of us.”⁴ The Eucharistic Congress is this time of grace enabling us to rekindle God’s gift and the awareness that all peoples embraced by the Eucharistic love that flows from the Heart of Christ are brothers, children of the same Father, builders of fraternity – a fraternity among humankind, fraternity with creation.

4. For its part, the Church is moving amid these divisions in a process of synodal discernment, questioning itself; seeking, at the levels of the local, continental and universal Churches, to recover its essential feature of being synodal that entails walking together in carrying out its mission in communion and sharing, thus always fulfilling its vocation of “enlarging the space of its tent” (cf. Is 54:2), by always becoming a fraternal place of radical inclusion, shared belonging and profound hospitality.⁵ We are grateful to God that this Eucharistic Congress will be taking place between the two general assemblies of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican (October 2023 – October 2024), seeing this as a prophetic sign of the Eucharistic banquet that is the centre and highest expression of synodality.⁶
5. The Archdiocese of Quito has been chosen to host the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress on the 150th anniversary of the Consecration of Ecuador to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (25 March 1874). The first national Eucharistic Congress was held in this city long ago in 1886; now the people of God of Ecuador, under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, welcome Christians from around the world to reflect on the Eucharist and live it as an opportunity for fraternity to heal the world.
6. From the pierced side of Christ on the Cross, blood and water flowed, as the evangelist John recounts (cf. Jn 19:34), signs of Baptism and the Eucharist, source and summit of the Church.⁷ Certainly the Eucharist, celebrated with astonishment at the paschal mystery,⁸ is the principal context of devotion to the Heart of Christ. Paul VI stated: “We desire that, through a more intense participation in the Sacrament of the altar, the Heart of Jesus be honoured, whose greatest gift is precisely the Eucharist.”⁹ It is here that the children of the heavenly Father, brothers in Christ, realize deepest communion with God and fraternity among themselves.¹⁰ The celebration of the Eucharist entails being immersed in the furnace of God's love,¹¹ where ecclesial communion is purified.

4 POPE FRANCIS, *Extraordinary Moment of prayer at the time of the pandemic*, 27 March 2020.

5 Cf. General Secretariat of the Synod, “*Enlarge the space of your tent*” (Is 54:2). *Working document for the Continental Stage*, 24 October 2022, n. 31.

6 Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality in the Church’s life and mission*, 2 March 2018, n. 47.

7 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Lumen gentium*, nn. 3. 11.

8 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Desiderio desideravi*, (Apostolic Letter on the liturgical formation of the People of God, 29 June 2022), nn. 24-26.

9 POPE PAUL VI, *Investigabiles Divitias Christi*, (Apostolic Letter, 6 February 1965), no number.

10 Cf. POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Deus caritas est*, (Encyclical Letter, 25 December 2005), n. 14.

11 Cf. *Desiderio desideravi*, n. 57.

7. We are living in a wounded world – a world with wounds still open and festering. From the dawn of human history, there have been encounters and paths that have been stained with bloodshed. To this day, the fragile, the small, the vulnerable, the disposable are excluded from the common good, social justice, freedom and human rights; they are banned from the tent of bread that is shared, from the common home that shelters us as children and brothers. To attack a brother is always an attack against the common home that is creation.
8. Today as always, God has not been deaf or indifferent to humanity’s suffering. In the fullness of time, God the Father has given us his Son, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word who offered himself unto the Cross for our redemption, by which he overcame sin and death, and at the same time has become bread and shepherd of our lives. Christ is the bread of God that unites and reconciles us so that everyone who walks with us is no longer a stranger on the road, is recognized as a neighbour and companion along the journey. And, from the tent of the Eucharist, from the offering of life so that others may have life, from the forgiveness of the executioners in the very place of their violence, the presence of the Lord engenders Christian communities where one learns again and again to promote dialogue, reconciliation and peace as the way of healing this world wounded by hatred, enmity and selfishness.
9. On 3 October 2020, at the tomb of Saint Francis in Assisi, the Holy Father signed his encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*. In a short time, it revived in many hearts the longing for universal brotherhood, highlighted the many wounds against it in today’s world, pointed to some ways toward achieving a true and just human brotherhood and encouraged all – people and institutions – to work for it.
10. Quito, a city in the middle of the world, located at zero latitude, extends its tent to become an immense Eucharistic tent where we are all invited to share this great dream of a fraternity redeemed and healed by the total love of Christ. Pope Francis exhorts us: “Let us dream as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth, which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.”¹²
11. We believe that fraternity is rooted in the deepest level of being human, regardless of the concrete circumstances and historic limitations in which it exists. It tells us of a thirst, an aspiration, a desire for fullness and life capable of making existence more beautiful and dignified.

From all this for Christians there comes the commitment to seek paths that lead to a common search and a renewed dialogue with all people of good will. This is the simple and demanding duty that springs from the awareness of Christ’s assertion: “You are all brothers” (Mt 23:8).

12 POPE FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, (Encyclical Letter, 3 October 2020), n. 8.

1. A WOUNDED FRATERNITY

“Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9)

12. “Where is Abel, your brother?” (Gen 4: 9). This was the question that God addressed to Cain after he had killed his brother. This question came down from heaven after the cry of Abel's blood rose from the ground. It is a question that resonates eternally reminding us of the original human vocation and of all creation to brotherhood.

GOD’S CREATIVE DESIGN: SONS AND BROTHERS

13. From all eternity, God had the design to create out of love and to call human beings to adoptive sonship to make of them a fraternity, so that, through their mutual gift, which is the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Father’s family may be built in history (cf. Gen 1-2). This ideal is, above all, a design of salvation, since human beings cannot respond to God in a “filial” way, without the very help of God, whose love is sufficiently great to reach human beings, even when they reject it by sin. This double vocation, to filiation and fraternity, defines us as human beings since the identity of our being consists in being children of the same Father and brothers among ourselves.

Fraternity is rooted in the fatherhood of God.¹³ This paternity does not refer to something generic, undifferentiated and historically ineffective, but to a personal, particular and extraordinarily concrete love of God for each human being (cf. Mt 6:25-30). To the initiative of this God who creates his children and loves them, corresponds the response of human beings. “Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.”¹⁴

Children of the same Father: a cosmic fraternity

14. All creation is maintained in a complete unity. In other words, the entire cosmic community pulsates with the rhythm of the same harmony because all of creation is entwined in a network of relationships woven by the freedom and goodness of each creature. Everything that the human being does or does not do will have an impact on the entire creation, positively or negatively.

In the narrative of Genesis, human beings are entrusted with the care of creation. Therefore, every man and woman must welcome, contemplate, enjoy this gift and guard it; they must likewise seek and find the Creator in creation which is his house; and, lastly, they have to know and understand themselves in this house, weaving fraternal, healthy, fair and lasting relationships

13 Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 272.

14 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 357.

with their neighbour. The vocation of all creation is universal brotherhood, since in it the design of salvation is fulfilled.

SIN: RUPTURE OF RAPPORT WITH GOD

15. However, from the beginning suspicion about God's goodness is planted in the hearts of Adam and Eve (cf. Gen 3:1). Filial dialogue with God becomes a silence of doubt and estrangement. Eden ceasing to be the land of encounter and dialogue becomes a place of hiding and guilt (cf. Gen 3,10).

A fractured fraternity

16. This initial estrangement from the Creator's designs will trigger the rupture of the brotherhood between Cain and Abel. Hence, the other is reduced from being a person to just an individual. Moreover, the elder brother, losing his filial identity, begins to regard his younger brother as a rival and a threat. Sin reduces a person to a mere individual and, in every way, seeks to destroy creation.

