

“Our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” -St. Augustine

A Presentation on the Eucharist as Spiritual Life Anchor and Highway to Heaven:

Source and Summit of Christian Life

No intelligent person goes into battle unprepared. Although not every aspect of life can be contextualized as a battle, there is no doubt that as regards the spiritual life, there is indeed a battle. It is a battle of the direst kind. It is a battle for the soul of a human being. In the Living Word we read,

*“One of the scribes,ⁱ when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” Jesus replied, “The first is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.**ⁱ The second is this: ‘**You shall love your neighbor as yourself.**’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”^k The scribe said to him, “Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, ‘He is One and there is no other than he.’ And ‘to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself’ is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”^l And when Jesus saw that [he] answered with understanding, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to ask him any more questions.”^m Mark 12:28-34*

The enemy of God desires one thing and will go to the greatest lengths to win. The goal is to stop us from knowing God, loving God. As the deceiving enemy wages battle, every attempt is made to lesson our love for God with the fullness of our hearts, soul, mind, and strength to ensure we become incapable of loving our neighbor. Therefore, we must be firm in the truth of our own identity, dignity, and value. A firmness only possible in knowing and loving God. We must be firmly anchored in this truth to journey by its light to our fullness of being eternally united to God in heaven. Armed with this knowledge and sustained by the Blessed Sacrament we can fully engage in the mission of Christ, of the Church – the Salvation of the World.

Every child conceived is a human person created by God and for God through the continuing fruitfulness of creation set in motion when;

God said: Let us make^z human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female^{} he created them. God blessed them and God said to them: **Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.**^z Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.^m ⁿ God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day.^o*

Genesis 1:26-37

And so it is that St. Augustine can confess, “You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Yet, he knows from his own struggles in life, in family and in faith – that this restlessness of heart, which is oriented toward God, is difficult to understand. He continued, “Grant me to know and understand, Lord, which comes first. To call upon you or to praise you? To know you or to call upon you? Must we know you before we can call upon you? Anyone who invokes what is still unknown may be making a mistake. Or should you be invoked first, so that we may then come to know you? But how can people call upon someone in whom they do not yet believe? And how can they believe without a preacher?” So, he looks to what he recognizes as a most trustworthy source of direction and knowledge, the Scriptures, where he notices the promise that those who seek the Lord will praise him, for as they seek, they find him, and on finding him they will praise him. These are just some of the words, most of

them lamentations, recorded in Psalm 22 from the lips of King David and found on the lips of our crucified Lord. The intensity of feeling reflects the intensity of distress in so many who have even unknowingly sought God, so moved by their restless heart. In the distress, the psalmist also turned to the record of God's past mercy. [Ps 22:2-12](#). Though enemies, within and without, may surround, we are invited to praise God for those mercies and the mercy for which we in our turn call upon God. [Ps 22:13-22](#) So, with Augustine we can say *"Let me seek you then, Lord, even while I am calling upon you, and call upon you even as I believe in you; for to us you have indeed been preached. My faith calls upon you, Lord, this faith which is your gift to me, which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry of your preacher."*

The Christian vision of the human person is of one who did not come from nothing, nor did we create ourselves. Nothing that is eternal in nature comes from us. It is the human person, who lives immersed in the truth of his origins, who is fully alive, thriving and the image and glory of God. ^{1 Cor. 11:7; St. Irenaeus, Against the Heresies, bk. 4, chap. 20, 7; quoted in Catechism, 294.} This is the truth that Jesus Christ revealed by his life, death, and Resurrection. He it is who reveals to us who are created in God's image, that we are endowed with God-given dignity, rights, and responsibilities, and therefore called to a transcendent supreme good. ^{Catechism of the Catholic Church ph. 1701} Jesus asked those who first came to him, "What are you looking for?" This question is for us, too.

We say to him, we want to know who are we? Is there meaning and purpose to my life? Are we more than mere animals? Does it matter to be a "good person"? Do our lives make a difference? Is everything just random? Lord, we are looking for the truth, meaning and purpose. In every age the lost will turn to Christ, no longer satisfied with the answers given them and no longer certain of how to find the answers. Lord, help me to live and not to merely exist. Help me to live free, full and fearless. Help me to know your love, to hear your voice, and to feel your tender healing touch.

St. Augustine continues to give voice to our own questions and confusion as he and we seek to know ourselves and God, driven on by these restless hearts.

"How shall I call upon my God, my God and my Lord, when by the very act of calling upon him I would be calling him into myself? Is there any place within me into which my God might come? How should the God who made heaven and earth come into me? Is there any room in me for you, Lord, my God? Even heaven and earth, which you have made and in which you have made me – can even they contain you? Since nothing that exists would exist without you, does it follow that whatever exists does in some way contain you?"

"But if this is so, how can I, who am one of these existing things, ask you to come into me, when I would not exist at all unless you were already in me? Or should I say, rather, that I should not exist if I were not in you, from whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things? Yes, Lord, that is the truth, that is indeed the truth. To what place can I invite you, then, since I am in you? Or where could you come from, in order to come into me? To what place outside heaven and earth could I travel, so that my God could come to me there, the God who said, I fill heaven and earth?"

