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MAKING AMENDS TO CHRIST

Corpus Christi
12 June 1977

Genesis 14:18-20
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
Luke 9:11b-17

On this occasion the homily is being preached by all of you priests as you concelebrate in this beautiful circle around the cathedral altar which is a sign of our eucharistic sacrifice and our unity in faith and love. The cathedral is filled to capacity, and beyond the cathedral are thousands of people listening on our Catholic radio station. And united with this Mass in the cathedral are all the parish Masses in the whole archdiocese.

It appears as though the divine spouse of Christ, the holy church becoming concrete in this diocese of San Salvador, is kneeling reverently to gather up with tears and love the hosts that were trampled underfoot in Aguilares, and those stolen in Ciudad Delgado, and those mistreated by so many unworthy communions. The church of Christ received this precious legacy on Holy Thursday night as a living portrait of her spouse so that he would be remembered by all the children who would be born to her throughout the ages. How much he loved us! Now the spouse of Christ, in the presence of all of us, kneels before the Christ, her Divine Spouse, to tell him, «Forgive us, Beloved! How we have mistreated you! Receive the love of these children who cry over so many shameful abuses».

Institution of the Eucharist

This is the hour to make amends. Therefore, to focus our attention in this reflection I would like to speak about the aspect of reparation and making amends that is part of the Eucharist itself. This is something marvelous: we have no other words with which to ask the offended Christ for pardon except the Eucharist he gave us. We are all capable of offending him, but no human being is able to pronounce adequate words of reparation unless Christ himself places them on our lips, in our hearts, and in our hands. How good is the Lord! When offended by us, he shows us the way to be forgiven. Even though we are incapable of reconciliation, the offended one offers his own Body and his own Blood, because only in this way can satisfaction be made for the brutal outrage which we commit against him. That is why he decided—with his indescribable love, a crazy love since he knew how we would treat him—to leave prepared for us the homage that could make amends to him.

That is why Saint Paul refers to tradition. But note this well: Saint Paul is writing fifty-three years after Jesus had instituted the Eucharist. For those who doubt the real presence of Christ or the value of the Mass, just take note of this historical detail. Half a

century after Christ, Saint Paul says, «I received from the Lord»—in fifty years such a thing could not be invented—«what I also handed on to you» (1 Cor 11:23). After twenty centuries we are certain, thanks to this testimony of faith, that Christ is present in the host and that there is truth in what will be said in a moment by all these priests who are responsible for fulfilling the command of Christ: «Take and eat, this is my body which will be given up for you; this is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new covenant. It will be shed for you for the forgiveness of sins» (Matt 26:26-28). This is not some human invention; it is an invention that has its origin with Christ on the holy night of the Last Supper. When he was anticipating his sacrifice on Calvary on Good Friday, he left us this living reminder: «Do this in memory of me». That is why Saint Paul just told us that as often as we celebrate the Mass, we announce the death of the Lord and we proclaim his resurrection (1 Cor 11:24-26). My sisters and brothers, as Christian people nourished by this mystery, as Catholics who live by this faith, we can never be hopeless, no matter what the insults to our dignity, our faith, or our belief. This is the cross of Good Friday, but it is also the promise of resurrection.

Atonement of the Eucharist

The Eucharist guarantees us that Christ is always present with his saving action, but the aspect of making amends to Christ is in these words: «the body that is given up for you; the blood that is shed for the forgiveness of sins». In the symbol of the host trampled upon in Aguilares we see the face of Christ on the cross. That wonderful poem, «Broken Christ», describes for us the awful hour in which the sins of humankind passed before the face of Christ crucified: the blasphemers, the adulterers, the thieves, those who trample on human dignity, all the sinners. And at this time in our country, how numerous are those who spread hate and slander, and how many times we ourselves have sinned! We are all sinners. Let us see our own faces, the faces of every one of us, the faces of our persecutors, the faces of those who pursue and slander us—let us see them passing, as if on a roll of film, before the divine face of Christ, who tells us as he dies in agony, «There my blood and my body await you; they are handed over for the forgiveness of all those sins». And in the consecrated host we take up all that suffering of Christ, all his love for sinners, all his feelings so different from those who have offended him. «Father, forgive them for they know not what they do» (Luke 23:34); and in the agonizing anguish of his Son, the Father beheld the depravity of all sinners, of those who trampled on his hosts, of those who receive Communion sacrilegiously, of all of us who offend the Lord. Let us all recognize ourselves as sinners this afternoon so that we can tell the Lord, as we call upon the power of the Eucharist for reparation, «Lord, we are now going to honor you in a beautiful procession at the end of Mass. And look upon this very Mass, Lord, as a homage of your church, sinful and in need of pardon».

The dark pages that have been published to highlight our defects are only a shadow of the many faults we have as church. We have recognized this. The Council itself published many pages proclaiming with humility the church's sins (LG 8). Our depraved persecutors tell us nothing new, but simply remind us of our need to beat our breasts, as we did at the beginning of the Mass: «. . . through my fault, because I have sinned greatly in thought word, and deed». Those who set themselves up as judges to point out the sins of the church are like that hypocritical Pharisee: «I am not like the rest of humanity» (Luke 18:11). And who is without sin so as to cast the first stone? (John

8:7). At this time of making amends, we all need to ask the Lord for forgiveness. The holy will of Christ who lives in the church is not one of rancor, of vengeance, of wishing harm to anyone; it is the will of Christ on the cross: «Father, forgive them». Reparation is love; reparation is beholding sinners so that they are converted. Reparation is beholding ourselves and being converted. In this moment of conversion, sisters and brothers, the humbler we are and the more we allow ourselves to be forgiven in Christ who dies for us and who remains with his pardon in the Eucharist, the more we are building up our church.

I thank the parish communities that have responded to this call. May God give you your reward. This is a beautiful community that fills the cathedral. It is a symbol of the whole archdiocese aflame with a love that loves more intensely the more we are persecuted. We are in the midst of the world as a response to all evils, a response of love, a response that reaches heaven with the words of Jesus: «Father, forgive them, forgive them» (Luke 23:34). If this is so, how can the Lord not bless us! Let us continue building up our church. Let us continue our Eucharist this afternoon with a sense of reparation. Let us unite ourselves to Christ because he is forgiveness for sinners, who are all of us, and he is a source of greater blessings for all the generous souls who know how to forgive.

The heart of Jesus asks for this gesture of reparation. And if you were right now to ask what the greatest need of our mother church is, I would say that the greatest need is reparation. We need reparation because she has been dreadfully spat upon; we need to wash her face and make her more beautiful; we all must collaborate to make her the most beautiful spouse of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is our task, to make her more beautiful. Therefore this ceremony should not be just an occasional event. I would say, sisters and brothers, that we should initiate a campaign of reparation. That is, we should give a sense of reparation to our pain, our poverty, our suffering, our labor for human dignity, our discharge of obligations, our struggle to build a more beautiful church, and our legitimate aspirations for a more worthy nation. All for your sake, most Sacred Heart of Jesus! At this time I invite you to come next Friday to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. There we will celebrate the feast of the Sacred Heart as an act of reparation. May all that we experience from this time forth be truly a life of reparation; may we experience no life more beautiful than that of embracing the cross of Christ, and from the cross may we ask forgiveness of God and our sisters and brothers. In this sense, then, let us live our Eucharist on this precious afternoon of the feast of Corpus Christi.