06 Sister Marie Droste and the Eucharist

Sister Ingrid Schimansky GSS

Pope Jean Paul II has consecrated October 2004-October 2005 as the Year of the Eucharist. With the whole Church looking in depth at the text of the encyclical which it has published two years ago, we, daughters of Mary Euphrasia, join this movement to help us renew our faith in this mystery. We ask ourselves, what place does the Eucharist have in our personal and Communal life?

In April 1995, the Spirituality center published a booklet "The Eucharist - at the heart of our apostolic engagement" in which the eucharistic experience of Mary Euphrasia was placed in its historical context in order to challenge us today.

Now, we will look at Sister Maria Droste in her life and the place the eucharist had...

For this, we place ourselves in the historical context of the 19th century – the same context that Mary Euphrasia had – in order to understand the attitude and expressions of Sister Maria Droste.

A paragraph from the brochure above mentioned:

"From the 13th century, the Mass had become the concern mainly of the priest and the participation of the assembly was increasingly reduced:

> the priest spoke in Latin, therefore, in an incomprehensible way for the majority of the faithful
> Pius IX, in 1857, renewed the prohibition to translate the Missal (i.e. prayers of the Mass read by the priest) into the vernacular;
> moreover, much of these prayers were to be read in "private", hence in a low voice by the priest who celebrated the Mass with his back turned to the assembly.

Consequently, the faithful "attended" Mass, mere onlookers and not active participants. Essentially, the rites of the liturgical celebration did not change until 1970, all of six centuries.

Due to a strict interpretation of the Eucharistic fast, Communion was often distributed outside the Mass - which made it possible for the faithful (and the religious among others) to be able to have breakfast first after communion in the morning and then "attend" the high Mass later.

Within such a context, communion became, almost exclusively a personal act of piety, emphasizing the aspects of personal union with God and personal sanctification. There was not only sacramental communion itself but there was "spiritual communion" as well. Consequently, acts of communion often meant, to see the consecrated host (instead of consuming it) and to adore it. From the 16th – 17th century, many Christians had a very realistic conception, of a "carnal knowledge" of the Eucharist. Christ "was made very small to hide in the host". He "descends upon the altar", He is "a prisoner in the tabernacle".
Let us listen to Maria Droste

"Yes, HE is the God hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament who is our life and our all. He hides his divinity and his humanity in order to give Himself to us, to inspire and give us confidence. The effects in us, of the visit of this hidden God, whether in a sacramental way, or simply as a special favor, are both hidden. Only those souls on which He condescends to visit in this manner understand these."

"The Lord made Himself my Master on the days of communion and especially when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. He condescended to teach me and to comfort me. I cannot find words to convey what was in me, to the Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament... I was set ablaze by the fire of divine love..."

And in a letter (13.06.1898) to Father Ildefons Schober: ...

“You will understand my desire to be able to rest some time (well at ease) in front of the Blessed Sacrament having a heart so full and feeling such a thirst in my soul...”

Maria Droste lived a life deeply rooted in the Eucharist. It is the source of her life to achieve her mission. Her union with Christ is reinforced continuously by her full

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1 Autobiography, p. 31, translated to German from the original Portuguese (typewritten copy)
2 Autobiography, p. 13, translated to German from the original Portuguese (typewritten copy)
participation in the Eucharist and especially in sacramental communion. "Remain in me, as I remain in you" says Jesus.

Her meditation on the infinite love of Jesus, on His Heart full of love for us and on His presence in the Blessed Sacrament, brought her to understand the connection between the mystery of the Eucharist and devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

"I have not separated the devotion to the Sacred Heart and Jesus in the Eucharist; never would I be able to explain how is it that the Sacred Heart of Jesus had condescended to foster in me the love of the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament was always for me Heaven, and almost always Our Lord presented Himself in the posture of this image; the Heart of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, like a radiant sun which attracted me to Him, illuminated me and set me on fire with love. Very often, the graces which I received were granted to me in Holy Communion or in front of the Blessed Sacrament exposed. But many times, these graces were in connection with some feast or before an image of the Sacred Heart..."

Here, her thoughts join those of St John Eudes:

"All these sacraments are as many inexhaustible fountains of graces and holiness, which have their source in the immense ocean of the Sacred Heart of our Savior; and all the graces which proceed from it are as many flames in this divine furnace. But the most ardent of these flames is the Most Holy Eucharist. It is true that this great sacrament is a summary of all the wonders of the power and kindness of God; but it is true also that it is one of the fruits of the incomparable Heart of Jesus, and one of the flames of this admirable furnace. Thus, if we celebrate so great a feast in the Church in honor of this Divine Sacrament, what solemnity should we have to honor His Most Sacred Heart, which is the origin of all that is great, rare and precious in this venerable sacrament?"

Jean EUDES, O.C.

VIII, chap.7

Maria Droste in one of her talks says:

"The first thing that we must do, is to study in order to know more and more this adorable Heart, this burning Furnace of charity, this Ocean of mercy. In approaching this burning fire, we feel our hearts to also ignite with fervent love... Who could remain cold and insensitive at the sight of so much kindness, of so much love? He has given all for us... And what do we have to say of the institution of the Most Blessed Sacrament? No human language is able to express the depth of this unutterable mystery of love..."

"Let us return to him love for love, that is what He asks of us, a generous love, a selfless love: and there we will find the source of our happiness and our perseverance in the way of the perfection..."

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3 Autobiography, p. 2, translated to German from the original Portuguese (typewritten copy)
The EUCHARIST is the meeting place with the Heart of Jesus to which Maria Droste remained united and in which she was transformed. John Eudes, and Mary Euphrasia after him, closely linked the Eucharist to the Heart of Jesus.

Towards the end of her life, Maria Droste writes:

"Through the Blessed Sacrament I am in personal contact with love eternal. In my interior sanctuary there appeared 'kindness and tenderness for all men' . I received this great gift of God. Now, the love of my Savior urges me. Thus, I request from you, eternal love for all men. That I may put your love in their hearts, that I receive with mercy the poor, all those who are in danger, who have "fallen, who suffers... and that I bring them to your Divine Heart you the Good Shepherd. And give me the strength of your Blessed Sacrament of love."

For you:
Do you find such similar attitudes in Mary Euphrasia? (see: booklet mentioned above)

We know, that since the time of John Eudes, Mary Euphrasia and Maria Droste, the theology of the Eucharist has undergone so much evolution. Our approach to the Eucharist is expressed differently – probably not in essence... but...

For you:
And now, how would you speak about your experience in connection with the Eucharist?