

poral problems of humanity would be ‘to forget the lesson which comes to us from the Gospel concerning love of our neighbour who is suffering and in need’ (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31.34). May World Mission Day reawaken in each person the joy and desire to ‘go’ out to meet humanity taking Christ to all. In his name, my Apostolic Blessing is imparted wholeheartedly, especially on those who toil and suffer most for the Gospel” (Benedict XVI).

Dear brothers and sisters, we can carry out this duty by praying and by supporting financially the missionary efforts of the Church. I wish to encourage all our Catholic faithful, in the Archdiocese of Rabaul, to be generous with the works of the Church, as the Church has been and is generous with us.

2. FMI Sisters: Centenary Celebrations

At the end of this month, on 27th October, the centenary celebrations of the foundation of the FMI Sisters by Bishop Louis Couppe, MSC, will start. Also these Centenary celebrations will give us the opportunity to thank God for the abundance of blessings and graces He has poured upon the Archdiocese of Rabaul and the Catholic Church in PNG, through the dedicated apostolate of the FMI Sisters, in the course of these 100 years. Dear Sisters: “You have not only a glorious history to remember and recount, but also a *great history still to be accomplished!* Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things” (*Vita Consecrata*, 110).



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PASTORAL LETTER 1

7th October 2011 – Our Lady of the Holy Rosary

“Praying the Mass”

Dear brothers and sisters,

A. Introduction

I am writing this first Pastoral Letter on the feast of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, a feast that is very dear to me, because it was on this very day, 80 years ago, that my family began. My father and mother wanted their marriage to be celebrated on the feast of our Lady of the Rosary. During that celebration my father asked God for two graces: to give him many children and to keep him poor. Probably many people might find this kind of prayer difficult to understand, but on that day he entrusted his future family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Blessed Mother.

On that day, too, my parents made a solemn promise: that they would recite the Rosary everyday. I have all the reasons to believe that they kept that promise.

Why am I writing these personal things? I am not writing them to extol my parents, but to thank God for the gift of “family life” he gave me. If I am here today as your Archbishop, it is because God has blessed me with good parents and helped me to grow in an environment of prayer, where the most important thing was not money, but the love of God and neighbor. It was through my parents that I learned to appreciate the importance of the Mass, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Our Lady and to the Saints.

As you all know, within the Archdiocese, we are celebrating the Jubilee Year of Bl. Peter ToRot. The main objective of this celebration is the renewal of Family Life, through a deeper application of Gospel values and a better appreciation of the Sacrament of Marriage.

As I mentioned above, in my family I learned to appreciate the importance of the Holy Eucharist, especially of the Sunday Mass. It is my fervent wish that this were true also for all our families, their children and young people.

B. The new missal of the Roman Rite

It is for this reason that in this Pastoral Letter I am writing about the important topic of the Holy Mass. As everybody should know by now, on the first Sunday of Advent, the new missal of the Roman Rite for the celebration of the Mass will be officially introduced.

The parish priests have already started giving an explanation for the changes to all our Catholic faithful. Various liturgical materials have been made available, so I am urging all our priests, religious men and women, the catechists, the teachers in schools, the parents at home, and all church leaders not to miss any opportunity to deepen the knowledge of the Holy Eucharist and to explain its meaning to all. It would be very good, indeed, if our people by having a better understanding of the Eucharist would be more faithful to the Sunday Mass.

For the benefit of everybody I would like to mention here some very important documents on the Holy Eucharist that can serve as reference to better understand the meaning of the Mass, such as: the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM – 2000), *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (John

has not lost its urgency. This task has not lost its urgency ... Indeed, ‘the mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion’ (*Redemptoris Missio*, 1). We cannot remain tranquil in face of the thought that, after two thousand years, there are still peoples who do not know Christ and have not yet heard his Message of salvation.

Not only this; but there is an ever greater number of people who, although having received the proclamation of the Gospel, have forgotten it or abandoned it and no longer associate with the Church ... They lead lifestyle that does without the evangelical message, as if God did not exist, and which exalts the search for well-being, easy earnings, careers and success as the objective of life, even at the cost of moral values.

The joint responsibility of all

The universal mission involves everything and everyone. The Gospel is not an exclusive possession of those who have received it, but it is a gift to be shared and good news for others. The Church's attention and cooperation in missionary activity in the world cannot be limited to some particular moments or occasions, or as one of many pastoral activities: the Church's missionary dimension is essential and continually present. It is important that both individual baptized persons and ecclesial communities should be involved not only spasmodically and occasionally in mission, but constantly, as a way of Christian life.

Global Evangelization

Evangelization is a complex process and includes several elements. The Pontifical Mission Societies worldwide are the voices for help to carry out tasks of evangelization in mission territories. They are involved in supporting institutions necessary for establishing and consolidating the Church through catechists, seminaries, priests; while also giving assistance to improve the living conditions of people in nations where poverty, malnutrition, especially of children, illnesses, lack of health services and education are most serious. This, too, is part of the Church's mission ... It is unacceptable to neglect in evangelization the themes of human promotion, justice, liberation from every form of oppression. To ignore the tem-

counter with the Jesus who gave himself wholly for us. Let us not hesitate to respond to Him when He invites us ‘to the wedding feast of the Lamb’ (*Rev 19:9*).

Let us entrust to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, through the intercession of Mary Most Holy, the welfare of our families, so that during this Year dedicated to Bl. Peter To Rot, we may achieve a renewal of Family Life.

+ Francesco Panfilo, SDB

Information

1. Mission Sunday

On 23rd October we will celebrate Mission Sunday. I wish to remind all our Catholic faithful of our obligation to participate in the missionary activity of the Church.

The Holy Father, Benedict XVI, in his message, entitled: “*As the Father has sent me, so I send you*”, wrote: “The most precious service that the Church can render to humanity and to every individual seeking profound purpose for living is to bring the Gospel proclamation to all with the enthusiasm of the very first Christians. This same invitation to proclaim echoes every year in the celebration of World Mission Day. In fact, the ceaseless proclamation of the Gospel also revitalizes the fervent, apostolic spirit of the Church. Faith, when it is given to others, is strengthened!

Go and Proclaim

This objective is continually revived by the celebration of the liturgy, especially of the Eucharist, which always ends recalling the mandate of the Risen Jesus to the Apostles: ‘Go ...’ (*Mt 28:19*). All those who have encountered the Risen Lord have felt the need to proclaim him to others, as did the two disciples of Emmaus.

To all people

The beneficiaries of the Gospel proclamation are all peoples. This task

Paul II, 17th April 2003), *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (Congregation for Divine Worship, 25th March 2004), *Mane nobiscum Domine* (John Paul II, 7th October 2004), *Pastoral Guidelines for Celebrating Mass* (Catholic Bishop Conference, 22nd April, 2005), *Sacramentum Caritatis* (Benedict XVI, 22nd February 2007), and *Verbum Domini* (Benedict XVI, 30th September 2010).

All our priests, seminarians, catechists, and all those who exercise some ministries in the Church should be familiar with these important documents, as well as with *Part II of the “Pastoral Directives for Priests, Consecrated Men and Women and Lay Faithful of the Archdiocese of Rabaul”* (page 17 - 28), in order to put their instructions into practice for the sake of unity in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Many things could be written about the Eucharist. In this Pastoral Letter I wish to present some points on certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist, in the light of the above documents.

First of all, Blessed John Paul II reminds us that the “Liturgy is never anyone's private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated... No one is permitted to undervalue the mystery entrusted to our hands: it is too great for anyone to feel free to treat it lightly and with disregard for its sacredness and its universality” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 52).

Benedict XVI, instead, writes: “The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself ... The “art of proper celebration” is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness. Indeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers” (*Sacramentum Caritatis*, 38).

Finally, Pope Benedict XVI reminds the Bishop to “be determined that the priests, the deacons, and the lay Christian faithful grasp ever more deeply the genuine meaning of the rites and liturgical texts, and thereby be led to an active and fruitful celebration of the Eucharist”. And he continues: “I would ask that every effort be made to ensure that the liturgies which the Bishop celebrates in his Cathedral are carried out with com-

plete respect for the ‘ars *celebrandi*’, so that they can be considered an example for the entire Diocese” (*Sacramentum caritatis*, 39).

In the parishes and communities that I have visited, I noticed with joy that in general the Liturgy, especially the Holy Mass, is well celebrated and that our people participate with devotion. It seems to me that there are no glaring abuses against the Liturgy and the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. For this I wish to thank all the Priests and those, especially the Religious Sisters and the Catechists, who assist them.

The above mentioned documents want us to celebrate the Eucharist in a way that is truly representative of what Christ himself established. It wants us to celebrate it more meaningfully, more solemnly and, yes, even in a more attractive way.

