Address on the Eucharist *by Archbishop Gabriel Ganaka* Delivered to Missionary Servants of Holy Love October 9, 1999

This evening brothers and sisters in Christ, I would like to speak to you about the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. This is a very important subject because the other day we explained that we are all called to holiness and that without holiness, according to the Letters to the Hebrews, no one will see the Lord. None of us will see the Lord. And Vatican II insisted repeatedly that all baptized - Christ's faithful - are called to holiness, and to pursue holiness vigorously. You cannot pursue holiness relentlessly without taking note and having a special devotion to Our Lord, Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

We all believe He is there but it is necessary sometimes to pause and reaffirm our beliefs and strengthen them less we grow weary through familiarity. There is this trite phrase or statement -familiarity breeds contempt. You may not breed that contempt really, but when you see certain things happening you may just believe there is some element of contempt going on. As soon as communion is over and the priest says 'Go, the Mass is ended,' the church becomes like a market - people shouting, talking, greeting, visiting with each other and talking. It is not respect as far as I am concerned. It is not respect at all. If the President of your country was seated at the high table and they announced that the conference has ended, out of respect for him,

you stand up and wait until he moves out at least. But if you begin to howl and shout and so on, they think it is unbecoming. I think so anyway.

I remember one priest from our own part of the world was assisting as a Chaplain in an Army barracks in Germany and he had a special session for the youth. So this boy came in and just stood with his two hands in his pockets like this and in our own part of the country it is the supreme sign of disrespect. So he asked this boy, "If the President of your country were here, would you put your hands in your pockets?" He said "No, I would not." "But why are you putting them there in the presence of Jesus?" He said, "Because Jesus understands." That is what the boy said. We make excuses for everything.

Anyway this is not an academic discussion. It is something to remind us of some truths so that our devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will be reaffirmed and reconfirmed. Right from the book of Genesis we notice where the priest of God, Melkizedec offered a sacrifice of bread and wine - something unheard of in the Old Testament. But there it was. And he blessed Abraham and Abraham offered him a tithe of what he had, a tithe - 1/10 of what he had. Nobody knew where it came from; he had no father, no mother - he just appeared there, showed up for dinner (the Book of Genesis).

The Eucharist is the greatest gift of Jesus to us. It is the gift

of Himself, really and truly present under the appearance of bread and wine. He prepared for the institution of the Eucharist by a series of miracles to prepare the minds of the Apostles so that if He gave them the Eucharist they would at least try to understand. He multiplied loaves and fishes on two occasions -one in the Gentile territory, one in Jewish territory - to kind of foretell that this Eucharist He is going to give later is for all, Gentiles and Jews alike. Then by signs and wonders, He showed them that He is God. He could suspend the laws of nature. He raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak.

Then on one occasion, he walked on water. And when Peter saw him and he said, "Lord, if it is You, command that I should come to You." He said "Come" and Peter began to walk toward him with confidence. Suddenly he remembered that this is Peter walking on water, so he began to sink, "Lord save me lest I drown or lest I perish" and Jesus captured him. He said to him, "Why did you doubt, oh you of little faith?" He raised Lazarus from the dead, and so on and so forth. But in John Chapter 6 He gave the clear promise of the institution of the Eucharist where He said "I am the living bread that has come down from Heaven. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you will not have life in you. " So the Apostles and the disciples understood this clearly that He was going to give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink and some got disgusted and said "This is

an abomination, we cannot eat a human being, let's go." And they left Him. Then He turned to the rest who did not go and said to them, "Will you also go away?" In other words, if you like - you can go. I am not going to change My words. He did not say that much but that was the implication. Then Peter answered on behalf of all. "To whom shall we go, O Lord? You have the words of eternal life." It was not all very clear to them at that point yet, but at the Last Supper, Jesus took bread, blessed it, gave it to the Apostles and said, "Take and eat, for this is My Body." He took the cup filled with wine, prayed over it and gave it to the Apostles and disciples and said, "Take and drink for this is My Blood." Then to the Apostles, he said, "Do this in remembrance of Me. As often as you do this, you do this in remembrance of Me."

Now if we look at First Corinthians, chapter 11, verse 23 and following, we will notice the understanding of the early Church about what Jesus did. Because Paul said this is what we have received from the Lord - that on the night before He suffered, He took bread, blessed it and gave it to the Apostles and said "Take and eat for this is My Body." He took the cup similarly and said "Take and drink for this is My Blood and as often as you do this, you announce the death of the Lord until he comes." Then He added something significant. He said, he that eats it and drinks it unworthily, eat it and drink judgment on himself not discerning the Body and Blood of the Lord." So Jesus is really and truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. And

the Church therefore teaches that when validly ordained priests pronounce the words of consecration on bread and wine, they become the Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The living Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. A marvelous change takes place which in theology we call transubstantiation - transubstantiation. That big word means this simply - that at consecration what makes bread bread changes into the living Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. What makes wine wine changes into the Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. The taste of the bread is there, the color of the bread is there. The color of the wine is there, the taste of the wine is there, but what makes wine wine has been changed into the Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. What makes bread bread is changed into the living body of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. It is tremendous! It is wonderful! Jesus is really and truly there.

