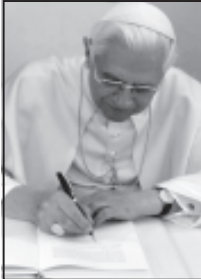


Pope reflects on Eucharist, makes suggestions for Mass

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Catholics must believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, celebrate the liturgy with devotion and live in a way that demonstrates their faith, Pope Benedict XVI said.

"The celebration and worship of the Eucharist enable us to draw near to God's love and to persevere in that love," the pope said in his apostolic exhortation, "Sacramentum Caritatis" (*"The Sacrament of Charity"*).

The 131-page document, a papal reflection on the discussions and suggestions made during the 2005 world Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist, was released March 13 by the Vatican.



Pope Benedict XVI signs his apostolic exhortation, "Sacramentum Caritatis" (*"The Sacrament of Charity"*). CNS photo

the fact that they are sent out in a mission to bring God's love and truth to the world.

■ Pope Benedict said in order to help Catholics "believe, celebrate and live ever more fully the mystery of the Eucharist," several Vatican offices are preparing a compendium of texts, prayers and explanations of the church teaching on the Eucharist and of the eucharistic prayers used at Mass.

■ He called for a general improvement in the quality of homilies and said bishops have a particular responsibility to ensure that the liturgies they celebrate provide an example for the whole diocese of a liturgy celebrated with dignity, beauty and fidelity to the approved rites.

■ The pope asked Catholics to pay more attention to how their postures and gestures at Mass communicate their faith in the Eucharist, particularly by "kneeling during the central moments of the eucharistic prayer."

"Amid the legitimate diversity of signs used in the context of different cultures, everyone should be able to experience and express the awareness that at each celebration we stand before the infinite majesty of God, who comes to us in the lowliness of the sacramental signs."

■ As for church architecture, Pope Benedict encouraged parishes to ensure their facilities are fully accessible to people with disabilities and that the tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament is "readily visible to everyone entering the church."

"In churches which do not have a Blessed Sacrament chapel and where the high altar with its tabernacle is still in place, it is appropriate to continue to use this structure for the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist," he said.

"In new churches, it is good to position the Blessed Sacrament chapel close to the sanctuary; where this is not possible, it is preferable to locate the tabernacle in the sanctuary, in a sufficiently elevated place," he said.

However, the pope said, the "final judgment on these matters belongs to the diocesan bishop."

In the letter, Pope Benedict also formally reaffirmed the obligation of celibacy for priests in the Latin rite and the fact that, in most cases, Catholics and other Christians should not share the Eucharist, which is a sign of full unity in faith.

He reminded Catholics of the obligation to be in a "state of grace," free from serious sin, before receiving Communion, and of the fact that by receiving Communion they are publicly proclaiming their unity with the teaching of the church.

"Respect for human life, its defense from conception to natural death, the family built upon marriage between a man and a woman, the freedom to educate one's children and the promotion of the common good in all its forms ... are not negotiable," he said.

Politicians and lawmakers must introduce and support laws inspired by those values, the pope said.

Pope Benedict said, "bishops are bound to reaffirm constantly these values as part of their responsibility to the flock entrusted to them."

But the pope did not mention his position on whether or not bishops should declare publicly that they would withhold Communion from a politician who did not fully accept church teaching.

At the Vatican press conference presenting the document, Italian Cardinal Angelo Scola of Venice was asked what the papal position was.

"He does not want to say that which he does not say," the cardinal responded.

The pope reminded bishops that they must call all Catholics, particularly politicians, to coherence of faith and action, "but he cannot substitute himself for the pastoral prudence of the bishop," the cardinal said.

Editor's Note: The complete text of the pope's post-synodal apostolic exhortation can be found at: www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis_en.html

It also will be printed by USCCB Publishing, publication No. 7-002 (English) and 7-800 (Spanish). USCCB Publishing has begun taking prepublication orders. The price will be \$6.95. Orders can be made at www.usccbpublishing.org by calling (800) 235-8722.

VATICAN SNAPSHOTS

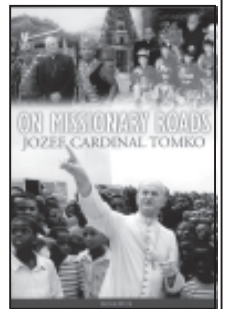
Photos © 2007 CNS

Auxiliary Bishop Odilo Pedro Scherer of Sao Paulo, Brazil, attends a news conference in Brasilia March 21 following his appointment by Pope Benedict XVI as the new archbishop of Sao Paulo. He will fill a see left vacant by the departure of the city's former archbishop, Cardinal Claudio Hummes, who left to head the Vatican's Congregation for Clergy. The 57-year-old archbishop was born of German descendants in Sao Francisco, Brazil. He studied theology at Rome's Pontifical Brazilian College and the Pontifical Gregorian University, and worked as an official for the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops from 1994 to 2001.



A statue of Blessed Antonio Galvao is seen in a church in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The 18th-century Franciscan and founder of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Conception of Divine Providence will be canonized by Pope Benedict XVI May 11 during his trip to Brazil.

This is the cover of "On Missionary Roads," by Cardinal Jozef Tomko, former prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Msgr. John E. Kozar, national director of the pontifical missionary societies in the United States, says the book gives insight into the church's missionary work in today's changing world.



Edio Costantini, president of the Italian Sports Center, holds a jersey with the name of the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, as Gianni Petrucci, president of the Italian Olympic Committee, looks on during a news conference to present the Clericus Cup in Rome Feb. 20. When the newly created cup kicked off, seminarians from 50 countries studying in Rome will swap their cassocks and clerical shirts for soccer jerseys, shorts and matching knee socks.

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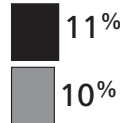
Papal Poll

When asked if Pope Benedict XVI is doing a good job, U.S. Catholics...

STRONGLY/SOMEWHAT AGREE



STRONGLY/SOMEWHAT DISAGREE



■ FALL 2006
■ FALL 2005

Source: Le Moyne College/Zogby International Poll ©2006 CNS

