

## *From the desk of Fr. Jim*

### **SOME WORDS FROM OUR HOLY FATHER**

Pope Benedict addressed many groups in his recent trip to Brazil, the country with the largest Catholic population in the world. His words are an encouragement to us as we share many of their problems and concerns. The following are excerpts from his address to the Bishops of Latin America.

In order to form the disciple and sustain the missionary in his great task, the church offers him, in addition to the bread of the word, the bread of the Eucharist. In this regard we find inspiration and illumination in the passage from the Gospel about the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

When they sit at table and receive from Jesus Christ the bread that has been blessed and broken, their eyes are opened and they discover the face of the risen Lord, they feel in their hearts that everything he said and did was the truth and that the redemption of the world has already begun to unfold.

Every Sunday and every Eucharist is a personal encounter with Christ. Listening to God's word, our hearts burn because it is he who is explaining and proclaiming it. When we break the bread at the Eucharist, it is he whom we receive personally. The Eucharist is indispensable nourishment for the life of the disciple and missionary of Christ.

### **SUNDAY MASS, CENTER OF CHRISTIAN LIFE**

Hence the need to give priority in pastoral programs to appreciation of the importance of Sunday Mass. We must motivate Christians to take an active part in it, and if possible, to bring their families, which is even better.

The participation of parents with their children at Sunday Mass is an effective way of teaching the faith, and it is a close bond that maintains their unity with one another. Sunday, throughout the church's life, has been the privileged moment of the community's encounter with the risen Lord.

Christians should be aware that they are not following a character from past history but the living Christ, present in the today and the now of their lives. He is the living one who walks alongside us, revealing to us the meaning of events, of suffering and death, of rejoicing and feasting, entering our homes and remaining there, feeding us with the bread that gives life. For this reason Sunday Mass must be the center of Christian life.

The encounter with Christ in the Eucharist calls forth a commitment to evangelization and an impulse toward solidarity; it awakens in the Christian a strong desire to proclaim the Gospel and to bear witness to it in the world so as to build a more just and humane society.

From the Eucharist in the course of the centuries an immense wealth of charity has sprung forth of sharing in the difficulties of others, of love and of justice. Only from the Eucharist will the civilization of love spring forth that will transform Latin America and the Caribbean, making them not only the Continent of Hope, but also the Continent of Love!

In order to bring about this renewal of the church that has been entrusted to your care in these lands, let me draw your attention to some areas that I consider priorities for this new phase.

## **THE FAMILY**

The family, the “patrimony of humanity,” constitutes one of the most important treasures of Latin American countries. The family was and is the school of faith, the training ground for human and civil values, the hearth in which human life is born and is generously and responsibly welcomed.

Undoubtedly, it is currently suffering a degree of adversity caused by secularism and by ethical relativism, by movements of population internally and externally, by poverty, by social instability and by civil legislation opposed to marriage that, by supporting contraception and abortion, is threatening the future of peoples.

In some families in Latin America there still unfortunately persists a chauvinist mentality that ignores the “newness” of Christianity, in which the equal dignity and responsibility of women relative to men is acknowledged and affirmed.

The family is irreplaceable for the personal serenity it provides and for the upbringing of children. Mothers who wish to dedicate themselves fully to bringing up their children and to the service of their family must enjoy conditions that make this possible, and for this they have the right to count on the support of the state. In effect, the role of the mother is fundamental for the future of society.

The father, for his part, has the duty to be a true father, fulfilling his indispensable responsibility and cooperating in bringing up the children. The children, for their integral growth, have a right to be able to count on their father and mother, who take care of them and accompany them on their way toward the fullness of life. Consequently there has to be intense and vigorous pastoral care of families.

Moreover, it is indispensable to promote authentic family policies corresponding to the rights of the family as an essential subject in society. The family constitutes part of the good of peoples and of the whole of humanity.