

My Eucharist Centred Life **Fr. Varghese Paul, S.J.**

As a Christian, as a Jesuit and as a priest my life is centre around Jesus Christ and nourished by daily Eucharist. I cannot think of my life apart from Jesus and the daily Eucharistic communion. I can truly say that, I am what I am today through my daily Eucharistic communion with Jesus.

I was born and brought up in a deeply religious family. Every one in my family participates in the daily family prayers before supper and attends Sunday Eucharistic celebration as part and parcel of our Christian living. In my family as children we were encouraged and we did attend the Holy Mass on Saturdays and also participated in Marian Sodality prayers and devotions.

My parents and other elders in my family and neighbourhood attended annual parish retreat or Mission often preached by Franciscan Capuchin fathers. My parents talked some times at home what the retreat preachers or parish feast-day celebrants spoke in their retreat talks or sermons.

As a child, I remember a thought I often cherished, especially while writing school examinations. "I have God Jesus to pray to and do well in examinations. What a pity that my Hindu friends do not have Jesus to pray to and do well in the examinations!"

In his late seventies my father started going to attend daily Mass in the parish church. But daily attendance in the Holy Eucharistic became a norm for me when I came to Ahmedabad in 1963 as a candidate to join the Society of Jesus.

I remember very well a conference by my Novice Master Fr. Gregory Conget about Jesus and the Eucharist. Perhaps the conference was given to us, novices during the month-long retreat. In the Spiritual Exercises St. Ignatius speaks of Jesus instituting the Eucharist as the "the greatest mark of his love" for us (Sp. Ex.289).

I remember the conference because, reflecting and praying over the conference I made a resolution that "I would always go to Jesus present in the tabernacle in all my problems and difficulties and seek his guidance and help." This resolution has helped me immensely in all my life, especially while taking important decisions or confronting problems.

I remember Fr. Conget giving the example of St. Ignatius. I do not remember the reference. But St. Ignatius once said to his companions that he could confront any problem in life and he could compose himself and find his peace of mind spending half an hour in front of the Eucharistic Jesus present in the tabernacle.

Here I can give you an example of finding peace of mind in the presence of Eucharistic Jesus present in the tabernacle. Once I had gone to Glen View at Mt. Abu with my staff personnel of DOOT and CISS offices for a three day sharing and picnic. On the second day very early morning the watchman of Sophia School brought to me a hand-written message: "To Fr. Varghese Paul. Telephone message from Ahmedabad received last night. Your father has died. Inform Navin at Dantiwada." (Navin then working at Dantiwada is my best friend and used to help me in DOOT. He and his wife Preeti have visited my home and spent 10 days with my

family). Navin is also the brother of one of my staff personnel Raju. I was brushing my teeth when I got the message.

I was confused with the message with reference to Navin. But the message was clear. “To Fr. Varghese Paul. Your father has died”. Then, there was no mobile and there was no phone in Glen View. So I went to the chapel and spoke to Jesus in the tabernacle. In about fifteen minutes I was composed and felt peace in my heart. I decided to return to Ahmedabad immediately with all my staff personnel.

(The news was partly false and partly true. It was my old friend, Mr. Peter Macwan, the father of Raju my clerk and of Navin who died at Ahmedabad on the previous late evening and not my father. By the time we came via Dantiwada, Peterbhai has buried! I was sorry that Raju could not attend not even the funeral of his beloved father.)

I believe in the sacramental presence of Jesus in the celebration of the Eucharist and in his unique presence in the consecrated host in the tabernacle. Jesus wishes to be with us by instituting the Eucharistic meal. He expressed his desire to be with his disciples saying “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in memory of me” (Lk 22, 19).

Through the Eucharist I try to identify myself with Jesus and nourish myself with his body and blood, which he has poured out for me on the Cross.

Celebrating or participating in daily Eucharistic celebration I unit myself with Jesus who is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14, 6) for me. These words of Jesus are also my guiding principles of my ministry. So when I founded a charitable Trust, Catholic Information Service Society in 1984, I included these words of Jesus as part of CISS logo: “I am the way, the truth and the life.”

So I can truly say that both my personal life and my ministry of proclaiming Jesus through CISS and through my writings are centred around Jesus and nourished by the Eucharist.

Celebrating the daily Eucharist, I often remember the words (I think that it is Mother Teresa who said,) “Remember O priest to celebrate the Eucharist as it is your First Mass, the Only Mass and the Last Mass.” (contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in)

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