Down through the years, Jesus has appeared to various visionaries complaining about our attitude to Him in the Eucharist. A notable example is that of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a French nun in France. Jesus appeared to her several times and said, "Behold this heart that has loved men so much and has received so little in return; has received nothing but ingratitude, sacrileges and nameless abominations in the Eucharist. Will you try to console me?" To Sister Josef Mendendez he said, "I have been a prisoner of love in the Eucharist for nearly 2000 years, day and night in many empty churches, not visited by even my friends who are supposed to visit Me."

It was around that time the practice of Eucharistic adoration started to offer reparation to Jesus for our neglect of Him in the Eucharist. And these hours of adoration could take the form of perpetual adoration day and night, every hour there is somebody before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, or one or two hours at a time in a parish after Mass, or on an agreed date where people come together to pray.

There are fantastic advantages in Eucharistic adoration. So when you are in your parish consider it. If it is not there, talk to your parish priest, talk to the members of your parish to see if you cannot organize to have at least one hour of adoration a week on Thursdays or Fridays. Then gradually you could extend. There are many complaints in different parts of the world especially in Europe and the United States about shortages of vocations. Wherever there has been perpetual adoration, vocations have increased and exploded by leaps and bounds because the harvester began to send laborers into his vintage to consecrate the Eucharist. They have seen this in the Philippines where there are hundreds of chapels of perpetual adoration all over the cities, towns and villages. There is one diocese where they have knocked down their old seminary and built a brand new one - bigger - to cope with the numerous vocations that are coming in.

In one archdiocese that I was visiting not too long ago, they are complaining that their seminary has only five

candidates, but these massive buildings. So I told the pastor "I wish we could transfer some of these buildings to Africa. We will fill them in the morning with seminarians." Lack of vocations are because people are not praying before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

You go into churches, you see that practically all those attending Mass are senior citizens. Where are the young people? Where are they? They were busy watching the god of television maybe, and they are too tired to wake up and go to church. Mommy says "Go to church." "I am not going. If you touch me, I will call the police on you." That is the liberty you have here and it amazes us. One Nigerian parent got so exacerbated with his rebellious teenagers - they were doing things that in Nigeria you never do and he hit one of them. His wife called the police and this daddy was locked up in prison for three nights. So when he came out, he said "Father, see I was trying to discipline my child and he got me locked up for three nights." They organized - the parents organized - to dispatch these children back to Nigeria to go to school there and grow up in an atmosphere where there is profound respect for elders - We give directives, you obey. You do not challenge. Nobody would be that stupid. So he arranged it neatly. Everything went well. So the person doing the finishing touches to the arrangements phoned him to say "The principal has agreed to accept these boys if you send them down from the United States and they will register as soon as they arrive." The man was not at home. It was on the voice mail. The boys

came back and they saw the thing beep so they listened. They saw that this message concerned them. As soon as daddy walked in – "Daddy we are going nowhere. We are not going anywhere. We are staying right here with you." So they did not go anywhere. So if you want your children changed to know the Lord Jesus, bring them to the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament or you go yourself. Pray for them constantly and you will see what Jesus will do. We have seen wonderful examples of the transformation that has taken place in the lives of various people.

On one occasion, this woman had a little boy of about six or ten. The parish school was near the parish church ,so mommy told this boy, "Whenever you go to school, the first thing you do is dive into the church, genuflect, make the Sign of the Cross with holy water at the entrance and say to Jesus really and truly present in the Tabernacle, "Lord, Jesus Christ, I am Johnny. I have come to greet You. I am going to school. Mommy says I should greet you. Bless me Jesus." Then genuflect and go. On his way back to the home, he would branch off and greet Jesus similarly. This went on for over a year and a half, day in and day out, Monday through Friday. One day Johnny fell very sick and was dying because he had one of these waterborne diseases where he did not drink clean water. So he became unconscious and they were putting drips into his arms and so on and so forth. He could not eat anything or drink anything. The mother was sitting beside the bed praying and suddenly this boy jumped from the

bed and said, "Mommy, give me water to drink. She said, "Johnny are you all right?" He said, "I am all right." "What happened?" The boy said, "Jesus came and said, 'Johnny, here is Jesus. I have come to greet you. You have been greeting Me all this while. It is My turn to come and greet you, and to heal you. Accept My blessing.' And Jesus vanished." And he got well and that is how he was healed. And this is a true story.

