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“Eucharist and Christian Life”, a new book by Bishop Javier Echevarría

In final days of the year of the Eucharist, the prelate of Opus Dei has come out with a new book, published by Rialp.

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Following the “Itinerary of Christian Life”, and “Gethsemane”, Bishop Javier Echevarría has just published a book on the Eucharist, titled “Eucharist and Christian Life.

According to the prelate, the aim of the books is: “to try to penetrate with greater depth the actuality of the Incarnation, in this passage of Jesus on earth in order to speak with men. It is also an invitation to gratitude in an effort to penetrate ever more deeply the wonderful reality of our being children of God”. The book is currently only available in Spanish, but some excerpts have been translated below.

“Behold our God”

Christianity is God’s nearness to man. It is a close friendship and an intimate relationship between God and man. It expresses the familiarity of a beloved son welcomed with indescribable joy, music, celebration and a great banquet (cf. Lk 15: 22-24). This reality of an especially spiritual content also has a sensible dimension which finds its fulcrum in the flesh of Christ.

“The Word was made flesh”, writes St. John (Jn. 1: 14), thus summarising the plan of salvation that the Father had fixed by means of his Word. The nearness of God does not only mean that he moves and governs everything. It is not an Alliance limited only to a legal pact of which are conserved some paper documents as testimony. It rather brings with it a personal closeness that has made itself sensible and tangible. The Son of God has assumed our nature and thenceforth in the words of Tertulian, “the flesh is the hinge of salvation”.

Learn to love

We need to sincerely search the interior of our soul. We need to get to the heart of situations or our reactions and recognize that the problem is ultimately a problem of correspondence.

Love is the substance of happiness. To love and to know oneself loved is the only true response to the ultimate anxieties of the human heart. Ultimately therefore in everything we do, we seek this end which is a “desire” that never dies, never passes, never betrays and which satiates the soul.

Augustine of Hippo briefly expressed this in writing: “Pondus meus, amor meus”. My love is my weight, that which gives me solidity, attracts me and exalts me. It transmits to me height and depth, it is the origin of my peace. He also proposed it with the consideration that our hearts are restless until they rest in God. This is because it is only in Him that true charity can be found which gives compactness and sense to everything, and liberates from superficiality and improvisation.

Nazareth and Bethlehem: with Christ in his own home

The communion of life that matrimony brings about finds its fundamental center in the Eucharistic Mystery. Jesus continues giving himself to his Spouse in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and through the Eucharist, he continues giving to spouses the light and strength for them to love each other as He has loved his Church, so that they give to his Father new children by means of their love and fruitfulness. For Christian spouses the Tabernacle remains forever the symbolic reference point of their love.

Christ unites and does not separate. At the same time, love and affection add weight to the respect spouses have for one another, wisely evaluating their needs, in such a way that ones' spiritual behaviour does not become a dead weight. In this

way, one avoids for example, retiring to a corner to pray when what is urgent is to repair a door that is not closing properly, receive a visitor or to prepare a meal; since these very activities can become occasions to meet God, which is to say that these activities can be converted into prayer.

What separates men and women from one another and which leads a marriage to shipwreck often arises from the pride that tries to focus on “ones” rightness. Such behaviour resists the gift of God and isolates the person from the others. Here is a piece of advice from Saint Josemaría Escrivá to married people: “Avoid pride which is the greatest enemy of your conjugal love. In your small quarrels, none of the two of you is right. The one who is more serene should say some conciliatory word which staves off any bitterness. And later when you are alone, disagree,

for then you will have already have buried the hatchet”.

Rest and divine filiation: Jesus' teaching

In speaking about authentic rest, Jesus is teaching us to behave like children of God. In the same way that an earthly father is concerned for the feeding, clothing and harmonious development of his children, God does the same with us. Putting it in a more exact way, earthly paternity is a reflection of divine paternity.

We are thus faced with a dimension of supreme importance in understanding who our Father God is and how to relate with him. One would be in grave error to imagine God as an immense and far being who resides in an infinite heaven unconcerned about the creatures that He himself has brought into existence.

In spite of our sincere desire to behave as Christians, we are accompanied by this danger: “It’s necessary to become convinced that God is close beside us all the time, - We live as though the Lord were far away, in the starlit heavens, and we don’t consider that he is also always by our side”.

“He who hears you, hears me”: the reason for apostolic efficacy

The secret of the apostolic zeal of a disciple of Christ is rooted in his love for the Master. This is what moves him to give his life for the others, to spend it in helping them know the divine Word and to live according to the imperatives of the Love of God. His zeal for souls is born from a love for Christ, which like all true love, implies identification with the person loved.

This then is the reason for his efficacy, because thus the words of

Jesus are fulfilled: “He, who hears you, hears me” (Lk 10: 16).

How can this identification be brought about? It is the Holy Spirit who brings about the incorporation of the disciple to the Master.

Therefore it is also the Paraclete who presides over and moves all the activity of the Apostles and fills them with efficacy.

Without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the creature cannot receive the Word of God, he cannot believe. This then has always been the teaching of the Church against the differing forms of human self-sufficiency in the presence of divine aims.

In the same vein, one cannot live according to this Word (to hope in God, to love like Christ) if the Paraclete does not sustain him with his grace. In the absence of the help of this Consoler, the lessons of the

Master and the example of the Model would be useless to us. We would want to behave in accordance with his teachings would try to imitate his example but we would not be able.

This is how Saint Ireneus explains it: “The Lord promised to send the Paraclete conform us to God. Just as without water one cannot produce a mass of dough, or a unified loaf from dry wheat, we who are many could not become one with Christ Jesus without this Water that comes from Heaven. Also, just as dry land cannot bear fruit if it does not receive water, we who previously were dry wood (cf. Lk 23: 31) would not produce fruit if not for this rain that comes to us freely from on high”.

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