



KNOW I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS

by Sister Mary Ruth

June 2005

Dear Friends of the Sacred Heart,

Our Visitation community, united with the entire Church, enjoyed a richly-colored tapestry of feasts this past week. Last Sunday we celebrated the Body and Blood of the Lord, formerly known as the Feast of Corpus Christi. Two days later Visitandines throughout the world rejoiced in the special feast day of their Order, that of the Visitation of Our Lady to her cousin, Elizabeth. And on Friday the Church celebrated the Feast of Love, that of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. These feasts had threads of the finest gold woven through them by our having Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in our chapel from Corpus Christi through the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart. Yesterday a lovely silver thread was added with our celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Rich jewels were also added to this tapestry as we celebrated the Sacred Heart Triduum, together with our friends, from June 1 through June 3

Momentous events preceded this past week's celebrations. In October of 2004, our late Holy Father, John Paul II, announced that the Church would keep October 2004 to October 2005 as the Year of the Eucharist. He called upon bishops and pastors throughout the Catholic world to cultivate a lively awareness of Christ's real presence, both in the Mass and in the worship of the Eucharist outside Mass within their dioceses and parishes during this year. Almost immediately upon reading the announcement, our community made the decision to have a Holy Hour each day during this Eucharistic Year, instead of only the Holy Hour that we ordinarily have on Sunday and Thursday of each week.

Our Holy Father, John Paul, was called to the Lord only six months after he proclaimed the Year of the Eucharist. However, mourning and weeping at his loss were turned into rejoicing when on April 19, both the Catholic and non-Catholic world welcomed one of his closest friends and collaborators as his successor, Pope Benedict XVI.

We also had an election in our Tyringham Visitation community – did you see the white smoke ascending from our chimney on May 12? On that day Mother Marie Joan Kelly was chosen as our new superior. In all the events of our lives, Jesus tells us: "Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." (Mt 20: 28)

The Year of the Eucharist is now coming to an end; we only have a little less than five months to hold a daily Holy Hour here at the monastery. Let's take a closer look at this year of grace as we review some of the reasons that Pope John Paul gave when he established this year in October, 2004. In his apostolic letter, "Mane nobiscum Domine", "Stay With Us, Lord", Pope John Paul II

God be Praised!



stated four main reasons for promulgating the Year of the Eucharist. The first was to emphasize the central role of Holy Mass in the life of Catholic Christians. That fact seems rather obvious to us who live in the United States. We know that in order to be considered “good Catholics”, we have an obligation to at least attend Holy Mass on Sundays. However, with the election of Benedict XVI, we are becoming more aware from recent news articles describing the impact that his election made in Europe, that many Catholics in his country do not take their Sunday Mass obligation seriously, if at all. The same is also true of Catholics in other European countries. In fact, the National Eucharistic Congress held in Bari, Italy a few weeks ago had as its theme: “We Cannot Live Without Sunday”.

The second reason to celebrate a Year of the Eucharist according to John Paul II is that there is a particular need to cultivate a lively awareness of Christ’s real presence, both in the celebration of Mass and in the worship of the Eucharist outside Mass. Our parishes in the United States do have, for the most part, active participation during the Sunday Mass. Our churches are full, singing at Mass is now taken for granted, priests, for the most part, preach meaningful homilies, and almost everyone receives the Eucharist. However, what the Holy Father is indicating is that the awareness of Christ’s real presence needs to be brought to the forefront of our consciousness during Mass, especially during Mass! Perhaps we get taken up with other aspects of the communal celebration such as the singing, the homily, or babies crying. Sometimes it might be hard to focus on the Eucharistic Prayer itself because we have an impending engagement and Sunday Mass is taking too long!

John Paul II also called for a commitment to have Eucharistic Adoration in our churches outside the time of Mass during this Year of the Eucharist. I know that many parishes in our diocese have Eucharistic Adoration and some even have adoration chapels. For those of you who do not have this privilege in your parishes, do you ever spend time in prayer before the tabernacle outside the time of Mass? Do you ever take time out of your week to spend an hour, or even a half-hour, before the Blessed Sacrament?