Sin smashed communion with God, fraternal communion and communion with creation. However, these fractures do not have the last word in salvation history. Through the redemption accomplished in Christ and in his Church today, through the sacraments and charity, God continues to guide the path of humanity towards the fullness of communion in the responsibility and care of our neighbour and our common home.¹⁵

17. The question God addressed to Cain is the same that challenges us today with all its force: "Where is your brother?" (Gen 4:9). While humanity contains within itself a vocation to brotherhood, it also has the dramatic possibility of betraying this.¹⁶ The daily selfishness that is at the basis of so many wars and injustices bears witness to this: many human beings die at the hands of brothers and sisters who do not know how to recognize themselves as such. In the sign of care and responsibility for others we can say that we are or are not brothers. Fraternity is the true way of giving ourselves as children, the true way to love God: "If anyone says: 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn 4:20).

DISFIGURED FRATERNITY: FROM BROTHERS TO ENEMIES

18. Love between brothers is so necessary that without this bond no society would exist. Fraternity as God's family, therefore, fosters an original solidarity in the diversity of its members and creates a balance between them. Thus, the fundamental prerequisite of fraternity would be the

15 Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality*, *op. cit.*, n. 12.

16 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Message for the XLVII World Day of Peace. *Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace*, 1 January 2014, n. 2.

original solidarity. Pope Francis reminds us that the world has lost sensitivity, solidarity and prefers individualism or turning away its gaze.¹⁷

The Church cannot look with indifference at the lack of social brotherhood. The fact of being catholic signifies that she is for everyone, so that everyone in her belongs as to a family. The People of God transcending all people is incarnated in the peoples of the earth. Thus, making the pains and wounds of her children her own, she seeks to heal them with the ointment of charity.

A wounded people

19. There is a wounded humanity all around us. We notice there are many wounds that remain open, while new wounds afflict the world we live in. If they are covered up, they end up becoming infected.¹⁸ Thus fear, rejection, contempt and insensitivity turn into xenophobia, violence, exclusion, marginalization, elimination of the unborn child and the elderly; in short, destruction of the common home. We even have to say that this distancing from others is manifested in a growing contempt for the human species itself. That is the wound that is haemorrhaging the world dry – a wound seeping from a culture of disposing and death.¹⁹

The Church in her body is not immune from these wounds. In it also, relationships between its members have often been seen fractured. Today there has been a growing awareness of terrible abuses, many of them serious crimes, committed by those who should have been “fathers” and not victimizers of the vulnerable. On several occasions, Pope Francis has spoken out forcefully against the “plague” of ecclesial ideologies, the “pests” of clericalism in clergy and laity, and “careerism” and the insufficient participation of women in process of decision-making.²⁰ All these long-standing wounds continue to bleed from the Church’s members.

Called to reconciliation

20. Thanks be to God that in the darkest moments in the history of our peoples, voices, gestures, dynamic elements and people always arise, which, guided by the Spirit, like a lighthouse in the night, never fail to trace out the path that we must travel.

An example of this was Saint Oscar Arnulfo Romero (1917 – 1980), Archbishop of San Salvador from 1977 to 1980. The lack of freedom in his country had led to a real civil war between the armed forces and various insurgent groups. The gap between rich and poor was widening and the accumulation of wealth by a few was scandalous. By organising a commission for the defence of human rights, Archbishop Romero, became the voice of the voiceless. Through his proclamation of the Gospel and denouncing of the injustices experienced, he rejected revolutionary violence. He knew how to approach the marginalised, accompanying Christ in the mothers of the disappeared (*desaparecidos*), the abused and expropriated peasants.

17 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *General Audience*, 2 September 2020.

18 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Address to participants at the meeting promoted by the “Organization of Catholic Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean,”* 4 May 2023.

19 Cf. *Fratelli tutti*, nn. 18-21.

20 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Address to the Vatican Foundation “Joseph Ratzinger - Benedict XVI” on the occasion of awarding the “Ratzinger Prize”*, 17 November 2018; *Address to participants at the meeting promoted by the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life*, 18 February 2023.

Unfortunately, his concrete preferential option for the poor resulted in the murder of members of the faithful, catechists and priests. He endured the ordeal of persecution, unscrupulous manipulation of his homilies and various attempts on his life.

His famous homily for the Fifth Sunday of Lent on 23 March 1980 was entitled “The Homily of Fire.” After the massacre of forty-three murders in a week, addressing the men of the army, the National Guard and the police, he stated: “Brothers, you are of part of our own people. You are killing your own brother and sister *campesinos*, and against any order a man may give to kill, God’s law must prevail: ‘You shall not kill!’ No soldier is obliged to obey an order against the law of God. [...] It is time now for you to reclaim your conscience and to obey your conscience rather than the command to sin. [...] In the name of God, then, and in the name of this suffering people, whose laments rise up each day more tumultuously toward heaven, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression!”²¹

Finishing the homily, the following day in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence, a rifle leans out from the rear window of a car parked outside, impossible to be seen by the faithful who were looking towards the altar. The holy bishop of fraternity concluded by saying: “May this body that was immolated and this flesh that was sacrificed for humankind also nourish us so that we can give our bodies and our blood to suffering and pain, as Christ did, not for our own sake but to bring justice and peace to our people. [...]”²² At that moment a shot rang out. Romero fell to the ground. The bullet had pierced his heart.

The challenge of our century is fraternity

21. Fraternity is a dream that the whole of humanity is experiencing. It is not a utopia, but rather, the opportunity to fulfil the vocation of each person: the call to encounter others. For this reason, in our historical time everyone has the task to explore the theme of fraternity: the depths of Christianity, religions, politics, philosophy and science must be plumbed. Apart from fraternity all can be lost.

Examples are not lacking in the history of the Church and of our world: Francis of Assisi, Josefina Bakhita, Charles de Foucauld, Teresa of Calcutta, Óscar Romero, and others. They are courageous witnesses to a desire etched into the human heart for brotherhood capable of overcoming particular and nationalist interests, dictatorships and ideologies.

The Christian faith stirs up in persons the human vocation to fraternity. This is well-known by the Lord Jesus’ disciples who, when celebrating the Eucharist, are called to welcome others, especially the most in need needy and the poorest, as persons to be supported and loved, and to protect creation. The history of salvation is a journey with others, a journey of forgiveness and reunion, a fraternal journey that is not individual.

21 ÓSCAR ROMERO, *Homilías*, Tomo VI, (UCA Editores, San Salvador 2009), 453 – English translation from The Archbishop Romero Trust, (London) – online <<http://www.romerotruster.org.uk/>>

22 Ibid., p. 457.

2. FRATERNITY REALIZED IN CHRIST

*“How good and pleasant it is
when brothers dwell in unity!” (Ps 133:1)*

22. Already the people of Israel on their pilgrimage used to sing of the joy of walking as brothers. This awareness of the unity of humanity, rich in diversity, that finds its origin in God himself. Faces, cultures, languages and thoughts “walk together” towards God, the beginning and the goal of life.²³

THE EUCHARIST: RECAPITULATION OF HISTORY

23. Our wounded world has not been abandoned to its fate but instead has received an infinitely greater healing than its wound required. “Where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20). God has healed us and has made us his children by assuming our nature, in the Son, so that we could participate in his own nature. “O wonderful exchange! The Creator of human nature took on a human body and was born of the Virgin. He became man without having a human father and has bestowed on us his divine nature.”²⁴

Precisely where the wound of sin has built the kingdom of death, God makes life spring forth from the wound in the side of Christ (cf. Jn 19:34). The open wounds of Christ crucified are, within history, the wound of love that heals the other wounds of hatred and violence that disfigure our lives, taking away our identity as children and brothers. Thus, the Word, by becoming man, has redeemed all creation because God’s being exists to create and save.

