



# The Holy See

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## MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR WORLD MISSION SUNDAY 2005

**"Mission: Bread broken for the life of the world"** My Dear Brothers and Sisters, 1. World Mission Sunday, in this year dedicated to the Eucharist, helps us to better understand the "eucharistic" sense of our life as we relive the emotion of the Upper Room when, on the eve of his passion, Jesus offered himself to the world: "on the night he was betrayed, he took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said: This is my body that is for you. Do this in memory of me". (1 Cor 11,23-24). In my recent Apostolic Letter *Mane nobiscum Domine* I invited you to contemplate Jesus in the "breaking of the bread" offered for the whole of humanity. Following his example we too are called to offer our life for our brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. The Eucharist bears the "mark of universality" and prefigures in a sacramental way the time when "all who share one human nature, regenerated in Christ through the Holy Spirit and beholding the glory of God, will be able to say with one accord: «Our Father»" (*Ad Gentes* 7). In this way, while the Eucharist helps us to understand more fully the significance of mission, it leads every individual believer, the missionary in particular, to be "bread, broken for the life of the world". *Humanity has need of Christ "broken bread"* 2. In our day human society appears to be shrouded in dark shadows while it is shaken by tragic events and shattered by catastrophic natural disasters. Nevertheless, as "on the night he was betrayed" (1 Cor 11,23), also today Jesus "breaks the bread" (cfr Mt 26,26) for us in our Eucharistic celebrations and offers himself under the sacramental sign of his love for all mankind. This is why I underlined that "the Eucharist is not merely an expression of communion in the Church's life; it is also a project of solidarity for all of humanity" (*Mane nobiscum Domine*, 27); it is "bread from heaven" which gives eternal life (cfr Jn 6,33) and opens the human heart to a great hope. Present in the Eucharist, the same Redeemer who saw the needy crowds and was filled with compassion "because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9,36), continues through the centuries to show compassion for humanity poor and suffering. And it is in his name that pastoral workers and missionaries travel unexplored paths to carry the "bread" of salvation to all. They are spurred on by the knowledge that, united with Christ "centre not just of the history of the Church, but also the history of humanity (cfr Ef. 1,10; Col 1, 15-20)" (*Mane nobiscum Domine*, 6), it is possible to meet the deepest longings of the human heart. Jesus alone can satisfy humanity's hunger for love and thirst for justice; He alone makes it possible for every human person to share in eternal life: "I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever" (Jn 6,51). The Church, one with Christ, becomes "broken bread" 3. When the ecclesial Community celebrates the Eucharist, especially on Sunday the Day of the Lord, it experiences in the light of the faith the value of the encounter with the Risen Christ and is ever more aware that the Sacrifice of the Eucharist is "for all" (Mt 26,28). We who nourish ourselves with the Body and Blood of the crucified and risen Lord, cannot keep this "gift" to ourselves; on the contrary we must share it. Passionate love for Christ leads to courageous proclamation of Christ;

proclamation which, with martyrdom, becomes a supreme offering of love for God and for mankind. The Eucharist leads us to be generous evangelisers, actively committed to building a more just and fraternal world.

I sincerely hope the Year of the Eucharist will inspire every Christian community to respond with "fraternal solicitude to some of the many forms of poverty present in our world" (*Mane nobiscum Domine* 28), because "by our mutual love and, in particular, by our concern for those in need we will be recognised as true followers of Christ (cf. *Jn* 13:35; *Mt* 25:31-46). This will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharistic celebrations is judged." (*Mane nobiscum Domine* 28). Missionaries, "bread broken" for the life of the world<sup>4</sup>. Still today Christ urges his disciples: "Give them something to eat yourselves" (*Mt* 14,16). In his name missionaries all over the world proclaim and witness to the Gospel. Through their efforts there resound once again the words of the Redeemer: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst" (*Jn* 6,35); they too become "bread broken" for their brothers, some even to the point of sacrificing their life. How many missionary martyrs in our day! May their example draw numerous young men and women to tread the path of heroic fidelity to Christ! The Church has need of men and women willing to consecrate themselves wholly to the great cause of the Gospel. *World Mission Sunday* is an opportune occasion to increase our awareness of the urgent necessity to participate in the evangelising mission undertaken by the local Communities and many Church organizations, in particular the *Pontifical Mission Societies* and the *Missionary Institutes*. This mission requires the support not only of prayer and sacrifice, but also of concrete material offerings. I take this opportunity to recall once again the valuable service rendered by the *Pontifical Mission Societies* and I ask you all to support them generously with spiritual and material cooperation. May the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, help us relive the experience of the Upper Room so that our ecclesial Communities may become authentically "Catholic"; that is Communities where "missionary spirituality" which is "intimate communion with Christ" (*Redemptoris missio*, 88), is closely related to "eucharistic spirituality" of which the model is Mary, the "woman of the Eucharist" (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia* 53); Communities always open to the voice of the Spirit and to the needs of humanity, Communities where believers, missionaries in particular, do not hesitate to offer themselves as "bread, broken for the life of the world". To all I impart my Apostolic Blessing! *From the Vatican 22nd February 2005, Feast of the Chair of Peter* **IOANNES PAULUS II**