Letters to My Brother Priests


Pope John Paul II

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# Contents

**Biblical Abbreviations**

xvi

**Foreword**

xvii

## 1979

*First Year of Pontificate*

- **LETTER TO ALL THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH**
  - 1. For You I Am a Bishop, with You I Am a Priest
  - 2. Love for Christ and the Church Unites Us
  - 3. Chosen from Among Men
  - 4. The Priest As a Gift of Christ for the Community
  - 5. In the Service of the Good Shepherd
  - 6. “The Supreme Art Is the Direction of Souls”
  - 7. Steward and Witness
  - 8. Meaning of Celibacy
  - 9. Test and Responsibility
  - 10. Every Day We Have to Be Converted Anew
  - 11. Mother of Priests

1

## 1980

*Second Year of Pontificate*

- **LETTER TO ALL THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH**
  - On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist
  - *Dominicæ cenæ*
  - 1. Introduction
  - 2. Eucharist and Priesthood
  - 3. Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery
  - 4. Eucharist and Church
  - 5. Eucharist and Charity
  - 6. Eucharist and Neighbor
  - 7. Eucharist and Life
  - 8. Sacred Character
  - 9. Sacrifice
  - 10. The Table of the Word of God
  - 11. The Table of the Bread of the Lord
  - 12. A Common Possession of the Church
  - 13. Conclusion

26
1981

Third Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH

For the 1600th Anniversary of the First Council of Constantinople and the 1550th Anniversary of the Council of Ephesus

1. “I am impelled to write you this letter . . .” 58
3. “. . . the 1550th anniversary of the Council of Ephesus . . .” 60
4. “These two anniversaries, . . . redound to the honor of the Holy Spirit.” 61
5. “I write these things . . .” 62
6. “. . . these events should be lived within the whole of their ecclesiastical context.” 62
7. “When the Son had accomplished the work that the Father gave him to do on earth, . . .” 63
8. “The two phrases in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto and Credo in Spiritum Sanctum, Dominum et vivificantem, . . .” 64
9. “. . . reasons for giving particular emphasis throughout the Church this year, which is the jubilee of two events, to the solemnity of Pentecost.” 65
10. “First, on the morning of the solemnity [of Pentecost] we shall come together in the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican . . .” 66
11. “In the second part of the celebration, . . . in the Basilica of St. Mary Major . . .” 66
12. “Dear brothers, I know that on Holy Thursday you renew . . .” 68

1982

Fourth Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

A Prayer Dictated by Faith and Coming from My Heart

1. “We turn to You, O Christ of the Upper Room and of Calvary, . . .” 72
2. “Lord Jesus Christ, when on the day of Holy Thursday You had to separate Yourself from those whom You had ‘loved to the end,’ You promised them the Spirit of Truth.” 73
3. “We thank You for having likened us to You as ministers of Your Priesthood, . . .” 74
4. “Save us from ‘grieving your Spirit’” 75
5. “Today everything speaks of this love whereby You loved the Church and gave Yourself up for her, in order to make her holy,” 76
6. “. . . this sacred day [Holy Thursday] seems to demand of us complete and absolute sincerity before You, . . .” 77
7. “Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” 77
8. “The Eucharist is first and foremost a gift made to the Church.” 78
9. “We must cry to You with a voice as loud as is demanded by the greatness of the cause and the eloquence of the needs of our time.” 79
10. “We are not told that Your Mother was present in the Upper Room. . . . Nevertheless we pray to You especially through her intercession.” 79
1983  
Fifth Year of Pontificate  
LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH  
Year of Renewal of the Priestly Vocations  
1. “. . . at the beginning of the Holy Year of the Redemption . . . ”  
2. “. . . I wish once more to proclaim the Year  
   commemorating the Redemption.”  
3. “The Redemption remains connected in the closest  
   possible way with forgiveness.”  
4. “. . . the particular grace of the Year of the Redemption  
   is being entrusted to all my brothers in the episcopate, . . .  
   also to you, dear brothers in the Priesthood of Christ.”  
5. “. . . I ask you with all my heart to reflect on the way  
   in which the holy Jubilee of the Year of the Redemption  
   can and should be celebrated in each parish, as also in  
   the other communities of the People of God . . .”

