



Homily of His Eminence, Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Chaldean Rite. Chaldean Cathedral of Detroit, Wednesday 19 June 2019 A.D.

Your Excellency, Bishop Frank,

Your Excellencies, Bishops Emanuel, Bawai, Ibrahim,

Reverend Fathers, Religious Brothers and Sisters,

Sisters and Brothers in the Lord!

1. This evening, the vigil of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, we are gathered to celebrate the Lord's Eucharist. I am very glad to be here with you, and as I said during the meeting with the priests, I would like to commend to your prayers as the special intention of this liturgy, the Holy Father, who has asked me to bring you his special greetings and to bless you in his name. Last week, during the Audience he granted to the Agencies that help the Catholic Eastern Churches (ROACO), Pope Francis announced his will to visit Iraq next year. Let us pray to the Lord for the fulfilment of this desire, and that his pilgrimage may contribute to peace in the country and be a sign of particular consolation for the Christian community, so sorely tried by the 4 years of war and not a few episodes of persecution. This apostolic voyage will be one of the fruits of the prayer in Bari on July 7 last year, when the Holy Father gathered the Catholic and Orthodox Patriarchs of the Middle East to pray together and dialog for peace in the region. This fact alone should make us reflect on the strength of prayer, which can bring down walls and overcome oppositions, open breaches in hearts hardened by hatred and violence, take steps that – though still marked by human weakness – are quickened by the power of God. We unite ourselves to Patriarch Sako, who raises his voice without fear so that the Christian presence is not neglected and so that Christians are guaranteed the possibility of being good citizens who collaborate for the common good of the whole country.
2. The readings set us on a journey within the Eucharistic mystery. The page from the book of Genesis portrays Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, offering bread and wine. St. Paul, through his letter to the Christians at Corinth, has reminded us that, eating of the one Bread, we too, though many, become one Body. In the Gospel passage about the Bread of Life discourse in the Synagogue of Capernaum, Jesus himself affirms that whoever eats of Him has eternal life. Along this path, we can recognize some indications for our personal life and that of our communities: God goes ahead of us, enabling us to recognize his presence through signs on our way; He nourishes us so that we can live the gift of communion with Him and between us, manifesting this communion to the world; those who live in His friendship experience eternal life already in the present life.
3. God goes ahead of us, anticipates us, gives us a foretaste of His presence that never lets us down: many are the times in life in which we might find ourselves lost or undecided about which road to take. In various ways, the Lord sends us signs, through silence and prayer, listening to His Word, and through the closeness of a family member or fellow Christian.



Think of the very existence of your Eparchy, just like those of San Diego, Canada or Australia. There was a time when it would have seemed impossible to imagine that today so many daughters and sons of the Chaldean Church would find themselves continuing to cultivate their ecclesial tradition, with celebrations led by your own bishops and priests, thousands of miles away from Iraq your motherland. The daring of those who blazed this trail and the hospitality of the countries that welcome you have made it possible to be the Body of Christ that journeys through time, to be the Chaldean Church in the bosom of the Catholic Church spread throughout the world.

4. Paul reminds us that Jesus feeds us with Himself so that we can live the gift of communion with Him and between us. We cannot however allow ourselves to approach His altar and then return to our lives as if nothing happened, or worse, to feed the divisions that wound the face of the Church, the Bride of Christ, while showing a sad spectacle to the world. If such an attitude of division is serious among the lay faithful, it is even more harmful when it concerns priests or consecrated persons. It spreads grumbling and thinking poorly of others, sometimes even to the point of calumny. We know how often in history belonging to one village, city or region rather than another prevails over all of us being children of God and of the Chaldean Church in particular. In my visits among our communities in France, Belgium, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Australia and the United States, I have noticed that such divisions often exist. "I am Chaldean, but I'm from that village. I am Chaldean, but I come from Turkey. I am Chaldean, but..." There are too many BUTs, which become barriers and human resistances, which should be purified and overcome, but are often spread as if they were more precious than our life in grace itself.
5. A great help for all of us on this journey of conversion is the testimony of those witnesses who lived their earthly existence in the certainty that eternal life begins already, if, in nourishing ourselves on this Bread, we cultivate friendship with Christ, who is eternal life for us. I think of the martyrs, even if they are not yet officially recognized as such by the Church, Archbishop Raho and Father Ragheed Ghanni among them, but also other less well-known faithful who decided that living for the Lord was more important and more real than keeping their lives for themselves. I think of so many fathers and mothers who suffered, and still suffer, to protect the lives of their children from insidious violence and creeping dangers, which seem to whisper that one can do without God. On the eve of the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ, let us reflect on the words of Father Ragheed: "*Christ with his endless love defies evil, holds us together, and through the Eucharist gives us back the life that the terrorists try to take away from us... I may be wrong, but one thing, only one thing, I am certain is true, always: that the Holy Spirit will continue to enlighten some people so that they may work for the good of humanity, in this world so full of evil.*" May it be so. Let's think and pray with this words also during the procession we will have at the end of the Qurbana.