



The Holy See

***VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS IN CEBU, PHILIPPINES
[24-31 JANUARY 2016]***

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet all of you gathered in Cebu for the Fifty-first International Eucharistic Congress. I thank Cardinal Bo, who is my representative among you, and I offer a special greeting to Cardinal Vidal, Archbishop Palma and the bishops, priests and faithful in Cebu and all the Philippines. I also greet Cardinal Tagle and all the Catholics of the Philippines. I am particularly happy that this Congress has brought together so many people from the vast continent of Asia and from throughout the world.

Just one year ago, I visited the Philippines in the wake of Typhoon Yolanda. I was able to witness at first hand the deep faith and resilience of its people. Under the protection of the Santo Niño, the Filipino people received the Gospel of Jesus Christ some five hundred years ago. Ever since, they have given the world an example of fidelity and deep devotion to the Lord and his Church. They have also been a people of missionaries, spreading the light of the Gospel in Asia and to the ends of the earth.

The theme of the Eucharistic Congress – *Christ in You, Our Hope of Glory* – is very timely. It reminds us that the risen Jesus is always alive and present in his Church, above all in the Eucharist, the sacrament of his Body and Blood. Christ's presence among us is not only a consolation, but also a promise and a summons. It is a promise that everlasting joy and peace will one day be ours in the fullness of his Kingdom. But it is also a summons to go forth, as missionaries, to bring the message of the Father's tenderness, forgiveness and mercy to every man, woman and child.

How much our world needs this message! When we think of the conflicts, the injustices and the

urgent humanitarian crises which mark our time, we realize how important it is for every Christian to be a true missionary disciple, bringing the good news of Christ's redemptive love to a world in such need of reconciliation, justice and peace.

So it is fitting that this Congress has been celebrated in the Year of Mercy, in which the whole Church is invited to concentrate on the heart of the Gospel. We are called to bring the balm of God's merciful love to the whole human family, binding up wounds, bringing hope where despair so often seems to have the upper hand.

As you now prepare to "go forth" at the end of this Eucharistic Congress, there are two gestures of Jesus at the Last Supper which I would ask you to reflect on. Both have to do with the missionary dimension of the Eucharist. They are table fellowship and the washing of feet.

We know how important it was for Jesus to share meals with his disciples, but also, and especially, with sinners and the outcast. Sitting at table, Jesus was able to listen to others, to hear their stories, to appreciate their hopes and aspirations, and to speak to them of the Father's love. At each Eucharist, the table of the Lord's Supper, we should be inspired to follow his example, by reaching out to others, in a spirit of respect and openness, in order to share with them the gift we ourselves have received.

In Asia, where the Church is committed to respectful dialogue with the followers of other religions, this prophetic witness most often takes place, as we know, through the dialogue of life. Through the testimony of lives transformed by God's love, we best proclaim the Kingdom's promise of reconciliation, justice and unity for the human family. Our example can open hearts to the grace of the Holy Spirit, who leads them to Christ the Savior.

The other image which the Lord offers us at the Last Supper is the washing of feet. On the eve of his passion, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples as a sign of humble service, of the unconditional love with which he gave his life on the Cross for the salvation of the world. The Eucharist is a school of humble service. It teaches us readiness to be there for others. This too is at the heart of missionary discipleship.

Here I think of the aftermath of the typhoon. It brought immense devastation to the Philippines, yet it also brought in its wake an immense outpouring of solidarity, generosity and goodness. People set about rebuilding not just homes, but lives. The Eucharist speaks to us of that power, which flows from the Cross and constantly brings new life. It changes hearts. It enables us to be caring, to protect the poor and the vulnerable, and to be sensitive to the cry of our brothers and sisters in need. It teaches us to act with integrity and to reject the injustice and corruption which poison the roots of society.

Dear friends, may this Eucharistic Congress strengthen you in your love of Christ present in the

Eucharist. May it enable you, as missionary disciples, to bring this great experience of ecclesial communion and missionary outreach to your families, your parishes and communities, and your local Churches. May it be a leaven of reconciliation and peace for the entire world.

Now, at the end of the Congress, I am happy to announce that the next International Eucharistic Congress will take place in 2020 in Budapest, Hungary. I ask all of you to join me in praying for its spiritual fruitfulness and for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all engaged in its preparation. As you return to your homes renewed in faith, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and your families as a pledge of abiding joy and peace in the Lord.