

Vincentian Reflections for the National Eucharistic Revival



The three-year National Eucharistic Revival called for by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops began on the Feast of Corpus Christi in 2022. You can learn more about the Eucharist, the Revival, and all events associated with it on the Eucharistic Revival web site:

<https://www.eucharisticrevival.org/>

Members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul are reminded by our Rule that our “journey together towards holiness will be all the more fruitful if the members’ personal lives are characterised by prayer, meditation on the Holy Scriptures and other inspirational texts and devotion to the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, whose protection we have always sought, and to the teachings of the Church.” (Part I, 2.2)

Our Manual reminds us also of the major role the Eucharist plays in our Vincentian spirituality:

“St. Vincent spent one hour each morning before the Blessed Sacrament before celebrating Mass. Vincent visited the Blessed Sacrament before and after his meals, and he would frequently make short visits to the chapel before leaving and upon returning from his responsibilities.”

...

“From his teens, Frédéric attended Mass daily whenever possible and received Holy Communion frequently – an unusual practice for that time. Not a day went by when Frédéric would not make a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament in one of the churches in Paris as he made his way to an appointment.”

On the following pages are four special reflections on the lives and words of our Saints and Blesseds on the mystery of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Holy Communion.



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Saint Vincent de Paul and the Eucharist

Love is Inventive to Infinity

St. Vincent's famous saying that "love is inventive to infinity" was his explanation of the Eucharist in his "Exhortation to a Dying Brother" in 1647¹. Read and meditate on his words:

Furthermore, since love is inventive to infinity, after being affixed to the infamous stake of the cross to win the hearts and souls of those by whom He wishes to be loved ... foreseeing that His absence could cause some forgetfulness or cooling off in our hearts. He wanted to avoid this danger by instituting the Most August Sacrament, in which He is as truly and substantially present as He is in heaven above. Furthermore, however, seeing that, if He wanted to humble and empty himself even more than He had done in His Incarnation and could make himself in some way more like us - or at least make us more like Him - He caused this venerable Sacrament to serve us as food and drink, intending by this means that the same union and resemblance that exist between nature and substance should occur spiritually in each human person. Because love can do and will everything, He willed it thus; and for fear that, if people didn't understand this incredible mystery and scheme of love, they might neglect to approach this Sacrament, He has obliged them to do so under pain of incurring His eternal displeasure. *Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis, non habebitis vitam.*²

From this you see how, by every means imaginable, He has striven to win us over to love Him and, with this in view, you must stir up your heart to pay this just and pleasant tribute to love of a God who has been the object of all His plans for you and for which to obtain it He did all that He has done for you. You must believe that the greatest present you could offer Him is your heart; He asks nothing else of you: *Fili, praebe mihi cor tuum.*³

Christ put on the cloak of humanity for his 33 years on earth, being present to us physically, and constantly reminding that He had come to serve and not to be served. In the Eucharist, He remains physically present, and humbles Himself even further by serving as our food and drink.

And all he asks in return is our hearts.

Reflect

In partaking of the Eucharist, do I sincerely and fully offer my heart in return?

¹ de Paul, Vincent and Coste, Pierre C.M., "Correspondence, Conferences, Documents, Volume XI. Conferences to the Congregation of the Mission vol. 1" (2008). Vincentian Digital Books. 37., p. 129

² Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, you will not have life. Cf. Jn 6:53. (NAB)

³ Son, give me your heart. Cf. Prv 23:26. (NAB)



Saint Louise de Marillac and the Eucharist

Never Again Separated from Him

In 1632, St. Louise explained the Eucharist as an instrument of conformity to the Divine Will¹

Holy Communion with the Body of Jesus Christ causes us truly to participate in the joy of the Communion of Saints in Paradise. This joy was merited for us by the Incarnation and the death of the Son of God. So powerful was this merit, that the reconciliation of human nature by means of it is so great that we can never again be separated from the love of God. Just as God sees Himself united to man in heaven by the hypostatic union of the word made Flesh, so He wanted such a union on earth so that the human race would never again be separated from Him.

We can never again be separated from Him! He keeps us close. The Living Word is present to us, He calls to us, He invites us to union with the Father through the sacrifice of the Son.

Reflect

When I receive Communion, do I feel in my very being that I am part of the Communion of Saints, united with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Pray with Louise

St. Louise wrote this "Prayer Before Communion". Pray it together, and take it with you to pray silently at Mass.