1984  
Sixth Year of Pontificate  
LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH  
Homily for Priests at the Jubilee of Redemption  
1. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, . . .”  
2. “. . . servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God . . .”  
3. “I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever.”  
4. “Day after day, year after year, we discover the content  
   and substance, which are truly inexpressible, of our priesthood  
   in the depths of the mystery of the Redemption.”  
5. “Jesus Christ is in our midst and he says to us:  
   ‘I am the Good Shepherd.’”

1985  
Seventh Year of Pontificate  
LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH  
1. “In the liturgy of Holy Thursday we unite ourselves  
   in a particular way with Christ, who is the eternal  
   and unceasing source . . .”  
2. “On the solemn occasion of Holy Thursday the community  
   of priests—the presbyterate—of each church,  
   beginning with the Church in Rome, gives a particular  
   expression to its unity in the Priesthood of Christ.”  
3. “I therefore wish also . . . to express some thoughts on  
   the theme of youth in the pastoral work of the priests and  
   in general in the apostolate proper to our vocation.”  
4. “Also in this field Jesus Christ is the most perfect model.”  
5. “The priest who is in contact with youth should know how  
   to listen and how to answer.”  
6. “The Evangelist says that Jesus ‘looked at him and loved him.’”  
7. “Love enables us to propose what is good.”  
8. “I will go to the altar of God, to God who gives joy to my youth.”
1986

Eighth Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

1. Holy Thursday, the Feast of Priests
2. The Matchless Example of the Curé of Ars
3. The Truly Extraordinary Life of the Curé of Ars: His tenacious will in preparing for the priesthood
4. The Depth of His Love for Christ and for Souls
5. The Many Wonderful Fruits of His Ministry
6. The Main Acts of the Ministry of the Curé of Ars: Different apostolic approaches to what is essential
7. The Sacrament of Reconciliation
8. The Eucharist: Offering the Mass, Communion and Adoration
9. Preaching and Catechesis
10. The Identity of the Priest: The specific ministry of the priest
11. His Intimate Configuration to Christ and His Solidarity with Sinners
12. Conclusion: for Holy Thursday

1987

Ninth Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

The Prayer of Jesus

I. BETWEEN THE UPPER ROOM AND GETHSEMANE
1. “All of us . . . on Holy Thursday concentrate our inner thoughts upon the memory of the institution of the Eucharist.”
2. “The words which institute the Eucharist . . . deliberately emphasize . . . the meaning and significance of a sacrifice.”
3. “. . . it is through prayer that Jesus moves forward towards the accomplishment of the reality that came to a climax in his hour.”
4. “The prayer in Gethsemane is to be understood not only in reference to . . . Christ’s Passion and death on the cross, it is also to be understood, and no less intimately, in reference to the Last Supper.”
5. “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”
6. “. . . the salvation of the world is to be accomplished through the redemptive sacrifice of the Son.”

II. PRAYER AT THE CENTER OF PRIESTLY EXISTENCE
7. “. . . how deeply our priesthood must be linked with prayer, rooted in prayer.”
8. “. . . at the basis of these many forms of prayer there must always be that most profound foundation which corresponds to our priestly existence in Christ . . .”
9. “The priesthood . . . is always a call to share in the same divine-human, salvific and redemptive reality . . .”
10. “The prayer in Gethsemane is like a cornerstone, placed by Christ . . .”
11. “. . . being stewards of the mysteries of God, this prayer must constantly broaden and extend to all those whom ‘the Father has given us.’”
12. “Prayer is essential for maintaining pastoral sensitivity to everything that comes from the Spirit . . .”
13. “... on this pilgrimage of faith each one of us should fix his soul’s
gaze on the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” 135

1988

Tenth Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH 140

Mary in the Life of the Priest: “Behold, your Mother”

1. “… the reality of the Incarnation as it relates to
the institution of the Eucharist and also to the
institution of the sacrament of the priesthood.” 140
2. “… the Mother of Christ … was present on
Calvary, at the foot of the cross, …” 141
3. “‘Woman, behold, your son!’ … ‘Behold, your mother!’ …
from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.” 142
4. “The Mother of God is a ‘type’ of the Church in the matter
of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ.” 143
5. “The analogy between the Church and the Virgin Mother
has a special eloquence for us, who link our priestly
vocation to celibacy …” 144
6. “Let us also take Mary as Mother into the interior ‘home’
of our priesthood.” 146
7. “… we turn the gaze of our soul towards that woman
clothed with the sun…” 147
8. “Let us give thanks to the Eternal Priest for the gift which
he has bestowed on us in the sacrament of the priesthood.” 148