Abba! Brotherly cry of the children in the Son

24. The entire existence of Jesus is marked by an intimate and trusting relationship with God whom he calls “Abba” (cf. Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:1-4), which is an expression of closeness never seen in the Jewish spirituality of that time. If the serpent had disfigured the loving image of God in Eden causing sin to break the dialogue of life with Adam and Eve, now Jesus is the well-beloved Son who heals this wound of disobedience, self-sufficiency and rebellion by giving his life up entirely to the Father on the Cross.

At the same time, this manner of invoking the Father is always fraternal, that is to say: “our”. Jesus will teach his disciples to call God “Our Father” (Mt 6:9). We are children and, therefore, brothers. This “we” is the ecclesial community, which is called to recognize, mature and nurture attitudes of brotherhood.

The Eucharist: source and summit of brotherhood

23 Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality*, *op. cit.*, nn. 49-53.

24 LITURGY OF THE HOURS, *Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God*, First antiphon of First Vespers.

25. The Church, the fruit of Easter, witness of the Lord and of his Kingdom, is a concrete sign of the fraternity that according to God's design must embrace all humanity. The act that first incorporates us into the Body of Christ, which is the Church, is baptism.²⁵ The privileged place of our bodily unity with the Lord and among ourselves, its new foundation, is undoubtedly the liturgical action and, in particular, the Eucharistic celebration, especially on Sunday. It is there that the Christian community guards the truth of the relationships expressed in charity and it is there that the path towards the concrete realization of human brotherhood is opened.
26. Thus the Son of God giving his Body at the Last Supper and on the Cross has sealed once and for all the destruction of the wall of hatred and enmity that divided us and did not allow us to be brothers (cf. Eph 2:14-15). So, the God creator of heaven and earth has not left history to its fate, nor to silence, nor to anonymity, but has associated it definitively with a purpose, a voice, a face, a Body, that of Jesus of Nazareth, whose presence we recognize in the Eucharistic celebration, at the table of the Word and the Bread of Life for Christian people, fraternally gathered by the Spirit of God.²⁶
27. In each Eucharistic celebration Christ makes himself present in the assembly gathered in his name, in the minister who *in persona Christi* offers the sacrifice and presides over the holy people, in the proclamation of Sacred Scripture and, in an excellent mode, in the species of the consecrated bread and wine. Each of these ways of being present are a sacramental expression of the one Body of Christ made up of the communion of brothers, that "we", who exercise our baptismal priesthood.²⁷ "The liturgy does not say 'I' but 'we', and any limitation on the breadth of this 'we' is always demonic. The Liturgy does not leave us alone to search out an individual supposed knowledge of the mystery of God. Rather, it takes us by the hand, together, as an assembly, to lead us deep within the mystery that the Word and the sacramental signs reveal to us."²⁸

The Eucharistic celebration breaks down every wall and frontier of rivalry, violence and selfishness. Behold the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of children in the Son, a Kingdom of brothers reconciled by the loving Father of Christ, a Kingdom of grateful children who, by sharing the Word and Bread, signs of life, brotherhood and of reconciliation, are grafted into the very reality of God.

At the Table of the Word

28. God speaks and communicates to humanity through his Word. The Word, who was with God and was God, in the fullness of time became flesh, being born of a woman full of grace, at his Pasch, by the gift of the Spirit, directed that humanity live on the Word that comes from the mouth of God. For this reason, during the celebration of the Eucharist throughout the liturgical year, especially on Sundays, the Christian people take their place around the table of the Word

25 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *General Audience* 11 April 2018; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1213.

26 Cf. Vatican Council II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 56; *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, n. 28.

27 Cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 7; *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, nn. 3-5.

28 POPE FRANCIS, *Desiderio desideravi*, n. 19.

that is listened to, celebrated, proclaimed, welcomed, so that the whole life of the Church be grafted onto the mystery of Jesus crucified and risen.²⁹

The table of the Word, around which the People of God gathers, gives life to an ever-renewed celebration of the "language of love" which, entering into dialogue with those who listen to it, brings together a people of brothers and sisters. It is the communion of the Holy Church!

EUCCHARIST: FRATERNITY REALIZED

29. In the Eucharist the Risen Lord, who is our salvation, becomes present finally and definitively. The Eucharist is a permanent form of paschal appearance; it is the presence of what is lasting in our passing world. It is the beginning of the eruption of the Parousia. The definitive thing, the new heavens and earth, is anticipated. Thus, by means of the Eucharistic memorial, God leads history and pilgrim humanity towards its consummation, where we will all be brothers, where the wound of fraternity will be healed in divine filiation. This eschatological coming of the Kingdom in our "here and now" is the anticipation in history of its final fulfilment.

In the Eucharist, Christ, the one who lives forever, makes himself present and we enter into communion with him in the Holy Spirit. The Risen One offers us and gives us what he is: his Word, his Body and his Blood, in short, his person and his life – the person and life of the Son who reconciled all things in himself and raised our being to the fullness of God.³⁰

At the Table of the Bread

30. The Eucharist offers healing to the world wounded in fraternity. Where sin has caused us to ignore each other as brothers and has placed us in a relationship of opposition and rivalry, the Eucharist calls us to sit at the same table of the Body and Blood of Christ as children of the same Father and, therefore, brothers and sisters of one another. For this reason, after the institution narrative of the consecration, Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I states: "Look kindly, most compassionate Father, on those you unite to yourself by the Sacrifice of your Son, and grant that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as they partake of this one Bread and one Chalice, they may be gathered into one Body, in Christ, who heals every division."

31. Situated between the Eucharistic Prayer and Communion, the entire assembly prays the *Our Father*, which recapitulates all the praise and intercessions expressed during the celebration and leads us towards the door of the Banquet of the Kingdom, of which the sacramental communion is a foretaste.

32. The *Our Father* is a prayer of communion: it is essentially the prayer of a community living in family relationships. By recognizing God as "Abba", we also declare the new bond that is established between Jesus' disciples and all people. The fatherhood of God generates the brotherhood that we acknowledge in the exchange of a sign of peace.

29 Cf. *Order of Readings for Mass*, nn. 5. 60.

30 Cf. POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, 22 February 2007), n. 89.

33. Then, in procession towards the altar, at the moment of communion we say “amen” to the Body of Christ that is presented to us, aware that with Eucharistic communion we are transformed into what we receive:³¹ “He who eats my flesh and drink my blood, abide in me and I in him” (John 6:56). This “amen” and communion have the consequence of making visible in history the Body of Christ, which is the Church, a people of brothers who offer the world the merciful presence of the gestures and words of the Lord. “This is beautiful; it is very beautiful. As it unites us to Christ, tearing us away from our selfishness, Communion opens us and unites us to all those who are a single thing in him. This is the wonder of Communion: we become what we receive!”³²

Eucharistic devotion and popular piety: expressions of fraternity

34. This Eucharistic fraternity is not only expressed in the celebration itself, but the faithful with their veneration of the Sacrament outside of Mass prolong and deepen it. In fact, the first and primary purpose of the Eucharistic reservation is fraternity with the sick brother in the administration of Viaticum. Eucharistic reservation, in parallel, has led the People of God to “the praiseworthy practice of adoring this heavenly food in the churches.”³³ As a fruit of the Holy Spirit, Eucharistic adoration, whose origin and end is always the celebration of Mass, is an expression of the priestly people’s fraternal awareness of being before the Mystery that saves and unites.³⁴

Together with this devotion, many local churches and, in particular, those in Latin America, have been enriched by many forms of popular piety. These expressions of the Christian life, of the baptismal priesthood, assist the faithful, while employing the language of their own culture, to persevere in Christian brotherhood through prayer, praise, witness and celebration.³⁵ Popular piety characterizes the heart of the believing people, while it passes on from generation to generation a particular Christian way of being.³⁶ This is reflected, for example, in the music, the dances, the colourful costumes, the burning of the “castles”³⁷ and the streets decorated with flower carpets for the *Corpus Christi* procession in Cuenca, Pujilí or Quito.

