



**49th INTERNATIONAL
EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS
QUEBEC CITY, CANADA 2008**

**THE EUCHARIST,
THE LIFE OF CHRIST
IN OUR LIVES:
SPIRITUAL WORSHIP
AND AUTHENTIC ADORATION**

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

We have come to the part of the Congress devoted to a reflection on the Eucharist, the Life of Christ in our Lives. These past days we have been affirming that the Church lives by the gift of the life of Christ. This essential part of our faith is experienced in a unique and special way in the Eucharist where the Church receives again and again the life of Christ to become its very own life. What a wonderful mystery it is to live by the life of Christ. Jesus' mission is to give his life so that others may live. In John 6:51 he says, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” Jesus the Bread of Life is a gift from the Father. Those who eat this Bread, who receive Jesus into their persons, will have life. He will lay down his life, so that others “may have life and have it abundantly” (Jn.10:10). Every Eucharist proclaims, “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Because the life of Christ is oriented towards others, the Church must share this life with the world. The Life of Christ is his gift to the Church that is meant to be the Church’s gift to the world.

In the Eucharist we don’t only receive the life of Christ. Beholding this most precious gift, we are moved as well to worship and adore the Triune God. The Eucharist does not fail to evoke from grateful hearts the worship and adoration that God deserves. But as we worship and adore we realize that it is Jesus who guides us on the way of true worship and adoration. We will dwell on these two

elements of living the Eucharist: spiritual worship and authentic adoration. But first let us describe the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

The Catholic Tradition refers to the Eucharist as the sacrament of Jesus' sacrifice. In the Judaic Tradition, the offering of ritual sacrifices occupied a central place in the worship of God's people. Was the sacrifice of Jesus no different from other Temple sacrifices like the pouring of the blood of animals and the burning of offerings? What made up the sacrificial worship of Jesus? It is time to consider the unique worship of Jesus contained in His unique sacrifice. For this we turn to the letter to the Hebrews. In Hebrews 7:27 it is stated, "Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself." He offered himself! "He entered once for all into the Holy Place, not

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12). Jesus offered his blood, his very life and not any animal substitute. The letter further says, “It is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10). The sacrificial worship of Jesus Christ, therefore, consists in the offering of his body, his blood, and his life. The apex of this sacrifice of self-oblation occurs on the Cross and reaches its completion in the Heavenly Sanctuary or in Jesus’ glorification. We have gone beyond mere ritual sacrifice to the living sacrifice of self-giving. Jesus’ worship culminates in the surrender of his humanity and its entry into God’s presence for the sake of the world.

At this point we draw our attention to the question of how the self-offering of Jesus becomes true sacrifice and worship. We know many people who offer themselves to something or someone, such as parents,

teachers, public servants, or even hardened criminals. Does every self-offering qualify as a sacrificial worship? So we ask, how does Jesus' offering of his body and blood acquire the quality of genuine sacrifice? The letter to the Hebrews gives two elements of Jesus' self-oblation.

Most Reverend
**Luis Antonio G.
Tagle**, S.T.D.

Bishop of Imus,
Philippines

First, we hear in Hebrews 5:7-8, "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered." This is the first aspect that makes his self-offering an act of worship, namely his obedience or reverent submission to the Father who willed that people be saved and brought to glory (Heb 2:10). Self-offering motivated by the desire to prove oneself, to achieve success or to promote self-interest falls short of being a moment of worship. Jesus' sacrifice of his life was not focused on

himself or his agenda but rather was a response to the Father who had sent him. The fulfillment of His saving will pleases the Father more than any burnt sacrifices (Heb 8:9). Thus obedience to God makes the gift of self an act of worship.

Most Reverend
**Luis Antonio G.
Tagle**, S.T.D.

Bishop of Imus,
Philippines

Secondly, his worship includes his solidarity with feeble sinners. In Hebrews 4:15-16 it is stated, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need.” His oneness with weak humanity was essential to his priestly service or worship on behalf of the people. Hebrews 2:17-18 states eloquently, “Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.” Here the image of priestly service or worship is applied to the redemptive mission of Jesus. His embrace of the trials and sufferings of human beings has made him a brother who can now truly intercede for them before the Father’s mercy rather than judge them harshly. He worships through supplications to God welling up from his compassion for erring sinners. In other words, Jesus’ prayer to the Father gives voice to humankind’s laments and hopes that he has made his own.

