

“Why We Adore Him?” A Holy Thursday Message

by Bishop Joseph Strickland

I hope the title of this reflection gets the attention of the reader because in many ways it gets to the heart of the matter. As I attempt to explain why Eucharistic Adoration is so important in my life and why I want to encourage every Catholic in the Diocese of Tyler to become more acquainted with this beautiful form of Catholic prayer, the conversation highlights the basic truth of the Real Presence of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Let's take a moment to look more deeply at this simple question, I believe the most profound answers are embedded in the question itself. Firstly, we can look at the simple word *Him*. I capitalize it because it refers to Jesus Christ, God's Divine Son and this immediately answers the first part of the question. Why adore? Because adoration is a fitting response to the presence of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ. This most basic consideration emphasizes the reality that Jesus is present in the Eucharist, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. Simply put if we believe He is there, really present, then adoration is the proper response.

Of course I realize that the paragraphs above rely completely on faith. Those who believe that the Incarnate Word, God's Divine Son, Jesus Christ is truly present, veiled under the form of the simple unleavened host, will immediately respond with adoration. As I continue I hope to move a bit deeper into why it is so beneficial for those who believe to spend time in Adoration of Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament.

The first question that may arise is why should adoration take place outside Holy Mass? I want to be very clear that as the Church teaches in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially in *Lumen Gentium* Number 11, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. Thus the actual celebration of the Mass, which is the memorial of Christ's sacrifice making it possible for us to be nurtured by His very Body and Blood, is the greatest prayer and the heart of our Catholic faith. Because of this, adoration of Christ's Body and Blood should always arise from and lead us back to the Mass. Any notion that adoration substitutes for participating in the Eucharistic Liturgy and receiving Communion should always be corrected with clarity and vigor. I hope to inspire the faithful of the diocese to realize that because we love the Mass, adoration is a beautiful form of prayer with the Lord.

The first point that I would make is that spending time in prayer and reflection in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is a great help to our supernatural faith. At its most basic level Eucharistic Adoration is simply spending time with our beloved Lord. We can acknowledge that how we spend our time is a significant indicator of what we value in life. Spending time with Jesus's Eucharistic Face indicates that we seek to know Him and follow Him.

This brings to mind Jesus' plea to the disciples as He enters into His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, “can you not spend one hour with me”? This truly can be directed to each of us as individual disciples. It is a great reminder that the presence of Jesus with us, although in a different form, is not somehow a lesser presence. In reality, if we pause to reflect on what we really believe about the Eucharist, that Jesus is present in every tabernacle in the world, then it makes His promise to be with us until the end of the age come alive. It must be acknowledged that believing in the Real Presence is a supernatural gift of faith that must be nurtured in order for it to stay strong and vibrant. We all know the sad studies that indicate that many Catholics have fallen away from belief in the real presence. Thus seeking to enhance our supernatural faith in the Real Presence is essential for our time.

The second truth that I would emphasize is that Eucharistic Adoration helps us to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Popes of the later half of the twentieth century and the popes of the twenty-first century, Saint Pope John Paul II, Pope Emeritus Benedict and Pope Francis, have all urged the faithful to deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ. This points to the very human reality that developing relationships as human beings always necessitates spending time together. In modern terms even relationships that have developed in some

virtual way involve spending time encountering another person. Interestingly praying before the Lord in His Eucharistic Presence is not virtual, you are in the room and He is in the room as a real physical presence. But the communication is on a spiritual level. Many mystics are on record professing that the Lord spoke to them in an audible way as they pray before Him. But for the vast majority of us we will not “hear a voice,” although in the interior of our hearts many of us will know that Jesus has spoken to us in a very personal way. The emphasis for us as believers is that the Lord is truly, physically present to us in the great mystery of the Eucharist. He loves us more than we can imagine. Thus it is reasonable to expect that He will communicate with us in some way as we spend time with Him.

A third reason for recommending Eucharistic Adoration is the simple reality that the Lord is truly present in a specific time and a specific space. The Church’s long history acknowledges that there is such a thing as Sacred Time and Sacred Space. This understanding expands and contracts as we move through our daily lives. Sacred Time can be as big as the cycle of the liturgical calendar as we progress through the year and it can be as small as a pause for silence before offering a spoken prayer. Although in our busy world these moments can easily be lost, we all need to cultivate our ability to spot them and all such moments to resonate through our hearts and minds. The sacred time of adoration for someone who has developed the good habit of spending time regularly with the Lord becomes a true and intimate treasure in the life of the person.

Sacred Space is similar as it expands and contracts through our lives. The Sacred Space of a vast Cathedral reminds us that we are in the presence of holy ground, while at the same time a corner in our home where we’ve placed a statue of a beloved saint can also be very holy ground. In the context of Eucharistic Adoration, the place where we adore Him is sacred because He is there.

Finally, I would offer that Eucharistic Adoration helps us be strong in faith and avoid allowing the casual approach to the presence of God’s Divine Son to overtake our approach to our faith. Any time we appreciate a person, a work of art, or virtually anything that becomes a personal treasure, it can be presumed that we have spent some time in appreciation. One simple remedy to the lack of reverence for Jesus in the world is to spend time with Him and to develop the good habit of awareness that He truly is with us in our day-to-day journey. I can share personally that learning to spend more time in Eucharistic Adoration has helped me to be much more conscious of the reality of the Lord’s presence in so many places. It also reminds us that we and every person around us is sacred. I’ve often tried to emphasize that our Catholic church buildings are the royal house of the King of Kings. Cultivating this attitude helps us remember that a church truly is a sacred place and reminds us that our loving Lord is with us throughout our days.

In conclusion I offer words from Saint Charles Borromeo, as he reminds us who we adore in the Blessed Sacrament.

O what ingratitude! What more can the Lord God do for us? For my own part, I cannot say. His great Majesty descends from heaven to earth for us poor sinners, and for many years bestows the divine presence upon this valley of tears, covering His most splendid and illustrious light with the darkness of our mortal vestment. He innocently and righteously suffers injury upon injury, torments, afflictions, and even death. He, the Son of God made man, dies upon the wood of the cross. Yet, He does not remain satisfied and content with all this; rather, burning ever more with love, He leaves us His Spirit, His Soul, and His Body for our food, and for our nourishment, to sustain us, to invigorate us, to console us, and to give us joy. And He does this not only for a time, but for the whole of our lives, because this great benefit will remain until the end of the world: “Behold, I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world” (Matt 28:20). St. Charles Borromeo (1538-1584)

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Spanish “¿Por qué lo adoramos?” *Un mensaje de Jueves Santo* Source: <https://www.dioceseoftyler.org...>