

Fr. Roger J. Landry
Pontifical Josephinum Seminary, Columbus, Ohio
40 Hours Retreat on "Living the Mystery Placed in a Priest's Hands"
September 4-6, 2020

- Introduction

- It is a great joy for me to be here with you at the beginning of this year of Seminary Formation so that I may join you in this period of adoration, gratitude, reparation, intercession and petition before Jesus present in the Most Holy Eucharist for the next 40 hours. I have long wanted to visit this house, which for 132 years has formed and sent forth generations of priests to continue Christ the High Priest's mission to save and sanctify his people. What an extraordinary place of grace. I thank Fr. Beseau, Fathers Brannen and Kelly, and all members of the Josephinum community for welcoming me.
- The theme of this retreat is "Living the Mysteries Priests Celebrate."
 - In the Rite for the Ordination of Priests, which I pray one day each of you who has been given a priestly vocation by God will experience, the bishop in the homily included in the Rite says to those about to be made priests forever: "By your ministry the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful will be made perfect, being united to the sacrifice of Christ, which will be offered through your hands in an unbloody way on the altar, in union with the faithful, in the celebration of the sacraments. **Understand, therefore, what you do and imitate what you celebrate.**" A short time later, when he places the chalice paten and bread in the newly ordained priest's hands, he says, "**Receive the oblation of the holy people to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross.**"
 - This is the essence of priestly life. It's also the goal of priestly preparation.
 - 40 hours of the Lord's Passion.
 - St. John Paul II, in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, declared, with words from which I have taken the theme for our time together:
 - "**Live the mystery that has been placed in your hands!**" This is the invitation and admonition which the Church addresses to the priest in the Rite of Ordination. ... **The 'mystery' of which the priest is a 'steward' (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1) is definitively Jesus Christ himself**, who in the Spirit is the source of holiness and the call to sanctification. **This 'mystery' seeks expression in the priestly life.** For this to be so, **there is need for great vigilance and lively awareness.** Once again, the Rite of Ordination introduces these words with this recommendation: "Be aware of what you will be doing."
 - To live the mystery that priests handle.
 - The priestly life is supposed to become a commentary on the Words of Consecration.
 - The Mass is not just something priests do. It is something that priests live full-time into eternity.
 - The identification with Christ the High Priest brought about through ordination is meant to be manifest, as we will ponder together, in how he celebrates the Mass, how he spends time with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, how he announces the mystery of faith, how he is transformed to love others as Christ loves us.
 - In Mass today, we had a very important part of St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, a phrase that many retreat masters use to preach retreats to their priest brothers, one that many bishops choose as their episcopal mottos. "Thus should one regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."
 - The word servant St Paul uses for servants is not *diakonos* or *doulos*, the common Greek words for "servant" or "slave," respectively, even though either would have been appropriate. It's *huperetes*, which means the slave who

mans the rudder in a big ship, whose doesn't establish the direction (the captain does) but helps head in that direction. That's what we are called to do for Christ, trying to point our lives and those of others in the direction Jesus sets, not steering off course. Our whole life is supposed to point to Jesus in the Eucharist, and together with him, to the Father's eternal outstretched arms.

