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The Eucharist and Life



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Editorial

On October 17, 2004, the late Pope John Paul II inaugurated the year of the Eucharist. He also chose the Eucharist as the theme of the Synod of Bishops to be held in October, 2005. It is in this context that we have selected the Eucharist as the theme of this issue of *Jnanadeepa*.

There are three articles in this issue which deal with the historical development of the theology of the Eucharist. The first one, by Errol D'Lima highlights important milestones in the development of the Eucharist. It traces the history of the Eucharistic celebration during four significant periods: i) in the New Testament times, ii) during the eleventh century, iii) at the time of Council of Trent and iv) and during Vatican II. While each of these periods makes its contribution, it is the Second Vatican Council that has given us a comprehensive understanding of the Eucharist. In the second article Leonard Fernando investigates the understanding of the Eucharist to be found in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. While it is true that the Fathers rarely approached the Eucharist in a wholly comprehensive way, still they touched upon most of the important elements of the theology of the Eucharist. However, the Fathers were primarily concerned about the impact the Eucharist has on the life of Christians. They also laid stress on the demand that the Eucharist makes on them: that they foster union among themselves, that they practise equality and that they promote justice. The third article, by Isaac Padinjarekuttu, deals with the Eucharist and the Reformers especially Luther, Zwingli and Calvin. It is true that Luther's understanding of the Eucharist evolved and changed in the course of time. But in all his debates about the Eucharist the words of Jesus in the institution narratives were fundamental. For Zwingli the Eucharist is a memorial of a historical event. The celebration of the Eucharist is an occasion for the Church to remember what Jesus did for us. It is not a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ. It is pure remembrance. Calvin sought to develop a theology of the Eucharist against both Luther and Zwingli. For him, the Eucharist is a sacrament where the promises of God are made manifest through earthly elements. He calls the Eucharist *verbum visibil*. The sign is visible and physical but the thing signified is invisible and spiritual. The Eucharist comprises the sign, the thing signified and the promises of God.

There is an article in this issue in which Mathew Jayanth explores the Dharma Vision of the Eucharist in the Papal Encyclicals of the post-Conciliar period. In his opinion the Eucharist as the Christian Dharma represents, at once, the Christic transformation and the consequences of this transformation for Christian existence in the world. It reveals the descriptive as well as the prescriptive dimensions of being a Christian. Closely connected with this is an article by Clemens Mendonca which

deals with the Eucharist and daily life. To her, the Eucharist is the symbol of the kenosis/self-emptying of Jesus. The Eucharist is to be understood as the Eucharist of life. Where there is self-emptying at work, there is thanksgiving, there is selfless concern for others and there is crossing of boundaries of class, caste, colour, creed and gender.

In his article on the Eucharist and mission Jacob Kavunkal discusses the relationship between the two. In his view, the Eucharistic table is the matrix of mission. It is there that the Church and the world intersect in the presence of Jesus Christ. It is the place from which we are sent forth to love and serve the world. The Eucharist is thus the well-spring of our mission to the world. Closely related to this is the article of Paul Puthanangady which deals with the inculturation of the Eucharistic celebration. He feels that in our efforts at inculturation of the Eucharistic celebration, our starting point has been the Eucharist as a cultic action and not as a community action. Such an approach to inculturation will only perpetuate the distortion of the Eucharistic celebration that took place in the Mediterranean world. Hence our approach to the inculturation of the Eucharist needs to be changed so that it brings out the authentic meaning of the Eucharist. This demands that we inculturate the Eucharistic celebration in such a way that it clearly manifests its secular, human, communitarian and socially transformative character rather than its cultic character.

Included in this issue are two articles which were written for the last issue. The first one, by Jacob Parappally, discusses Jesus' vision of a new world order and his stand against the religion and society of his day. According to the author, Jesus did not give us the blueprint of a new social order. All the same, we can draw valid conclusions about his vision of a new society and a new order of human relationships from the New Testament witness about his dream of a new human society where God's reign is recognized, acknowledged and celebrated. In the second one, Cyril Desbruslais deals with globalization, violence and religion. In his opinion there are two gospels operative in the world today. Globalization preaches the gospel of *having more*. It affirms that all that we seek, deep down, happiness, meaning, fulfilment, is to be found in accumulating things and by limitless material gratification, even if it involves depriving a lot of people of the little they have. But there is also in us humans another capacity, equally "deep within" us and it provides the basis for the gospel of *being more*. It focuses on enhancing the quality of living for everyone, is sensitive to the environment and to the millions yet unborn. It is up to us to decide: Which is the gospel we want to build on.

It is our fond hope that the articles in this issue will enable the readers to reflect seriously on the meaning of the Eucharist in our life today.

Kurien Kunnumpuram SJ
Editor