A rich witness of fraternity in popular piety is evident in the innumerable shrines, particularly those Marian ones, which, like an epiphany of Christ, the great shrine of the Father,³⁸ are an extension of the divine tent that welcomes his children and brothers. In the Archdiocese of Quito, one can think of the National Marian Shrine in Quinche, where not only on 21 November, but every day of the year, in that house Mary, as on Christmas night, welcomes rich and poor to show them her Son (cf. Lk 2:16-17). In it and in every popular shrine, pilgrims, stripped of the

31 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *General Audience*, 21 March 2018.

32 Ibid.

33 ROMAN RITUAL, *De Sacra Communione*, *op. cit.*, n. 5.

34 Cf. POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 68.

35 Cf. CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, *Directory on popular piety and liturgy. Principles and guidelines*, (December 2001), n. 86.

36 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, (Apostolic Exhortation, 24 November 2013), nn. 122-123; *Address at the National Marian Shrine of El Quinche (Quito)*, 8 July 2015.

37 These structures made of cane, which when burnt set off spectacular fireworks. (*Translator’s note*)

38 Cf. *Directory on popular piety*, *op. cit.*, n. 262.

appearances of the world, fervently participate in the celebration of the Eucharist. Everyone, without distinction, finds the doors open, the table set and, on a journey made together and in shared prayer, they experience fraternity as God's creative plan and the gift of faith in Christ.

FRATERNITY WITHOUT THE LEAST IS NOT FRATERNITY

35. To be genuine this fraternity realised in Christ must be universal. “In God’s heart there is a preferential place for the poor.”³⁹ The mystery of the incarnation tells us of this preferential option for the poor. Salvation came about thanks to the “yes” of a humble young woman and the Saviour was born in poverty.

In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the following who are excluded are spoken of in a way that shakes our consciences: “the last” (Mt 20:16), the victims, the poor, women, indigenous people, children and the elderly, the sick, the redundant masses, those who have no voice or count for nothing either in society or in the Church, the suffering faces, the insignificant, the “nobodies” who, however, will be our judges on the last day and with whom the Lord identifies (cf. Mt 25, 31-45).

The Church: a tent for all

36. The pericope of the gospel about the last judgment tells us of a mysterious but real identification of Christ with the marginalized, the last, the hungry, the naked, the sick, or the prisoners (cf. Mt 25:31-45). It is also significant that the Gospel of John, instead of describing the institution of the Eucharist, offers the account of the washing of the feet (cf. Jn 13:1-20), during which the Lord invites the carrying out of fraternal service, so that the Christian communities do not merely focus on repeating the ritual gesture, forgetting the deep social meaning of the Eucharist, but continue Jesus’ service to others, the giving of his life for others.⁴⁰

Jesus’ death itself is linked to his option for the poor. Jesus Christ, being rich, became poor for us in order to enrich us (cf. 2Cor 8:9). In the Acts of the Apostles, in the Church of Jerusalem, the breaking of bread is linked to a solidarity that reaches out to the poor. Paul is indignant that the Corinthians do not share the table and states that their meeting is not the Lord’s Supper (cf. 1 Cor 11:20).

37. Latin American theology and pastoral action, in their experience of faith, have emphasised the connection between the Eucharist, charity and justice, in which priority of expression is given to an option for the poorest and most rejected; this commitment transforms reality from the theological and moral virtues into a decisively personalist perspective. This is an option that is neither acceptance nor resignation, but rather it implies an occasion of rejection and denunciation, of commitment to eradicate and overcome all those realities that, insofar as they threaten human beings and their ecological environment, impede and pervert the salvific design of God.

39 POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 197.

40 Cf. POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 88.

38. It must be recalled that in the history of the Latin American Church the first prophetic cry in favour of the indigenous people occurred in a Eucharistic celebration in Hispaniola, when the Dominican Antonio de Montesinos, in Advent of 1551, commenting on the Gospel passage referring to John the Baptist, “I am a voice crying out in the desert” (John 1:23), exclaimed: “This voice,” he continued, “says that you are all in mortal sin and you live and die in it, because of the cruelty and tyranny that you afflict on these innocent people. Tell me, with what right and with what justice do you hold these Indians in such cruel and horrible servitude? With what authority have you made such detestable wars against these people who were in their meek and peaceful lands; where an infinite number of them, whose deaths and ravages unheard of, have you consumed? [...] Are these not men? Do they not have rational souls? Are you not obliged to love them as yourselves? Do you not understand this? Do you not feel this? How are you in such a deep and lethargic asleep?”⁴¹

A Spanish *comendero*,⁴² Bartolomé de Las Casas was deeply affected. Later, meditating on the text of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 34:21-22 in which the unjust are harshly criticised, he freed his slaves, became a Dominican friar and, appointed bishop, became the great defender of the indigenous people.

39. The celebration of the Eucharist necessarily has social, political and historical implications pertaining to a banquet of brothers in which there is no longer any distinction of person; and from it a new civilization springs, as stated in the Conclusive Document of Aparecida (2007): “We praise the Lord because he has made this continent a space for communion and communication of indigenous peoples and cultures. We also appreciate the prominence that sectors that were displaced are acquiring: women, indigenous people, Afro-Americans, peasants and inhabitants of marginal areas of large cities. All the life of our peoples, founded on Christ and redeemed by Him, can look to the future with hope and joy.”⁴³ Recently, the Joint Note on the “Doctrine of Discovery” of the Dicastery for Culture and Education and the Department for the Service of Integral Human Development expressed itself in these terms: “Faithful to the mandate received by Christ, the Catholic Church strives to promote universal brotherhood and respect for the dignity of every human being” (n.1).

41 BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS, *Historia de las Indias*, t. III, cap. IV, (Madrid: Printed by Miguel Ginesta, 1875), 365-366.

42 An *encomendero* is a holder of an *encomienda*, which is an estate of land comprising an indigenous village, or group of villages, granted to Spanish colonists, who collected taxes from the indigenous people in kind or in the form of compulsory labour. (*Translator's note*)

43 Vide GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN EPISCOPATE, *Concluding Document of Aparecida*, 128.

3. FRATERNITY TO HEAL THE WORLD

“Give them something to eat yourselves” (Lk 9:13)

40. In the Gospel passage about the multiplication of the loaves the Evangelist Luke describes not only the miracle of abundant food for all until they are satisfied and more, but also a community that, constituted in assembly around its Master, receives the mandate of charity, so by sharing its own possessions and physical effort it comes out of itself to feed the hungry crowd. A prophetic eucharistic sign of a people of a people that does not seclude itself in the intimacy of their churches, but is sent by its Lord to become bread broken also for the life and fraternity of today's world.

