

OMILY

Mary is the Eucharistic woman, we should imitate Her

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What follows are major excerpts from Cardinal Robert Sarah's homily delivered on 8 September (Feast of Mary's Birth) at the International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest.

(...) God did not choose to reveal himself through His power, but through humility and meekness. He came down to us and arrived in our world through a poor girl in the tiny town of Nazareth. He did not choose a majestic palace or some powerful country to receive His Son, but instead a cave in a very small village, the smallest of them all. That is why so many Jews did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. (...)

Many Jews, as well as many people in our own day and age, are convinced that man's salvation is dependent upon his own wealth and human capabilities. For today's world, for this globalised and opulent society we live in, a poor man - a man who has no power, no money, no science, no fame- is doomed. He is seen as useless. Everything nowadays is focused on our power, on our wealth and on our having things, instead of allowing ourselves to be reshaped in God's image and likeness. Indeed, this way of thinking and acting has made us forget all about God.

On several occasions, St John Paul II, Benedict XVI and now Pope Francis have stated that post-modern man focuses too much of his attention on material goods and leads his life as if God didn't exist. Even many Christians live in a real silent apostasy. For our western society, God is dead. But it is we who have killed Him... We are God's murderers, eliminating him from our daily life, from our ordinary thinking. For example, our quest for absolute freedom, the denial of human law and God's law, the disintegration of the family, and the total rejection of God all have their origin precisely in this very attitude of apostasy that we tend to live out.

Man has a great desire for total freedom. He thinks he can only have it by getting rid of God, since God is seen as the One who imposes rules and limitations. According to modern thought, we think this reduces our chances of true freedom. Yet, man can only be truly free by following God's commandments and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us not forget that when God is done away with, man's life is in danger. Even the progress that our society has achieved cannot lead man to true happiness. For any progress that excludes God will never bring about true human growth or development. A fully human life is only possible to the extent we allow God to lead and govern our existence and our personal journey.

Today's difficulties should not frighten us, because as St Paul reminds us: "For those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son." (Romans 8: 28-29). We are therefore called to always trust God, because our happiness and salvation solely depend on Him.

We are not saved by ourselves, but through God Who is the Author of our salvation. We are saved through His Son Jesus who came into the world through the Virgin Mary. It is she who continually tells us to go to Jesus, the principle of life and salvation for all men and women. The Mother of God is the first living tabernacle in history. She carried Jesus in her womb and handed him over to men, as their path to holiness and nourishment in their lives. The Virgin Mary is the Eucharistic woman who supports us by allowing ourselves to be totally nourished by her Son Jesus, who is [truly] present in the Eucharist.

Humanly speaking, it can be hard to believe that the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are really found in the consecrated host and wine. Yet according to our faith, it is indeed the truest reality! Jesus is truly present with His body and blood - with His divinity - in the [consecrated] bread and wine.

It is the divine light of faith that allows us to see Jesus in the consecrated host.

The body of our Lord is not silent. It is not inert like some idol. He sees. He speaks. He listens. He hands Himself over to those who want to receive Him and he continues to communicate His gospel of love amid the confusion, the doctrinal and moral confusion and uncertainty of our lives and of this world.

He speaks of liberation and of peace. He is with us. Hence, let us pause and contemplate Him. He is truly a body that accompanies us through the different seasons of our lives, ever since we first received Him with great emotion and awe on the day of our First Holy Communion.

Every time we feed on Him it must seem like the first time. We must always be amazed and moved before a love so great that it comes to live within us. This bread never becomes a right. It cannot be bought. It has no price for our calculating minds, for those of us who think if we do nothing we receive nothing. It is a body that teaches us to love freely: it is God's body of love.

Love is always a gift. Life is only a gift. By means of the Eucharist Jesus wants to dwell within each one of us and transform us into Him. He wants to make us one with Him, and this is the greatest miracle of all.

In the Eucharist, Jesus comes to dwell in us and we come dwell in Him. Together, we live the same divine life. Through His body and blood we are given eternal life, just as Jesus tells us in John's Gospel: "If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh...Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6: 51; 54-58).

Salvation, therefore, is given to us only by Jesus. Dear friends, let us put Jesus, Who is found in the Eucharist, at the very centre of our lives. If we do this, our lives will flourish once again, because He is truly an inexhaustible source of life, peace and love. When we are fatigued, in pain, suffering trials, and feeling anguished, let us kneel before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us adore Him with all our heart, and we will experience being reborn through Him.

The Eucharist renews us and gives us life. Let us be determined to once again give importance to Eucharistic Adoration in our daily lives. Let us set aside a few minutes each day to consecrate to our Lord, kneeling before His Eucharistic Presence and silently living our prayer. Kneeling in silent adoration is the right human way to stand before the majesty of God who is humbly but truly present in the Eucharist. Indeed, it is in silent prayer, lived with faith, love and hope, that our Christian life is strengthened. It is in silence when we give God the opportunity to speak to our hearts and show us the way forward. Through our daily prayers, we discover that God's dwelling place is silence. God dwells and is covered in silence. Modern man is lost precisely because he no longer dedicates time to prayer, particularly to silent prayer. So he engages relentlessly in activism and noisy agitation that destroy his capacity for having an interior life.

This pandemic time has afforded many of us the opportunity to rediscover the value of silence and personal prayer time. While forced to stay at home, we have had the chance to experience first hand that there is something beyond frenetic activity (which can continue even while at home). There is a life of contemplation which allows us to grow with humble attitudes of trust. For it is through silent contemplation that we can recover our true relationship with God and, consequently, with ourselves. By immersing ourselves in God we are able to immerse ourselves more in ourselves. It

becomes clear to us who we really are: His precious creatures and, through our baptism, His beloved children. This was made possible by the high price of the blood shed by His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In fact, unfortunately, today's man, who has killed God, thinks that praying is a waste of time. However, the saints, even those most dedicated to acts of charity, such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, have taught us that all their great works are inspired during time spent in adoration, prayer and silence.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, let us desire to bring God to the world with our lives. It is then when we will truly become children of God and disciples of Christ.

Let's certain of this hope. Let's ask Jesus in the Eucharist to fill us with His presence and to make us tabernacles of His body in our daily lives, just as the Virgin Mary was. (...)

*** Cardinal**