



PASTORAL LETTER  
THE MOST REV. DAVID M. MARTINS  
Bishop of the Diocese of New England

November 1, 2017  
The Solemnity of All Saints

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# EUTHUS: THE YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST

## I. One Hundred Years of Fatima

During the night of October 12<sup>th</sup> into October 13<sup>th</sup>, of 1917, rain poured down on the small town of Fatima, in Portugal. Pilgrims came from every direction, amounting to the thousands, having heard the story of the mysterious visitor from heaven who had come consistently since May to visit the three shepherd children: Jacinta, Lucia, and Francisco. Using every means of transportation available to them at the time, all the rain in the world would not keep them away.

The children arrived for their monthly encounter with the Blessed Virgin, amidst a mix of skepticism and profound faith. In the early afternoon, Our Lady appeared to them as she said she would. This time she told the children her name: the Lady of the Rosary. She told them that the world needed to embrace conversion to the heart of her son, she promised the eventual end of the war, and the granting (and the denial) of the petitions brought to the children by the crowds. As the Blessed Mother rose from the bush on which she stood to return to the glory of heaven, the children were blessed with more visions: Saint Joseph, and the Christ Child. It was during this experience, that the thousands assembled in the rain witnessed the miracle of the sun: a spectacle that was both frightening and comforting at the same time.

The message of Fatima is so often overshadowed by the excitement of heavenly secrets, mysterious visions, and a dancing sun. Yet if it were only these supernatural phenomenon that we took from the events of the Cova de Ira, the Blessed Mother's visit would have been in vein. Rather, the core message of Fatima is one of conversion to the heart of Jesus. Her message was urgent, and one to which she desired that the world immediately attend.

This year we have celebrated 100 years of Fatima, and one need only look around at the world in which we live to see that the world could use perhaps another visitation from the Queen of Heaven. The urgency for deeper and deeper conversion to the heart of Jesus seems to increase by the day, in the face of a world that turns more and more toward the chaos and division that has become the hallmark of our culture.

## II. The Gospel of Urgency

On the first Sunday of Advent the Church enters Lectionary Cycle B, during which time the Church will hear from the Evangelist Mark every Sunday. It is the shortest of the four Gospels, and clearly communicates its point. With no Infancy Narrative, the first Chapter of the work takes us directly to the Jordan River, where Jesus is baptized by John, and then he sets himself immediately to his mission. The text tells



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us that he arrives in Galilee proclaiming, “This is the time of fulfillment, the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.”

As the Evangelist takes us through the action of the first Chapters of his work, he frequently employs the Greek word, “*euthus*”, which is translated as “immediately.” In Mark’s Gospel it is used 41 times, and only 19 times in the entire rest of the New Testament. The Marcan Jesus has something on his mind, and he has no time to waste. What is his rush? His rush is to the cross, whereby he will make known to all people the purpose of his coming. This news of the Kingdom being at hand, and the need to turn more deeply to the Lord is likely the most urgent news the world has ever heard.

Throughout all of this pressing work, he continually tells those who he heals to not tell anyone. Scholars refer to this as the “Messianic Secret.” He doesn’t want to be known as a healer or a magician: he is the savior, and his work will be accomplished only by the cross.

As Jesus moves about his mission he calls followers to come after him, and in the 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Gospel he and the Disciples have an exchange that not only articulates the crux of his mission, but also echoes across the ages as the definition of where we fit in this incredible work. He tells his followers that if they want to be his Disciple, they must be no different than him, and take up their cross daily, and follow him. To be his Disciple one must lay down their life (Mark 8:27-38). He recognizes how alarming this notion is to his confused and perhaps frightened Disciples, and he says, “what profit is there for one to gain the world, and loose his life?” (Mark 8:36). More simply: why would you ever want to choose this world, and its empty promises, over the life I have prepared for you for all eternity? The choice seems obvious to Jesus.

He is consistent in this attitude throughout the text. In Chapter 10 Jesus encounters “the rich young man”. We are told of how the young man runs to Jesus and drops to his knees asking, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” This is not an inquiry of mild curiosity. The man *runs* to Jesus, and *kneels*. Perhaps he has had it with the frustrations of life, and just wants to know how to find true joy. Perhaps he is thinking about some of life’s bigger questions after the loss of a parent or other loved one. Maybe he just feels beaten down. Regardless of the motivation, the man’s gestures betray his desperation...his sense of urgency.

