

Understanding Devotion to The Eucharist

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At the heart of our Catholic faith lies our devotion to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, the pinnacle of all the sacraments. Each sacrament conveys God's grace to us, but the Eucharist is the Author of Grace Himself. Through the Eucharist, we encounter the living Christ, truly present in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and dwelling with us in all the Tabernacles of the world. Understanding this reality should nurture a deep sense of love, respect, and adoration. He who sacrificed Himself for us on the cross continues today to give Himself wholly and completely in the Eucharist.

St. Francis of Assisi said, "...In this world, I cannot see the Most High Son of God with my own eyes, except for His Most Holy Body and Blood."

Jesus Christ is our Lifeline, the Bridge to the Father, the Way to Heaven. He is not distant from us but remains very near and accessible. He knows we need Him to reach our Heavenly destiny and has promised never to leave us alone on this diOcult and sometimes dangerous journey to our spiritual home. Do we believe His promise? Do we really embrace the truth that He comes to us in the Mass and remains there on the altar to nourish, strengthen, and protect us?

Let's look at the reality of the Real Presence in Communion and Adoration and how this truth can impact us and strengthen our faith.

What is the Real Presence?

The Real Presence *is* Our Lord Jesus Christ, body, blood, soul, and divinity, truly and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist. This doctrine of our Faith has been deBned and defended throughout the history of Catholicism by the Church Fathers, the Councils, the Doctors of the Church, and countless saints and theologians. When Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, He said plainly, "This is my Body," and "This is my blood" (Matthew 26:26,28).

Christ was not speaking in parables when He instituted the Eucharist. This was not a time for ambiguity. Christ was preparing to enter into His passion and leaving His apostles with a clear, simple, and profound truth to understand and follow. And, although the Consecration of the Eucharist is a miracle, it is not beyond the ability of God to choose to reveal His love and presence in a physical, as well as spiritual manner. At the wedding of Cana when Jesus turned the water into wine, He demonstrated that all creation is subject to Him. Likewise, at the close of His earthly ministry, He changed bread into His body and wine into His blood by His spoken word.

When Jesus commanded the apostles to “*Do this...*” (Luke 22:19), He was empowering them and their successors to carry on this Mystery of Faith throughout the life of the Church. When the priest pronounces the same words of consecration, Christ renews the miracle of the Last Supper through His minister.

Even before the Institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, Jesus laid the groundwork in His Bread of Life discourse in John, chapter 6. In it, Jesus explained to a large group of disciples the significance of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. His language was unmistakably clear and many of the disciples left Him that day, due to the difficulty of these sayings. He did not call them back to assure them that His intent was only symbolic. He did not soften or change the message. No, the God of all truth, who wants to save and never mislead us, held firmly to the truth He was conveying.

When Jesus said,
“*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood **has eternal life**, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. **He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.** . . .*”

His words were not vague or ambiguous. And coming from Him, they were words of truth and life. In His wisdom, Our Lord provides the superabundant grace we need by giving Himself to us in the Blessed Sacrament. We rejoice to receive this unspeakable gift and with faith, we acknowledge that devotion to Jesus *is* devotion to the Eucharist.

The Real Presence at Mass

Our participation in devotion to the Eucharist begins with understanding **its central role** in the Sacrifice of the Mass. Father John Hardon in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary* writes, “*The Mass cannot be understood apart from Calvary, of which it is a re-presentation, memorial, and effective application of the merits gained by Christ.*”

In the moment of the Consecration, **the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is made present** and offered anew to God the Father. Christ’s command to His apostles to “*Do this in remembrance of Me*” (Luke 22:19), is not merely to bring to mind something in the past, but rather to bring the action of Our Lord’s Sacrifice on Calvary **to the present moment**. In each Mass, Jesus offers Himself to the Father as He did on the cross. Though He cannot die again, nevertheless the mystical reality of His Sacrifice remains the same.

As we commune with Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, we kneel under the cross with Mary, John, and the holy women. *We meditate upon the last words of Jesus, we contemplate His body*

torn and pierced, and His precious blood poured out upon us. The grace of Calvary is being applied to us in those moments.

Devotion to the Eucharist in the context of the Mass involves recognizing and responding to the real presence of Christ on the altar sacrifice Himself in an unbloody manner for our salvation and **ongoing sanctification**.

The Real Presence in Adoration

Adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is another essential aspect of our devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist. Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, states, “[T]he Church bids us adore Christ hidden behind the eucharistic veils and pray to Him for the [supernatural and earthly gifts], of which we ever stand in need”

When the consecrated host is exposed for adoration or hidden in the tabernacle, we have the opportunity to be **in the direct presence of Christ**. Just as the disciples walked and talked with Jesus during His earthly ministry, we too encounter Him physically in the Blessed Sacrament. This reality for Catholics is an incomparable gift. **We can meet with God**.

In our technological and often frenetic world, it can be difficult to make room for intimate one-on-one encounters that allow us to express and receive love. These interactions are necessary to build relationships but they take time and attention. It requires us to slow down, intentionally turn aside from all the competing tasks and opportunities, and sit still with the one we desire to know better.

Nothing is more important than our relationship with Christ, and though we can never plumb the depths of His being, we need to know Him better. How can we become like Him if we do not know Him? Although He is the King and Creator of all that exists, He grants us a personal, face-to-face audience whenever we desire it. Not only this, but He longs for us, He wants to reveal His love to us. He is inviting us into personal friendship with Him.