1989

Eleventh Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH 152

1. “The one Priesthood of Christ is eternal and definitive,
just as the sacrifice he offered is definitive and eternal.” 152
2. “… ministerial priesthood and hierarchical priesthood …” 153
3. “… [the] Priesthood of Christ is shared by everyone in the
Church through the Sacrament of Baptism.” 153
4. “Each of us who shares by sacramental ordination in
Christ’s Priesthood must constantly reread this
‘inscription’ of Christ’s redeeming service.” 155
5. “… [priestly] ministry itself by a special title forbids them to
be conformed to this world. Yet at the same time this min‑
istry requires that they live in this world among men.” 156
6. “Each of us must be aware of gathering the community together not
around ourselves but around Christ, and not for ourselves but for Christ …” 157
7. “Sacred pastors know how much the laity contribute to
the welfare of the entire Church.” 157
8. “Acting in persona Christi, as ‘stewards of the mysteries of God,’
we are conscious of the universal dimension of the Eucharistic Sacrifice.” 158
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Twelfth Year of Pontificate</th>
<th>Thirteenth Year of Pontificate</th>
<th>Fourteenth Year of Pontificate</th>
<th>Fifteenth Year of Pontificate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>161</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>190</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Twelfth Year of Pontificate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comma, Holy Spirit</td>
<td>Priestly Identity and the Need for Priests</td>
<td>Give Thanks for the Gift of the Priesthood</td>
<td>The Catechism of the Catholic Church: An Authentic and Sure Norm for Teaching Catholic Doctrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>163</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veni, Creator Spiritus!</td>
<td>The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.</td>
<td>“I am the vine, you are the branches.”</td>
<td>“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Let us pray to the Holy Spirit and ask him always to visit our thoughts and our hearts.”</td>
<td>“what is needed everywhere is to pray ‘the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.’”</td>
<td>“Christ is the ‘inexhaustible source of the formation of every Christian, and especially of every priest.”</td>
<td>“...let us give thanks for the gift of the priesthood...”</td>
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<td>“...the priesthood and the training and continuing formation of priests in the Church.”</td>
<td>“...the relationship existing between the Last Supper and Pentecost.”</td>
<td>“...let us give thanks for the gift of the priesthood.”</td>
<td>“...thanksgiving for the gift of the Catechism.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”</td>
<td>“May [this letter] be the sign and expression of communion which unites all of us...in a sacramental bond.”</td>
<td>“Catechism is ‘particularly linked with our priestly life and with the Church’s pastoral ministry.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1994
Sixteenth Year of Pontificate
LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH
Priesthood and the Pastoral Care of the Family
1. “The Eucharist evangelizes our surroundings and confirms us in the hope that Christ’s words will not pass away.”
2. “Today I wish to entrust to you, dear brothers, the letter which I have addressed to families in the year dedicated to the family.”
3. “The Year of the Family is for all of us a call to make the Church ever more ‘the household of God, in which his family lives.’”
4. “The call to pray with families and for families, dear brothers, concerns each one of you in a very personal way.”

1995
Seventeenth Year of Pontificate
LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH
The Importance of Women in the Life of the Priest
1. “…I wish to speak to you about the importance of women in the life of a priest…”
2. “A link with the Mother of God is fundamental for Christian ‘thinking.’”
3. “In this way he institutes the sacrament of his body, that body which, as the Son of God, he has taken from his Mother, the Immaculate Virgin.”
4. “Christ Jesus is the only son of Mary Most Holy.”
5. “Certainly ‘woman as sister’ represents a specific manifestation of the spiritual beauty of women.”
6. “…the role women are called to play in the building up of the Church.”
7. “…the ministerial priesthood, in Christ’s plan, is an expression not of domination but of service!”
8. “Beside Christ the Servant, we cannot forget the one who is ‘the Handmaid,’ Mary.”

