

A FORGOTTEN SOURCE OF BLESSINGS

SOLEMN EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

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We can rightly call the 19th century the great century of the Holy Eucharist, just as it has been styled the century of Mary. Never in all the past ages has the cult of the Blessed Sacrament flourished so conspicuously.

Solemn Exposition was rare even in the ages of Faith. Perhaps there was some sort of misapprehension for the respect and majesty of the Sacrament of love, were it to be exposed too often to the piety of the faithful.

There was, then, no special need of this excellent means of salvation, the last, perhaps, which is now offered to Christian society. But today, Solemn Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is the grace and need of our times.

Exposition is the sovereign grace, the life-blood of the Church and the faithful.

In 1810, when Rome, the city of the Prince of the Apostles, mourned over the exile and enslavement of her Pastor, and found no hope except in God, a few men found in Faith a thought which restored courage and confidence. "We will save Rome by the grace of adoration," they said; "by this help we will bring back in triumph our beloved Pontiff." This thought stirred men to the quick; they grouped together around the altar; the ecclesiastical authorities blessed and approved this work and it went into motion. Exposition began, and in November, 1810, this heavenly flame was lit, never to be extinguished. It became a powerful protection, a burning furnace; and Pius VII re-entered Rome in triumph, as would also, in later years, his worthy successor, Pope Pius IX.

How can things be otherwise. Jesus Christ, the eternal Pontiff, possessed a throne surrounded with love and veneration in the old city of the Popes, and His Vicar on earth would moan in exile! No, no, these two thrones, that of the Savior and that of His august representative, must stand side by side; the one must raise or sustain the other. You see how powerful is the work of perpetual adoration.

In 1848, once more, Rome was trampled under foot by hatred and impiety. Monsignor Palmer was murdered at the very feet of the Pope, though it was at the Pontiff that the blow was aimed, The Quirinal was set on fire, churches desecrated, religious Orders were persecuted. The revolution had triumphed and dispossessed the Pope of his lands, and the Pope took the road into exile. But those fiends had forgotten something. They forgot to put out the fire which would consume and exterminate them - the fire of perpetual adoration. The Divine Host of propitiation had remained exposed in the heart of Rome, to protect and defend the city, and prepare the triumphal entry of Pius XI to Saint Peter's.

Indeed, all the malice, all the cleverness, all the treachery of the impious and of the revolutionaries, who at this very moment are leagued against the eternal city, will crumble at the foot of the Eucharistic throne on which reigns the omnipotent Master Who said to the sea: "Peace, be still."

Exposition has also proved the salvation of Paris and France. How sad and gloomy were the days of the Revolution, when the king and his servants were liquidated and the Tuileries, the Treasury, and the government were seized. What would be the fate of disrupted France? Who would check the flood waters which have been pent up for so long? Who could prevent wholesale pillage and murder? The furies of '93 and its impiety are let loose ... and no hope of salvation looming on the horizon. But a timely thought inspires a few pious souls: they would save France by perpetual adoration. Jesus must be adored day and night, He must have a throne of salvation and reparation. At this thought hope is re-kindled. People unite, enroll themselves, spare no efforts, and on December 6, 1848, Exposition and Adoration are inaugurated in Notre-Dame des Victories. This great work, the solemn manifestation of Jesus-Hostia, accomplished - Paris and France were saved.

Paris was saved by Perpetual Adoration, whatever others might say to the contrary. For neither the eloquence of any man, or the common sense of the people, or the wisdom of the government could extricate the nation. No, no; neither soldiers, nor leaders, nor learned men could achieve such a feat. Only a few modest men, who copied the gesture of Moses on the mountain, could work such a miracle. They constituted themselves victims of adoration and propitiation for their brethren, for the Church, and the world, at the feet of Him Who holds in His hands the balance of peace and of war, of pardon and of justice; and so long as Paris will have the devotion her thrones of perpetual exposition, she will never bow to her enemies. Where the King is, there is the capital; and its bulwarks, its strength, its glory spring from His residing there. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is the King of Kings. As long as He resides on the altar-throne, He wants reign, to pardon, and to save. If no longer He had adorers, then, oh! yes, we needs must tremble and take to flight, for the fatal hour will have struck, the hour of the prince of darkness.

From Paris perpetual adoration spread far and wide; the devotion has been instituted in nearly every diocese of France, and those which have not yet organized this royal service of Jesus are preparing to do so, and what is more remarkable is the fact that it is the more remote and poor parishes which first fall in line with this eucharistic movement.