In summary, we can say that the worship of Jesus is the sacrifice of his own life offered to fulfill the Father’s will to save sinners, whose weaknesses he shares in order to lift them to the mercy of God as a compassionate High Priest and Brother. Obedience to God and compassionate action on behalf of sinners form one unitary act of worship. They cannot be separated from each other. Jesus’

intercessory life for weak humanity before God is his priestly worship that fulfills God's will. Ultimately, we see in Jesus' worship the embodiment of loving God with one's whole being and loving one's neighbors as oneself. Every time we come to the Eucharist, Jesus renews his unique sacrifice and invites us to share in his worship of self-oblation.

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

The Spiritual Worship of the Baptized

In baptism, we begin sharing in Jesus' sacrifice of obedience to the Father in solidarity with sinners. Baptism unites us to Jesus' sacrificial death and newness of life. Saint Paul tells us in Romans 6:3-4, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." In union with Christ and in

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

the power of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to offer our life for God that involves dying to sin. Renunciation of sin and faith in God form the fundamental worship and sacrifice of the baptized, made possible by our sharing in the sacrifice of Jesus. In this light we can understand Saint Paul's words in Romans 12:1, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." Like Jesus we are to offer a living sacrifice not made up of calves, goats and grain but of lives dedicated to God. This living sacrifice united with Christ's sacrifice builds up the Christian community as well. 1 Peter 2:4 rightly states, "Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

It is evident that the living sacrifice of the baptized includes ethical demands. Saint Paul tells us that offering our bodies as a living sacrifice will happen only if we are not conformed to this world but are transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rm 12:2). Conformity to the will of God is a key to the sacrifice of life. It also involves living in genuine love, contributing to the needs of others, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep (Rm 12:9-21). We are back where we started. Jesus' sacrifice of obedience to the Father and communion with weak sinners is the same sacrifice that the baptized are asked to offer as a gift to the world. This is so because we have received his life in baptism. And in every Eucharistic memorial of Christ's sacrifice, we are taken up into its life-giving power so that we can share it for the life of the world.

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

It is ironic that during the public ministry of Jesus, he was not always perceived as someone who offered a sacrifice pleasing to God. Instead of being praised for being obedient, he was frequently accused of transgressing the law of God. No wonder, some people attributed his miracles to the power of the prince of demons rather than to Divine intervention. His critics even took his repeated claims of oneness with God as blasphemy rather than as revelation of God's truth. They concluded that God was as displeased with him as they were. He was dangerous for the nation and the Temple. For indeed Jesus' sacrifice of obedience took on a seemingly disobedient or irreverent expression.

It is interesting to note that quite often, Jesus was denounced as a violator of God's law when he showed compassion for the weak, the poor, the sick, the women, and public sinners. He offered new life to those considered impure by eating and mingling

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

with them. He assured them that God was not distant and there was hope in God's loving mercy. But he himself got no mercy from his adversaries, only ridicule for disobeying laws that were supposed to embody God's will. Jesus suffered on account of his self-offering for those loved by God. But he never wavered in his sacrifice. In the process he exposed the false gods that people worshipped, erroneous notions of holiness and the blindness of righteous people to the visitations of God. Jesus' sacrifice uncovered the link between the worship of false gods and insensitivity to the needy. An idolater easily loses compassion for the weak. Though he was judged, Jesus was the one actually judging the untrue worship that kept people blind and deaf to the true God and the poor.

The Church that lives the life of Christ and offers his living sacrifice cannot run away from its mission to unearth the false gods worshipped by the world. How many people have exchanged the true God for idols like

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

profit, prestige, pleasure and control? Those who worship false gods also dedicate their lives to them. In reality these false gods are self-interests. To keep these false gods, their worshippers sacrifice other people's lives and the earth. It is sad that those who worship idols sacrifice other people while preserving themselves and their interests. How many factory workers are being denied the right wages for the god of profit? How many women are being sacrificed to the god of domination? How many children are being sacrificed to the god of lust? How many trees, rivers, hills are being sacrificed to the god of "progress"? How many poor people are being sacrificed to the god of greed? How many defenseless people are being sacrificed to the god of national security?