RECONCILIATION AND VIOLENCE

41. Christ's healing action of the world confronts the dramatic realities of our history, in which widespread violence has made us all victims and executioners at the same time. In our country Ecuador, which is mainly Catholic, for example, to speak about a reconciled fraternity can seem incredible considering what has happened in our jails and on our streets where innocent and guilty have indiscriminately lost their lives making the last years the most violent in our recent history.

We are aware that redemption is real, but it has to reach its final consummation. The world has been healed, in its heart and in its destiny, although we discover situations where this healing has not been fully manifested. The indignation in the face of violence and the yearning to find a solution speak to us of the determination to be healed. We can see this in the many men and women, who, based on Christ example, becoming his missionary disciples,⁴⁴ have known how to respond in an evangelically new way to the growing violence that plagues our “natural” way of relating to one another.

Forgiveness: following Christ's example

42. We have to take notice and investigate the fact that the world is wounded and there is an urgent need to find paths of brotherhood and not let ourselves to be overcome by the violence that degrades the human person and all creation. From time immemorial, in humanity there have always been social conflicts in which a brother kills his brother in so many ways. Scripture also relates the same story, but with the assurance that God is not on the side of the executioner, but of the victim.

Christian revelation overturns the enigma of violent desire, not because it cancels the dynamism of imitation that builds societies, but because it channels it towards genuine imitation, namely, not imitation of an executioner, nor of a revengeful victim, but imitation of the forgiving victim, who is Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Every

44 Ibid., nn. 28-29.

Sunday we as Christians at the Eucharistic celebration place before us the Crucified, the One who offers life out of Love, the One who is broken and shared, the One who forgives his executioners – without a word of revenge, nor a gesture of hatred.

The voice of victims

43. The voice of the defeated expresses then the condition that makes it possible for violence to cease once and for all. That has been, for example, shown by Pope Francis before the victims of abuse within the Church⁴⁵ and before so many other victims of human inequality.⁴⁶ Their voices have been a cry of hope. Despite history indicating that executioners apparently continue to triumph, we have to recognize another constant feature in that same history: there are still genuine, anonymous saints, who give their lives for others. Therein lies the transforming force of the Gospel and, particularly, in the Eucharist: believers live, experiencing and undertaking the task of closely following the path opened by Jesus Christ, namely, the task of loving unto the cost of giving one's life.

A healed brotherhood; gratitude

44. The Easter accounts of Jesus' appearances open up the possibility of building a community no longer in terms of rivalry but of gratuitousness. The Risen One shows the wounds of the Passion not to avenge the humiliation suffered and persecute the murderers, but to call all nations to believe in the Good News of forgiveness and mercy. Thus the Risen One makes it possible for the Eucharist to be celebrated not sorrowfully as at a grave but in the joy of a new world, where reconciliation can be celebrated as a gift that transforms fratricidal relationships into a community of brothers.

Thanks to this act of absolute gratuitousness of the immolated Lamb, who is Christ Jesus, it is possible to move forward from the miserable memory of the victims, whose blood cries out to heaven, to a joyful memory that integrates the cry of brotherhood in a universal act of reconciling everyone. This entails not simply pardoning the guilty, nor sad complicity that alienates the victim, but reconciliation, that capacity to assume the misery of the other as our own in an act of forgiveness, the condition of a new history and of a new creation made possible.

It is the Lamb of God who fully expresses the Eucharistic logic of the gift that saves, as Isaiah had already announced: "In his wounds we are healed" (Is 53:5c). The invitation of Jesus, "give them something to eat yourselves" (Lk 9:13), and that of the Paschal Christ in the Eucharistic memorial, "do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19) assure us that there is no other way to rebuild fraternity than by giving our life and giving it unto the end, as faithful missionary disciples of Him who is the food of eternal life. A life that is broken and shared until the hunger for brotherhood of all peoples and cultures is satisfied. "How beautiful it would be if all could admire how much we care for one another, how we encourage and help each other. Giving of

45 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Address at the Conferral of the Rank of Knight and Dame of the Grand Cross of the Pian Order to MR. Philip Pullella and MS. Valentina Alazraki*, 13 November 2021.

46 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Meeting with indigenous peoples of the First nations, Métis and Inuit at Maskwacis (Canada)*, 25 July 2022; *Address to participants at the meeting promoted by the "Strategic Alliance of Catholic Universities Research" and the Foundation Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice*, 11 March 2023.

ourselves establishes an interpersonal relationship; we do not give ‘things’ but our very selves. Any act of giving means that we give ourselves. ‘Giving of oneself’ means letting all the power of that love which is God’s Holy Spirit take root in our lives, opening our hearts to his creative power.”⁴⁷

CREATION AND UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

45. At the end of the Second World War, aware of the barbarism produced by this fratricidal war, all the peoples drew up the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which sought to put an end to the murderous violence among the peoples of the earth. But the historical events that followed it have shown us that the thirst for power, like a curse, menaces humanity, bringing about many forms of seemingly invincible violence. How is it possible to restrain the desire for power that resides in us? Where is the Remedy?

In the footsteps of Jesus: humility and tenderness

46. The story of Jesus teaches us the way: his self-abasement to radical humility and utter delicacy of “tenderness” towards others. Humility implies recognizing the *humus* of our humanity, in that clay we all discover ourselves and acknowledge ourselves as brothers and sisters because we are all made from the same *humus*. From that *humus* we are tenderly linked to all creation. Hence, it is necessary and vital to strip ourselves of all titles of superiority, remnants of an anthropocentrism without God that has destroyed the Common Home.⁴⁸

Putting aside all the interests that stand between others and me, we have to become poor to meet face to face, to look into each other’s eyes, to embrace each other fraternally. Apart from all differences we are brothers and sisters. Aware of our poverty, we will be enabled to feel more as brothers of the earth, fire, air, water and animals, respecting every form of life. Human brotherhood passes through this cosmic brotherhood.

This attitude entails returning to a simple lifestyle, overcoming the temptation of consumerism that drowns us in the superfluous, making us prisoners of things, creating inequalities and barriers with respect to others, destroying fraternity, not only with human beings but with all creatures. If we do not cultivate this style of universal brotherhood, human brotherhood remains an illusion constantly endangered.

Universal fraternity is possible

47. Is universal fraternity possible? Yes, it must be lived as a counter-cultural style within the Christian communities, bonded to Christ, the victim who forgives. This realization generates in the sea of history, waves of growth that can recreate the world from below and from inside.

47 POPE FRANCIS, *Homily at the Mass for the Evangelization of Peoples*, Quito, 7 July 2015.

48 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, n. 194: “What is tenderness? It is love that draws near and becomes real. A movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands [...] Tenderness is the path of choice for the strongest, most courageous men and women [...]. The smallest, the weakest, the poorest should touch our hearts: indeed, they have a ‘right’ to appeal to our heart and soul. They are our brothers and sisters, and as such we must love and care for them.”

Primitive Christianity is an irrefutable proof of Christian faith's capacity to reinvent society and culture, and all of this through the strength of the One who gathers us around the same table, becoming nourishment in his Gospel and in his Body and Blood.