“You have to follow the law,” Jesus essentially answers, to which the man replies that he already does that. Then Jesus delivers the answer that his questioner did not expect: “You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me” (Mark 10:21).



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The man's response is nonverbal, but clear as day: "At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions" (Mark 10:22).

Jesus asks the man to conform his life to his own: to conform his life to the cross. Jesus himself has left all that he had: the glory of heaven – to enter into our poverty. What little he had in this life is stripped violently away from him, as he is nailed to the cross and hoisted alone, high above the earth, for every passersby to laugh and jeer. Following his footsteps will not lead anywhere else then to the cross. When Jesus takes his last breath he has absolutely nothing to his name: except the love that drove him there...he doesn't even have any ego, pride, or anger.

But the rich young man can't bring himself to "lose his life" by this world's standards in order to inherit the eternal life of the Lord and his glory. When he walked away sad, one can imagine Jesus saying the same words he had earlier, "what profit is there for one to gain the world, and loose his life?" Perhaps if he were to speak in our vernacular: why wait? We don't have time!

### III. Eucharistic Urgency

The Gospels, while certainly inspired by the Holy Spirit, were written by man-specifically- by those individuals whom God chose to employ for this important work. It is important to remember that God chose the authors that he did for a reason. "For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another" (*Dei Verbum*, 12).

The Evangelists lived during that first century of the Church, and those early Christian communities were living in constant expectation of Christ's return. There was a constant and pressing urgency to their mission, which is reflected in the tone of the author. More than that, it is precisely because they were products of this particular environment that they were called to this vocation. The Lord wanted to use their spirit of urgency! Mark's spirit is also upbeat, which is demonstrated in his opening line of the Gospel, announcing his work as "the good news" of salvation (Mark 1:1), but that sense of urgency overshadows every word of his text.

The commitment of those early Christians to the truth of the Gospel was so strong in their hearts that they were not discouraged by the realities of the situation in which they lived. Every day of their lives they faced the potential consequences for their Christianity. To be a known Christian was certain death. The early Church was forced to meet in secret, and even more so after they were expelled from the synagogues. On the Sabbath they met in secret in the evening to break open the



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Scriptures, while before dawn they would return for the Breaking of the Bread. In the evenings they would come together for a third time to celebrate the “agape meal,” a gathering rooted in love, where Christ was understood to be present according to his promise of where two or three are gathered in his name (Matthew 18:20).

This Christian Community saw the Eucharist as a more than sufficient reason to run this risk of martyrdom on a weekly basis. In fact, they saw the two as going hand in hand. Ignatius of Antioch in his *Letter to the Ephesians*, speaks of the Eucharist as not only what unites the divided Church, but in fact also as “the medicine of immortality, and the antidote which prevents us from dying” (*Epistle to the Ephesians*, 20). Why wouldn’t they? The risk of laying down their earthly life in favor of the glory that has been promised was a small price to pay. In fact, they understood the Eucharist to be a constant and urgent need. By the blood of these martyrs the seeds of the Church were planted, laying the foundation for the unbroken Tradition of our faith that has spanned the course of two millennia.

### IV. A Eucharistic Mariology

Who in our history has followed in the footsteps of the Lord and master more effectively than the Blessed Virgin Mary? Mary is the perfect model of Discipleship, entirely divesting herself of the world’s values to embrace a Christocentric world view. John Paul II speaks of her “yes” to the Angel Gabriel as a “decisive” moment, as with “full intellect and will”, she empties herself to the will of the Father, with her complete gift of self (*Redemptoris Mater* 13). Beginning with this moment, and throughout the rest of her days, she demonstrates what it means to cultivate and live, what he called, a “Eucharistic Culture, as she gave of herself wholly and completely to God for his use, so too she teaches us how to do the same”, making her the “teacher in contemplating Christ’s face” (*Ecclesia de Eucharistica* 53). With her “yes”, she embraced the call to lay down her life with urgency and a lifelong commitment.

The late Pontiff says that her special interiority speaks of her relationship with the Eucharist. While scripture does not tell us that she was present at the Last Supper, Mary certainly would have participated in the Eucharistic meal of the early Church. That decisive yes at the Incarnation did not fade after his Ascension, as she continued to stand by him beyond his infancy, beyond Cana, beyond Calvary, even to the lengths of being among those who risked her life to stand by him in his Eucharistic presence. Through it all she demonstrates a perfect Eucharistic faith. She teaches us to trust in God completely, by giving ourselves over to him entirely for his use (EE 53-55). It is because of this incredible strength and faith that the Father chose to use her to give flesh to the eternal word, “thus anticipating within herself what to some degree happens sacramentally in every believer who receives” (EE 55).