- And the word St. Paul uses for "steward" is *economos*, which means the one who implements the law of the house, who administers. We're entrusted with the mysteries of God, which first means the sacraments, the things of God. And because the mystery of mysteries, the *mysterion agapes*, the sacramentum caritatis, is, as St. John Paul II says, "definitively Jesus Christ himself." We are called to be stewards of Christ who humbles himself in priestly hands.
- St. Joseph
 - That's why, in my opinion, it is such a grace for you to be preparing to live the mystery priests who in your hands here at this seminary dedicated to Saint Joseph.
 - This year we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph's being named the patron and protector of the Universal Church.
 - Even though he never had the privilege that each of us has, to receive Jesus each day, he has so much to teach us about being a priestly *huperetes* and *economos*.
 - Father Faber commented: The priest, who has most reason to deplore the poverty of his attainments in humility, is humble at least when he comes to consecrate at Mass. For years Joseph lived in the awful sanctity of that which to the priest is but a moment. The little house at Nazareth was as the outspread square of the white corporal. All the words he spoke were almost words of consecration.
 - He lived in the Real presence
 - Joseph was even more blessed than Simeon (Lk 2:28), for he held the Child Jesus in his arms not once but many times
 - His life was an expression of the sacrificial love expressed in body language in the consecration.
 - St. Paul VI: This is the **secret of the greatness of St. Joseph, which accords well with his humility**: having made his life a service, a sacrifice, to the mystery of the Incarnation and to the redemptive mission that is joined to it; having used the legal authority, which he was entitled to on the holy family, **to give his total gift of himself, of his life, of his work; having converted his human vocation to domestic love into the superhuman oblation of himself, of his heart and of all his abilities**, into the love placed at the service of the Messiah **conceived** in his home, his nominal son and son of David, but in reality the son of Mary and the son of God. ... One can say, of every saint: "to serve through love," we must attribute to St. Joseph, who appears to be dressed by it, as with the profile that defines it, as with the splendor that glorifies it; serving Christ was his life, serving him in the deepest humility, in the most complete dedication, serving him with love and for love.
 - That's why it's so fitting that St. John XXIII added his name to the Roman Canon (EP I). That's why it's also so fitting that Pope Francis added his name to the others.
 - He is interceding for us, I'm sure, that we might reverence his foster son in the Eucharist with the same love that Joseph had in Bethlehem, in Egypt, the Temple and Nazareth. His whole life was an amen to the mystery of God's presence. His life points to Christ and he was certainly a good and faithful *economos*.

- What I'd like to do in our time together tonight, before the Lord Jesus, is talk about the centrality of the Eucharistic Jesus in the lives of priests and those preparing to be priests.
 - Then I would like to focus on a few things specifically about the way our whole life is meant to become a Mass and some of the practical consequences that truth should have.
 - Living a Eucharistic Life in the documents of the Church
 - St. John Paul II in PDV:
 - PDV 26. For the priest as well, **the truly central place, both in his ministry and spiritual life, belongs to the Eucharist, since in it is contained "the whole spiritual good of the Church."**
 - PDV 23: As the Council states: "The eucharistic sacrifice is ... **the center and root of the whole priestly life.**"
 - PDV 48: The Eucharist... is to be seen as the **"summit and source"** of the sacraments
 - PDV 48: **Priests, as ministers of sacred things, are first and foremost ministers of the sacrifice of the Mass: The role is utterly irreplaceable, because without the priest there can be no eucharistic offering. This explains the essential importance of the Eucharist for the priest's life and ministry and, as a result, in the spiritual formation of candidates for the priesthood.** To be utterly frank and clear, I would like to say once again: "It is fitting that seminarians take part every day in the eucharistic celebration, in such a way that afterward they will take up as a rule of their priestly life this daily celebration. They should, moreover, be trained to consider the eucharistic celebration as the essential moment of their day, in which they will take an active part and at which they will never be satisfied with a merely habitual attendance. Finally, candidates to the priesthood will be trained to share in the **intimate dispositions which the Eucharist fosters: gratitude** for heavenly benefits received, because the Eucharist is thanksgiving; **an attitude of self-offering, which will impel them to unite the offering of themselves to the eucharistic offering of Christ;** charity nourished by a sacrament which is a sign of unity and sharing; **the yearning to contemplate and bow in adoration before Christ,** who is really present under the eucharistic species."⁽¹⁴⁶⁾
 - PDV 46: **First there is the value and demand of "living intimately united" to Jesus Christ. Our union with the Lord Jesus, which has its roots in baptism and is nourished with the Eucharist, has to express itself and be radically renewed each day.** Intimate communion with the Blessed Trinity, that is, the new life of grace which makes us children of God, constitutes the "novelty" of the believer, a novelty which involves both his being and his acting. It constitutes the "mystery" of Christian existence that is under the influence of the Spirit: it should, as a result, constitute the ethos of Christian living. Jesus has taught us this marvelous reality of Christian living, which is also the heart of spiritual life, with his allegory of the vine and the branches: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:1, 4-5).
 - Pope Benedict on the consequences of this communion
 - SC 23. I consider it important to recall several important points **about the relationship between the sacrament of the Eucharist and Holy Orders.** First of all, we need to stress once again that **the connection between *Holy Orders and the Eucharist* is seen most clearly at Mass,** when the Bishop or priest presides *in the person of Christ the Head.* ... As a result, **priests should be conscious of the fact that in their ministry they must never put themselves or their personal opinions in first place, but Jesus Christ. Any attempt to make themselves the centre of the liturgical action contradicts their very identity as priests.** The priest is above all a servant of others, and **he must continually work at being a sign pointing to Christ, a docile instrument in the Lord's hands.** This is seen particularly in his humility in leading the liturgical assembly, in obedience to the rite, uniting