1996
Eighteenth Year of Pontificate
LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH
The Unique Vocation of Christ the Priest
1. “Christ, the Son of one being with the Father, has been made priest of the New Covenant according to the order of Melchizedek…”
2. Common Priesthood and Ministerial Priesthood
3. The Personal Call to the Priesthood
4. The Priestly Vocation of the Apostles
5. The Priest Attains his Fulfillment in a Constantly Renewed and Watchful Response
6. Priesthood as “Officium Laudis”
7. The Priest Accompanies the Faithful Towards the Fullness of Life in God
8. The Priestly Jubilee: A Time of Joy and Thanksgiving
9. “Te Deum laudamus…”
1997

Nineteenth Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

1. “...I wish first of all to express once more my gratitude to the Lord for the jubilee celebrations which, on 1 and 10 November last, saw so many brother priests take part in my joy.”

2. “... the first year of immediate preparation for the third millennium: Tertio millennio adveniente.”

3. “... ordinations to the priesthood.”

4. “Christ brings into the eternal Holy Place the self-sacrifice which is the price of our redemption.”

5. “You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

1998

Twentieth Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

1. The Holy Spirit, Creator and Sanctifier

2. Eucharist and Orders, Fruits of the Spirit

3. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

4. The Influence of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit upon Man

5. The Gifts of the Spirit in the Life of the Priest

6. The Spirit Leads Us into the Life of the Trinity

7. Prostrate in the Presence of the Spirit

1999

Twenty-first Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

“Abba, Father!”

1. “Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.”

2. “If time is always a movement away from the beginning, it is also, when we think of it, a return to the beginning.”

3. “... the Son alone knows the Father.”

4. “The doxology with which the Canon ends has a fundamental importance in every Eucharistic celebration.”

5. “... the Lord’s Prayer.”

6. “In the Eucharist the priest personally draws near to the inexhaustible mystery of Christ and of his prayer to the Father.”

7. “On Holy Thursday we shall renew, dear brothers, our priestly promises.”

2000

Twenty-second Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH

1. “It was here that Christ gave us the immense gift of the Eucharist. Here too our priesthood was born.”

2. “These are the hours of the great battle between the love which gives itself without reserve and the mysterium iniquitatis which is imprisoned in hostility.”

3. “In all of you I honor the image of Christ which you received at your consecration, the “character” which marks each of you indelibly.”
4. “In Christ, God has ‘stripped himself,’ and has taken on ‘the form of a slave’ even to the utter abasement of the Cross . . .” 277
5. “From the Upper Room, I wish to thank the Lord for the courage of these priests.” 278
6. “. . . it was upon this human weakness that he set the sacramental seal of his presence.” 278
7. “. . . it is integral to his identity as the Son Incarnate, as God-made-man.” 279
8. “For in the Bread of the Eucharist is present the very Body born of Mary and offered on the Cross . . .” 280
9. “How many saints have found in it not only the pledge, but as it were the foretaste of Heaven!” 281
10. “But the Eucharist is the point from which everything else comes forth and to which it all returns.” 281
11. “Wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, the bloody sacrifice of Calvary will be made present in an unbloody manner. . . .” 282
12. “. . . but the living presence of the Lord in the midst of his own.” 282
13. “Here began a new presence of Christ for the world . . .” 282
14. “Let us remain faithful to what the Upper Room ‘hands on’ to us . . .” 283
15. “Through your apostolic labors, may love for Christ present in the Eucharist grow stronger.” 283
16. “. . . but to us you have given spiritual food and drink and eternal life through your Son . . . .” 284

