

SUPPLEMENT TO THE 2007 PASTORAL LETTER

LIVING EUCHARIST: GATHERED, NOURISHED, SENT

Most Reverend Robert N. Lynch
Bishop of St. Petersburg

LENT 2010

YOU ARE
LIVING EUCHARIST



www.livingeucharist.org

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✦ **Introduction**

Ask any Catholic about the purpose of the season of Lent and most will tell you it is a time for “giving up” things – like candy, soda, or even a bad habit or two. This thought and practice seems to be a part of the DNA that makes up every Catholic.

Likewise, those same individuals will say how much they look forward to the end of the Lenten season. By the time Holy Week rolls around, they are ready to imbibe in those long-forsaken delights – perhaps even slip back into that bad habit again.

At its core, however, Lent is about *metanoia* – that is, a deep and sincere change of heart. Any practice, like fasting, which is embraced during this season, should lead to a change that will hopefully last a lifetime.

On the Friday after Ash Wednesday, the prophet Isaiah describes what real fasting is:

“This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall be quickly healed.” (Isaiah 58)

Two years ago, I issued my pastoral letter *Living Eucharist: Gathered, Nourished, Sent*.¹ Referring to the Concluding Rite at Mass, I reminded the faithful that the last few words spoken there (“Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”) required that every Catholic “has his or her special work to do in proclaiming the Church’s mission of healing, mercy, justice and proclaiming the Good News” (p. 18).

Truly the Mass is not static. It is not an end to itself. It is not an opportunity for me to be with Jesus in isolated union or communion. Rather, the Mass pushes me out *into* the world to be Christ *for* the world.

Certainly, this admonition is captured in the third and final theme for my Living Eucharist initiative: Sent. As a result, I would like to share with the faithful of the Diocese of St. Petersburg this supplement to my pastoral letter. In doing so, I trust that all Catholics will reflect on and discern how we “carry the Christ whom we receive in Communion out into the world, e.g. the ministries of mercy and justice.”²

✦ **Rooted in Baptism**

While our mission to the world is strengthened by our participation in the Mass, it is first rooted in our baptism. It seems appropriate then, to share a story with you about this first sacrament of initiation.

Recently, I spoke with a young couple that experienced sacramental preparation in their parish in order for their infant daughter to receive Baptism. They shared with me that as the catechist led

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them through the Rite of Baptism, explaining what would happen in each part of the ceremony and the significance of each symbol of the Rite, she periodically paused to ask the couple various questions:

- Do you really “get” what you are accepting on behalf of your child?
- Do you realize what this means in terms of the way you live your faith?
- Do you know that when you are anointed with Chrism as priest, prophet and king that you are being commissioned to evangelize?
- Are you willing to accept your role in helping your daughter to live her faith, to share her faith, and to change the world because of her faith?
- Do you realize that the real work begins after receiving the Sacrament of Baptism?
- Are you ready to be involved in mentoring your child in the faith and in turn, open yourself to an ongoing and deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church?”

The husband said that these questions hit him in a way that he did not expect. He felt walls crumbling within him and doors opening. He had never thought of Baptism in this way and wondered why no one had ever told him this before!

He wondered how he could have made it this far in life without ever making the connection that he had been commissioned, that he had been sent forth in Baptism to build the kingdom of God here on earth. He shared with me that he was now beginning to see that in order for the Church to be about its mission, he was going to have to make some decisions to be more intentional in sharing the gifts that God had given him.

Maybe you know that your Baptism sends you to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and therefore a steward of the gifts that you have been given or maybe you are hearing this for the first time. Perhaps you are on a path of living out your baptismal call and building the kingdom of God is your life’s work and then again, maybe you’ve strayed from that mission.

We are made in the image of God and have a deep longing and desire for God. We have also been created to be social beings who want and need to be in relationship with other human beings. Through these relationships we come to know God and God invites us to participate in a divine community of loving relationships, the Trinity.³

The Sacrament of Baptism introduces us into relationship with the Trinity. We are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are made adopted children of God and have become partakers of the divine nature, members of Christ and co-heirs with him, and temples of the Holy Spirit.⁴ Because we participate in the divine life of the Trinity, we are invited to live completely as community. We are not individuals living in an isolated world; we are communal beings who need to move beyond our self-centered ways so that we may enter into right relationship with all of creation, including all our brothers and sisters. This is not an option. Our path to God is a journey with and in community.⁵ This is why I am sharing this supplement to my pastoral letter with you.

