

# Diocesan Catechesis

## The Holy Eucharist: Celebration and Profound Significance

### III-English

#### Our First Encounter with the Risen Lord – Baptism

The Lord Jesus who dies no more, who lives forever with the signs of his Passion (Roman Missal, Easter Preface III) continues to pardon us, to heal us, to save us with the power of the sacraments.

Our first encounter with the Risen Lord is Baptism, which *is being plunged into his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension*. This is not magic, which pretends to have a power over God; hence, for this reason it comes from the Tempter. In perfect continuity with the Incarnation of the Son of God, there is given to us, in virtue of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, the possibility of *dying and rising with Christ*.

In the Rite of Baptism, the prayer for the blessing of baptismal water (the infusion of the Holy Spirit into the water) reveals to us that God created water precisely with Baptism in mind. Hence, God was thinking of the Baptism of each one of us; He used water for his saving work. He wanted to fill water with the movement of the Spirit so that it could contain the hidden power to sanctify. He used water to regenerate humanity through the flood (Gen. 6:1-9,29) He controlled it by separating the Red Sea so that Israel could cross it and have freedom from slavery. He consecrated the water of the Jordan River by plunging into it the flesh of the Word of God, Jesus, and so infused that river water with the Spirit. Finally, he blended it with the blood of His Son, the gift of the Spirit inseparably united with the gift of the *life and death of the Lamb* slain for us, and from his pierced side He poured it out over us. It is into this water that we have been immersed so that through its power we can be inserted into the Body of Christ and with Him, rise to immortal life. (Rom. A6:1-11)

In the letter from Pope Francis entitled “I have *Eagerly Desired* to eat this Passover with you,” (Lk. 22:14) the Pope warns of a dangerous temptation in the Church today. He named it “*spiritual worldliness*” pinpointing Gnosticism and neo-Pelagianism as two versions that feed this error.

This Gnosticism shrinks Christian faith into a subjectivism that “ultimately keeps one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings.” (Evangeli Gaudium, nn, 93-97) Followers were considered to have their own “Special-Secretive Knowledge” that did not belong to all. The celebration of the Liturgy does not belong to the individual; it is the church that takes us by the hand, together as an assembly, to lead us deep within the mystery of the Word and the Sacramental signs reveal to us. The Liturgy is not an “I” experience, but rather a “we” experience.

Neo-Pelagianism intoxicates us with the presumption of a salvation that is earned through our own efforts. It denied Original Sin and the necessity of infant baptism. It was opposed by St. Augustine who asserted that human beings cannot attain salvation on their own efforts but are totally dependent on the Grace of God.