It is precisely the Eucharistic celebration, as a great thanksgiving, that unites heaven and earth, making us artisans of fraternity and wise custodians of the common home. For this, the Eucharist is likewise a source of light and motivation to safeguard our concerns about the environment and guide in being custodians of all creation. We cannot reject this option: it is a requirement for the continuity of the human community on this planet.⁴⁹

THE CHURCH: WITNESS OF THE WORLD'S HEALING

48. "The Church lives from the Eucharist"⁵⁰ and the Eucharist heals the world, therefore we necessarily have to turn our gaze to the Christian community, to the Church, a community of men and women whom the Lord gathered to be with Him and to bring the bread of his Word and of his Body to all nations. This is in accord with Jesus' humble and tender command: "feed them yourselves" (Lk 9:13). Men and women who, following their own vocation, are sent as salt and light, as yeast in the dough, called to be the memory and ferment of this healing in the midst of the world. The healing power of the Eucharist is effective in the witness given by Christians being that fraternal community, that outgoing Church that lives the mandate of Christ.

In each Eucharistic celebration the words of Jesus resound: "Do this in memory of me" (1 Cor 11:24). What does the Lord mean? What do we have to remember? It is about the memory of love. We need to recall that Jesus loved us to the end, giving us his Body and his Blood, his entire life. The memory of his love renews our faith and awakens our love, enabling us to enter into the scandalous logic of God that shakes our egoism: whoever wants to save his life will lose it, whoever wants to be first must become last (cf. Mt 16:25).

This transforms daily life, opens it up to sharing, responds to the demands for justice and peace that are raised in the heart of the world, and impels us to protect creation. Every Sunday, on the Lord's Day (cf. Rev 1,10), there are men and women of every race, language, people and nation (cf. Rev 7,9) who, in all latitudes, gather around the altar of the Lord to be united as the Body of Christ in the heart of our world.

"Go in peace": a missionary command

49. Once the celebration of the Mass ends, the liturgical assemblies disperse slowly and scatter like seeds in the furrows of the earth. After listening to his Word, sharing the same Bread and drinking from the same Cup, Christians return to their homes, schools, offices, trade, places of leisure, tracing new paths that through the network of fraternity build the Kingdom. Quite fittingly, the Collect on Monday of the Easter Octave prays: "Grant that your servants may hold fast in their lives to the sacrament they received with faith."

49 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato Si'*, (Encyclical Letter, Solemnity of Pentecost, 24 May 2015), nn. 161. 236.

50 POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, (Encyclical Letter, 17 April 2003), n. 1.

Thus, after eating the “given” Body, Christians become the “body offered for the multitudes” serving the Gospel in places of fragility and suffering, sharing and healing. It is in often inhumane trials of migration, challenging extremism, problematic work situations that Christians extend the celebration of the memorial of the Cross, and thus relive and present the Gospel of the Servant who, giving himself out of love, has healed the sin of the world and built brotherhood.

Life a continued Mass

50. A true celebration of the Lord's Supper is one that transforms us into *Eucharistic men and women* for the life of the world.⁵¹ In the Eucharist, Jesus invites the entire community of disciples to imitate the dynamics of his life, that is, to “take”, “break” and “give oneself” to become bread for humanity. Indeed, to celebrate the memorial of his self-giving, we must do the same thing that he did with his disciples and with each one of us: wash feet, that is, lower ourselves and serve our brothers: Wash their feet, wipe their faces, cleanse their hearts with our love and mercy. This to celebrate the memorial of Jesus’ love means not only to remember, but to live today that love for Him in our brothers. The memory of love becomes a task of love and thus opens us to the future, to the hope of Easter, to the hope of full happiness. It is not enough to participate in the Mass “to feel good with God”, but rather to let this risky love of Jesus form our lives.

How many mothers, how many fathers, together with the daily bread cut at the table at home, break their backs to raise their children, and raise them well! How many Christians, as responsible citizens, have gone out of their way to defend the dignity of all, especially the poorest, marginalized and discriminated! Where do they find the strength to do all this? Precisely in the Eucharist: in the forgiving victim, in the power of the love of the Risen Lord, who today also breaks bread for us and repeats to us: “Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:29).

The source of life

51. In the Eucharist we are integrated into the Master and we recognize that every testimony spring from Him. Since He is the supreme witness, our testimony is always a participation in his, which takes the form of proclamation of the Kingdom and service to our neighbour in the gift of oneself. This is the ecclesiology of communion about which the Second Vatican reminds us: “the Eucharist is the source and, at the same time, the summit of all evangelization [...] centre and summit of the life of the Church.”⁵² It is true that there is always the constant temptation to escape from this reality by hiding behind rituals and intimate spiritualities, but if we are sincere with what we celebrate we must immediately reject this threat. In the Crucified we contemplate the greatest love and the most atrocious contempt, but faith focuses its eyes on love, so that hate no longer has the last word, but Love: “Father forgive them because they do not know what do” (Lk 23:34). Although the spear of the Roman soldier seems to seal the crime with the final thrust of murderous violence, God makes life and salvation spring up: blood and water (Jn 19:34). This is witnessed to in prophecy and action. “Let us be prophets of hope who announce the love of God in these moments of crisis, who denounce the ideologies and structures of sin and who renounce all will to dominate, possess or manipulate the flock of God. We know that the prophet

51 Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *General Audience*, 4 April 2018.

52 POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, nn. 22. 31.

is not a seer of the future, but that man of God who knows how to read and interpret the history of his people as a history of salvation.”⁵³

52. This witness permeates the life of our Christian communities in every time and place. In 1954, Fr. Leonidas Proaño Villalba was named bishop of the Diocese of Riobamba (Ecuador), a territory that has the largest indigenous population in the country. Following the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council, he focused his pastoral mission on the preferential option for the poor who were the concrete faces of hundreds of exploited, marginalized and indigenous communities excluded from the right to education, health, work, land, to be recognized in their language, culture and traditions.

Taita (“father” in Quechua) Leonidas, began to promote a Church-community rooted in the encounter with Jesus Christ, marked by fraternity and centred on the Eucharist: “I went to visit a community [...] the people had prepared the liturgy, the readings of the word of God, which were about community, describing the first Christian communities. So I asked them: And you, form a Christian community? Yes, they told me. I asked them to explain to me the characteristics that made it a Christian community. [...] They began to tell me what they were doing as a community and, suddenly, a poorly dressed lady asked me, raising her hand to speak, and crying, she told me: “Yes, Monsignor, the Christian community here is alive and active, I am a witness of what it has done. My husband became seriously ill, and since we are poor, we had nothing to go to Riobamba with, to pay for a doctor, to buy medicine, we had nothing, but the community took care of us, they came to see my husband, they took up a collection, hired the doctor, brought him by taxi, paid for the medicines - which were very expensive. - Thanks to all of them, to the community, I am not a widow.”⁵⁴

53. If we experience the silence after the shot that killed Bishop Oscar Romero, if we listen to the voice of Montesinos who continues to challenge us, and if we contemplate in each of our communities the witness of so many men and women who have given their lives for the world to be healed through fraternity, we shall recognise that the Risen Crucified continues to unite us to Him and to His Father because in Him “we are all brothers” (cf. Mt, 23:8).

53 ESPINOZA, Alfredo José, *Carta Pastoral “Profetas de Esperanza”*, (Quito, 22 April 2022).

54 BELLINI, Luciano (c), *Palabras de Liberación. Discursos y Homilias de Mons. Proaño*, (Quito: Abya Yala, 2009), 58-59.