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John Paul draws a comparison between her *fiat* (her “yes”) and the “amen” of each of us when we receive the Eucharist. When we receive the Eucharist that “amen” is not just a scripted response or rubric; rather it is a declaration or conversion, every time we have that Eucharistic encounter. That moment needs to be equally as decisive in our own lives and in the lives of every believer who shares in Holy Communion, as hers was. This *fiat* of ours is an assent not only to the belief that it is in fact the Body of Christ, but also to the call to *be* the Body of Christ (Orsuto 122). We are invited, nourished, and sent with each celebration of the Eucharistic meal.

Mary becomes the first tabernacle, wherein the body of the Lord is adored by Elizabeth, and she demonstrates the love with which the believer should receive his presence in the way she cradles him in her arms and protects him (EE 55), characterized by such love, tenderness, and awareness.

More than this, she “makes her own the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist” (EE 56). Throughout her life she came to accept that her suffering was inseparable from her motherhood. This “spiritual communion” she experienced with Jesus will climax in her union with him on Calvary, and would have a final expression (in this life) by her receiving the Eucharist when it is celebrated by the Apostles (EE 56), and then perfected in her Assumption. What a singularly unique experience for her it must have been!

She demonstrates the perfect integration of devotion and communion. What greater communion is there then how their two hearts beat in such unison – even at Calvary (EE 56), and yet what greater example of adoration is there then her loving embrace of the Christ Child in Bethlehem, and her fierce devotion to protecting him in their flight into Egypt. In her Magnificat “she praises God ‘through’ Jesus, but she also praises him ‘in’ Jesus and ‘with’ Jesus. This itself is the true ‘Eucharistic attitude’” (EE 58), and a living testimony to the Doxology the Priest speaks on behalf of the people as they hold up the Eucharistic elements as an offering to the Father.

### V. The Year of the Eucharist

As Mary clearly leads us to her son, particularly in the Eucharist, it is only natural that this Marian Year of 2016-2017 should lead directly into a Year of the Eucharist: a time dedicated to our own growth in devotion and communion...a time dedicated to our embracing the call to lay down our lives for him, to grow in our sense of urgency, and to become enflamed by the same fire that burned in the hearts of those early Church martyrs.

With the enculturation of Christianity in the age of Constantine, the Church moved from the hidden homes of believers to large worship spaces in the public sphere. The



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Church found herself to be a constituency of consequence- nearly overnight- and the generations that followed would face the challenge of a double edged sword:

1. No longer was the immediate threat of martyrdom synonymous with Christian faith. How would they continue to lay down their lives as Christ calls us now that this movement had become an institution?
2. The experience of the faith went from small groups in the homes of believers, to large Cathedrals filled with a mix of those deeply committed believers and the halfhearted. As they grew, they asked themselves how would be able to maintain the passion and intimacy that defined the faith in its infancy?

These two challenges continue to loom in the life of the Church today. As Independent Catholics we face many of the same realities of the early Church. Much of our experience transpires in homes and other “nontraditional” venues. Our communities of faith are small, but passionate about the value of our Church. Yet we struggle as a global body to move across that line from a movement to an institution: from a movement to a Church.

For the early Church that transition cost them their intimacy and passion for the Lord truly present in the Eucharist, and division and separation became a constant battle on all fronts. As the Church grew, and the threat of death by martyrdom became less and less of a reality, there remained always an army of women and men who found more creative ways to lay down their lives without shedding their blood. The notion of “white martyrdom led to the asceticism of the Dessert Fathers/Mothers, then to the establishment of Monasticism and the Mendicant Orders. How do we today, in a culture of such comfort and convenience, lay down our lives for the Lord as we are asked? How do we embrace white martyrdom, and see our Church grow as a result?

The answer can be found in the same place it always has: in the Eucharist.

Beginning on the Solemnity of Christ the King, November 26, 2017, until the same Solemnity in 2018, our Diocesan Church will enter more deeply into the mystery of the Lord in the Eucharist, and rededicate ourselves to *being* the Body of Christ we celebrate out in the waiting world! In the meanwhile we will begin to transition our attention from our teacher, Mary, to the subject we are seeking to make our own: the Eucharist.

