



TESTIMONY 07/19/2024

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Discussing the Eucharist is like discussing the whole life of Jesus, for he offered himself as sustenance for his brothers and sisters, the bread of Salvation for humankind! He fed his brothers and sisters with words: "You alone have the words of eternal life". He fed his brothers and sisters with actions and attitudes. Jesus once met a Canaanite woman of great faith, as the evangelist Matthew reminds us, who describes this encounter well (Mt 15:27).

By providing sustenance, we become intertwined with the one we nourish. Levi, or Matthew, experienced the grace of this profound encounter with Jesus. Levi left everything and became Matthew, that is, the one who feeds on Jesus, is transformed in his inner self and begins to bear the ethical fruit of a new life.

That's why I want to speak to you in an affective way, because I believe that affections nourish our interior; I want to speak in a way that is rooted in the Bible, because I believe that in listening to and living the Word we can nourish our spirituality. It's a practice that flows from the other: listening and meditating in order to practice; this is how the Teams of Our Lady teach us, this is how Father Caffarel taught and guided us.

I have been in ministry for 15 years; 15 years of anointed and consecrated hands. Looking back and seeing what God is doing through my hands in the world is a great grace. It moves me! I am not worthy, Lord, for you to enter into me and do the works that you do; I can repeat: "I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed!" The priestly ministry is not a privilege, it is a Divine Grace, it is an action of God's Grace; He calls us and works in us and through our ministerial service.

Every day, in my personal prayer, I renew this call: He has called me to be this sign of His grace and love; He has called me, with my frailties, to be a witness and a working sign of His love, to be an offering of life for Him and for the community, for the Church.

He calls us to be Eucharistic men and women, in other words, capable of living together as brothers and sisters and of serving as a team, in community. I can't give this testimony without remembering my brother team members, my base teams: Our Lady of Guidance and Our Lady of Miracles; with the team members we are nourished by the Word of God and by the Eucharist, and we are food for one another to preserve unity in this small and strong *Ecclesia*.

I got to know the Teams of Our Lady Movement when I was still a seminarian in Recife, and I was taken in by a team as a spiritual companion, while I was still a teenager in the faith; I was taking my first steps in Life and Grace, and today I can say that that first team was the home and family that Jesus prepared so that my vocation could grow and develop; it was like the home of Nazareth, in the team of Our Lady of Penha, Team number 12, now number 5, of Sector A in Jaboatão dos Guararapes, in 2004.

So I can only be grateful for the contribution I have received over all these years of sharing and fraternity. The Teams of Our Lady are a school of communion, of the Eucharist and of life: they are a path to holiness.

It's been 15 years of ministerial life, of consecrated hands to consecrate, of anointed hands to feed the brothers and be fed with the body of Christ. Being nourished is not an easy task; it demands humility



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and self-denial from us. The Eucharist is the sacrament of emptying oneself, of kenosis; one must empty oneself of all pride, of all vanity in order to nourish one's neighbor with Christ, with God's love, and be nourished by him.

My whole life is an action that stems from the Eucharist. How so? As team members, we have learned that there is a communion of the sacrament of Matrimony and the sacrament of Holy Orders; this is what Father Caffarel taught us. He taught us that there can be no Eucharist without the species of bread and wine, that there can be no Baptism without water and that there can be no Marriage without love between the spouses.

In the same way, there can be no Eucharist without the faithful giving their lives. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of Christ's self-giving for humanity and, in the ritual of Holy Mass, we give wine and bread. And God, in his love, gives us the Body and Blood of Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit! This is a great mystery: the mystery of Faith and Love!

The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's real presence in our midst. He is present in the species of bread and wine, which are transformed by the sacramental grace of Christ's self-giving to the Church into his Body and Blood. The Eucharist is the act of grace of God who wants to give himself, feed and nourish humanity. The Holy Trinity acts powerfully when we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus.

The body of Christ has always been present in my home, in my house, since my childhood. My parents' life was a full gift of life for all of us! I come from a family of 12 siblings; my parents worked day and night to educate us and give us dignity.

What about you, as a couple? Have you ever thought about the sacrifices you have and have had to make to nurture your children with love, education, decent housing, health and education?

As a child, I liked to dress up as a priest and celebrate Mass with my siblings and friends at home. Today I think about this: how the gestures of adults have an impact on the formation of children and also on their vocation.

I come from a Catholic family. Therefore, Sunday is sacred and I learned that the first act of Sunday was to attend Holy Mass with my parents. Every Sunday we attended Holy Mass, as the first action of the day, because Dad said we couldn't put off what was essential. Going to Mass is essential. Today, I am a priest and a happy and fulfilled one; I have a sister who is a team member and a whole Catholic family. My father is already in paradise! My mother lives nourished by faith and the holy rosary.

We were always present at Holy Mass; I was an altar server, and I know the value of this Sacrament and its beauty. Its value and grandeur as a Sacrament of healing, self-giving, self-donation and love. Jesus makes himself present, visible in his Body given and Blood poured out, a gift of love and for love. Body given, Blood poured out! Action of presence and surrender, Sacrament of Charity, Sacrament of love.