Some people believe that some do not go to Mass because they find it boring. We should ask ourselves: “Is it the Mass that is boring or is it the way we celebrate it that makes it boring and unattractive?” If the celebration of the Mass is boring or unattractive, we (Priests, Religious and Lay faithful) have only ourselves to blame. Have we tried to explain the meaning of the Mass to our people? Do we care enough to select songs that are appropriate and that everybody can sing? Do we select and train good readers? Do we prepare our homilies well? Do all those who have an active part to play in the celebration – those in charge of the offertory, cleanliness and decorations of the Church, the dancers – know what to do?

C. Some fundamental points

1. *The Eucharist “center and summit of priestly life”*

Many of the priests of the archdiocese of Rabaul are engaged in a wide variety of pastoral activities that can demand so much from them from the physical, psychological, and spiritual point of view. The *risk of losing their focus* amid such a great number of different tasks is very real. *It is important, therefore, for their spiritual life that priests celebrate the Eucharist daily.* “In this way priests will be able to counteract the daily tensions which lead to a lack of focus and they will find in the Eucharistic Sacrifice – the true centre of their lives and ministry – the spiritual strength needed to deal with their different pastoral responsibilities. Their

We kneel after the Holy until the doxology. If for some reasons we cannot kneel, we make a deep bow when the priest celebrant genuflects after the consecration. We kneel again after the Lamb of God.

E. Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in his Encyclical Letter “*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*”, Blessed John Paul II reminds us that there is no better way to build Christian communities and to be truly alive in Christ, than through the Holy Eucharist. The Eucharist is at the center of the life of the Church.

When Catholics participate together in the celebration of the Eucharist, they give “testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. They give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity. Together they testify to God’s holiness and their hope of salvation. They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (*CCC. 2182*).

Of course, we all know that it is impossible for many of our Catholic faithful to participate in the Eucharist on ordinary Sundays and even on the greatest solemnities of the Church, such as Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, because of great distances and/or lack of priests.

The Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist recommended first of all “that the faithful should go to one of the churches in their Diocese where the presence of the priest is assured, even when this demands a certain sacrifice” (*Sacramentum Caritatis* 75). Of course, this might be easier said than done in our Diocese, but I know of some of our Catholic faithful who, on Sundays and on days of obligation, walk for hours in order to be able to participate in the Eucharistic celebration. These faithful deserve our admiration and imitation.

However, “whenever great distances make it practically impossible to take part in Sunday Eucharist, it is still important for Christian communities to gather together to praise the Lord and to commemorate the Day set apart for him” (*Sacramentum Caritatis* 75).

Dear catholic faithful as we prepare ourselves to implement the new changes of the Roman Rite, let us try to make the Mass a truly loving en-

8. *Liturgical Books, Vessels, and Vestments*

In my visits around the diocese I have observed that there are simple but beautiful churches and chapels. In some places, though, the chapels are in dire need of repair. There are also communities without any chapel at all, where the faithful try to gather together in a house or even under a tree.

Without wishing to be extravagant or waste our resources when there are so many needs for the health and the education of people, there is nothing wrong if we were to build something beautiful for the Lord. “Like the woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany, we should not be afraid to devote the best of our resources to expressing our *wonder and adoration* before the unsurpassable gift of the Eucharist” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* No.48).

This wonder and adoration is not expressed only in buildings, but also in the vessels, the vestments, and the liturgical books. We should not be afraid to invest the money of the Sunday collections to purchase the above items which can help us to celebrate the Eucharist in a dignified manner.

9. *Importance of gestures and posture (standing, sitting, and kneeling)*

The active participation of the faithful takes place when their thoughts reflect what they hear, do, and say during the liturgy. It is also shown outwardly in and through their way of standing, sitting, and kneeling.

We stand from the opening procession to the opening prayer; for the gospel acclamation and the reading of the Gospel; for the recitation of the Creed and for the prayer of the faithful. We stand when we are incensed or when the priest invites us to pray using the words: “Pray brothers and sisters (brethren) ... “, until the Holy, Holy, Holy has been recited or sung. We stand again from the Lord’s Prayer until the Lamb of God has been recited or sung. We finally stand for the prayer after communion until the dismissal.

We sit from the beginning of the liturgy of the word until the gospel acclamation. We sit during the homily and during the offertory. We can also sit after receiving Holy Communion and/or while Communion is distributed.

daily activity will thus become truly Eucharistic” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* No. 31).

2. *The Right of the Christian people to the Eucharist*

Redemptionis Sacramentum, very forcefully, insists that it is a right of the Christian people “to have the Eucharist celebrated for them on Sunday, and whenever holidays of obligation or other major feasts occur, and even daily insofar as it is possible” (162). Consequently, it is the duty of the Bishop and of priests “to provide the faithful with the opportunity to satisfy the obligation of participating at Mass on Sunday” (163). Of course, for obvious reasons we know that this is not possible everywhere in the Archdiocese. Nevertheless, the right of the faithful remains and the duty of the Bishop and Priests as well. I would like, therefore, to encourage our Priests not to miss any opportunity to offer the Eucharist as often as possible, including on weekdays by going on patrol.