Over the 12 months that follow, we will move through the life of Jesus, and experience that *euthus*, as Sunday after Sunday we will hear Mark the Evangelist tell us of Jesus’ urgent work. This *euthus* speaks to all of us today as well. When in our



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history has the need for the Kingdom been so great, or has there been so urgent a need to embrace its values?

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus declares: the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel. In Fatima in 1917 the Blessed Virgin Mary proclaimed the same thing: and every time we gather at the Lord's Table he says the very same thing – over and over.

At every Mass, after the elements are consecrated the Priest shows them to the people at the elevation. For a moment we have the opportunity to gaze upon our Savior who has left all things for us and for our salvation. There is no more appropriate form for him to take than that simple host: bread without even any yeast for it to rise. It is the purest form of poverty in our world, and it is the voice of Christ breaking through history to reach our ears as he says, “you take up your cross and follow me – leave all that you have – I am all that you need...*immediately!*”

To conform ourselves to Christ, and answer this call with a sense of urgency, we must embrace a world view that looks through the lens of his heart, embracing his values, and then we are able to happily dispense of those worldly “possessions”, and realize that in Christ we have so much more! This was the mindset of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council when they said that Christians “must follow in His footsteps and conform themselves to His image seeking the will of the Father in all things” (LG). This notion of conforming ourselves to his image, is what lies at the heart of the answer to his invitation of discipleship.

Without a doubt, the Sacraments – in particular the Eucharist –are the essential remedy to this urgent need of our broken world. Ignatius spoke of the medicinal quality of the Sacraments, and in her book, *Holiness*, Dr. Donna Orsuto presents them to us from the perspective of maintenance work on God's dwelling. Some are major renovations, while some are more that ‘ordinary’ maintenance of the building. Taken together, the Sacraments are “the amazing renovation project and maintenance program to which God invites us to collaborate” (Orsuto 114). In short, they are a place of encounter between us and the living God, as he offers us his manifold grace to grow and be inspired to live his call to holiness more deeply.

“Through the ordinary means of word, touch, anointing, and feeding, we are being transformed and sustained in an edifice” (Orsuto 129). As sacramental people we should find God and his powerful love in the many “ordinary” places, situations, and encounters of our day. All of these encounters: from those with Jesus in the Sacraments, to those with him in his creation – we are being transformed. The more we give ourselves to it, the more we are open to his grace, the more that grace will be able to accomplish in us. This ongoing process is a daily one, and it defines our lives as Catholics!



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## VI. Euthus in the Diocese of New England

The ICCA found its beginnings in New England in 2012, and as a result the Church has organically grown with the North East as its central axis. Our Diocese has enjoyed a remarkable history in these years: the establishment of Mary Our Hope Seminary, and the Franciscans of Joy. We have seen the successful transition of authority from one Ordinary to his successor: a rarity in the Independent Catholic Movement. We have seen Parishes acquire their own properties, take on ministries at a State wide level, and make a name for themselves as a faith leader in the communities where they serve. Most recently, we have joyfully welcomed a Dominican Order to the Diocese, and expanded our territory to include regions beyond the geographical boundaries of New England.

We find ourselves ministering in a world that is torn by a profound lack of peace, and an abundance of unrest. Our Nation is deeply divided, with Americans embracing one of two markedly opposite political ideologies, and those ideologies are even being confused with value statements and guidelines for daily living. These divides have resulted in “mainstream” Churches taking a decisive step toward the left or the right: furthering the divide in our Nation, and further taking the attention away from the communion and intimate love to which the Eucharist beckons us.

For the Catholic who strives to live each day in the light of the Lord’s love, and to grow in the life of grace through the participation in the Sacraments, these are times of great confusion and frustration.

These realities set the stage for an experience of growth in Independent Catholicism like has never existed before. If God works with all that we give him, it makes sense that now be the time that we offer up our broken world to our God, and ask him to do with it whatever he needs in order to launch into the boundless expanse of his glorious providence.

In light of these truths, I would like to present a threefold experience of “*Euthus: the Year of the Eucharist*”.

### 1. Sacramental

I would invite Parishes throughout our Diocese to embrace this year as an opportunity to allow the members of our faithful to enter more deeply into the Sacrifice of the Mass, and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. What does that look like?



