



# Allocutio



Presentata Curia 28th June 2012

## Allocutio: After the Eucharistic Congress

I have met a number of people who were at the 1932 Congress and they are able to recall just some memories so it occurred to me would we all not do well, while we can, to just sit down and hot-pen as they call it and keep together the good memories or whatever struck you. So here is mine!

I have to say that initially I was not enthusiastic about the proposal. Given our problems in the Church at home was this not about the worst time? But behind the scenes people were working and I decided to put my bit in too. And one thing I put a lot of effort into and got others to do was to pray that the weather would work out when we most needed it.

But I was worried that it would be a flop. I watched the opening Mass on the TV and enjoyed it. It had been well planned and although not at all full it was a happy dignified opening. I went over to the RDS on the Tuesday and realised that this was going well. People not able to get into talks because it was so full, good liturgies, an excellent exhibition hall where I helped out at one stall.

I went across for the Eucharistic Procession on Wednesday evening. So many turned up the guards had to extend the route to cater for them and the dark clouds threatening as the evening began vanished and left us a blue sky. The final Mass was a joy in my view.

In fact the Congress turned out to be a shot in the arm for us. It was great to meet so many people of real faith and full of the joy of the Lord. We are far from being alone with our faith. The volunteers were all people of faith and indeed they are people who volunteered because of their faith and helped the atmosphere. It was above all a celebration of our faith. I am glad despite some earlier fears that a space was found for the Eucharist at the RDS and indeed it was gratifying to see so many people there praying.

What now? The people of 1932 still have their memories of that time. And we will have ours. And if here is anything we can carry forward is that there is a deep well-spring of real faith in the country. And it is not just confined to the older population. Many there were young. And even those sitting on the fence were impressed. We can build on the energy that it gave us.

On the way home one evening on the DART I met a man who is a Legion member and he was talking joyously to everyone about it and he was drawing others around him in on the conversation. Okay I accept it may be part of his personality. God can use shy personalities too. And if a Therese of Lisieux can hide away in a contemplative monastery and do much good then we can all be assured that an offering of ourselves to God to work with him and do his will and then leave the rest to him will be blessed with spiritual effects.

I do know that many people prayed for the Congress that it would be a success. I do know that our prayers for good weather came off. So let us decide that we will keep faithful to our prayers and continue to turn to God who will be with us. The whole work and its success comes down to being first of all with the Lord. Or as Jesus said, "Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine so you must remain part with me. For apart from me you can do nothing." Or as Bishop Desmond Tutu put it a modern idiom, "We are all like light bulbs. Our job is to stay screwed in!" God is the power source. We must remain connected to him.



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But I think that deep down the Congress showed something else. There is a real hunger out there for God and many people want to know him and know more about him. They need help. Yes there are some immature ones who want to evade the question of God because they are afraid. And such immature people, like St. Paul kicking against the goad, can cause us trouble. I met one young legionary who found the Congress such a boost. But then she added, "How do you transpose this to the staff room at work?" And my answer is that you first be a positive, joyful, happy person. And then by winning friends you can open little doors and windows. But take care not to force because if people feel they are being forced the door will be firmly closed and may not be opened again. This requires skill.

Another thing the Congress showed and that was the value of good and well-prepared liturgies. We had good homilies, we had good singing, we had good pageantry if I may put it that way. We need to somehow transfer this to our parishes. I think it is more important that we have good liturgies than that we have many masses. If by having three masses you spread out the number of people who can help with the liturgy you may be leaving a poor celebration. By combining and reducing to one Mass you have more singers, cantors and other ministers available to provide a much better quality of liturgy. We need to think of that.

These are just some of my passing thoughts. Jot yours down and maybe even share them.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill