



# Allocutio



Presentata Curia 25th September 2008

Allocutio: The Eucharist

The forthcoming Eucharistic Congress is a gift to us to grasp and make the best of. And we don't have to wait for the bishops to decide things. Already it gives us a focus. Each of us personally can decide to learn more about this special reality, this presence of the Lord Jesus who stays close to his people across the ages. And as you were already mentioning at the last meeting you can already begin to develop strategies for visitation and street contacts around the Mass and Eucharist. Indeed a new translation of the Mass is coming up soon, so again we will be given another opportunity to speak directly to people about this and let's hope that this time we don't get caught up in the superficial outside but try and explain with the changes the deeper meaning of the reality behind the exteriors.

Let us be clear about the Eucharist. It is the Risen Lord himself with us. It is a special way he has of being with us. But it presupposes faith in him. The Eucharist makes no sense if you do not believe in Christ. And sadly for many people in Ireland today their Christianity, even their Catholicism, has a severe absence of Christ as part of it. To be a Catholic for some is to belong to a club that embraces a certain national outlook, support of the GAA and of course Celtic, perhaps membership of Muintir na Tire or even to vote Fianna Fail, but may fail in the most fundamental essential: a lack of awareness of who Jesus Christ is and taking him for real.

The Eucharist is the sacrament par excellence to challenge us in all this. Because if it is not Christ himself it is only a small insignificant wafer of unleavened bread. But God has told us that it is himself. As St. Peter said after the discourse in the Synagogue of Capernaum, "To whom shall we go Lord? You have the message of eternal life."

Some people will say: "Come off it; how can you expect anyone to believe that Christ is present in this small item that looks like, smells like and tastes like a host of bread? This is so banal and yet God is so great. Surely the totality of God, as you Catholics and Orthodox say, cannot be contained in this tiny piece of matter?"

But even in the last month an event that hit the headlines has something to say on this question. At Cern on the Swiss-French border they have been hoping to learn a bit more about what matter consists of. Because the truth is they do not know. When I was going to school it reduced to the atom, which in turn is composed of protons electrons and neutrons. Now they speak of muons, quarks and even strings of quantum energy. They think that two protons colliding might create a black hole. And they say that all matter anyway is energy packaged in a certain form. But at the end of the day the scientists do not know. It is a mystery, one as mysterious as God.

Has it not occurred to them that the God who made it all and knows its very secrets, who is the creator of its secrets, has made it with the capacity to be divinized. If the totality of God can adopt a human body, can not God take total possession of that material we call bread which gives us food and feeds cattle who make milk of it? In other words if that food which gets absorbed in us and becomes part of our living organism, cannot God, who is so much more powerful than we are, also so take it to himself that it is absorbed totally in Him?

So let us not doubt but believe. Believe that we are in the presence of Him, by whom and for whom all things were made.



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Here we should note another thing. Do you know anything else that is so taken over by God that it ceases to be what it originally was? For we say that the bread and wine are changed totally into the Body and Blood of Christ. If so then those particles are utterly privileged. They are divinised. It seems to tell us that it is not only us but that all creation that serves God is called to be part of the eternal kingdom. Thus St. Paul speaks of the whole of creation being set free from its slavery to decay to enjoy the liberty of the sons of God. And in that way also we are being taught that we all belong together to God.

But let me come to one final thing this evening as we look ahead to the Eucharistic Congress. It is not just about programmes or witness. It must above all lead to us kneeling before and adoring and thanking and dialoguing with the Lord of the Eucharist. Let us go in search of his close presence to us. Let us be alert to his special presence wherever there is exposition. I think of the Blessed Sacrament chapel, the Capuchins in Raheny, Queen of Peace in Bray and other such places. It might be a useful exercise to identify all those places where Eucharistic adoration goes on and make this known and let us start by making use of these opportunities to go and prayer before him

And in our prayers of petition let us at this early stage ask his help for the Eucharistic Congress. Let us pray that his presence will be acknowledged, that people will come back to prayer, that the whole Church may be guided in its preparations for this event of great opportunity, for setting the light of faith aflame in our 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill