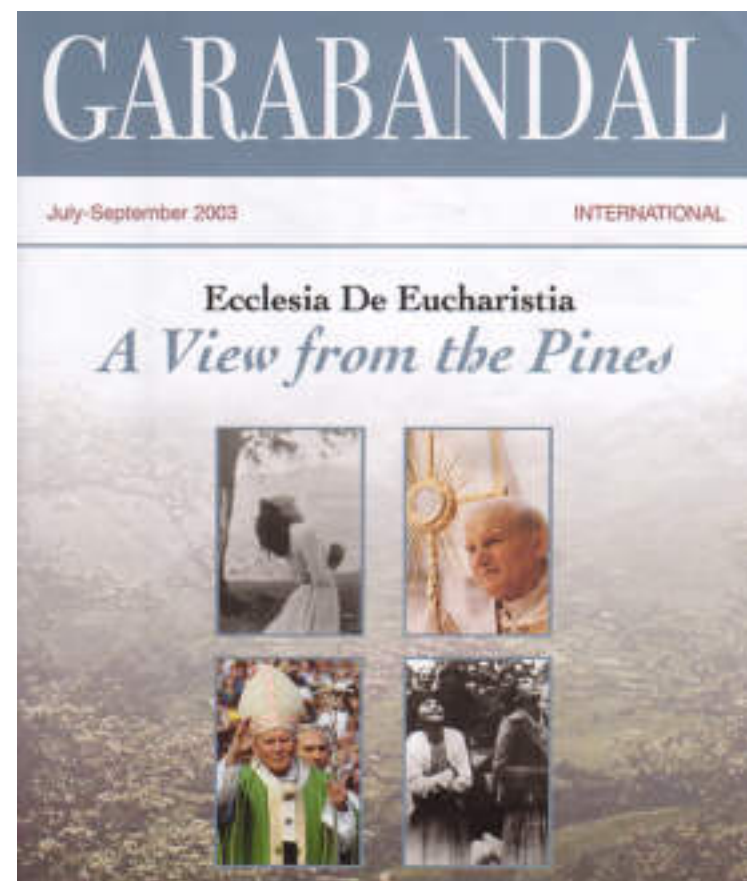


Ecclesia De Eucharistia: A View from The Pines

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written by Gabriel Garnica



In his most recent document, Pope John Paul II tackles an issue that has become as controversial as it is central to the Catholic faith: The Eucharist.

As in his other recent writings on the Rosary, the Holy Father serves as a beacon of light in a world increasingly clouded by confusion, distortion, and compromise. Equally important, however, is the strong inclusion of the Blessed Virgin Mary in John Paul's eucharistic writings, and his elegant and profound advocacy for her role in true eucharistic adoration. To the Garabandal follower, this connection between the Eucharist and our Blessed Mother rings a familiar, and pleasant, tune.

The numerous points made in *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* can be grouped into five general themes, all relevant to the Garabandal message and events. Likewise, the last of these general themes, relating to the importance of Mary in eucharistic relevance and adoration, can itself be presented in five points, all relevant and

critically tied to the Garabandal events and message.

Five General Themes

One of the central themes of the Pope's document is the idea that the Eucharist is both the life blood and the mortar of the Church, constantly revitalizing and building it. It is not simply some daily faith expression or fraternal banquet, but a "constant fulfillment of the promise that Christ will be with us always." The Eucharist is a sacrificial and sacramental gift of Christ of Himself to us. We recall that at Garabandal the Virgin Mary told the children that it was a greater grace to receive Jesus in Holy Communion than to see Her! Also, given a choice between a locution and a Communion, the children unhesitatingly chose Communion. Finally, we should recall that the first miracle at Garabandal, that of the visible Host, was of a eucharistic nature. How reverently and lovingly the children came to see Communion at the instruction of our Mother! Alas, how disrespectfully and disgracefully many treat the Eucharist today. From laughing on the way to receiving it, to treating the Host as some sort of "cookie", many today have lost the sense of how important and relevant the Eucharist really is in the life of the Church and the faithful.