There are people who offer Masses for the dead. There are people who do not offer Mass for their beloved who have died. One of the greatest things we can do is to offer the sacrifice of the Mass for the dead. And it will shorten their stay in Purgatory and relieve them very fast. There was this widow whose special devotion was to the holy souls. She offered Masses for them, gave offerings whether she knew them or not. She said there were souls burning there like in Hell, the only difference is that they will get out one day. One day she was in great financial distress and she had a bit of money. But it was not enough for what she wanted to do, but she split the money in half, took half and gave it as a Mass offering for the souls in Purgatory, especially the most needy. As she was walking back from the parish church, she met an elderly man who saw the worried look on her face and said, "What is wrong with you?" She said, "Look I have this great financial problem and I do not know how to wriggle out of it, but I am praying to God. He said, "How much do you need?" The man was told. Then he said, "Have you any piece of paper?" And he wrote on

it. It was his signature. He said "Go to such-and-such a street, enter the shop and give the young man there this, my signature." "Thank you sir." So she went, and when she announced why she came - that somebody directed her to come to him, and this is the signature - the boy nearly collapsed. It was the signature of his dead father. He had just been released from Purgatory thanks to the prayers of this woman and this man said this young man should give her whatever money she wanted. The man said, "This is the exact signature of my father - my late father." Then he pulled her into his office. "Does he look like this?" She said, "Exactly. This is the man that I met." The young man was dumbfounded. He gave her all the money she wanted to meet her needs. Isn't this marvelous and it is a true story.

Now many people complain we have no time for Eucharistic adoration. We have no time for Mass. But it depends on your priority in life. What does it profit a man or woman if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his own soul? What can anybody give in exchange for his soul? Now how long are you going to live in this world? You are busy making money, money, money. Money is important to pay our bills, live a comfortable life, but you have enough. If you want to make more, more, more - well, money has never satisfied anybody. A London newspaper ran an advertisement to find out who would give the best definition of money and the young may who won the prize defined money as follows: Money is that article which can be used to get anything except happiness

and can be used as a universal passport to everywhere except to Heaven. It was his definition that won the prize. Can provide everything except happiness. Can take you anywhere except to Heaven. And I think it is true.

So if you have your priorities right, you will give proper time to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. And the problem with many people is, when they come before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, they come with a litany of requests. Give me this, give me that. Give me this, give me that. You love the gifts in His Hands, you don't love Him as the Person. Love him first and you will see what you will do. Seek you first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. All other things will be added to you as well. So seek Jesus. He will give you all other things according to His riches and glory.

Secondly, receive Him worthily every day. Go to Mass daily if possible. If not, at least Sunday Mass is obligatory. Then time yourself so you can go several times during the weekdays. And spend one continuous hour before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament every day in adoration - adoration of reparation - making up for the lack of prayers of many other people and for all the things and the sacrileges and the outrages and the nameless abominations committed against Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Some people will receive the Eucharist, cover their hands, take it out and go and give it to these people organizing black masses and diabolical practices - consecrated hosts!! They do that! A

great punishment awaits them, I am sorry to say.

And some people do not receive Him worthily. They have fat, fat sins in their souls. No act of contrition. They just move up and are receiving. Jesus said when such people receive Him, He backs out and goes away because the place is not clean for Him. Go to Communion only after you have cleansed yourself thoroughly. Occasionally make what we call spiritual communion. "Lord Jesus, I would love to receive you now but as I cannot receive you sacramentally, come spiritually into my soul and take complete possession of me. Jesus, I love You. I surrender myself to You." Spiritual communion.

And we must have respect before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. You come, you genuflect. If your bones are starting to be rickety and you cannot genuflect, you bow. And then take your position and pray silently and listen to the Lord. It is not one-way traffic. It is not one-way traffic. Some people talk, talk, talk for the whole one hour. It is dreadful. There is a tiny little book called Miracle Hour by Linda Schubert. I was discussing today that if you try and flood this bookstore here or this gift shop with that book. It takes one hour and divides it into five minute units: Adoration, Contrition, Surrender, Praying to the Holy Spirit, Spiritual Warfare, Thanksgiving - all the necessary ingredients for complete prayer life. And you are supposed to go through it once a day if you can. If you can. If you can't, then do half in the morning and

half in the evening. Your life will never be the same again. I first saw a copy of this book in Italian. I enjoyed it but I said "How can I keep this to myself." Not everybody understands Italian. I discovered it was from an English translation written by an American lady so I wrote to her to give us permission to reprint the English copy in Nigeria. She said, "Print as many as you want." We printed them. Printed 60,000 copies free of charge from her so-to-say and we sold them for an affordable price. They went like hot cakes. We printed another 40,000 and they have been in demand ever since. And then the people said, "Let us see who this woman is." So we invited her to come to Nigeria and she held seminars and talks on the miracle hour that will change your life.

So if you want change, allow Jesus to change you. There is no way you can take a block of ice out of the freezer and put it in the sun and it will not melt. When you come before Jesus, you are like a block of ice - full of iniquities, sin, and so on and so forth, distracting thoughts and so on. You begin to change gradually, gradually. Those things that used to fascinate you before will suddenly begin to disappear one by one - one by one. And where you would have reacted with rage, you discover that you are just humble and meek like a lamb. You say, "Is this the same me." It is Jesus who has done it. So give yourself a chance. Go to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and He will change you gradually and successfully. Give Him a chance and He will do it. Thank you for your patience.