

LET US RETURN TO THE EUCHARIST!

From the Vatican 'department for Liturgy and the Sacraments', 9 September 2020

Aware the God never abandons the humanity He has created, and that even the hardest trials can bear fruits of grace, we have accepted our distance from the Lord's altar as a time of Eucharistic fasting, useful for us to rediscover its vital importance, beauty and immeasurable preciousness. As soon as is possible, however, we must return to the Eucharist with a purified heart, with a renewed amazement, with an increased desire to meet the Lord, to be with him, to receive him and to bring him to our brothers and sisters with the witness of a life full of faith, love, and hope.

This time of deprivation gives us the grace to understand the heart of our brothers and sisters, the martyrs of Abitinae (beginning of the 4th century), who answered their judges with serene determination, despite a sure death sentence: "Sine Dominico non possumus." The absolute verb *non possumus* (we cannot) and the significance of the neuter noun *Dominicum* (this which is the Lord's) cannot be translated with a single word. A very brief expression sums up a great wealth of nuances and meanings that are offered to our mediation today:

--- ***We cannot live, be Christians***, fully realizing our humanity and the desires for good and happiness that dwell in our hearts ***without the Word of the Lord***, which in the celebration of the liturgy takes shape and becomes a living word, spoken by God for those who today open their hearts to listen;

--- ***We cannot live as Christians without participating in the Sacrifice of the Cross*** in which the Lord Jesus gives himself unreservedly to save, by his death, humanity which had died because of sin; the Redeemer associates humanity with himself and leads it back to the Father; in the embrace of the Crucified One all human suffering finds light and comfort;

--- ***We cannot be without the banquet of the Eucharist***, the table of the Lord to which we are invited as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters to receive the Risen Christ himself, present in body, blood, soul and divinity in that Bread of heaven which sustains us in the joys and labours of this earthly pilgrimage;

--- ***We cannot be without the Christian community***, the family of the Lord: we need to meet our brothers and sisters who share the sonship of God, the fraternity of Christ, the vocation and the search for holiness and the salvation of their souls in the rich diversity of ages, personal histories, charisms and vocations;

--- ***We cannot be without the house of the Lord***, which is our home, without the holy places where we were born to faith, where we discovered the provident presence of the Lord and discovered the merciful embrace that lifts up those who have fallen, where we consecrated our vocation to marriage or religious life, where we prayed and gave thanks, rejoiced and wept, where we entrusted to the Father our loved ones who had completed their earthly pilgrimage;

--- ***We cannot be without the Lord's Day***, without Sunday which gives light and meaning to the successions of days of work and to family and social responsibilities.

As much as the means of communication perform a valued service to the sick and those who are unable to go to church, and have performed a great service in the broadcast of Holy Mass at a time when there was no possibility of community celebrations, no broadcast is comparable to personal participation or can replace it. On the contrary, these broadcasts alone risk distancing us from a personal and intimate encounter with the incarnate God who gave himself to us not in a virtual way, but really, saying: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him" (Jn 6:56). This physical contact with the Lord is vital, indispensable, irreplaceable. Once the concrete measures that can be taken to reduce the spread of the virus to a minimum have been identified and adopted, it is necessary that all resume their place in the assembly of brothers and sisters, rediscover the irreplaceable preciousness and beauty of the celebration of the liturgy, and invite and encourage again those brothers and sisters have been discouraged, frightened, absent or uninvolved for too long.