himself to it in mind and heart, and avoiding anything that might give the impression of an inordinate emphasis on his own personality. **I encourage the clergy always to see their eucharistic ministry as a humble service offered to Christ and his Church.**

- SC 71. **Christianity's new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life:** "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (*1 Cor* 10:31). **Christians, in all their actions, are called to offer true worship to God. Here the intrinsically eucharistic nature of Christian life begins to take shape.** The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace to reflect the image of the Son of God (cf. *Rom* 8:29ff.). There is nothing authentically human – our thoughts and affections, our words and deeds – that does not find in the sacrament of the Eucharist the form it needs to be lived to the full. Here we can see the full human import of the radical newness brought by Christ in the Eucharist: the worship of God in our lives cannot be relegated to something private and individual, but tends by its nature to permeate every aspect of our existence. Worship pleasing to God thus becomes a new way of living our whole life, each particular moment of which is lifted up, since it is lived as part of a relationship with Christ and as an offering to God. The glory of God is the living man (cf. *1 Cor* 10:31). And the life of man is the vision of God. (203)
- SC 77. Significantly, the Synod Fathers stated that **"the Christian faithful need a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and their daily lives. Eucharistic spirituality is not just participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life."** (216) This observation is particularly insightful, given our situation today. It must be acknowledged that one of the most serious effects of the secularization just mentioned is that it has relegated the Christian faith to the margins of life as if it were irrelevant to everyday affairs. The futility of this way of living – "as if God did not exist" – is now evident to everyone. Today there is a need to rediscover that Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman. Hence **the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into a life lived "according to the Spirit"** (*Rom* 8:4ff.; cf. *Gal* 5:16, 25). It is significant that Saint Paul, in the passage of the *Letter to the Romans* where he invites his hearers to offer the new spiritual worship, also speaks of the need for a change in their way of living and thinking: "Do not be conformed to this world but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). In this way the Apostle of the Gentiles emphasizes the link between true spiritual worship and the need for a new way of understanding and living one's life. **An integral part of the eucharistic form of the Christian life is a new way of thinking**, "so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (*Eph* 4:14).
- SC 31. **If the Eucharist is the centre and summit of the Church's life, it is likewise the centre and summit of priestly ministry.** For this reason, with a heart filled with gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ, I repeat that the Eucharist **"is the principal and central *raison d'être* of the sacrament of priesthood, which effectively came into being at the moment of the institution of the Eucharist."** Priests are engaged in a wide variety of pastoral activities. If we also consider the social and cultural conditions of the modern world it is easy to understand how priests face the very real *risk of losing their focus* amid such a great number of different tasks. The Second Vatican Council saw in pastoral charity the bond which gives unity to the priest's life and work. This, the Council adds, **"flows mainly from the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is therefore the centre and root of the whole priestly life"**. We can understand, then, how important it is for the spiritual life of the priest, as well as for the good of the Church and the world, that priests follow the Council's recommendation to celebrate the Eucharist daily. ... In

this way priests will be able to counteract the daily tensions which lead to a lack of focus and they will find in the Eucharistic Sacrifice – the true centre of their lives and ministry – the spiritual strength needed to deal with their different pastoral responsibilities. Their daily activity will thus become truly Eucharistic.