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✦ **Evangelization: Spreading the Good News**

God models for us what we are to be about – people in relationship who work together to deepen and strengthen the bonds that unite us. To carry this out, we need to “do” and not just “say.” In other words, the Trinitarian mystery that we are baptized into, that we pray and teach in the Creed, is the foundation for the faith that must be lived in our everyday life. The Great Commission sends us out into the world to teach others “to do” all that Jesus has taught us – to evangelize!⁶

The word “evangelization” comes from a Greek word which means to convey good news. For us as Christians, it means “bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”⁷ We do this by bearing witness to God, revealed by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit in a simple and intentional way, through word of mouth and through actions. We bear witness that in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, God has loved the world – that in God’s Incarnate Word, God has given being to all things and has called all men and women to eternal life.⁸ At its essence, evangelization is the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, which are both works of the Spirit of God.⁹

Evangelization is concerned with creating, recognizing, fostering and developing opportunities to encounter Jesus Christ so that we may be moved to faith in Jesus, to conversion of life in Christ, to communion with other disciples in the Church and to live and work in solidarity because it makes us aware that whatever we do for others, especially for the poorest, we do for Christ.¹⁰ Therefore, evangelization is not a program or one item on an agenda, it is the agenda! It is a process, a way of life, a way of becoming disciples and of living as disciples of Jesus in the world. It is the reason for our hope (1 Peter 3:15) and the reason that each ministry exists in the Church. As Pope Paul VI confirmed in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*:

“...the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection.” (#14)

The Eucharistic Liturgy and the Sacraments invite us into and support us in this relationship with Jesus, into this new humanity. It is through the Sacraments of Initiation that we are initially gathered, nourished and sent to evangelize, to live lives according to the Gospel. Evangelization is not an option; it is the responsibility of all disciples. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he told his followers:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

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It is through Baptism that we share in this responsibility to evangelize. When we are anointed Priest, Prophet and King, we are commissioned to live the faith fully and with enthusiasm as disciples, to share our faith and to invite others into a relationship with Jesus, and we are commissioned to transform the world because of our relationship with Christ.¹¹ The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert the individual and the community, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and environment which are theirs.¹² The fruits of evangelization are changed lives and a changed world!

Various documents of the Church and leaders in Catholic evangelization have noted the varied elements and stages in the evangelization process: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative.¹³ As Eucharistic people, we are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ to intentionally build the kingdom of God on earth – in our communities, our parishes, our neighborhoods, and in our own families.

Being “sent” means that we are to be Eucharist to others, that we are creating an atmosphere conducive to the work of the Holy Spirit, in the way in which we structure our parishes, in our individual behaviors and attitudes, and in the way we reach out to the larger community. Of course, the Spirit will move where and when the Spirit wills, but imagine the possibilities when we are helping to usher in that process!

In order to reach a full understanding of the Church’s evangelizing activity and to create an effective environment for evangelization to happen it is necessary to take stock in how we are doing. Are we creating opportunities for:

- People to encounter one another and to build relationships in the parish and with individuals and communities beyond the parish?
- Lived experiences to be shared and for connecting our lived experiences with the stories of faith, thereby helping others to encounter Jesus Christ?
- Conversion of heart, mind and action to occur in our lives and in the lives of others and then creating an environment that welcomes, loves, and supports those who are joining the community of faith in various ways?
- Ongoing discipleship, where we learn what it means to grow as followers of Jesus Christ so as to live as a community of disciples and disciple makers and stewards of the gifts we’ve been given?

We have been commissioned to evangelize and the Church is the vehicle for this mission. Let us further discover how our vocation helps us to live in charity and justice the essential mission of transforming our lives and our world for Christ.