D. **Practical things to be observed in the Archdiocese in the celebration of the Mass**

1. *The Responsorial Psalm*

The Responsorial Psalm “follows the first reading and is an essential part of the liturgy of the word” (*Guidelines* No.78). It is not liturgical to have a second Responsorial Psalm (generally a song), after the second reading. If the Responsorial Psalm is sung, it “may be done in different ways. The preferred form is *responsorial*, in which the cantor or psalmist sings the verses and the whole assembly takes up the response. In the *direct form*, which is also permitted, there is no response and the cantor, or the whole assembly together, sings the verses. The Psalm, nevertheless, may not be replaced by another hymn” (*Guidelines*, No. 79).

Benedict XVI reminds us that “the Responsorial Psalm is also the word of God, and hence should not be replaced by other texts; indeed it is most appropriate that it be sung” (*Verbum Domini*, 69).

2. *The Gospel procession*

The “*Pastoral Guidelines for Celebrating Mass*”, issued by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference on 22nd April 2005, state: “Only the Book of the

Gospels is carried in procession. The Lectionary or a Bible is never carried in procession. The Lectionary is to be at the ambo from the beginning of the celebration” (No. 60).

In this connection Benedict XVI wrote: “The proclamation of the word of God, and of the Gospel in particular, should be made more solemn, especially on major liturgical feast, through the use of the Gospel Book, carried in procession during the opening rites and then brought to the lectern by a deacon or priest for proclamation. This would help the people of God to realize that the reading of the Gospel is the high point of the liturgy of the word” (*Verbum Domini*, 67).

3. *Dances*

The “*Pastoral Guidelines for Celebrating the Mass*” also states: “In most of the cultures of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, dancing by groups in traditional costumes is used at more important celebrations in the lives of the people. The meaning of these dances can well express the joy, happiness, and unity of the people at Mass. These dances are especially fitting at the processions in the Mass: the entrance procession, the procession with the bread and wine and other gifts, and at the concluding procession”.

From the Guidelines one thing is clear: in normal circumstances, there are only three processions: entrance, offertory and at the conclusion.

4. *The sign of peace*

The Sign of Peace is to be announced by the Deacon or by the Priest with the words: “*The Peace of the Lord be with you*”, to which the people answered: “*And with your Spirit*”. The Sign of Peace signifies our sharing in the peace which Christ gives us through our brethren. The Pastoral Guidelines again tell us: “All the members of the assembly, ministers and people, turn to those immediately around them and share the sign of peace ... The sign of peace is strong enough and expressive in itself not to need any song (119).

5. *Silence*

“It is necessary nowadays that the People of God be educated in the value

of silence ... Pastors are encouraged to foster moments of recollections whereby, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the word of God can find a welcome in our hearts” (*Verbum Domini*, 66). “The amount of time for silence must fit the assembly. It will be different when there are mostly children at Mass from when there are adults. But it is always needed, so that all take to heart the word of God and respond to it in prayer” (*Ordo Lectionum Missae*, 28).

Here are the moments when silence is to be observed: ***at the penitential rite***, we pause to remember our sinfulness and the loving kindness of God in Christ. ***At the opening prayer***, we put ourselves and our deepest needs and desires before God. ***After the readings and homily***, we take God’s word, think about it in our hearts like Mary, and apply it to our lives. ***Before communion***, we prepare ourselves to receive the Lord, ***and after communion***, we praise Him and thank Him in silent prayer.

In regard to silence, no song should be sung during the elevation of the consecrated host and the chalice.

6. *Altar servers*

The Instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, while encouraging us to preserve or to introduce, where it does not exist, the practice of having boys as altar servers, ***allows girls or women to service at the altar***, at the discretion of the diocesan Bishop (47). Since in our diocese in some places girls are already participating as servers, I am intending to allow the practice to continue or to be introduced in other parishes where it is not yet practiced.

7. *Choirs and groups animating the liturgy*

In some of our parishes, including the Cathedral Church, different groups are invited to animate the Liturgy on Sunday. The word itself – to animate – means helping people to be fully alive. Too often, instead, it happens that the group sings songs that are known to the group alone, while the rest of the assembly just listens. The whole assembly should be encouraged to ***actively participate*** in singing and in the various responses.