

The Sacrament of Charity (*Sacramentum Caritatis*) – Pope Benedict XVI — Paragraph 71; 2007

The all-encompassing effect of eucharistic worship

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.

Following the Footsteps of Jesus – *Poverty and Joy* – Wm. Short OFM - pp. 74-75 ORBIS Books – 1999; Reprinted by Permission

In his care for people with Hansen's disease, Francis was following that example of Jesus that he knew from the gospel. Jesus calls others, after his wilderness retreat, to conversion, to repent, to change their lives. To show the effects of this turning to God *Jesus does something specific*: He heals people who are suffering from disease, both physical disease and sickness of spirit (*Mt 4:23-4*). Later in the Gospel, Matthew says, "When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him, and a leper came to him," whom Jesus healed. (*Mt 8:1-3*).

The special role of people with leprosy appears in the exceptions that Francis makes where they are concerned, even in the Rule. Despite his strict prohibitions about receiving money, he makes special provisions for one group of people: the brothers 'may accept money for urgent needs of the lepers.' He places in his list of the 'companions of Jesus' the sick, those who beg, and lepers, including them with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the disciples among those who live by alms. The brothers should 'rejoice' to be in their company.

In his own writings Francis does not speak of the voice from the crucifix at San Damiano telling him to 'rebuild the church.' He never refers to the marks on his body (the stigmata), which others associated with his profound compassion for the suffering of Christ. Rather, Francis speaks about people with leprosy as the context for his conversion to the gospel way of life, the practical experience of 'being with' them, and serving them. Here he found the suffering members of Christ's Body, and beginning with this experience he participated in the passion of Christ.

Penitents served in the leper hospital of Assisi already, so Francis 'did mercy' most likely in the midst of other brother and sister penitents who had taken on this service at the risk of contracting the disease themselves (a widespread fear at the time). To go 'among the lepers' meant exposing himself to risk, for the sake of others considered 'dead to the world.' There may even be reasons to suggest that Francis' multiple illnesses in later life may have derived from infection with the tubercular form of Hansen's disease. And during his lifetime, or shortly thereafter, a place for the brothers who contracted the disease was established at San Lazzaro del Valloncello, outside Assisi.

Saved in Hope (*Spe Salvi*) – Pope Benedict XVI – Paragraph 26; 2007

It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love. This applies even in terms of this present world. When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of “redemption” which gives a new meaning to his life. But soon he will also realize that the love bestowed upon him cannot by itself resolve the question of his life. It is a love that remains fragile. It can be destroyed by death. The human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say: “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (*Rom* 8:38- 39). If this absolute love exists, with its absolute certainty, then—only then—is man “redeemed”, whatever should happen to him in his particular circumstances. This is what it means to say: Jesus Christ has “redeemed” us. Through him we have become certain of God, a God who is not a remote “first cause” of the world, because his only-begotten Son has become man and of him everyone can say: “I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (*Gal* 2:20).

2 Timothy 1:8-14

Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.