Lastly, our late Holy Father challenged priests “to celebrate Holy Mass each day with the same joy and fervor with which you celebrated your first Mass, and willingly spend time in prayer before the tabernacle.” (Mane nobiscum Domine, Apostolic letter of John Paul II). “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.” (Mt 28: 18-20)

As you know, June is the month that is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. You come to this monastery every First Sunday to learn more about this devotion – in fact, some of you have been attending the Hour of Presence, as we call it, for over ten years now ... first at Saint Joseph’s parish in Pittsfield and now, here, in Tyringham.



You might be wondering if there is an intrinsic connection between devotion to the Eucharist and devotion to the Sacred Heart. And you know the answer, “Of course, there is.” However, I would like to share something from my recent reading on the Sacred Heart Devotion which made that connection crystal clear to me.

First of all, there is evidence of the interconnectedness of these two great devotions in the writings of Saint Margaret Mary. The main revelations given to her, called the great revelations, were always made when she was in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. However, not only the setting of these revelations is important, but rather the content of these revelations is paramount.

When Saint Margaret Mary was asked, “What do we mean by devotion to the Sacred Heart?” she responded: “The particular object of this devotion is the immense love of the Son of God which induced Him to deliver Himself up to death for us and to give Himself entirely to us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar...”

One of the early Fathers of the Church, St. John Chrysostom (i.e., the Golden Mouthed), advises us that “when you see the Blessed Sacrament exposed, say to yourself: ‘That this is the body which was once covered with blood, pierced by a lance, from which issued saving fountains upon the world, one of blood and the other of water... This body He gave us to keep and to eat, as a mark of His intense love.’” The presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is just not a spiritual presence... He is present there BODY, BLOOD, SOUL and DIVINITY. “Consequently, the Blessed Sacrament contains the LIVING HEART OF CHRIST: the same heart that was formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, that was moved to compassion over the sins of Mary Magdalen and the sorrow of the widow of Naim, that was pierced on the Cross for our salvation and that abides, in a glorified state, at the right hand of His heavenly Father.” (Father John A. Hardon, S.J.)

When we really allow this reality – that we are receiving the actual Body and Blood of the Lord – to penetrate our awareness, we have a better understanding of why some of Jesus’ followers said that “this is a hard saying” and that because of it they no longer walked with Him! We know that we cannot fully understand any of the mysteries of our Catholic Christian doctrine. We can only say, “Lord I do believe; help my unbelief”.

Our baptism into Christ has given each of us the capacity to bow before the mysteries of our faith, to allow them to penetrate our minds and hearts in a manner which far transcends the merely rational. Through baptism, our incorporation into Christ, we are given new, supernatural eyes to behold and to gaze in wonder at the Gift. With the entire Church, with all of the People of God who have ever lived and who now live, we contemplate the great Mystery of the Eucharist with an ever fresh, an ever wondrous sense of amazement. And for each of us who has come here to honor the Sacred Heart today, we praise and thank the Father for having given us the Heart of Jesus, His beloved Son. It is this same Heart that we receive in the Eucharist, this Heart that is burning with love for us that we receive, that we adore in the Blessed Sacrament. We praise the Father, His beloved Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, who is the outpouring of the love between that same Father and Son.



Jesus in the Eucharist is truly with us at every moment of our lives. "Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." (Mt. 28:20)

Before we leave today, I would like to just pose some questions for your reflection:

- 1) What has the Year of the Eucharist meant to me? Was this Year emphasized in my parish? If so, how did we celebrate it?
- 2) What can I do to grow in awareness of the Real Presence, especially when we worship as a parish community at Sunday Mass?
- 3) Do I ever take time to make a Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament?
- 4) If not, could I possibly work this into my week, even if it would be for only a half hour?