- SC 80. The eucharistic form of the Christian life is **seen in a very special way in the priesthood. Priestly spirituality is intrinsically eucharistic.** The seeds of this spirituality are already found in the words spoken by the Bishop during the ordination liturgy: **"Receive the oblation of the holy people to be offered to God. Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's Cross."** (222) **In order to give an ever greater eucharistic form to his existence, the priest, beginning with his years in the seminary, should make his spiritual life his highest priority.** (223) He is called to seek God tirelessly, while remaining attuned to the concerns of his brothers and sisters. An intense spiritual life will enable him to enter more deeply into communion with the Lord and to let himself be possessed by God's love, bearing witness to that love at all times, even the darkest and most difficult. To this end I join the Synod Fathers in recommending **"the daily celebration of Mass, even when the faithful are not present."** (224) This recommendation is consistent with the objectively infinite value of every celebration of the Eucharist, and is motivated by the Mass's unique spiritual fruitfulness. **If celebrated in a faith-filled and attentive way, Mass is formative in the deepest sense of the word,** since it fosters the priest's configuration to Christ and strengthens him in his vocation.
- DLMP:
 - 52. Sacramental memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ, real and efficacious representation of the singular re-deeming Sacrifice, **source and apex of the Christian life and all evangelisation, the Eucharist is the beginning, means and end of the priestly ministry,** since "all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Holy Eucharist and are directed towards it." **Consecrated in order to perpetuate the Holy Sacrifice, the priest thus manifests his identity in the most evident manner.**
 - 52. In fact, **there is an intimate connection among the centrality of the Eucharist, pastoral charity and the unity of the life of the priest,** who therein finds decisive indications for the way to holiness to which he has been specifically called. If the priest lends to Christ, the Most Eternal High Priest, his intelligence, his will, his voice and his hands so through his ministry he may offer to the Father the sacramental sacrifice of redemption, **he is to embrace the dispositions of the Master and, like him, live as a gift for his brothers.** He is therefore to learn to unite himself intimately to the offering, placing on the altar of the sacrifice his whole life as a revealing sign of God's gratuitous and prevenient love.
 - 67. The priest is called to **celebrate the Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice, to meditate constantly on what it means and transform his life into a Eucharist, which becomes manifest in love for daily sacrifice, especially in fulfilling the duties and offices proper to his state.** Love for the cross leads the priest to become himself an offering pleasing to the Father through Christ (cf. Rm 12:1). **Loving the Cross in a hedonistic society is a scandal,** but from a perspective of faith **it is the fount of interior life.** The priest must preach the redemptive value of the cross with his style of life.
 - It is necessary to evoke the **irreplaceable value for the priest of the daily celebration of the Holy Mass** – the "source and summit" of the priestly life – even if it should not be possible to have the faithful present. In this regard Benedict XVI teaches: "To this end I join the Synod Fathers in recommending 'the daily celebration of the Holy Mass, even when the faithful are not present'. This recommendation is consistent with the objectively infinite value of every celebration of the Eucharist, and is motivated by its unique spiritual fruitfulness. **If celebrated in a faith-filled and attentive way, the Holy Mass is formative in the deepest sense of the word, since it fosters the priest's configuration to Christ and strengthens him in his vocation.**"
 - **He is to live the celebration of the Eucharist as the core moment of his day and his**

daily ministry, the fruit of sincere desire and occasion for a deep and effective encounter with Christ. **In the Eucharist the priest learns to give himself each day, not only in moments of great difficulty, but also in minor daily setbacks.** This learning experience is reflected in love in preparing himself for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice and living it in piety without haste, ever attentive to the liturgical norms and the rubrics so the faithful may in this manner perceive an authentic catechesis.