The Church however must also constantly examine its fidelity to Jesus' sacrifice of obedience to God and compassion for the poor. Like those who opposed Jesus in the name of authentic religion, we could be

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

blind to God and neighbors because of self-righteousness, spiritual pride and rigidity of mind. Ecclesiastical customs and persons, when naively and narrowly deified and glorified, might become hindrances to true worship and compassion. I am disturbed when some people who do not even know me personally conclude that my being a bishop automatically makes me closer to God than they could ever be. My words are God's words, my desires are God's, my anger is God's, and my actions are God's. If I am not cautious, I might just believe it and start demanding the offerings of the best food and wine, money, car, house, adulation and submission. After all, I am "God!" I might take so much delight in my stature and its benefits that I might end up being callous to the needs of the poor and the earth.

I remember an experience in the market of our town of Imus, the seat of our diocese. One Saturday morning I went to monitor the prices of goods and the condition of the

Most Reverend
**Luis Antonio G.
Tagle**, S.T.D.

Bishop of Imus,
Philippines

simple market vendors. I saw a woman selling fruit and vegetables in a corner. She was one of those who went to Sunday Mass regularly. It was only 10 o'clock in the morning but she was already closing her store. So I asked her the reason. She told me, "I belong to a prayer group. We have a big assembly this afternoon. Some tasks were assigned to me. So I want to be there early." Upon hearing this, the pragmatic side of me surfaced. I responded, "The Lord will understand if you extend your working hours. You have a family to support. You can benefit from additional income. I am sure the Lord will understand." With a smile, she said, "But Bishop, the Lord has been faithful to me. The Lord has always been there for us. We may not be rich but we have enough to live by. Why will I fear?" Then looking at me tenderly, she said, "Are you not a Bishop? Are you not supposed to be encouraging me in faith?" I was quite embarrassed. But for me it was an experience of spiritual worship. I, the

religiously and culturally accepted presence of God was revealed to be a faltering representation of God. That simple woman, offering herself to God in trust for love of her family, became for me the manifestation of the presence of God. She had brought the Eucharistic sacrifice and Jesus' spiritual worship from the elegant Cathedral to the noise and dirt of the market place. God must have been well pleased.

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

Authentic Adoration

This leads me to the final part of my conference. Let us briefly reflect on adoration. Worship is so intimately related to adoration that they could be considered as one. The sacrifice or spiritual worship of Jesus on the cross is his supreme act of adoration. In the Eucharist, the Church joins Jesus in adoring the God of life. But the practice of Eucharistic adoration enlivens some features of worship.

We believe that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist continues beyond the liturgy. At

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

any time we can adore the Blessed Sacrament and join the Lord's self-offering to God for the life of the world. Adoration connotes being present, resting, and beholding. In adoration, we are present to Jesus whose sacrifice is ever present to us. Abiding in him, we are assimilated more deeply into his self-giving. Beholding Jesus, we receive and are transformed by the mystery we adore. Eucharistic adoration is similar to standing at the foot of the Cross of Jesus, being a witness to his sacrifice of life and being renewed by it.

Aside from the Blessed Mother and the Beloved Disciple who kept vigil with the dying Jesus, the Roman centurion who had been watching over Jesus when he died could also be a model of adoration. Probably the centurion guarded Jesus from his arrest to his death. Seeing Jesus betrayed, arrested, accused, humiliated, stripped, and brutally nailed to the cross, he surprisingly concluded, "This man is innocent" (Lk 23:47), and "Truly, this is the Son of God" (Mt 27:54; Mk 15:39).

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

Already hardened by many crucifixions he had supervised, he must have seen something new in Jesus. At the conclusion of a routine execution came a profession of faith in Jesus. It was not just another crucifixion after all. It was the manifestation of innocence and of the Son of God. We learn from the centurion's "adoration" that Jesus' sacrifice of life cannot be appreciated for what it truly is unless the horror of the cross is confronted.

Mark's gospel says the centurion stood facing Jesus. Like any leader of guards, he kept careful watch over this criminal Jesus. He did nothing but look at Jesus. Physical nearness was not enough however. He had to be intent, vigilant and observant so that he could account for every detail. We learn from the centurion to face Jesus, to keep watch over him, to behold him, to contemplate him. At first the centurion spent hours watching over Jesus out of duty but ended up contemplating him in truth.

