

*Movimiento internacional*  
**Somos-Iglesia**

*Movimento Internacional*  
**Nós somos Igreja**

*Movimento Internazionale*  
**Noi siamo Chiesa**

*Mouvement international*  
**Nous sommes Eglise**

*Internationale Bewegung*  
**Wir sind Kirche**

# *International Movement* **We are Church**

Madrid, May 7, 2008

Dear Pope Benedict XVI, dear brother in Christ,

We, the People of God, are greatly concerned about the growing shortage of ordained priests throughout the world. Because of this the celebration of the Holy Eucharist has had to be omitted in an increasing number of parishes. This inevitably follows the organisational rules of the church regarding compulsory celibacy in the ordained ministry. This is also in contradiction of can 213 that gives Christians the right to receive the Holy Eucharist each Sunday.

The Eucharist is "source and summit of the life and mission of the Church" (XI. Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2005). But the fact that the Eucharist is no longer celebrated in many parishes, puts the credibility of our church into question and starves believers from taking part in the most important sacrament of community. The catholic faithful should not be deprived of this centre by maintaining obligatory celibacy. The opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist should take precedence over the Church law of compulsory celibacy.

The severe lack of ordained priests, as we know from the "Anuario Pontificio", does not only affect Europe and the United States of America, which you have just visited, but especially the parishes and missions in South America. It is a global problem that urgently requires a global solution and one that a great majority of practising Catholics would like to see changed. Christians must not be deprived of this sacrament by the maintenance of obligatory celibacy (a law introduced in the 11th century). "The celebration of the Mass, as the action of Christ and of the Church, is the centre of the whole Christian life" (Instruction "Redemptionis sacramentum").

In order to make it possible for all Christians to benefit from this centre, the International Movement We Are Church kindly asks you to reconsider the present organisation of the ministries in the Church, to urgently repeal the present Western Church's law of obligatory celibacy and to re-introduce voluntary celibacy for ordained priests as a first step towards a renewed form of priesthood, that could better serve the people of God.

We know and you know that there are thousands of married priests who are longing to return to active ministry, quite apart from the many who would choose this path if the sacrament of orders was seen as compatible with the sacrament of matrimony. It seems an extraordinary, inexplicable and unacceptable waste of potential service and communion. We are sent by Jesus to bring the Good News to all the people.

Yours sincerely,



Raquel Mallavibarrena  
Chair of the International Movement *We Are Church*