✦ **In Charity and Justice**

The Eucharist transforms the worshipping community so that we may be people of hope and action. The fruit of our faith is love and the fruit of our love is service. As we reflect upon the

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principles of Catholic social teaching, we realize that we are called to work for charity and justice. It is often said that charity and justice are the two feet of social action, both of which are integral to the Christian life. Pope Benedict XVI teaches us in his latest encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*:

“If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it.” (#6)

There is a deep connection between discipleship and charity. Modeled by Jesus as he walked the earth, the disciples continued this work as noted in the Acts of the Apostles (chapter 6) when seven were selected to see that the needs of the widows were met.

Over time our faith tradition has developed what we have come to know as the corporal works of mercy¹⁴ serving the poor and marginalized. It is these corporal or immediate physical needs that are usually met through acts of charity.

Charity (or direct service) addresses the painful symptoms of social problems. The People of God are usually quite generous with their resources, especially in times of natural or man-made disasters. Our charitable outreach takes place in countless and varied ways. We stock our food pantries, collect supplies for hurricane relief, comfort the sick, and provide alternatives for women in crisis pregnancies.

Through our support of Catholic Relief Services and Parish Twinning efforts we grow in solidarity with other communities and countries who are struggling. Disciples also perform acts of charity when they seek to provide comfort or spiritual assistance to those who are suffering or alone.

Direct service is needed, but justice goes beyond charity. Justice addresses the underlying social causes of individual problems and works for long-term social change. Justice asks: “Who are the owners? Who makes the decisions? How are they made? Who benefits?” When we seek justice, we are not only benevolent givers, we work side by side and hand in hand with our sisters and brothers who are poor or oppressed.

The struggle for justice requires us to examine traditional structures and various models and approaches to ministry. The charitable actions in our faith communities are no substitute for the more demanding work of justice. We must be willing to leverage our strengths, talents, and gifts with all leaders in ministry who are working for a just society. We work to impact local, state, and federal legislation that promotes the common good. We support community organizing groups and other efforts to create long-term, sustainable change in our communities.¹⁵

Working for justice in our society requires both voice and action. If we stand on the foot of charity alone, we will surely tumble. The Jesus we encounter in our liturgy, in Word and Eucharist, gives us the strength to work for justice throughout the world. I challenge every parish to embrace ministries that will work to build a more equitable society.¹⁶

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✦ **Parish Social Ministry**

Rooted in prayer and worship, parish social ministry is an organized effort in the parish to bring the Gospel to life by serving those in need through acts of charity and building the kingdom of God by working to transform societal structures that perpetuate injustice.

As the United States Bishops stated in their document, *Communities of Salt and Light*, “effective social ministry helps the parish not only do more, but be more – more of a reflection of the gospel, more of a worshiping and evangelizing people, more of a faithful community. It is an essential part of parish life.”

Jesus was quite clear in the Gospel of Matthew (Chapter 25), that we are measured by how we serve “the least” of our brothers and sisters. This is not just a message to us as individuals, but to us as Church, as the Body of Christ, as a faith community. Parishes are challenged with the responsibility to go beyond their boundaries – to the hungry, the homeless, the sick, those in prison, the stranger (cf. Mt 25:31). As *Communities of Salt and Light* emphasizes, “a parish cannot really proclaim the gospel if its message is not reflected in its own community life.”¹⁷

It is important to know that parish social ministry is not a separate entity or activity of the parish. Rather, it is coordinated and collaborative effort of a team of people that seek to promote justice and mercy throughout the parish and its various ministries. Below are examples of ways in which parish social ministry is integrated in the parish. This team of people – which can look differently in each parish – serve as a resource for the liturgical commission, formation team, outreach ministries, advocacy committee, and other parish groups.

Therefore, how can a faith community foster and promote parish social ministry?

First, parish social ministry must be anchored in prayer and worship. Reflecting upon the Gospel, planning hymns and songs that reflect the Gospel message, developing petitions that point to addressing the poor and marginalized, and selecting appropriate prayers for liturgical prayer and Sunday liturgy are examples of promoting Catholic Social Teaching and parish social ministry.

Second, taking advantage of opportunities to teach and preach about the social teachings of the Gospel goes hand in hand with our prayer and worship. This is essential to us as Catholics because many of our sisters and brothers have not heard about our social teaching.