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

What did the centurion see? We can assume that he saw the horror of suffering that preceded Jesus' death. He was an eyewitness to the torment, humiliation and loneliness inflicted on Jesus when friends betrayed and left him. He must have been shocked to see Judas planting a seemingly caressing kiss that was in fact an act of treachery. He probably wondered how swiftly a band of friends could abandon their teacher to preserve their lives. He heard the lies fabricated in the Sanhedrin and Pilate's surrender to the crowd, despite the lack of a case against Jesus. He beheld people ridiculing Jesus, spitting on him, stripping him and crucifying him. He heard the painful cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mk 15:34). The centurion saw incredible cruelty from friends, leaders, and even from a distant God. Betrayal, inhumanity, and viciousness continue up to our time in the many crucifixions of the poor and of creation.

We cannot help but wonder why friends, leaders, and God are unresponsive.

But I also believe that in Jesus the centurion saw incredible love, love for the God who had failed to remove this cup of suffering from him, and love for neighbors. For his enemies, he begged the Father's forgiveness (Lk 23:34). To a bandit he promised paradise (Lk 23:43). For his mother he secured a new family (Jn 19:26-27). And to the God who had abandoned him, he abandoned himself, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46). The centurion saw love blooming in the aridity of inhumanity. Amidst the noise of ridicule and lies, this man Jesus uttered words of fidelity and truth. Everywhere people were shouting "no" to Jesus, but the centurion heard from Jesus only "yes" to the Father, "yes" to neighbors, "yes" to mission. In this horrible cross of hatred and violence, the centurion found love, unwavering love, a love that refused to die, a love that was strong as steel

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

against evil, yet tender before the beloved. Jesus remained faithful to his mission. Thus his death was transformed into life.

When we adore the Triune God in praise of the sacrifice of Jesus, we are called to cry for the victims of the indifference of sinful humanity and the helplessness of God. But we also cry in gratitude for the hopeful unfolding of pure love in a broken world. The cross, where the guilt of criminals was sealed, confirmed the innocence of Jesus, the true worshipper of God. His sacrificial worship was his untarnished love of God and profound compassion for sinners. Jesus, who survived such horror with hope and conquered such evil with tenderness and love, was not only innocent. He also showed that he came from above. The centurion believed that Jesus could have come only from God, his Father.

Most Reverend
**Luis Antonio G.
Tagle**, S.T.D.

Bishop of Imus,
Philippines

I visited a poor section of a parish that opened a feeding program for malnourished children. The parents were required to

Most Reverend
**Luis Antonio G.
Tagle**, S.T.D.

Bishop of Imus,
Philippines

supervise the meal of their children. As I went around the crowded noisy hall, a teenage girl who was gently feeding a young boy caught my attention. She must his elder sister, I thought to myself. I approached them and asked where their mother was. She was looking for a job that day, I was told. So she sent her teenage daughter to feed the boy. Thinking that she must be as hungry as her brother, I asked, "Have you eaten?" "No," she said, "I am not part of the program. I am already thirteen." I was surprised at her honesty. For hungry children, this was an opportunity to cheat in order to fill one's stomach. But she remained honest. I responded, "I will instruct a volunteer to give you lunch, if some food is left after all the children have eaten." Thankful but embarrassed she said, "No, Bishop. There are many other hungry children in this village. Give the extra food to them." I was drawn into deep silence. "My God, my God, why are these children going hungry?" I prayed. Yet I also

exclaimed, “I did not expect to see sharing and integrity in this place of death. Truly these are innocent children of God. There is hope for the world.”

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**

In Eucharistic adoration, let us join the centurion in watching over Jesus and see what he has seen. Let us cringe in horror at the sight of destructive evil. Let us marvel at the reality of spotless love, of pure sacrifice and worship. I wish that Eucharistic adoration would lead us to know Jesus more as the compassionate companion of many crucified peoples of today. Let us spend time too with the multitudes of innocent victims of our time. We might be able to touch Jesus who knows their tears and pain for he has made them his own and has changed them into hope and love. Watching over our suffering neighbors, we could be changed like the centurion into discerners of truth and heralds of faith. And hopefully when people behold how we bear others’ crosses in love, they too would see the face of innocence and the Son of God in us. Let

us adore Jesus who offered his life as a gift to the Father for us sinners. Let us adore him for ourselves, for the poor, for the earth, for the Church and for the life of the world.

**Most Reverend
Luis Antonio G.
Tagle, S.T.D.**

**Bishop of Imus,
Philippines**