Dear Team member: isn't your daily self-denial to maintain family unity also an action that stems from the Eucharist? The Eucharist teaches us to grow in love.

It is the most profound Sacrament we have, the mysterious real presence of Christ in our midst; His real presence in our midst gives us life and summons us to love!

The Eucharist is also the communion of the words of the celebrant, who repeats the words of Jesus, and the material surrender of the faithful present in the offering of bread and wine. We offer bread and wine, and God offers us the Body and Blood of Jesus through the Holy Spirit! This is a great mystery!



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It is the sacrament of the MEETING of Divine action and the action of human beings. On the altar we offer bread and wine, and God in his infinite goodness, through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, offers us the Body and Blood of Christ, an unbloody sacrifice, that is, without the shedding of blood, which brings us up to date in the sacrament of the cross, the only true sacrament of Christ.

So I've had many profound experiences on retreats, in adoration, and in the silence of my meditations, especially when I review my life every day. Looking at our lives through the lens of the Eucharist converts us.

Jesus embraces us and nourishes us; He nourishes our Charity. That's why I'm sharing with you a very special moment in my life that I'll never forget!

Visiting the sick is an action that is part of our ministerial life; it is an ACT OF MERCY.

I was called to give the Anointing of the Sick to a patient at the League Against Cancer Hospital in Natal, the capital city of the state of Rio Grande do Norte.

The patient, a man in his 80s, was in palliative care, already terminally ill. He was in the hospital bed, prostrate. When I see a sick person, I always see the Body of Christ, a Christian who was certainly seeking holiness. I like to look at people with a positive eye!

I was called by his grandson, who is active in the pastoral work of my parish, St. Peter's Parish. On the way to the hospital, the sick man's grandson told me that his father was very upset because his grandfather was like this.

When I arrived at the hospital, I saw the scene: the son was at his father's side. We stood there: the priest, the sick man, the sick man's son and his grandson. We began the rite of the Anointing of the Sick and suddenly Mr. Marcelo opened his eyes and wept. His son André also began to cry; I continued the Anointing, gave communion to everyone, and as I handed the Body of Christ to André, I felt a strength inside me and asked if he would like to say something to his father. André was moved, he cried and with a trembling voice he said: Father, I'm sorry for everything! He hugged his father, cried a lot and gradually calmed down. We prayed the Our Father together and finished administering the Sacrament. I went home, certain that I had seen a miracle. The reconciliation of a father and son!

The Eucharist is a sacrament of healing! I can tell you that I saw the profound action of God in the life of that team member who was saying goodbye to his father! Trust in the action of the Eucharist!

I will never forget that scene! At that moment I saw the mysterious action of God through the Eucharist and the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. A powerful action of Christ in the Eucharist, who gives himself, who nourishes and strengthens us on the path of life. It nourishes hope, nourishes fraternity, nourishes the desire for conversion, nourishes the desire for change and encourages us to forgive.

That moment was a profound moment of healing and liberation! Perhaps today is also a moment of healing and liberation for you as a team member! That scene changed my outlook, my way of ministering the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, because following the ritual is giving life to it, it's giving affection and letting the Holy Spirit touch us and guide us always!

I have a ministry that is very close to the sick, to those who are invisible in society, such as the street ministry; I am a Missionary of the Holy Family and our mission is to be close to those who are far away. Being close is not easy; we live in a society that distances us from each other, we have technologies that bring us closer to each other and also distance us from each other.

On another occasion, I was called to administer the Anointing of the Sick to a patient. The patient was a doctor; he was accompanied by his wife. Dr. Augusto (the names here are all pseudonyms, to preserve



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the confidentiality of the sick) was undergoing treatment for pancreatic cancer, an aggressive cancer. I arrived, introduced myself and at that moment felt a deep desire to ask if they were married in church. They said yes, they had been married for 35 years. We began the Anointing and then I gave them the Eucharist; after Communion I asked them if they wanted to renew the sacrament of Matrimony.

He smiled and she cried, and they said yes, they wanted to. I began the renewal of the sacrament of Matrimony on the action of the Eucharist received at that moment. The couple renewing the sacrament of Matrimony in a hospital bed has a different effect! (I ... in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health...) It seems that it is in human weakness that God works his strength and vigor.

Open your hearts and live this International Gathering with intensity! May we return to our base teams full of God's love. After the renewal, Dr. Augusto asked me to make a confession.

The Eucharist calls us to conversion and it is in confession that we nourish our deepest desire for holiness and uprightness of life. The Eucharist makes us walk with three attitudes that are basic to our life in grace: assiduity and openness to God's will and love; seeking the truth; and growing in encounter and communion with our brothers and sisters.

May the Eucharist lead us to live in communion with our brothers and sisters! May it be the driving force for us to be a sign of sharing with the most needy and vulnerable in the world.

Today we live in a world affected by many crises, we live in a fragmented society and we are, as Pope Francis says, going through the third world war in pieces.

May the Virgin Mary, mother and teacher, educate us in communion and in living social fraternity. Thank you very much!

Father Francisco de Assis Motta de Sousa

Brazil Super-Region - Northeast Province I

Rio Grande do Norte Region II - Natal Sector E