Third, renewing the earth primarily takes place as we encounter and live in society. Most of our life takes place during family time, work, and as citizens in society. Therefore, the social message of the Gospel must be made real to the faithful – supporting, encouraging, and sustaining them to live the mission of Jesus in the public arena, in the marketplace, in the neighborhood, and in their family. As Church we are called to help the people of God live the Gospel in their multiple environments.

Fourth, it is necessary that the parish seek out and provide opportunities for parishioners to get involved in serving the poor and marginalized as well as offer a platform or network to advocate

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for justice. An example would be to get involved in legislative action that promotes the teachings of the Church. This means reviving a sense of political responsibility among the faithful to be informed and active citizens in the dialogue regarding the values and vision that guide our communities, our businesses, and our nation. Other examples include encouraging parishioners to be involved in one of their parish's outreach efforts – working with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, visiting the sick or homebound, social concerns/respect life ministry, or other Ministries of Mercy¹⁸ for the homeless, poor, or marginalized.

Finally, building a sense of solidarity with those beyond our borders nourishes and challenges our sense of being a universal Church. An example is forming a relationship with another parish (usually in a developing country) by parish twinning. This form of ministry has opened doors to new relationships that foster solidarity with those of different cultures overcoming perceived barriers such as race, religion, gender, economic status, culture and nationality.

As parishes seek to better reflect the mission of Jesus in the world, the items outlined above are key components that need to be carefully implemented. For, it is through parish social ministry that the work for charity and justice takes place. It is in parish social ministry that being “Sent” is manifested. As such, I charge each parish in the Diocese of St. Petersburg to embrace or renew its commitment to work for greater mercy and justice in our communities and the world. Every parish must be ready to assist those who wish to serve in these ministries. In addition, the parish must promote these ministries among the faithful since these ministries manifest one of the basic reasons that parishes exist.

✦ **Sent in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord and One Another**

As I stated briefly above, most of our life happens at home, in community, and in the workplace. It is at this junction of life where we encounter the primary relationships in our lives. Yes, we are sent to the world, but the world also includes the individuals we meet in daily life. For instance, do we know someone seeking answers to faith questions, a single parent struggling to raise children, an adult caring for an elderly loved one, someone who has lost a close relative, or an individual wrestling with health issues? It is these, our neighbors, that we are called to serve.

It is essential that we become more conscious of those around us who are suffering, who have never heard of Jesus or who are no longer gathering with us on Sunday.

In business and the workplace doing the right thing the right way and putting our faith into action is vital if we are to become a truly integrated Catholic. Hope is restored when ethical decisions that respect the dignity of the human person, the family, and creation are considered non-negotiable in the market square. This is our responsibility as baptized Christians in the public arena. The work environment is a place where we live out our faith daily.

Yes, the risks are real. These challenges can be enormous, frightening, and intimidating. Where do we begin? How can we transform ourselves, our family, our communities, businesses, and the world? From where does the strength come? The strength comes from the Eucharist. It is Jesus

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who heals, nourishes, comforts, consoles, strengthens, and convicts us to go forth being another Christ to the world.

We gather every Sunday bringing our lives with all of its celebrations, joys, hopes, wounds, weaknesses, and fears to be formed by God's Word and transformed by the Eucharist.

This paschal mystery sustains us with hope, faith, and love so that we can continue to persevere in our baptismal calling, committed to this journey as a pilgrim people in a pilgrim Church. We are sent forth to be Jesus to the world.



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STUDY QUESTIONS

✦ **Introduction** (Page 2) – based on the pastoral letter *Living Eucharist: Gathered, Nourished, Sent* issued by Bishop Lynch in December, 2007.