- **The priests who fail to celebrate the Holy Mass well reveal the weakness of their faith and do not educate others to the faith. Conversely, celebrating the Holy Mass well constitutes an initial important catechesis on the Holy Sacrifice.** In a special way the liturgical norms must be respected with generous fidelity during the celebration of the Eucharist.
- 68. The centrality of the Eucharist must appear not only in the worthy and deeply felt celebration of the Sacrifice, but also in **frequent adoration of the Sacrament of the Altar so the priest may be seen as a model for the flock also in devout attention and assiduous meditation in the presence of the Lord in the tabernacle.** It is hoped that the priests entrusted with the guidance of communities would dedicate **long periods of time to community adoration** – for example, every Thursday, the days of prayer for vocations, etc. – and **reserve to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, also outside Holy Mass, attention and honours superior to any other rite and act. ... Inspired by the example of their pastors' faith, the faithful will seek occasions throughout the week to go to church and adore our Lord present in the Tabernacle.**

- Practical issues

- Problems and challenges today

- EE. 10. Unfortunately, alongside these lights, *there are also shadows.* **In some places the practice of Eucharistic adoration has been almost completely abandoned. In various parts of the Church abuses have occurred, leading to confusion with regard to sound faith and Catholic doctrine concerning this wonderful sacrament.** At times one encounters an extremely reductive understanding of the Eucharistic mystery. **Stripped of its sacrificial meaning, it is celebrated as if it were simply a fraternal banquet.** Furthermore, **the necessity of the ministerial priesthood, grounded in apostolic succession, is at times obscured and the sacramental nature of the Eucharist is reduced to its mere effectiveness as a form of proclamation.** This has led here and there to ecumenical initiatives which, albeit well-intentioned, indulge in Eucharistic practices contrary to the discipline by which the Church expresses her faith. **How can we not express profound grief at all this? The Eucharist is too great a gift to tolerate ambiguity and depreciation.**
- Pew Study last year on knowledge of the faith.
 - Only 50 percent of U.S. Catholics said that they knew the Church's teaching that after the consecration, the bread and wine are totally changed into Jesus' body and blood; 45 percent said that the Church teaches that the "bread" and "wine" are only symbols, and five percent didn't know what the Church teaches.
 - Even among the 50 percent of those who were aware of the Church's teaching, a third said that they still regarded the Eucharist as a symbol, leaving a total of only 31 percent who actually believed the Church's teaching. 69 percent of Catholics said that they believe that the Eucharist was just a symbol — that Jesus is not on the altar after the consecration, or in the tabernacle, or in us after Holy Communion.
 - Rather than news, the report was a confirmation of what had long been known and inferred: there is a grave crisis in Eucharistic faith. That crisis is ultimately at the root of many others: low Mass attendance, shuttered parishes, closed schools, insufficient priestly vocations, waning Catholic influence in society, growing secularism, and, as Pope-emeritus Benedict incisively wrote in April, even the clerical sexual abuse of minors.