Another theme of the Pope's document, most important in our faith yet under seige in modernist trends, is the concept of the Real Presence of Christ within the Eucharist. John Paul II reminds us that Christ is wholly and entirely present in the Eucharist. Unlike those who view Communion as a symbolic reminder of the Last Supper, Catholics believe the Eucharist is the reception of Christ Himself. This is one reason why the Pope is concerned with allowing ecumenical efforts to overshadow and replace basic Catholic cornerstones regarding the Eucharist. Included in these concerns is the highly publicized warning that non-Catholics should not receive Communion in a Catholic Church. As noted above, our Blessed Mother clearly reminded us of the Real Presence by her words and actions at Garabandal.

A third theme regarding the Eucharist expressed in *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* runs consistent with the theme of eucharistic respect and reverence. John Paul II reminds us that we must first confess our sins before receiving Communion, as outlined in the teachings of the Council of Trent. The Pope notes that while our state of grace is a private matter based on a self-examination of conscience, any outward conduct while living in a state of public sin calls for direct Church involvement. An example of this would be receiving Communion while living with someone outside of marriage, or after marrying outside the Church without a valid annulment to a previous Church marriage. We recall that at Garabandal the Virgin did not kiss a wedding ring belonging to someone in a false matrimonial state, and that the children often knew while in locution those in such states. The angry and arrogant outcries of people in such situations "demanding" to be allowed to receive Communion is a clear example of a society where personal idolatry, freedom, and disrespect seeks to overturn God Himself.

The Pope also stresses the theme that the sacrificial and sacramental nature of the mystery of the Eucharist does not allow for reduction or exploitation. It must be "expressed and lived in its integrity both in its celebration and prayerful meditation afterward". The message of June 18, 1965 stated: "Less and less importance is being given to the Eucharist." We thus see that Pope John Paul's *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* is a reminder of many of the concerns present at Garabandal.

The final general theme, and the springboard to our discussion of Mary's role in all of this, is the Pope's clear message that she has a central and critical role in eucharistic devotion. Nowhere is this more evident than at Garabandal, where the Virgin brought us a message steeped in Eucharistic reverence and adoration. Let us briefly tie together five points eloquently made by our Pope, all relative to Garabandal.

Mary was the first "tabernacle" in history in which the Son of God allowed Himself to be adored (by Elizabeth). Did not our Blessed Mother appear at Garabandal holding her Divine Son both physically in her arms and profoundly in her words and example?

The Eucharist, as a reminder of Calvary, is therefore a reminder of the giving to us of Mary as our spiritual mother. In one beautiful yet concise expression, the Pope begins the bridge between our Blessed Mother and the Eucharist. How powerfully the Garabandal message drives home the notion of Mary as our heavenly mother! Are not the Garabandal accounts filled with stories of motherly love, concern, and even playfulness?

Mary is present with the Church and as the Mother of the Church at each of our celebrations of the Eucharist. If the Church and the Eucharist are inseparable, so are Mary and the Eucharist. It is impossible to think of the visible Host and the Eucharistic elements of the Garabandal message without thinking of her who appeared there!

Mary's *Magnificat* represents the true eucharistic attitude of praising God through, in, and with Jesus. Just as Mary's life was shown in this utterance, so the Eucharist is given us so that we can try to make our own selves offer a *Magnificat* as well. Does not the Garabandal message, taken as a whole, demonstrate a model of praising God in word and action? Did not the Blessed Virgin carry this message and example to us?

In Mary we also see the mystery, transforming power, renewal, and love of the Eucharist. She is our guide and teacher in the true adoration and respect of the Eucharist. Does not our Blessed Mother represent and show us all of these things? Did not Garabandal become a Marian lesson in such adoration, respect, and application of eucharistic power?