1. The Mass ends rather abruptly with these or similar words: “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” What does the Eucharist (which we have celebrated and received) send us out to do? What is the correlation between worship and service? Why is this important?
2. Pope John Paul II wrote in his Apostolic Letter, *Dies Domini* (On Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy), “The Eucharistic celebration does not stop at the church door” and that there is “the liturgy after the Liturgy.” What does this mean for you?
3. What are you doing to bring about the Kingdom of God? What are some concrete ways that we, as a parish community, might invite and encourage each other to be Eucharist to one another and to the world?
4. What area of service or issue of concern is something you embrace or want to embrace in your life? Why?
5. Charity (mercy) is about taking care of immediate needs of others (providing food, clothing, shelter). Justice attempts to promote or embrace changes in systems (economic, social, environmental) for the common good. Why does the Church insist that Catholics are to be involved in all these efforts?

✦ **Rooted in Baptism** (Page 2)

1. How do the questions posed by the catechist to the couple resonate with me?
2. What gifts have I been given that I could share with others to help build the kingdom of God?
3. How am I living as an active member of a faith community? What must I do to intentionally give and receive in this faith community?

✦ **Evangelization: Spreading the Good News** (Page 4)

1. What evidence would there be to convict me of being a Catholic Christian? How does my life bear witness to God living in and through me?
2. How is the parish intentionally living the essential mission of the Church? What processes and structures help the parish to keep this focus?
3. How does the community of believers support and uplift me in living my baptismal call? How do I support others in their vocation?
4. If my parish ceased to exist, what difference would that make in the larger community?

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5. How is my parish, small community, ministry creating opportunities for people to encounter one another, allowing for the building of relationships within the parish and with individuals and communities beyond the parish?
6. How is my parish, small community, ministry creating opportunities for conversion of heart, mind, and action to occur in my life and in the lives of others?
7. How is my parish, small community, ministry creating an environment that welcomes, loves, and supports those who are joining the community of faith in various ways?
8. How is my parish, small community, ministry creating opportunities for ongoing discipleship, learning what it means to grow as a follower of Jesus Christ so as to live as a community of disciples and disciple makers and stewards of the gifts we've been given?

✦ **In Charity and Justice** *(Page 5)*

1. How have I been involved in charitable outreach?
2. When have I provided comfort or spiritual assistance to those who are suffering or alone?
3. Given the difference between charity and justice, name some ways that you and/or your parish community are working for justice.
4. In what situations have I addressed the underlying social causes of individual problems and worked for long-term social change?
5. How is the Spirit calling me to intentionally work for justice in our society through word and action?

✦ **Parish Social Ministry** *(Page 7)*

1. How is Catholic Social Teaching promoted in the prayer and worship of our parish?
2. What are the opportunities that we have in our parish to teach and preach about Catholic Social Teaching?
3. How are the People of God helped by the parish to live the Gospel within the family, workplace, and in society at large?
4. What are the opportunities we have in our parish to serve the poor and marginalized and offer a platform or network to advocate for justice?
5. How does our parish live in solidarity with those beyond our parish borders?

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Notes

¹ <http://www.livingeucharist.org/>

² *Living Eucharist: Gathered, Nourished, Sent* (p. 19)

³ RENEW International, *God, A Community of Love*, Season I, RENEW 2000, 1997

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1265

⁵ *God, A Community of Love*

⁶ *PrayerTime*, Cycle B, RENEW International

⁷ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #18

⁸ *Ibid.*, #26

⁹ *Go and Make Disciples*, #10

¹⁰ *Ecclesia in America*, # 26

¹¹ Three Goals of Evangelization from *Go and Make Disciples*

Goal I: To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.

Goal II: To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith.

Goal III: To foster Gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.

¹² *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, #18

¹³ *Ibid.*, #24

¹⁴ Corporal Works of Mercy: (1) Feed the hungry, (2) Give drink to the thirsty, (3) Clothe the naked, (4) Shelter the homeless, (5) Visit the sick, (6) Visit those in prison, (7) Bury the dead.

¹⁵ FAST (Faith in Action for Strength Together) is one example in Pinellas County of different faith communities banding together with one voice to move our elected leaders to action on social justice issues.

¹⁶ *Seeking Justice: The Public Life of Faith in Small Christian Communities*, by Peter Eichten, Michael Cowan, Bernard Lee, SM. Morehouse Education Resources, (800) 242-1918, www.morehouseeducation.org/

¹⁷ *Communities of Salt and Light*, NCC/USCC, 1996.

¹⁸ <http://www.mom-dosp.org/>

