

Sermon delivered by
Bishop Laise,
during the closing Mass of the symposium on Saturday, November 10, 2001

Dear friends of CIEL

It is always a great pleasure for me to be among you on the occasion of your annual meeting.

I am now a bishop “emeritus” and therefore have greater freedom to attend all events dedicated to defending the integrity of the Faith.

This year’s liturgical symposium emphasizes the importance and necessity of the Faith: indeed, what is at stake today is precisely the transmission of this faith that we have received from the Apostles. In the words of Pope John Paul II himself, Christians are a minority today.

Allow me to quote Cardinal Ratzinger’s statement at the Roman Synod on October 11, 2001: *“The crisis of today’s culture—and, in part, of the Church itself—lies in the marginalization of God. The crisis of our culture is rooted in the absence of God, and we must admit that the crisis of the Church is also largely the consequence of a widespread marginalization of the theme of God”*. The Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith told us bishops that being a bishop means having the courage of the Truth and being willing to suffer for the Truth.

You have long understood that the expression of the Faith, the life of the Faith, and the very deposit of the Faith are found in the “Lex orandi,” as Bishop Wladimir reminded you in his homily, with his masterful quotation from Pope Pius XI in his encyclical “Quas Primas.” Your association, CIEL, and the ecclesiastical communities associated with it are committed to the traditional Roman Rite: you possess a treasure that the Church has entrusted to you; may you ever more deeply discover its riches and better understand why, for centuries, the Church has asked us to act and pray in this manner during sacred ceremonies. Behind every rubric, behind every sign and every symbol, you will discover the very theology and ecclesiology of the Church. The liturgy was born of the Faith and, together with the Faith, of the Church. Therefore, show ever greater respect for what our fathers in the faith have handed down to us to this day, and God knows how great this Faith is: it is the faith of Christendom that spread throughout the world, even to my beloved country of Argentina. Consider, dear friends, that the Liturgy celebrated in Rome was the same as that of the smallest parish in my diocese. The Faith, too, was the same!

You have been entrusted by the Church herself with the task of passing on the integrity of this treasure to future generations, at the cost of many sacrifices, great suffering at times, and misunderstandings—even from those who should be supporting you. Cardinal Meisner, Archbishop

of Cologne, in his address to the bishops at the last Synod, reminded us that: *“The crisis of faith in the Church is the consequence of a self-secularization for which Church institutions, including those who exercise the episcopal ministry, share responsibility.”* This is a “*mea culpa*” spoken in the Synod Hall that we, as bishops, must be able to hear.

Through the traditional Roman liturgy, you will be able to spread Faith, Hope, and Charity around you. I know how many conversions and vocations this liturgy inspires. As a bishop myself, I have witnessed such fruits during ordinations celebrated according to the traditional rite. Indeed, it clearly expresses what it confers; no doubt or misinterpretation is possible. This rite of ordination is still, in keeping with the Church’s maternal manner, a rite that exhorts, explains, and confers: it seems to me to be complete.

“Imitamini quod tractatis, agnoscite quod agitis,” and with all my heart I bless your work; be strong in the Faith, and I will conclude with the words of Cardinal Ratzinger, addressing us bishops once again: *“Let us not forget that a peace paid for with the loss of Truth would be a false peace, an empty peace.”*