CONCLUSION

Eucharist: a psalm of brotherhood

“You are all brothers” (Mt 23:8)

54. The wound opened by sin meant that Adam broke off his dialogue with God and that the bonds of fraternity were stained by Abel’s blood. That wound was healed by the Son of God through his death and resurrection, the memorial of which we celebrate in the Eucharist, the paschal meal of the new and eternal covenant. The Father so loved the world that he gave his Son and the Son made himself a gift of love unto death, death on a cross (cf. Phil 2:8). The eternity of love has entered history.

Human beings no longer have to hide from God's gaze under fig leaves. The vivid brightness of Christ’s love restores God’s dialogue and communion with humanity. The paschal meal opens the new Eden where human beings are finally true sons and daughters who sit at the table of the Kingdom. And at the same time, the Eucharist is transformed into a cenacle of fraternity because it unites us to the Son who becomes broken bread and a chalice of blessing, making us brothers: “Since there is only one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Cor 10:17)

The selfishness that had poisoned Adam’s heart and stained Cain's hands with blood was overcome by the Son of God made man. In the Eucharistic banquet Christ, with bread in his hands, addresses his prayer of thanksgiving to the Father, redeeming every distorted image of God as an enemy of humankind. And by breaking the bread and giving it to his disciples, he heals the wounded fraternity. The Eucharist truly heals our way of loving. In Christ’s prayer we all have a special place because we are all called to communion: “May they all be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you” (Jn 17:21). And at the same time, this new “we” of the Eucharist does not remain closed in a cenacle: Eucharistic love overflows to heal the wounds of the world, orienting us to serve one another, our concrete and visible neighbours.

55. In Latin America, the Eucharistic dynamism of ecclesial communities has found its vital centre in the “celebrated” listening to the Word and in the “breaking of Bread”. As in the assembly at Jerusalem, James, Peter and John shook hands with Paul and Barnabas as a sign of recognition, communion and mission, with the prayer “to remember the poor” (Gal 2:10), so too today we do the same during every Eucharist.

The response that God the Father offers to the yearning for human fraternity is the person of Jesus Christ who made himself the Bread of Life out of love to heal the wounds of the world. For this reason, the Church must always be outgoing and renew the fruitfulness of her evangelizing action by recognizing the Body of Christ in the abused body of the neighbour, the last and the least; for this she puts herself at the service of suffering humanity with the same gestures and words of life, closeness, love and dignity that Christ showed towards the least. Only

in this way does the Eucharist continue to be Word and Bread of life that heals the wounds of the least and most forgotten in history.

56. Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, preached that the Eucharist is God's seal of love in us and, through us, for the least: "May the broken bread transform our empty hands to be filled with that measure 'pressed, shaken and overflowing' that the Lord promises to those who are generous with their talents. May the sweet weight of the Eucharist leave its imprint of love on our hands so that, anointed by Christ, they become hands that welcome and embrace the weakest. May the warmth of the consecrated bread burn in our hands with the lively desire to share such a great gift with those who are hungry for bread, justice and God."⁵⁵
57. The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation to the extent that she is united to Christ.⁵⁶ If Christ is communion, the Church too is communion, not only between people, but "for Christ, with Christ and in Christ" is communion with the eternal trinitarian love of God. The Church, born from the Heart of Christ, is sent to generate these new fraternal relationships with Eucharistic love that includes everyone without leaving anyone out. At the same time, the Eucharist is the altar of the world where thanksgiving to God is raised and the covenant for the life and care of all creation is renewed.
58. In communion with the Virgin Mary, the "Eucharistic woman,"⁵⁷ with Saint Marianita of Jesus,⁵⁸ who offered her life for our people, and with Blessed Emilio Moscoso,⁵⁹ a martyr of the Eucharist, we unite with all human beings and as the voice of every creature, we raise from our common home this Psalm of fraternity:

Nations, peoples, lands, races!
You who are close, friends and families,
You wounded and bitter, divided and dispersed,
For arms that kill so many,
For drugs that stifle life and song...

Forgive, Lord, my hardness,
an incoherent sign of my clay
that estranges me from the human and divine,
breaks bonds of brotherhood and saddens you,
silent presence in bread and wine.

55 BERGOGLIO JORGE MARIO, *El verdadero poder es el servicio*, (Buenos Aires: Claretiana, 2013), 243-244.

56 Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 1-2.

57 Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, nn. 53-58.

58 Marianita de Jesús Paredes y Flóres (Quito, 1618-1645), the "Lily of Quito" was the first Ecuadorian saint, who offered her life for the salvation of her country, hit by a terrible epidemic. The Congress of Ecuador in 1946 conferred on her the title of "Heroine of the Fatherland."

59 Salvador Víctor Emilio Moscoso Cárdenas (Cuenca, 1846 - Riobamba, 1897) was a Jesuit priest murdered because of hatred for the faith by soldiers loyal to the revolutionary regime in a bloody fratricidal struggle at Riobamba.

Human blood shed by men
is brotherly blood of murderous clashes.
Look, Lord, generous and great,
the confused mind, the frayed heart,
lips that implore acceptance:
may they find refuge in your loving heart.

Forgive, Lord, my selfishness,
the tenderness that is hidden;
the pain that hits me
you assume on the cross,
silent presence in bread and wine.

Help us, Lord, to be Church,
in the synodal journey, always brothers
and now without hatred, selfishness or rancour
let us taste intimate peace of dialogue and love,
you the balm that heals wounds,
wounds of the world that cry out to you.

APPENDIX

THE PRAYER OF CONGRESS

Lord Jesus Christ,
living bread come down from heaven:
look upon the people of your heart
who praise, worship and bless you this day.

As you gather us around your table
to feed us with your Body,
help us to overcome all divisions, hatred and selfishness,
unite us as true brothers and sisters,
children of the Heavenly Father.

Send us your Spirit of love,
so that walking in the ways of fraternity –
peace, dialogue and forgiveness,
we may work together to heal the wounds of the world.

Amen.

LOGO



The Cross of Christ enters the flesh of the world to heal the wounds opened by sin. Where humanity has unleashed the greatest violence on the Lamb of God, God has poured out his love for it in the signs of the water and blood that flowed from Christ's open side. The Crucified Risen One embraces all as brothers reconciled with the Father.



The open Heart of Christ on the Cross is the source of the love that makes all things new. His wound is a source of life and reconciliation. The open wounds of the Risen One are the wounds of love that heal the wounds of hatred, enmity, violence and death afflicting humanity.



The Host recalls the Eucharist, the summit and source of all Christian life. It indicates a new direction to human history because God continues to gather his people, from East to West, assembling them around the Word of life and the living Bread which came down from heaven. The Eucharist is a bond of brotherhood: if sin breaks it, the Eucharistic celebration reunites us at the one table as children of the same Heavenly Father.



Quito, a city in the middle of the world, situated at latitude zero, widens its tent to become an immense Eucharistic city where all are invited to build the dream of a fraternity healed by the love of Christ, who in this hour of history tells us: "You are all brothers" (Mt 23:8).

THE OFFICIAL HYMN

“En torno a tu mesa”

Rit. Fraternidad para sanar el mundo
eso nos muestras, Señor, desde la cruz.
Tú nos congregas en torno a tu mesa
y nos enseñas al hermano a amar.

1

Con tu cuerpo y sangre, misterio divino,
te haces presente aquí en el altar.
Tú estás con nosotros en el pan y el vino
que reconcilian, que dan vida y paz.

2

Señor amigo, Palabra de Dios,
tu nos invitas a ser fraternidad.
Por ti aquí estamos y eres alimento
que nos llena de amor para sanar.

3

Fraternidad es más que una palabra,
es un abrazo olvidando el rencor,
es dar la mano al pobre y desvalido,
es consolar al hermano en la aflicción.

