

Heart of the World

Last week in this spot, I quoted #1324 from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) on the Eucharist: “The Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life.”¹³⁶ “The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.¹³⁷”

Contained in this citation, are quotes from two other documents promulgated by Pope Paul VI as part the Documents of Vatican II. The first is from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the Nations). The second is from The Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (The Order of Priests). Let us first note a couple of points:

1) A “Dogmatic Constitution” is of the highest level of authority of any teaching in the Church. It sets a foundation upon which the rest of the edifice of the Church is constructed.

2) There is a tradition of entitling Church Documents by their opening words in Latin. Therefore, this is taken into consideration when the documents are being crafted so that theses opening words capture the spirit and principle(s) of what will follow.

As the “Light of the Nations”, the Church is a beacon—like a lighthouse. It’s existence in the World is to give a solid point of reference, which alerts to dangers and illuminates darkness resulting in a sense of security and consolation, and points out the way to go. As members of the Church, we all participate in that mission. This title is also an allusion to Scripture (Isaiah 49:6 and Luke 2:32) where the Messiah is referred to as being a “light of revelation to the gentiles...”.

In #11 of *Lumen Gentium*, (where the quote in the CCC comes from) the council fathers beautifully sketch out how the Sacraments build up and facilitate the life of the Church and her members. Beginning with Baptism and moving through each Sacrament, they show the interaction and relationship that we have with Christ and each other by virtue of the Sacraments. They also explain that these relationships are mutually informative, and that the fruit of this combination of relationships is to flow into the world outside of the ‘boundaries’ of ‘the Church’.

Like the heart in the body, the very center and life-moving force of the Church is the Eucharist. It is the very physical Presence of the Living God among us, but it is even ever so much more than that.

Sorry this was a little more abstract than practical—but you cannot build a house without a foundation. Could you say the Eucharist is the very center and life-moving force of your life?

Fr. Michael