



## Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?

*Mt 20:22; Mk 10:38*

+ Rome, May 2, 2008

Dear Sisters,

For this letter I chose the *Last Supper* from Sieger Köder. We see the disciples, who had gathered with Jesus for the Passover. Jesus himself – as on most of the pictures from Sieger Köder – is not in sight, except for his

hands and his reflection in the cup. On the table, where there is a shadow of a cross, we see eleven pieces of bread – symbolic of the total surrender of Jesus. At the top right of the picture we perceive a dark figure; it is Judas who is just leaving the room. He took his piece of bread along. He will not participate in the drinking from the cup.

In my last letter I tried to interpret the words of consecration over the bread and its consequence for our life. In this letter I will direct our attention to the cup or rather the chalice. The detail of the picture of Sieger Köder shows us quite impressively the essential: the transformation, the change of the substance of the wine into the substance of the Blood of Christ. The artist indicates this transformation by having painted the reflection of the face of Christ in the chalice.



Fr. Anthony McSweeney elaborated in detail the significance of the cup/chalice in his talk on eucharistic spirituality. As far as I know this text has been made available for each Sister. I cannot recommend enough that you read and reflect on his exposition time and again, so that it does not remain on paper but contributes more and more to the shaping of our eucharistic spirituality. In the following reflection I can only go into some aspects of Father's paper. In doing so I want to stress especially the relationship of the cup/chalice to our life in the following of Christ.

It is remarkable that the words of consecration which are used in the liturgy go back to the tradition of Paul and Luke: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25) On the other hand, Mark and Matthew say: "This is my blood of the covenant." (Mk 14:24; Mt 26:28) "Jesus' words in the text of Mark and Matthew are clearly directing our attention to the sealing of the covenant with Moses on Sinai. (Cf. Ex 24: 6-8). In Paul and Luke, however, the reference is no longer a question of the Sinai covenant, but rather of the *new covenant*. If you drink from this cup, Jesus seems to be saying, you will enter into or become part of the new covenant that has been ratified at the cost of my life's blood." (Fr. Anthony McSweeney) What is essential to the new covenant is that it does not have conditions attached to it as was the case of the covenant with Moses; it is an unmerited gift. "God takes the initiative in offering an utterly gratuitous forgiveness, a total and unmerited acceptance. Once a person truly grasps that truth in a personal way, he or she can never be the same again.... Communion, especially through the cup, then, is the supreme proof of acceptance; the gift of the cup is nothing less than Christ's great gesture of undeserved and unconditional forgiveness. It is a unilateral gift to a people who know they have failed and will continue to fail, yet cannot doubt that they are still loved, simply because he has chosen to love them." (Fr. Anthony McSweeney)

During the Last Supper Jesus explains this newness by breaking the Jewish tradition according to which each participant in a banquet had his or her own cup. Jesus, however, passes around his cup: From this all shall drink. The disciples drank from the one cup and with this they entered into the intimate union of life with Jesus, although they might not have understood this during the Last Supper. Jesus invites us also to drink of the cup. With the “Amen” we profess that, by eating the Body of Christ and drinking his Blood, we are ready to share his destiny. “But there is more... Practically Jesus is saying to each one of us as we approach to receive the cup: Can you drink the cup that I drink? Can you drink the cup of your life as I drank the cup of mine? Will you accept the cup that is your life just as I accepted my cup as a gift from the Father? If you do, I will unite your cup with mine and I will transform your life into an overflowing cup of blessing.” (Fr. Anthony McSweeney)

Regrettably the custom of communion from the chalice is still not very common everywhere. In some of our provinces it is a natural occurrence; in others I experience it seldom or not at all. Of course, each communion under the species of Bread unites us always with the whole Christ. And yet – communion with the cup can help us to become more conscious of the invitation to the radical following of Christ: “Can you drink the cup which I am going to drink?” This question might make us tremble, especially in considering what the cup had meant for Christ. But we have to face this question. At the same time we should not forget that the cup is not only a symbol of suffering, but also of joy, salvation, blessing, community. “Can you drink the cup, the cup of your life?” What is my/our answer? Perhaps we can only say: Lord, you know the answer. He who drank the cup first, wants to give us a share in the fullness of divine life which he has “bought” for us with his blood, and this fullness of life is nothing else than to live a life of love.