"Jesus came into our world as the "Son of Man" so that we might become the sons and daughters of God. In his face we see the face of God. And in his face, we see revealed the true face, the full promise and potential of our humanity. In Jesus Christ, we see who we are meant to be and who we are capable of becoming by the gifts of God's mercy and grace." ^{Most Reverend José H. Gomez 'For Greater Things You Were Born'}

We cannot deny that in our time we are increasingly losing a sense of the truth about the precious nature and dignity of the human person. Yet, as the enemy has worked throughout the ages, our time is not so unique. Neither is it unique in the efforts of the enemy to blind us to the truth nor in the abiding mercy and faithfulness of God. We must be united with St. Augustine in saying *"Alas for me! Through your own merciful dealings with*

me, O Lord my God, tell me what you are to me. Say to my soul, I am your salvation. Say it so that I can hear it. My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, I am your salvation. Let me run towards this voice and seize hold of you. Do not hide your face from me: let me die so that I may see it, for not to see it would be death to me indeed."

The voice of God is most intimately present to us, echoing in the depths of our being, in our conscience. It is there we become aware, even if at first it is without understanding, that we are called to obedience to a law of divine making which guides us to act in accord with our nature and to experience inner tension and disunity, disintegration even. In our consciousness we know this as being drawn to the good and to avoid evil. Obedience to this voice of God which speaks to lead us to perfection in holiness, is to act in accord with our dignity. In the Word of God, we know this to be the commandment to love, God and neighbor. So then we are drawn to desire and discover truth that corresponds. Increasing sensitivity to God's voice both within us and in the Word lead us to better understand God and ourselves in the Word made flesh and so to act accordingly. Our dignity demands purity of mind and heart for purity of action. Acting otherwise not only invites the judgement of God but increasingly disables us from being able to hear God's voice and distinguish truth, resulting in sin. We become less free. We become less ourselves. Gaudium et Spes paragraphs 16-17; Romans 2:14-15

Just as the bread and wine we offer in the Eucharist is transformed into his Body and Blood, so our lives are meant to be transformed into the image of the living God. The Word became flesh to make us "*partakers of the divine nature*". This is not an abstract statement of theology. It is the destiny and meaning of your life and mine. Everything in our ordinary lives — our work and study, our loves, our family life, our works of charity, even our recreation — all of it is made to be transfigured in the light of Christ.

*"For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God."
"For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods".* CCC

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Blessed Carlo Acutis described his own experience of response to the 'universal call to holiness', saying "*To be always united to Jesus is my program of life,*" he said that happiness comes from keeping "*one's face turned toward God*". "*Find God, and you will find the meaning of your life.*" "*Every minute that passes,*" he said, "*is one minute less to become like God*". "*What does it matter if you can win a thousand battles if you cannot win against your own corrupt passions?*" he asked. "*The real battle is with ourselves.*"

To that end, Blessed Carlo believed adoration and reception of the Eucharist was essential. "*The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven.*"

He wasn't just a pious kid from a pious family. He had his struggles. He was diagnosed with leukemia, from which he died. But he was blessed from a young age with a special love for God. He loved to pray the Rosary and after receiving the first sacraments he went to Mass as often as he could. He was devoted to God and loved to adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament either before or after Mass. Usually, kids pester their parents for toys or fun activities, but Blessed Carlo pestered his to take him to church and on pilgrimages. Eventually, his faith and prayers led to the conversion of his parents. Carlo offered his sufferings to God for the intentions of Pope Benedict XVI, and the entire Church. His longtime desire to visit as many sites of Eucharistic miracles as possible was cut short by his illness. Carlo died in 2006 and was beatified in 2020.

Blessed Carlo had an ardent love for Jesus in the Eucharist. He lived a Eucharistic life, calling the Eucharist "*my highway to heaven.*" "*The Virgin Mary is the only woman in my life,*" and he called the Rosary, the "*shortest*

ladder to climb to heaven” and the “most powerful weapon,” after the Eucharist, “to fight the devil.” He had a love for the Church and the saints. He had a vibrant charity.

In his teens he researched over 136 officially approved Eucharistic miracles that had occurred over the centuries in different countries around the world. He collected them into a virtual museum on a website and he helped create panel presentations that have traveled around the world.

In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI wrote an Apostolic Exhortation called *Sacramentum Caritatis* (On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission). In it he says;

94. Dear brothers and sisters, the Eucharist is at the root of every form of holiness, and each of us is called to the fullness of life in the Holy Spirit. How many saints have advanced along the way of perfection thanks to their eucharistic devotion! From Saint Ignatius of Antioch to Saint Augustine, from Saint Anthony Abbot to Saint Benedict, from Saint Francis of Assisi to Saint Thomas Aquinas, from Saint Clare of Assisi to Saint Catherine of Siena, from Saint Paschal Baylon to Saint Peter Julian Eymard, from Saint Alphonsus Liguori to Blessed Charles de Foucauld, from Saint John Mary Vianney to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, from Saint Pius of Pietrelcina to Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, from Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati to Blessed Ivan Merz, to name only a few, holiness has always found its centre in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

*This most holy mystery thus needs to be firmly believed, devoutly celebrated and intensely lived in the Church. Jesus' gift of himself in the sacrament which is the memorial of his passion tells us that the success of our lives is found in our participation in the trinitarian life offered to us truly and definitively in him. The celebration and worship of the Eucharist enable us to draw near to God's love and to persevere in that love until we are united with the Lord whom we love. The offering of our lives, our fellowship with the whole community of believers and our solidarity with all men and women are essential aspects of that *logiké latreía*, spiritual worship, holy and pleasing to God (cf. Rom 12:1), which transforms every aspect of our human existence, to the glory of God... I exhort the lay faithful, and families in particular, to find ever anew in the sacrament of Christ's love the energy needed to make their lives an authentic sign of the presence of the risen Lord.*

As with the Saints before him, Blessed Carlo shows us a most excellent way to be spiritually anchored in this life, anchored in the source and summit of Christian life and to fearlessly forge ahead free and at peace in Christ until that day when we forever rest in HIM.