2001

Twelve-third Year of Pontificate 286

LETTER TO ALL THE PRIESTS OF THE CHURCH 288
1. “Great indeed is the mystery of which we have been made ministers.” 288
2. “The Lord invites us to put out into the deep, with trust in his word.” 288
3. “. . . I wish to echo the voice of Christ who continuously calls us to deepen our relationship with him.” 289
4. “. . . I would like to choose for this reflection the theme of sacramental reconciliation.” 289
5. “We should accept this Jubilee indication as a sign from on high, and make it a reason for renewed boldness in re-proposing the meaning and practice of this Sacrament.” 290
6. “. . . we should feel the grace of the priesthood as a super-abundance of mercy.” 290
7. “Let us rediscover our vocation as a ‘mystery of mercy.’” 291
8. “Christ was not afraid to choose his ministers from among sinners.” 291
9. “And is it not within an experience of mercy that Paul’s vocation too is born?” 291
10. “. . . it is important for us to rediscover the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a fundamental means of our sanctification.” 292
11. “Dear priests, let us make use of this Sacrament . . .” 293
12. “. . . now more than ever the People of God must be helped to rediscover the Sacrament.” 293
13. “. . . the Sacrament of Reconciliation, when correctly celebrated, also has a ‘humanizing’ effect . . .” 294
14. “The Sacrament forms part of the structure of communion which is the mark of the Church.” 294
16. “Our spiritual meeting-place on Holy Thursday is still there, in the Upper Room . . .” 295
2002  Twenty-fourth Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO PRIESTS 300
1. “. . . I am . . . taking my seat beside you as it were at the table in the Upper Room . . .” 300
2. “. . . the mission which the Lord has given us to represent him not just in the Eucharistic Sacrifice but also in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.” 300
3. “. . . rediscover the beauty of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.” 301
4. “. . . restore vigour and enthusiasm to our journey of holiness and to our ministry.” 302
5. “. . . nothing that God does happens by chance.” 303
6. “Luke’s account is remarkable . . .: everything is so personal, so tactful, so affectionate!” 304
7. “I must stay at your house.”” 305
9. “. . . the personal encounter between confessor and penitent is the ordinary form of sacramental Reconciliation . . .” 308
10. “. . . confessors too need to be properly trained for the celebration of this Sacrament.” 309
11. “Know that I am especially close to you as you gather with your Bishops on this Holy Thursday of the year 2002.” 310

2003  Twenty-fifth Year of Pontificate

TO THE BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND DEACONS, MEN AND WOMEN IN THE CONSECRATED LIFE AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL 314

Ecclesia de Eucharistia on the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church

Introduction
1. “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist.” 314
2. “. . . I had an opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist in the Cenacle of Jerusalem . . .” 314
3. “The Church was born of the paschal mystery.” 315
4. “The hour of our redemption.” 316
5. “Mysterium fidei! - The Mystery of Faith!” 316
6. “I would like to rekindle this Eucharistic ‘amazement’ . . .” 317
7. “I have always marked Holy Thursday, the day of the Eucharist . . .” 317
8. “When I think of the Eucharist, and look at my life as a priest, as a Bishop and as the Successor of Peter . . .” 318
9. “The Eucharist . . . is the most precious possession which the Church can have . . .” 318
10. “The Magisterium’s commitment to proclaiming the Eucharistic mystery has been matched by interior growth within the Christian community.” 319

Chapter One: The Mystery of Faith
11. “The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed’ (1 Cor 11: 23) . . .” 320
12. “. . . the universal charity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is based on the words of the Saviour himself.” 321
13. “. . . the Eucharist is a sacrifice in the strict sense . . .” 321
14. “Christ’s passover includes not only his passion and death, but also his resurrection.” 322
15. “The sacramental re-presentation of Christ’s sacrifice . . .” 322
16. “The saving efficacy of the sacrifice is fully realized when the Lord’s body and blood are received in communion.” 323
17. “Through our communion in his body and blood, Christ also grants us his Spirit.”

18. “The Eucharist is a straining towards the goal . . .”

19. “The eschatological tension . . . expresses and reinforces our communion with the Church in heaven.”

20. “The Eucharist . . . spurs us on our journey through history and plants a seed of living hope in our daily commitment to the work before us.”

21. “The celebration of the Eucharist is at the centre of the process of the Church’s growth.”

22. “. . . Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice . . .”

23. “Eucharistic communion also confirms the Church in her unity as the body of Christ.”

24. The gift of Christ and his Spirit which we receive in Eucharistic communion superabundantly fulfils the yearning for fraternal unity deeply rooted in the human heart . . .”

25. “The worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass is of inestimable value for the life of the Church.”

26. “. . . the Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist, . . .”

27. “. . . the Church is apostolic - founded on the Apostles . . .”

28. “. . . the Church is apostolic in the sense that she ‘continues to be taught, sanctified and guided by the Apostles . . .’”

29. “. . . ‘the ministerial priest, acting in the person of Christ, brings about the Eucharistic Sacrifice’ . . .”

30. “. . . the relationship between priestly ministry and the Eucharist . . .”

31. “. . . the Eucharist is the . . . centre and summit of priestly ministry.”