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I would encourage communities and Parishes, wherever possible, to provide opportunities for Eucharistic Adoration, Holy Hours with Benediction, or other Para liturgical celebrations with Eucharistic Devotion at its core. Perhaps a study group or bible study centering on the Eucharist, or a class like “Catholic 101” centered on this paramount teaching of the Church. Parishes that run a Small Groups program could make the Eucharist a topic of discussion, or perhaps small retreats could be organized within the various Parishes. Resources for any and all of these activities are available on our website, under the link, “*Euthus*”.

I would ask that Pastors to make this Letter readily available to the faithful, and encourage discussion around its content. This should be a year where the faithful in our pews come to know the dynamic and incredible reality of the Eucharistic presence of Jesus, and thereby grow in their own personal relationship with him.

## 2. Pastoral

I would likewise like to see all of our Parishes and Communities join me in a commitment to growth over the next year. With the land so perfect for a bountiful harvest, it would be foolish and poor leadership, to not scatter the seeds wherever we can.

With everything we do in our Parishes and Ministries we should be able to answer the question, “how will this make us grow?”

The growth of our Church will be Eucharistic: it will happen by virtue of our *being* the Body of Christ in the world, compounded with our increased devotion to it.

What outreach ministry does your Parish/Ministry currently engage in? This is the perfect time to train a group of Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, and send them out to hospitals and nursing homes in the community. Even the planning of such an activity builds the Church because it establishes relationships with other community leaders.

Are there Parishioners who are able to help with transportation for those who can't get to Church? Are home visits and hospital calls things that the Lord's people know about.



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## VII. The Blessed Sacrament Society

Effective on the Solemnity of Christ the King, I am also happy to establish the Blessed Sacrament Society of the Diocese of New England. This spiritual fellowship is to be open to women and men of every Catholic expression. I am asking that members commit to three hours of Eucharistic Adoration a week, during which time members should pray for our Church, pathways to peace, and the advancement of justice. If three hours is not possible, commit as much as you are able. Parishes are encouraged to make times available (taking into account those limitations that are beyond our control) for those members of the faithful who feel called to this fellowship. I would ask that you likewise make information available about Eucharistic Adoration in neighboring Roman Catholic Parishes as well.

We hear in the Gospel of Luke the story of Jesus' visit to Martha and Mary. In this popular pericope, Martha is busy running around the house and tending to the details of entertaining a houseguest. Her sister Mary, in the meanwhile, sits at Jesus' feet listening to him. Martha points out to Jesus that she is working so hard while her sister is seemingly wasting time. Jesus replies, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and busy about many things. Only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part, and she shall not be denied it" (Luke 10:41-42).

What joyful news this is for those who set themselves to the mission of sitting at Jesus' feet and listening: which is precisely what we do in Eucharistic Adoration. We come to the feet of Jesus, knowing that typically we are anxious, and busy about many things. We become busy with the requirements, pleasures, and distractions of life: but in truth only one thing is required- time with Him, sitting at his feet, listening to him.

Further joy comes with his promise: those who chose this better part, will not be denied it! With these words Jesus promises to be with us always. Our communities are comparatively small, and there may be times that we wonder if things are going grow: if we will "make it." It seems by this conversation with Martha and Mary that Jesus promises that so long as we seek him out, so long as we spend time with him, we will not be denied that opportunity.

## VIII. Fiat

The goal of this Year of the Eucharist is for all of our Parishes to grow in both *grace and number*. As we said earlier, when we receive the Lord in the Eucharist we declare to the minister: "Amen," and that "amen" should be more than a habitual response. If we are declaring our willingness to go out and *be* the Body of Christ in the world, we must ask ourselves "how am I accomplishing it?"



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So we take a moment to look at the communities in which we minister and live, and ask ourselves, “Where is the darkness that needs to be illuminated by the love of Jesus?” Perhaps it is in the opioid overdose epidemic that grips our nation – so much so that the average life expectancy for white males has dropped. Perhaps it is in the Nursing Homes and Rehabilitation Facilities where so many lonely hearts find themselves without the Sacraments. Perhaps it is among those effected by: HIV/AIDS, cancer, or homelessness.

The growth of our Church is inevitable with such a fierce Eucharistic focus. In choosing the Body of Christ, we choose the better part – and we will not be denied it! By spending time with the true presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we enter into the quiet to discern how we can walk closer with the Risen Jesus, and discover what “possessions” we want to lay aside in order to do so. By *being* the Body of Christ out in the world, we bring the needs of our sisters and brothers to fore front of our priorities.

My dear sisters and brothers: *Euthus!!*  
We don't have time to waste!



The Most Rev. David M. Martins  
Bishop of the Diocese of New England



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