“The sovereigns of the earth do not always grant audience readily; on the contrary, the King of Heaven, hidden under the eucharistic veils, is ready to receive anyone. . . .” – St. Alphonsus Liguori

The Impact of Communion

How does the Real Presence of Christ in Communion impact our lives? The implications of Christ within us are far-reaching. The graces, the privileges, the mercies, the gifts afforded to the faithful through Holy Communion cannot be enumerated. Every Holy Communion increases grace in our soul. It expands our capacity to love. We become more disposed to respond to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit prompting us to give up our will and do the will of the Father.

When we receive Christ in the Eucharist His life is incorporated into ours and ours into His. United to the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, *we become participants in the Divine Life*. Here we are reminded of Christ’s prayer to the Father, *“that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, . . . The glory which thou hast given*

me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, . . .” (John 17:21-23).

Through the Eucharist, we share in His glory, becoming one with the Triune God, and one with each other as His Mystical Body.

We also gain a special union with Our Lady. In Holy Communion, **we become Christ-bearers**. St. John Chrysostom said that when we receive Christ in the Eucharist we **“carry Him within [us] like Mary Most Holy.”** And like Our Lady, who brought Christ to the world, we do likewise, reconnecting His nature that all men might be drawn to Him.

Jesus calls us as sharers in His Body, to continue His work. When we understand that God, incarnate nourishes us with Himself, we should no longer be complacent or afraid to do His will. Having received His grace into ourselves, we become channels of grace to the world. Even when He asks something of us that is beyond our ability, with Jesus living in us, Saint Paul tells us, “[we] can do **all things**. . . “. It is Christ Himself Who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

Blessed Louise Margaret Claret de la Touche was called by God to form the hearts of priests. She saw this as a daunting task for a woman religious. However, when she received Holy Communion, she said, *“What need I fear? He Who sustains the world is within me. The blood of God circulates within my veins. Have no fear, O my soul. The Lord of the universe has taken you into His arms and desires you to find rest in Him”* (Manelli, FI, Father Stefano M. *Jesus Our Eucharistic Love*).

The Real Presence and The State of Grace

The Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confession are very closely connected. Because we are required to be in the state of grace to receive Our Lord in Communion, we must confess all grave sins before a Catholic priest – who acts in the person of Christ in the confessional. Grace is lost through mortal sin, but a sincere confession obtains God’s mercy, restores our relationship with Him, and returns us to the state of grace.

Although it’s not essential to confess venial sins to receive the Eucharist, confessing them purifies our souls and gives us the grace to overcome our faults – thus we are more disposed to respond to the graces received in Communion. The Sacrament of Confession is a powerful gift, restoring sanctifying grace to the soul if lost through mortal sin and giving us strength us to combat our vices and grow in virtue.

The Impact of Adoration

Adoration is a personal and intimate encounter with Christ, obtaining grace for our daily lives. We come to the Author of our faith to pour out our hearts, repent of our sins, offer gratitude, seek guidance, and solace in His presence. It is a time to deepen our relationship with Christ and experience His profound love and mercy.

As we kneel before Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, our minds and hearts become quiet in union with Him. We can receive His **gift of peace through the silent love of the Eucharist**. This silence in the presence of Jesus is a profound source of healing and re-orient us to what is truly valuable and worthy of our time. In His silence, He speaks heart to heart. It is a language of the

soul, only understood by spending attentive time in His presence. Here with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, we engage in [Mental Prayer](#), thus bringing together two powerful means of attaining holiness and growing in love for Our Lord.

This meditative communion with Our Lord also radiates outward, through us to the world. Silence teaches us to be recollected (attentive to the here and now). Learning the discipline of silent recollection is necessary to hear the voice of the Spirit amid our busy lives and to attend to others in their need. As we learn to sit with God, we can then sit with others who need to be seen, heard and loved. This is another gift of grace we receive in the peaceful, quiet moments of Adoration.

Spending time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament not only blesses us with many graces but also, gains “a treasury of graces for others” – Fr. John Hardon (Hardon, John A. *With Us Today: On the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist*).

Embrace Him

As Catholics, understanding the truth of Christ’s presence shouldn’t we want to visit our Lord a little more frequently and stay a little longer with Him? We have such a treasure in the Eucharist. But this treasure must be seen through the eyes of the spirit – through the supernatural. If we want to please God and live in the freedom He intends for us we must have faith – faith in His Revelation and the doctrines of His Church. Faith that Christ speaks the truth and has given us the gift of Himself in the Holy Eucharist.

If we want to believe that Our Lord is present in the Eucharist, but we have doubts, we can bring those doubts to Him. The Real Presence of the Savior of history, now gloriously reigning in heaven and also lovingly present with us on our altars, will fortify our faith, making it strong and unwavering if we invest the time to discover His truth.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44).

Jesus requires us to go all in, to run toward the truth as a treasure to be gained. Even as we are discovering its meaning and significance, **we know we will not be disappointed.**

Christ is calling us to Himself. It’s time to answer the call, to embrace Him in the Eucharist. Our faith will grow and our lives will change. Our Eucharistic Lord will fill us with His grace and bring about the transformation we want to see in ourselves, in our families, and in the world.