32. “. . . distressing and irregular is the situation of a Christian community which . . . does not have a priest to lead it.”

33. “. . . ‘no Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and centre in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist.’”

34. “The Church is called during her earthly pilgrimage to maintain and promote communion with the Triune God and communion among the faithful.”

35. “The celebration of the Eucharist . . . cannot be the starting-point for communion.”

36. “Invisible communion . . . presupposes the life of grace . . .”

37. “The two sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance are very closely connected.”

38. “Ecclesial communion . . . is . . . visible, and finds expression in the series of ‘bonds’ . . .”

39. “. . . the very nature of ecclesial communion . . . is never a celebration of that community alone.”

40. “The Eucharist creates communion and fosters communion.”

41. “The Eucharist’s particular effectiveness in promoting communion is one of the reasons for the importance of Sunday Mass.”

42. “The safeguarding and promotion of ecclesial communion is a task of each member of the faithful . . .”

43. “. . . I am referring to the relationship of the Eucharist to ecumenical activity.”

44. “. . . Communion in his body and blood absolutely requires full communion in the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance . . .”

Chapter Three: The Apostolicity of the Eucharist and of the Church

36. “. . . the Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist, . . .”

37. “. . . the Church is apostolic - founded on the Apostles . . .”

38. “. . . the Church is apostolic in the sense that she ‘continues to be taught, sanctified and guided by the Apostles . . .’”

39. “. . . ‘the ministerial priest, acting in the person of Christ, brings about the Eucharistic Sacrifice’ . . .”

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43. “. . . ‘no Christian community can be built up unless it has its basis and centre in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist.’”

Chapter Four: The Eucharist and Ecclesial Communion

44. “. . . Communion in his body and blood absolutely requires full communion in the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance . . .”
45. “... administration of the Eucharist under special circumstances, to individual persons belonging to Churches or Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church.” 339

46. “... I expressed my own appreciation of these norms, which make it possible to provide for the salvation of souls with proper discernment...” 340

Chapter Five: The Dignity of the Eucharistic Celebration
47. “... we are struck by the simplicity and the ‘solemnity’ with which Jesus, on the evening of the Last Supper, instituted this great sacrament.” 341

48. “Like the woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany, the Church has feared no ‘extravagance’...” 342

49. “... the Eucharist has found historical expression not only in the demand for an interior disposition of devotion, but also in outward forms...” 343

50. “... in its ritual and aesthetic dimensions, a certain ‘competition’ has taken place between Christians of the West and the East.” 344

51. “The development of sacred art and liturgical discipline... is also taking place on continents where Christianity is younger.” 344

52. “All of this makes clear the great responsibility which belongs to priests in particular for the celebration of the Eucharist.” 344

Chapter Six: At the School of Mary, “Woman of the Eucharist”
53. “... we cannot neglect Mary, Mother and model of the Church.” 345

54. “... there can be no one life Mary to act as our support and guide...” 346

55. “... Mary lived her Eucharistic faith even before the institution of the Eucharist...” 346

56. “Mary, throughout her life at Christ’s side and not only on Calvary, made her own the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist.” 347

57. “‘Do this in remembrance of me’ (Lk 22: 19).” 347

58. “In the Eucharist the Church is completely united to Christ and his sacrifice and makes her own the spirit of Mary.” 348

Conclusion
59. “Ave, verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine!” 349

60. “... we... are called to undertake with renewed enthusiasm the journey of Christian living.” 349

61. “The mystery of the Eucharist—sacrifice, presence, banquet—does not allow for reduction or exploitation...” 350

62. “Let us take our place, dear brothers and sisters, at the school of the saints...” 351

2004

Twenty-sixth Year of Pontificate

LETTER TO PRIESTS

1. “Our annual encounter through this Letter is a particularly fraternal one,...” 358

2. “We were born from the Eucharist.” 358

3. “‘Mysterium fidei’, the priest proclaims after the consecration.” 359

4. “The Eucharist, like the priesthood,... radically transcends the power of the assembly...” 360

5. “Vocations are indeed a gift from God for which must pray unceasingly.” 360

6. “... show special care for altar servers, who represent a kind of ‘garden’ of priestly vocations.” 361

7. “... your particular mission in the Church requires that you be ‘friends’ of Christ, constantly contemplating his face with docility at the school of Mary Most Holy.” 362