I am not afraid to say it: the cult of Solemn Exposition is the great need of our times; this public and solemn profession of faith in the divinity of Christ and in the reality of His Sacramental Presence is a necessity. It is the best refutation which can be leveled at the renegades, the apostates, the impious and the indifferent. It will crush them like a mountain of fire, but a fire of love and goodness.

This solemn cult of exposition is also necessary to arouse the slumbering faith of many good people who have forgotten Jesus Christ, because they have lost sight of the fact that He is their Neighbor, their Friend, and their God.

This cult is needed to stimulate true piety, alas, so long held up at the gates of the sanctuary where Jesus is always ready to bless us and open His Heart to us.

It is needed to save society. For society is dying out, because it no longer has a vital principle of truth and charity, no family spirit. Each one shifts for himself, becomes self-centered and self-sufficient. So dissolution is at hand. But society will revive when all its members group themselves around our Emmanuel.

Our judgement will naturally become healthy if it is inspired by a common principle; the bonds of true friendship will be tightened by a common love; the beautiful days of the Cenacle, the family feast, the banquet of the great King, will be re-lived. These are the effects of the devotion on Christian peoples.

A devout French Bishop used to say: "Ever since the devotion has been established in my diocese, religion has flourished again; three days of adoration are worth a mission. Besides, and this, especially, is what rejoices me,, the good effected is more lasting." Behold the best proof of the power of adoration.

Zealous priests in many a parish easily get discouraged, because priests are regarded merely as professionals, and the Church as a sort of religious townhall. The house of God is often deserted, even on Sundays, and men seem to have lost the way to church. How attract them to the priest, to the church, to Jesus Christ Himself? In many countries the only way is through Solemn Exposition, with its grandiose religious exercises and its torrents of graces.

Even if success seems at first imperceptible, hope must continue to flicker; it is already very much that our Lord has deigned to visit His people and mount His throne of mercy. When He comes a second or third time, hearts will become more docile. It takes time before an arid land can yield an abundant harvest. As with all living things, so, too, souls must expand their vitality by degrees before reaching full maturity.

There is even a stronger reason for establishing solemn exposition as a real means of salvation: it is the impotency of secondary means for saving the world. It is unfortunately too true that Christian societies are dissolving into religious individualism. And yet there are still many priests, zealous and learned; good books abound in our shops; Catholic organizations are to be found wherever some good may be achieved; Catholic charities reach out far and wide. Whence, then, comes this indifference, incredulity, hostility? Whence, the foul air? Whence the moral epidemic which rages and weakens so many souls?

Missioners can't understand why their spiritual exercises, even the most consoling, merely streak the sky like a brilliant meteor, or, like torrential rains, flow over hard soil without sinking in; or, like a bolt of lightning, flash and disappear; in a word, why the thermometer of piety soon falls to its former level.

Formerly a good book could work up a revolution in the minds of men; today, men barely cast a fleeting glance at one. A new movement of grace produced salutary effects in whole nations; today we are afraid of the supernatural and start out with feelings of apprehension or aversion in everything we do.

In the past, whenever our Christian civilization was going on the rocks, you could always find some lighthouse of safety; these beacons were certain saints, who were showing the way to perplexed souls or guiding religious works. But, at present, few are to be found. Now, there is nothing astonishing about this, for the planets cease to reflect light when the sun is eclipsed. Devotion to saints has a meaning only when it spells glory for Jesus Christ, in Whom it must terminate. When a King is without court, his ministers have no prestige, and when a sovereign is insulted, so also all his subjects are humiliated.

The great evil of the day lies in the fact that we don't go to Jesus as to a Savior and a God. We abandon the only basis, the only law, the only grace of salvation. The trouble about empty piety is that it fails to spring from Jesus Christ, or terminate in Him. People stop or loiter on the way. A divine love which does not derive its fervor, its center, in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, lacks the essential conditions of power: it will soon die out like the hearth without fuel. This love will soon become merely human.

What then, must we do? Go back to the source of life which is Jesus. But we must cease viewing Jesus only in His earthly Life, or in the glory of Heaven; we must see Him especially in the Holy Eucharist. We must take Him from the back seat and place Him at the head of our Christian civilization, which He will guide and bring to safety. We must rebuild His palace, a royal throne, a court of devoted servants, a family of friends, a people of adorers.

Behold the mission and the glory of our age; that will make it the greatest and holiest of centuries.

Let us never forget that an age prospers or dwindles in proportion to its devotion to the Holy Eucharist. This is the measure of its spiritual life and its faith, of its charity and its virtue.

May the glorious kingdom of Jesus Eucharistic come! Too long, much too long, have impiety and ingratitude ruled the earth.

Adveniat regnum tuum!

http://www.therealpresence.org/eucharst/manual/section6/sec6_69.pdf