4

Tú nos enseñas a amar al más pequeño,
ustedes son todos hermanos, sean uno.
Desde Ecuador, para el mundo entero,
anunciamos: Tú eres la vida, Jesús.

Música: *Marco Antonio Espín Landázuri*
Letra: *Marco Antonio Espín Landázuri y Solideo*

THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF EUCHARISTIC CONGRESSES

From the Roman Ritual: *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*

Pause for prayer and commitment

80. Eucharistic congresses have been introduced into the life of the Church in recent years as a special manifestation of eucharistic worship. They should be considered as a kind of station to which a particular community invites an entire local church or to which an individual local church invites other churches of a single region or nation or even of the entire world. The purpose is that together the members of the church join in the deepest profession of some aspect of the eucharistic mystery and express their worship publicly in the bond of charity and unity. Such congresses should be a genuine sign of faith and charity by reason of the total participation of the local church and the association with it of the other churches. [109]

The preparation of the Congress

81. Both the local church and other churches should undertake studies beforehand concerning the place, theme, and programme of the congress. These studies will lead to the consideration of genuine needs and will foster the progress of theological studies and the good of the local church. Specialists in theological, biblical, liturgical, pastoral and humane studies should help in this research. [110]

82. In preparation for a eucharistic congress, primary consideration should be given to the following:

- a) a thorough catechesis concerning the eucharist, especially as the mystery of Christ living and working in the Church, accommodated to the capacity of different groups;
- b) more active participation in the liturgy in order to encourage a religious hearing of the word of God and the spirit of brotherhood and community;
- c) research and promotion of social undertakings for human development and the proper distribution of property, including temporal property, following the example of the primitive Christian community. Thus the ferment of the Gospel, as a force in the growth of contemporary society and as the pledge of the future kingdom may be diffused in some measure at the eucharistic table. [111]

The celebration of the congress

83. The celebration of the congress should follow these criteria:

- a) the celebration of the eucharist should be the true centre and high point of the congress to which all efforts and the various devotional services should be directed;

- b) celebrations of the word of God, catechetical meetings, and public conferences should be planned to investigate thoroughly the theme of the congress and to propose clearly the practical aspects to be carried out;
- c) there should be an opportunity for common prayers and extended adoration in the presence of the blessed sacrament exposed at designated churches which are especially suited to this form of piety;
- d) the regulations concerning eucharistic processions⁶ should be observed for the procession in which the blessed sacrament is carried through the streets of the city with common hymns and prayers, taking into account local, social, and religious conditions. [112]

EVANGELIZATION IN ECUADOR

The discovery and evangelization of Latin America is linked to the symbolic date of 12 October 1492, when the boats of Christopher Columbus, under the aegis of the Catholic kings Isabella and Ferdinand of Spain, docked at the island of Guanahaní (Bahamas), which was called San Salvador, signalling future evangelization. This began with the twelve priests who arrived in the New World with Columbus' second expedition: this band was led by the Apostolic Vicar Fra Bernardo Boyl, who celebrated the first solemn Mass in America on 6 January 1494. The chronicles describe these events that have marked the fascinating history of evangelization of a continent that, in the space of just over a century, changed the direction of humanity's course.

The work of evangelization had its lights and shadows because the spread of the Gospel in Ecuador was accompanied by the process of colonizing what remained of the Inca Empire, which collapsed after the assassination of Atahualpa (1533). Many of the Franciscans, Mercedarians, Dominicans and Augustinians who arrived in what is today the country of Ecuador as chaplains of the Spanish troops already had missionary experience in other parts of the continent. Because of this they endeavoured above all to become acquainted with the inhabitants of the regions of Quito, their languages, social structures, beliefs, lifestyle and customs, aware that the best way to evangelize was to do it in the indigenous language, starting from the children of the *caciques*, the chiefs of the tribal communities. The initial repressive tone of communication gradually became that of persuasion: immediate conversion was not imposed, but the indigenous people's free adhesion was awaited since acceptance of the faith is incompatible with coercion.

From the data available to us, the Indo-Hispanic foundation of the city of San Francisco of Quito in 1534 is the point of reference marking the history of the Church in those territories. Two years after the foundation of the city, construction began on the church and convent of San Francisco, an architectural complex called the *Escorial de los Andes*. In that place already dear to the memory of the natives, Father Rique and his companions sowed in the ground in front of the new church the first seed of wheat in Ecuador's fertile soil and, with it, entrusted Quito with the good seed of the Gospel.

In 1545 the *quiteña* community was raised to a diocese, a suffragan of Lima and the "doctrinas," a nucleus of the future parishes, multiplied by means of the work of the religious congregations, enabling the political birth of the *Real Audiencia* of Quito (29 August 1563). After the Jesuits also joined in the evangelizing work, the colonial Church became enlivened with a network of schools that led to the foundation of the universities of San Fulgenzio and that of San Gregorio, while the arts and crafts found their highest expression in the masterpieces of the School of Quito. Meanwhile, the Gospel infiltrated the Amazon belt of the Country.

Evangelization rapidly developed starting from urban environments supported by bishops who convened metropolitan councils and provincial synods to guide missionary activity, endorse the rights and freedoms of the natives, encourage catechesis and preaching in indigenous languages by using

images, music and singing. Thus the great mosaic of popular piety developed as the precious treasure of the Catholic Church in Latin America.

Without staying silent about the errors, it must be recognized that in the colonial period the Church was considered a “moulder of national sentiment” through attending to people’s needs and promoting the dignity of the indigenous people. Milestones in this work of social consolidation and pastoral service are: the *Itinerary* for parish priests of the Indians of the bishop of Quito, Alonso de la Pena (+1687), the first fundamental Charter of republican Ecuador, which was written by priests of the *quiteña* Ecclesiastical Assembly in 1812; the social and scientific orientation provided by the Jesuit heads of the national University and the first polytechnic School. In republican Ecuador, bishops, diocesan priests, men and women religious, eminent lay people have built and endorsed up to today the Christian and cultural physiognomy of the country.

The people of God in Ecuador is the result of the fruitful encounter between the Gospel and people of different cultures, languages and traditions. Their lived faith finds clear expression in the sanctity of numerous men and women, among whom the following are resplendent: Saint Mariana de Jesús (1618-1645), “lily of Quito”; Blessed Mercedes de Jesús (1828 – 1883), the “rose of Baba and Guayaquil”; Saint Narcisa of Jesus Martillo y Morán (1832-1869), a “Niña Narcisa” for many devotees; Blessed Emilio Moscoso (1846-1897), martyr of the Eucharist.

All this is still visible today in the educational institutions, in the magnificent works of art, in the churches of the city of Quito, declared “a cultural heritage of humanity” by UNESCO. But the most important heritage is made up by the values that imbue families and society, private and public life: the wisdom springing from the historical memory of defeats and triumphs, from the vitality of the great religious themes that inspire culture, art, craftsmanship, festivity and repose, birth and death. A spirit of sincere brotherhood, stronger than any violent enmity, is shown in the joy and enthusiasm of the “mingas,” in the celebrations, in cordiality towards strangers, in solidarity at the difficult hour of trial.

The advent of the Gospel of Christ the Saviour in this land of America, consecrated since 1874 to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, has matured, amidst joys and sorrows, the genuine fruit of a living Church that looks forward to sharing its vitality with pilgrims who from every corner of the world, will arrive in Quito to celebrate the 53rd International Eucharistic Congress.

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