8. “I entrust each of you and your daily ministry to Mary, Mother of Priests.” 363
2005

Twenty-seventh Year of Pontificate 364
LETTER TO PRIESTS 365
1. Introduction 365
2. “Tibi gratias agens benedixit“ 365
4. “Hoc est enim corpus meum quod pro vobis tradetur”. 366
5. “Hoc facite in meam commemorationem”. 367
6. “Mysterium fidei!” 368
7. “Mortem tuam annuntiamus, Domine, et tuam resurrectionem confitemur, donec venias.” 368
8. Conclusion 369

Index 371
LETTER
OF THE HOLY FATHER
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO ALL THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH
ON THE OCCASION OF HOLY THURSDAY 1979

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate!
The great day is drawing near when we shall share in the liturgy of Holy Thursday together with our brothers in the priesthood and shall meditate together on the priceless gift in which we have become sharers by virtue of the call of Christ the eternal Priest. On that day, before we celebrate the liturgy in Cena Domini, we shall gather together in our cathedrals to renew before him who became for us “obedient unto death” 1 in total self-giving to the Church, his spouse, our giving of ourselves to the exclusive service of Christ in his Church.

On this holy day, the liturgy takes us inside the Upper Room, where, with grateful hearts, we set ourselves to listen to the words of the divine Teacher, words full of solicitude for every generation of bishops called, after the Apostles, to take upon themselves care for the Church, for the flock, for the vocation of the whole People of God, for the proclamation of God’s word, for the whole sacramental and moral order of Christian living, for priestly and religious vocations, for the fraternal spirit in the community. Christ says: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you.” 2 It is precisely this sacred triduum of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord that re-evokes in us, in a vivid way, not only the memory of his departure, but also faith in his return, in his continuous coming. Indeed, what is the meaning of the words: “I am with you always; yes, to the end of time”? 3

Venerable and dear brothers, in the spirit of this faith, which fills the entire triduum, it is my desire that, in our vocation and our episcopal ministry, we should feel in a special way this year—the first of my Pontificate—that unity which the Twelve shared in when together with our Lord they were assembled for the Last Supper. It was precisely there that they heard those words that were most complimentary and at the same time most binding: “I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master’s business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have
learned from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I
commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last.”\(^4\)
Can anything be added to those words? Should one not rather pause
in humility and gratitude before them, given the greatness of the
mystery we are about to celebrate? There then takes root even deeper
within us our awareness of the gift that we have received from the
Lord through our vocation and our episcopal ordination. In fact the
gift of the sacramental fullness of the priesthood is greater than all
the toils and also all the sufferings involved in our pastoral ministry
in the episcopate.

The Second Vatican Council reminded us and clearly showed us that
this ministry, while being a personal duty of each one of us, is nev‑
ertheless something that we carry out in the brotherly communion
of the whole of the Church’s episcopal college or “body.” While it
is right that we should address every human being, and especially
every Christian as “brother,” this word takes on an altogether special
meaning with regard to us bishops and our mutual relationship: in
a certain sense it goes back directly to that brotherhood which gath‑
ered the Apostles about Christ; it goes back to that friendship with
which Christ honored them and through which he united them to
one another, as is attested by the words of John’s Gospel quoted
above.

Therefore, venerable and dear brothers, we must express the wish,
today especially, that everything that the Second Vatican Council so
wonderfully renewed in our awareness should take on an ever more
mature character of collegiality, both as the principle of our collabora‑
tion (collegialitas effectiva) and as the character of a cordial fraternal
bond (collegialitas affectiva), in order to build up the Mystical Body of
Christ and to deepen the unity of the whole People of God.

As you gather in your cathedrals, with the diocesan and religious
priests who make up the presbyterium of your local churches, your
dioceses, you will receive from them—as is provided for—the renewal
of the promises that they placed in the hands of you, the bishops, on
the day of their priestly ordination. With this in mind, I am sending
to the priests another letter that—as I hope—will enable you and
them to live even more deeply this unity, this mysterious bond that
joins us in the one Priesthood of Jesus Christ, brought to completion
with the sacrifice of the Cross, which merited for him entrance “into
the sanctuary.”\(^5\) Venerable brothers, I hope that these words of mine
addressed to the priests, at the beginning of my ministry in the See of