Most Holy Spirit, the Love of the Father and of the Son, come to purify and to embellish my soul so that it will be agreeable to my Savior and so that I may receive Him for His greater glory and my salvation. I long for You with all my heart, O Bread of Angels. Do not consider my unworthiness which keeps me away from You, but listen only to Your love that has so often invited me to approach You. Give Yourself entirely to me, my God. May Your precious body, Your holy soul, and Your glorious divinity, which I adore in this Holy Sacrament, take complete possession of me.

Sweet Jesus! Gentle Jesus! My God and my All! Have mercy on all souls redeemed by Your precious blood. In flame them with the arrow of Your love in order to make them grateful for the love that urged You to give Yourself to us in the Blessed Sacrament.

To this end, I offer You the glory that You enjoy within Yourself from all eternity, and all the graces that You granted the Blessed Virgin and the saints, together with the glory that they will eternally render You by this same love.

¹ "Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac", edited and translated by Sr. Louise Sullivan, D.C., New City Press, New York (1991), p. 713



Blessed Rosalie Rendu and the Eucharist

Christ in the Catacombs

Born and baptized in 1786, it was under the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution that Bl. Rosalie Rendu's earliest faith life was born and fed. Little Jeanne-Marie, called Marie by her family, learned from her parents a simple and generous manner. From the youngest age, following their example, she was known to be especially generous and kind to those in poverty, and to the sick.

Priests and bishops who refused to take the "Civil Oath of the Clergy" were sentenced to execution. Many of them fled France, and on their way through Confort, a farming village in the foothills of the Alps, the Rendu family sheltered them.

This was a real and serious risk to take, for the death sentence extended beyond the clergy to anybody who might shelter them. It was in this world of great danger, and with the example of her mother's fearlessness in practicing her faith, that Rosalie prepared for and received her First Holy Communion. Her friend and biographer, Armand de Melun, would later describe the Sacrament:

"For her, this great day was hidden in darkness; no splendor, no festivity marked its solemnity; they scarcely dared to light a candle or utter a prayer even in a low voice; but in the depths of this cave, in the bosom of this poor and silent obscurity, there was before the altar a priest who was prepared for martyrdom, and a virgin who promised God, Whom she received for the first time, to love Him and to serve Him all her life, by serving the poor and the lowly. These were the mysteries, the dangers, but also the virtues, of the Catacombs."¹

As Vincentians, our journey towards holiness includes a special "devotion to the Eucharist"² which we share together, especially on our feast days.³ Perhaps when we partake of Holy Communion, we might call to mind Bl. Rosalie Rendu.

Bl. Rosalie's example of holiness and courage may have become known during her long service as a Daughter of Charity, but it began when little Jeanne-Marie first accepted the Body and Blood of Christ in a candle-lit cave in a war-torn land.

Reflect

Does my devotion to the Eucharist give me comfort even in times of great troubles and trials?

¹ Viscount de Melun, "The Life of Sr. Rosalie", Translated Fallon, Joseph, 1915, p. 6

² Rule of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Part I, 2.2

³ Ibid, Part III, Statute 9



Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and the Eucharist

United with Each Other

Frédéric remembered his First Communion as one of the most significant days of his life:

“I made my first communion May 11, 1826... Day of happiness, may my hand wither and my tongue cleave to my palate if I ever forget it! I changed greatly then. I became modest, good, docile, and unfortunately also a little scrupulous.”¹

For Frédéric, receiving Communion united him with his friends:

“When I have not been able to be with you on the great feast-days, I have found you at the altar. I believe firmly that when I am receiving, I am in close touch with my friends, all united to the same Savior. Why is it that so soon after leaving that holy company I sink again into despondency? When shall we see that place where there shall be no divisions among Christians, nor public injustice, nor disgrace for mighty nations!”²

It united him with departed loved ones, especially his mother:

“[W]hen I have the happiness to receive Holy Communion, when our Savior comes to visit me, it seems to me that she follows Him into my poor heart, even as she so often followed Him in the Holy Viaticum, into the rooms of the poor. Then I firmly believe in the actual presence of my mother by my side.”³

And according to his biographer, Monsignor Baunard, it also united him with the poor:

[O]n leaving Notre Dame and while still filled with the presence of Jesus Christ, the pious communicant did not fail, before returning home, to visit the homes of his poor families of the Conference. He thus returned to Our Lord, in the person of His suffering poor, the visit which he had just received from Him in the Holy Eucharist.⁴

Reflect

Does the Eucharist affirm and renew my commitment and desire to encounter Christ in the home visit?

¹ Dirvin, Joseph I. C.M., "Frédéric Ozanam: A Life In Letters" (SVdP, 1986), Letter 12

² Monsignor Baunard, "Ozanam in His Correspondence", (Benziger Brothers, New York), 1925, p. 381

³ Ibid, p. 158

⁴ Ibid, p. 209