- That's why the results have justly been occupying the attention of bishops, priests, commentators, and all those who care about the Church and the Lord.
- Many have focused on the need for much better catechesis across the board. That's absolutely true, but inadequate and shortsighted. Christianity is not a classroom trying to help people pass a standardized test, but a way of life. Even if the results came back and 100 percent of surveyed Catholics identified the Church's teaching with precision and affirmed faith in it, the larger question would remain: are they living Eucharistic lives, with Jesus in the Eucharist as the source, summit, root and center of their existence?
- Knowing and believing are indispensable steps, but the goal is Eucharistic living. This is something that goes far beyond mere Sunday Mass attendance. It's whether we live in holy communion with the Risen Lord incarnate in the Eucharist, whether we draw our life from him, whether we permit Him from within to make our life a commentary on the words of consecration.
 - Rate of people returning to the Sacraments after COVID.
- Living a Eucharistic life
 - Daily Mass
 - Sept 24, 1988
 - Strengthens us each day
- Learning the *Ars Celebrandi*
 - SC 38. The primary way to foster the participation of the People of God in the sacred rite is the proper celebration of the rite itself. The *ars celebrandi* is the best way to ensure their *actuosa participatio*. (114) The *ars celebrandi* is the fruit of faithful adherence to the liturgical norms in all their richness; indeed, for two thousand years this way of celebrating has sustained the faith life of all believers, called to take part in the celebration as the People of God, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (cf. *1 Pet* 2:4-5, 9) (115).
 - SC 64. Given the vital importance of this personal and conscious *participatio*, what methods of formation are needed? The Synod Fathers unanimously indicated, in this regard, a mystagogical approach to catechesis, which would lead the faithful to understand more deeply the mysteries being celebrated. (186) In particular, **given the close relationship between the *ars celebrandi* and an *actuosa participatio*, it must first be said that "the best catechesis on the Eucharist is the Eucharist itself, celebrated well."** (187) By its nature, the liturgy can be pedagogically effective in helping the faithful to enter more deeply into the mystery being celebrated. That is why, in the Church's most ancient tradition, the process of Christian formation always had an experiential character. While not neglecting a systematic understanding of the content of the faith, it centred on a vital and convincing encounter with Christ, as proclaimed by authentic witnesses. It is first and foremost the witness who introduces others to the mysteries.
 - DLMP: 52. **All of this makes clear the great responsibility which belongs to priests in particular for the celebration of the Eucharist.** It is their responsibility to preside at the Eucharist *in persona Christi* and to provide a witness to and a service of communion not only for the community directly taking part in the celebration, but also for the universal Church, which is a part of every Eucharist. It must be lamented that, especially in the years following the post-conciliar liturgical reform, as a result of a **misguided sense of creativity and adaptation there have been a number of *abuses*** which have been a source of suffering for many. **A certain reaction against "formalism" has led some, especially in certain regions, to consider the "forms" chosen by the Church's great liturgical tradition and her Magisterium as non-binding and to introduce unauthorized innovations which are often completely inappropriate.** ... I consider it my duty, therefore to appeal urgently that the **liturgical norms for the celebration of the Eucharist be observed with great fidelity.** These norms are a concrete expression of the authentically ecclesial nature of the Eucharist; this is their deepest meaning. Liturgy

is never anyone's private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community in which the mysteries are celebrated. ... Our time, too, calls for a renewed awareness and appreciation of liturgical norms as a reflection of, and a witness to, the one universal Church made present in every celebration of the Eucharist. Priests who faithfully celebrate Mass according to the liturgical norms, and communities which conform to those norms, quietly but eloquently demonstrate their love for the Church.

