



# SSS Grapevine

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## Some Highlights from the First Day of the 53<sup>rd</sup> International Eucharistic Congress

The opening Mass took place at the original city airport, which was converted in 2013 to a convention center for the city. Still present are the watch tower, gate walkways, and hangers; in fact, the convention center is an old hanger converted with a new front to it, and where the choir and orchestra led us in music, it was also a drop-off area.





There were a few key highlights of the Mass:

- One thousand seven hundred children from the city parishes of Quito received their First Communion in a new ritual created for the event. (*I look forward to using Saint Paschal Baylon this May 4.*)
- Altar servers from neighboring parishes were invited to serve with red cassocks white surplices, and ring bells during the call to worship procession and the Institution Narrative of the Eucharistic Prayer.

- The special hymn for the Congress sounded magnificent, with the 1,000-voice choir, superb orchestra, and organ; a special arrangement for other pieces of the Mass made the music very special.
- Pope Francis gave a special pre-taped video welcome and reminded us that to be the Eucharist, we must be the theme of the Congress: Sisters and brothers together for the world. Just as single grains come together to be bread to feed others, so do we when we celebrate this Congress or any Eucharist, a bread of unity, companionship, and healing for the life of the world.
- The Archbishop of Quito, Alfredo José Espinoza Mateus SDB, gave an excellent homily encouraging the First Communicants to remember their baptismal call, their Eucharistic call to now participate and live the Eucharist. With the Sunday readings, he encouraged all of us to “be open” and heal the blindness, the deafness, and the worries with Eucharistic love and mission. This archdiocese dates back to when it was established in 1545 and has over 2,200,000 Catholics with 173 parishes.
- The Universal Prayers highlighted the many languages of the Congress, especially the aboriginal language of Quito, of which the name of the city and people became “Quito.”
- Cardinal Baltazar Porras, the Pontifical Legate (*representative of the pope*) for the Congress, also gave an official welcome and pronounced the Congress open. This proclamation led to the closing procession.





- At the end of the Mass, the flags representing the people present from different countries process from the stage/sanctuary-altar platform into the convention center for the events in the following days.

We are staying at a lay institute retreat center – the Institute of the Holy Spirit. This is different from a religious order or group, like our Servitium Christi. These women live in a community together and work for their mission of hospitality, providing space for the Holy Spirit to work. Our food at the retreat center is excellent, and various new fruits from Central and South America are being shared. Accommodations are very comfortable, as well as private showers and baths! These are some of

the regular questions I receive when visiting a new country and place – and they are part of the adventure of exploring and receiving graced hospitality.