In this way the cup/chalice, which is the new covenant in his blood, can throw light on our eucharistic spirituality. It “is born of the experience of an unconditional forgiveness that opens our hearts to God and to one another, awakening the desire to share that love with all we meet. A eucharistic spirituality, therefore, is about accepting the reality of my self – of my history, of the happiness and pain that make up my life. All of it is to be accepted as a gift from the Father, even if much of it is painful, because the saving God not only wants to transform my pain into joy, as a loving Father, God wants above all to draw me into the work of salvation, making my suffering productive for others by uniting it to the saving passion of Jesus, God’s beloved Son.” (Fr. Anthony McSweeney)

There is still one important aspect, dear Sisters. The Gospels show very clearly the connection between chalice/cup and service. “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Cf. Mt 20:20-28; Mk 10:35-45) In Luke Jesus talks about service in connection with the Last Supper: “I am among you as the one who serves.” (Luke 22:27) With this he is very close to the Gospel of St. John. In the place of the institution of the Eucharist John relates about the washing of the feet. Practically Jesus is saying: When I give you a share in the one bread and the one cup then follow my example and do also what I have done for you. (Cf. John 13:15) As it is the Spirit who sanctifies the gifts so that they become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ so also it is only through the Holy Spirit that we can be transformed into the image of Christ. Let us ask the Spirit to work this transformation in us!

\*\*\*\*\*

Information:

- I want to thank all of you very heartily for the many congratulations I received for Easter and for my Feastday. I needed a couple of days to read all of the letters, greetings by Fax and e-mails. I especially thank you for your prayers and for the Holy Masses. I only can ask the Lord to give back to you in fullness all that you had wished for me.

- Today I can inform you about the new provincialate for the German Province, beginning in November. Sister Anna Schwanz has been appointed Provincial Superior. Her councilors are Sister Maria Ancilla König, Sister Rita Kellner and Sister Matthäa Held. Let us include these Sisters in our prayers!
- The conference with the coordinators for justice and peace was very intense and for each of us, challenging. We were strengthened in our effort to collaborate with other congregations and lay people, especially our lay associates, and to be attentive to the signs of our time according to our possibilities and our potential. Our resources are entrusted to us so that we can share them with those, who in our society, are treated like “goods” that you can buy and use, but then also can be thrown away: children, women, migrants, people who are persecuted because of their religion or color or who are exploited and ripped off by a profit-seeking and corruptive economic system. The listing could be endless. These people “without a voice” are in the midst of us. Are we a “Good Samaritan” to them? Often this week we asked ourselves: What would Mother Pauline do? Where would she go TODAY? Which group of people would be of special concern for her? You will receive a more detailed account from the coordinators. On our webpage under “Justice and Peace” you are also able to read some reports about our visits to various institutions here in Rome that advocate for justice and peace.
- On May 21, I will travel with Sister Maria del Rosario to the Philippines. On May 31 – the Feast of the Visitation of Mary – our novice, Sister Martha, will make her first profession. We rejoice with our Sisters in Manila and promise to accompany them with our prayers.

Dear Sisters! “That all may be one”– this is our motto as together we “reconfigure our hearts” on our way to a new orientation, reorganization and structural change. In article 28 of our Constitutions we read: “Mother Pauline also desired that her Sisters be one heart and one soul. This deep unity,” the article continues, “is a gift of the Spirit ...” We are in the middle of the novena for Pentecost, the novena which has its origin with the apostles. Let us ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of unity – not only during the novena!

With hearty greeting, also from the Sisters of our Generalate community,

I am your grateful

*Sr. Adalberto*