- MND 18. 18. **The way that the ministers and the faithful treat the Eucharist should be marked by profound respect.**⁽¹⁶⁾ **The presence of Jesus in the tabernacle must be a kind of *magnetic pole* attracting an ever greater number of souls enamoured of him, ready to wait patiently to hear his voice and, as it were, to sense the beating of his heart. “O taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Ps 34:8).**
- Pope Benedict has stressed throughout his pontificate the importance of the “ars celebrandi,” of the art of celebrating Mass the way the Church intends, the way the Holy Spirit wants to inspire.
- Meeting with the Priests of Albano at Castelgandolfo, August 31, 2006
 - A parochial vicar named Fr. Vittorio Petruzzi, asked him: “*Holy Father, can you help us to understand how all this can be expressed in the “ars celebrandi”?*” The Holy Father replied:
 - I would say that there are different dimensions. The first dimension is that the *celebratio* is prayer and a conversation with God: God with us and us with God. Thus, the first requirement for a good celebration is that the priest truly enter this colloquy. In proclaiming the Word, he feels himself in conversation with God. He is a listener to the Word and a preacher of the Word, in the sense that he makes himself an instrument of the Lord and seeks to understand this Word of God which he must then transmit to the people. He is in a conversation with God because the texts of Holy Mass are not theatrical scripts or anything like them, but prayers, thanks to which, together with the assembly, I speak to God.
 - It is important, therefore, to enter into this conversation. St Benedict in his "Rule" tells the monks, speaking of the recitation of the Psalms, "*Mens concordet voci*". The *vox*, words, precede our mind. This is not usually the case: one has to think first, then one's thought becomes words. But here, the words come first. The sacred Liturgy gives us the words; we must enter into these words, find a harmony with this reality that precedes us.
 - In addition, we must also learn to understand the structure of the Liturgy and why it is laid out as it is. The Liturgy developed in the course of two millennia and even after the Reformation was not something worked out by simply a few liturgists. It has always remained a continuation of this on-going growth of worship and proclamation,
 - This is the first condition: we ourselves must interiorize the structure, the words of the Liturgy, the Word of God. Thus, our celebration truly becomes a celebration "with" the Church: our hearts are enlarged and we are not doing just anything but are "with" the Church, in conversation with God. It seems to me that people truly feel that we converse with God, with them, and that in this common prayer we attract others, in communion with the children of God we attract others; or if not, we are only doing something superficial.
 - Thus, **the fundamental element of the true *ars celebrandi* is this consonance, this harmony between what we say with our lips and what we think with our heart.** The "*Sursum corda*", which is a very ancient word of the Liturgy, should come before the Preface, before the Liturgy, as the "path" for our speaking and thinking. We must raise our heart to the Lord, not only as a ritual response but as an expression of what is happening in this heart that is uplifted, and also lifts up others.
 - In other words, the *ars celebrandi* is not intended as an invitation to some sort of theatre or show, but to an interiority that makes itself felt and becomes acceptable and evident to the people taking part. **Only if they see that this is not an exterior or spectacular *ars* - we are not actors! - but the expression of the journey of our heart that attracts their hearts too, will the Liturgy become beautiful, will it become the communion with the Lord of all who are present.**

reality, to be learned ever anew and ever more deeply at the school of Christ and of the Saints of all the ages. Since the Christian liturgy by its nature is also always a proclamation, we must be people who are familiar with the Word of God, love it and live by it: only then can we explain it in an adequate way. "To serve the Lord" - **priestly service precisely also means to learn to know the Lord in his Word and to make it known to all those he entrusts to us.**

