

## Extract from Bishops' Teaching on The Eucharist

54 Sunday is the first of all days, the Lord's Day, the day when Christ our Saviour rose from the dead. Christians in our countries need to work together to make this day special to the Lord, but it is above all the celebration of the Eucharist, Sunday after Sunday, which keeps it holy. 'The Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life.' Sunday is 'the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church', and taking part in the Mass every Sunday is 'a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church.' As bishops we reaffirm this obligation, and urge all Catholics in our countries to take part in the Eucharist every Sunday. The very act of coming to Mass on Sunday is a proclamation of our faith and commitment, and a witness to the world. We also strongly encourage daily Mass and Holy Communion when this is possible. God then feeds us with bread from heaven each day of our pilgrim journey, as he fed his people each day with manna in the desert. It is the Lord in person who invites us to come to him in the Eucharist and to receive him: 'Take this, all of you, and eat it', 'Take this, all of you, and drink from it', 'Do this in memory of me.'

55 At Mass and afterwards, Catholics express their faith in the real presence of Christ by genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration. The radical conversion of the inner reality of the bread and wine means that the consecrated elements remain the 'Blessed Sacrament' of Christ's presence when the celebration of the Eucharist is over. Any remaining consecrated hosts are treated with the utmost reverence. For Catholics, reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is 'a sign of Christ's abiding presence in the Church and a much-loved focus of devotion.' Always centred on the actual celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrament is reserved for taking communion to the sick and for silent adoration. 'In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us, and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love.' As bishops we wish strongly to encourage prayer before the Blessed Sacrament: this includes extended periods of Exposition, Benediction and personal visits to church for prayerful adoration. Our response of 'Amen' when we come forward for Holy Communion includes an acceptance in faith of the permanence of the sacramental presence of the Lord, and a readiness to reverence that presence in our hearts, in our prayer and in the way we act in church, together and alone.