In conclusion, our spiritual guide here on earth, Pope John Paul II, has once again blessed us with a profound and relevant document to nourish our efforts to live as Christ taught us to live. In this document, he reminds us that the Eucharist is central to the life and action of the Church. This treasure from heaven transforms humble bread and wine into the food we need for our own journey. It also reminds us of Calvary,

the mystery of salvation, and of the role of our Blessed Mother as our guide and example in living a life along the lines of her *Magnificat*.

We must never allow this treasure to be tarnished by the conventions of an increasingly disrespectful, forgetful, and arrogant world. Both the events and message of Garabandal and *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* remind us that, through the most holy Eucharist, Christ walks beside us on our own road to Emmaus, where we will come to know Him "through the breaking of the bread".

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Eucharistia de Ecclesia

written by Geoffrey A. P. Groesbeck

The 14th encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Eucharistia in Ecclesia*, offers a deeper reflection on the mystery of the Eucharist in its relationship with the Church. It was delivered on Holy Thursday, 2003. In sum, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, "the source and summit of the Christian life", contains the Church's entire spiritual wealth: Jesus Christ, who offers himself to the Father for the redemption of the world.

The first chapter, "The Mystery of Faith", explains the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist which, through the ministry of the priest, makes sacramentally present at each Mass the body given up and the blood poured out by Christ for the world's salvation. The celebration of the Eucharist is *not* a repetition of Christ's passover, or its multiplication in time and in space; it is the one sacrifice of the Cross, which is re-presented until the end of time. It is, in the words of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, "a medicine of immortality, an antidote to death". As a pledge of the future Kingdom, the Eucharist also reminds believers of their responsibility in the present, in which the weak, the powerless, and the poor, await help from those who, by their solidarity, can give them reason for hope.

"The Eucharist Builds the Church" is the title of the second chapter. When the faithful approach the sacred banquet, not only do they receive Christ, but they in turn are received by Him. The consecrated bread and wine are the force that generates the Church's unity. The Church is united to the Lord who, veiled by the Eucharist, dwells within the community of the faithful and builds it up. We worship him not only at Mass itself, but at all other times as well.

The third chapter is entitled "The Apostolicity of the Eucharist and of the Church". The priest who celebrates the Eucharist acts in the person of Christ the Head; he does not possess the Eucharist as its master, but is its servant for the benefit of the community of the saved. Indeed, the Christian community does not "possess" the Eucharist, but receives it as a gift.

These reflections are developed in the fourth chapter, "The Eucharist and Ecclesial Communion". The Church, as the minister of Christ's body and blood for the salvation of the world, abides by all that Christ established. Faithful to the teaching of the apostles, united in the discipline of the sacraments, it must also manifest in a visible manner its invisible unity. The Eucharist cannot be "used" as a means of communion; rather, it presupposes communion as already existing and strengthens it. In this context, emphasis is given to a commitment to ecumenism, which must mark all the Lord's followers: the Eucharist creates and builds communion when it is celebrated truthfully. It cannot be subject to the whim of individual or particular communities.

"The Dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration" is the subject of the fifth chapter. The celebration of the Mass is marked by outward signs aimed at emphasising the joy that should mark the community around the incomparable gift of the Eucharist. Architecture, sculpture, painting, music, literature, and, more generally, every form of art demonstrate how the Church, down the centuries, has feared no extravagance in her

witness to the love that unites it to Christ. A recovery of this sense of beauty also is needed in today's celebrations.

The sixth chapter, "At the School of Mary, 'Woman of the Eucharist'", is a timely and original reflection on the analogy between the Mother of God, who by bearing the body of Jesus in her womb became the first "tabernacle", and the Church, who in its heart preserves and offers to the world Christ's body and blood. The Eucharist is given to believers so that their life may become a continuous *Magnificat* in honour of the Trinity.

The Conclusion is insistent: those who wish to pursue the path of holiness need no new "programmes". The programme already exists: it is Christ Himself who calls out to be known, loved, imitated and proclaimed. The implementation of this process passes through the Eucharist. This is seen from the witness of the saints, who slaked their thirst at the inexhaustible source of this mystery and drew from it the spiritual power needed to live fully their baptismal calling.

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