- Entering into the words the Church gives us inwardly
 - We celebrate the Eucharist rightly if with our thoughts and our being we enter into the words which the Church sets before us. There we find the prayer of all generations, which accompany us along the way towards the Lord. As priests, in the Eucharistic celebration we are those who by their prayer blaze a trail for the prayer of today's Christians. If we are inwardly united to the words of prayer, if we let ourselves be guided and transformed by them, then the faithful will also enter into those words. **And then all of us will become truly "one body, one spirit" in Christ.**(Chrism Mass, April 9, 2009)
- Some thoughts on the *Ars Celebrandi* from a lay woman
 - I am very close friends with a family in Portugal. The wife, Maria, had been a Carmelite novice in France before she realized God was calling her to marriage. She now is the mother of seven in Lisbon, a contributor to the Portuguese version of *Communio*, a true contemplative in the middle of the world. During the year for priests, she and her husband started a movement specifically to thank priests, having dinners in their honor, taking out full-page ads in their national newspapers with thousands of names just to say to the priests of Portugal, "We love you and we're so grateful for all you do to bring us to God." Because she's a busy mom who wants to attend Mass each day, she's often traveling all over the place in Lisbon to attend while fulfilling her duties as a mom. Because she knows I preach a lot of retreats to priests, she once wrote me a heart-felt letter sharing some of her observations about a lot of things in the hope that her observations from the pews may be of use to us.
 - I'd just like to share with you a few of her thoughts about the "body language" involved in the *ars celebrandi*:
 - If it is said that children learn by imitating their parents' example, you could say that a thousand fold for the priest and his community.
 - A priest's way of kneeling reveals a lot about the intensity of purpose and love with which he enters the Church to say Mass. Right knee to the floor, before the altar or the tabernacle, never less than one full second, shows us you know it is God you are adoring.
 - After the readings and homily, we need a little time to assimilate. If you sit down after the homily and wait a little before you proceed, you will be training us into listening with our hearts to the Word of God. Every Mass can then become like a short retreat.
 - [Please pray and don't rush through the offertory.] I try to tell my children that at that time, the angels will take whatever it is we want to entrust God with to the altar. But they can only do so if we [have time to] formalize in our hearts what particular blessings we are grateful for, what joys or sorrows, worries or intentions we may have. Most people are unaware that this is the time to offer this particular Mass, their entire life, everything to God, with Jesus.
 - If the consecration words are said in a lower tone of voice, with no hurry, powerfully, it will help us re-center at that most important moment of the Mass. For a mother trying to get her young kids to be attentive, it is wonderful to be able to tell them that when the priest speaks slower and with a different tone of voice – that that is the moment when Jesus becomes present on the altar, especially if there are no bells. We need time also to help our little ones say their adoring "My dear Jesus, I love you so» or something of the kind."

- A particular priest, whose piety has greatly impressed me, holds the consecrated host and chalice way up high for 8 full seconds and then puts his right knee on the floor for 3 full seconds (to time yourself one suggestion is to find a prayer that takes that long to be uttered and then say it slowly, for example the Fátima prayer «My God I believe, adore, hope and love you; I beg your forgiveness for those who do not believe, do not adore, do not hope and do not love you»).
- It will also become very telling if you put it down very delicately with the reverence of knowing that it is no longer a piece of bread but our living God, as real and true as He is in His majesty in heaven. I always think of the awe with which Our Lady must have put down the sleeping Baby Jesus in His cradle!
- Your posture is also very revealing. If you close your eyes once in a while and pause in silent prayer after having invited us to a more intentional prayer with the «Let us pray» we will learn the timings and different intensities of the liturgy and we will know we can pray with our body too. We are in no hurry. You may pause when you like and when you want us to pay further attention. If sometimes you change the rhythm or tone of a prayer we will 'hear' that you are praying and not just repeating prayers.
- Let your gestures be graceful, gracious and aesthetically very beautiful. Very extreme gesture like holding your arms straight up, tend to make us focus on irrelevant things like the shirt the priest is wearing. ... What you do with your hands at all times is very important: if you prefer not to use the very classical way of putting the two hands together, there are other ways of joining hands that confer prayerfulness and composure. But choose one and stick to it as your particular spiritual posture, your 'signature'. Your hands are precious. You have been consecrated to perform the biggest miracles. Don't let the knowledge of your own shortcomings interfere with what God is doing through you.
- As the Blessed Sacrament is taken to the tabernacle, hold [the ciborium] up high. Our Lord is going to stay in the tabernacle, He is no longer on the altar, and it is instructing to see that He deserves reverence and adoration.
- How great [it is] when we can tell you are not a bureaucrat of the Mass and that the Mass, this particular Mass, the Lord and this community is the real object of your love and the affection of your priestly heart.”
- Conclusion
 - Living the Mysteries Priests celebrate.
 - The *ars celebrandi* becomes the *ars vivendi* and vice versa.
 - Let us turn to our Lady and to St. Joseph and ask them to pray for us.