

## WHAT IS THE EUCHARIST AND

### WHAT IS EUCHARISTIC ADORATION?

#### What is the Eucharist?

Jesus' Presence in the Eucharist is real and substantial: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this Bread will live forever ... Whoever eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For My Flesh is true food, and My Blood is true drink" (John 6:51, 54-55).

The Church explains that the Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life" (Lumen Gentium, 11). In his very first encyclical, Pope St. John Paul II reminds us that through the Eucharist, "each Christian receives the saving power of redemption" (Redemptor Hominis, 20). At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His Body and Blood (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 47). The Eucharist is the sacrament that Jesus established when "He took bread, and when He had given thanks He broke it and gave it to them, saying 'This is My Body, which is given for you, Do this in remembrance of Me.' And likewise the chalice after supper, saying, 'This chalice which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My Blood.'"

At Mass, when a Catholic priest follows this command of Jesus and offers the words of consecration, by these words of Christ and the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine are permanently changed, and they become Jesus: His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity (CCC 1333, 1373-76, 1406, 1410, 1412-1413). The Eucharist is Jesus' complete and personal gift of Himself to us under the appearances of bread and wine. Jesus is present in this sacrament permanently. His Real Presence is abiding, and does not vanish after Mass. The hosts remaining after Communion are kept in a special place of honour called the tabernacle (CCC 1377, 1379).

#### What is Adoration?

"Adoration is the acknowledgement of God as God, creator and saviour, the Lord and Master of everything that exists as infinite and merciful love" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2096). "Adoration is homage of the spirit to the King of glory, respectful silence in the presence of the ever greater God" (CCC 2628).

*The Concise Dictionary of Theology* defines Adoration as "the highest reverence to be offered only to God, our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier who alone should be worshiped and glorified." "Adoration is the word used to express those acts of divine worship which are directed to God only, and of which the characteristics are recognition of His perfection and omnipotence and our own complete dependence upon Him" (*A Catholic Dictionary*, Tan, 1997).

St. Elizabeth of Hungary remarked: "Adoration. This is a word from heaven. It seems to me that it could be defined as an ecstasy of love. It is love overwhelmed by the beauty, the strength, the immense grandeur of the Beloved. It falls into sort of a swoon, into a full deep silence, the silence that David spoke of when he cried out 'silence is Thy praise'. And it is the most beautiful of all praise that is sung eternally in the bosom of the unchanging Trinity, and it is also the last effort of the soul as it overflows and can say no more."

#### What is Eucharistic Adoration and why is it so tremendously important?

Eucharistic adoration is an expression of our love for Jesus, who loves us so much that He never wants to leave us and stays with us day and night in the Blessed Sacrament. He says: "Behold I am with you always," because "I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant in My affection for you" (Mt. 28:20; Jer 31:3). Eucharistic adoration is the respect and worship we give to Jesus, who is truly present to us under the appearance of bread and wine. The Eucharist is a priceless treasure; by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass we are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of grace. As St. Alphonsus Liguori noted, "of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us" (CCC 1418).

#### What is the relationship of Eucharistic adoration to the Mass?

The celebration of the Mass is the origin and purpose of the worship shown to the Eucharist outside the Mass. Eucharistic adoration extends Holy Communion in a lasting way even as it prepares the faithful to participate more fully in the celebration of the Mass. It leads us to acknowledge Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament and invites us to deeper spiritual union with him in the

reception of Holy Communion. St. Pope John Paul II said, "Our communal worship at Mass must be together with our personal worship of Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration in order that our love may be complete".

### **What is exposition of the Blessed Sacrament?**

Exposition is the placement of the sacred host outside the tabernacle for public adoration. This can take many forms. One form is the removal of the sacred vessels from the tabernacle for a more prominent and visible placement. The Church also permits a "full" exposition, when the sacred host is clearly visible in a sacred vessel called a "monstrance."

### **What is the purpose of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament?**

There are three purposes of Eucharistic exposition: (1) to acknowledge Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament; (2) to lead us to a fuller participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, culminating in Holy Communion; and (3) to foster the worship which is due to Christ in spirit and in truth.

### **What is Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration?**

Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration is our response to Jesus' love for us, whereby each of us is willing to spend a quiet "holy hour" of prayer in His Eucharistic Presence once a week on a regular basis, so that we may have extended exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus is never left alone, and the chapel is open for anyone to visit Him.

### **Why do we need Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration and what are the fruits of it?**

**Jesus wants it!** He loves you infinitely. You bring joy to His Sacred Heart when you spend time with Him in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus said to St. Margaret Mary that He has a burning love to be honoured in the Blessed Sacrament. **He gives us graces through adoration!** He refreshes us in mind, heart and spirit by lavishing on us those graces that encourage, console, strengthen, guide and inspire us to place all our trust in Him, so that the power of His Love may cast our every worry, fear, doubt, and anxiety that we have. **Popes and the Church have asked for perpetual adoration. Everyone can participate. It leads to a truly personal relationship with Jesus. It builds community. It brings peace!**

People who observe Eucharistic adoration experience a deeper devotion to Jesus, and this manifests itself in countless ways. The primary fruits are repentance and conversion, which lead to increased charity - that is, the love of Christ alive in his people. The adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist also leads to greater reverence at Mass, a deeper desire for personal holiness, and a stronger sense of union with the parish and the whole Church. More recently, the practice has led to an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.

### **How should we pray during Eucharistic adoration?**

There are many ways to pray. We may meditate silently by gazing on the sacred host. We may silently speak to Jesus with our mind and heart. We may rely on devotions and prayers from Catholic tradition, such as the reading of Scripture, recitation of the rosary, or the litanies. ACTS: during our holy hour of prayer, we may want to spend 15 minutes for each type of prayer - Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving (Praise) and Supplication (intercession/petition). Pray the salvation and sanctification of souls!

### **Promote Eucharistic adoration by doing it!**

Make frequent visits to Jesus at the tabernacle and in the Monstrance. Invite your spouse, children, neighbours, friends, co-workers and others to join you. "Because Christ Himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, He is to be honoured with the worship of adoration. To visit the Blessed Sacrament is...a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord" (CCC 1418). Please do what you can to help to implement Pope St. John Paul II's great desire that Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration be established in every parish and Christian community.

St. Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*; Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd Ed., 1997; USCCB, *31 Questions on the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*, 2004; Excerpts courtesy of Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, *Questions and Answers on the Eucharist*, 2000