



Excerpts from *Thirty-One Questions on Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament*

1. If the Mass is the source and summit of the entire Christian life, then why have Eucharistic adoration?

The celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist is, certainly, the “fount and apex” of the entire Christian life.¹ Yet the “spiritual life . . . is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy.”² Pope John Paul II calls worship of the Most Holy Eucharist outside Mass “an important daily practice [that] becomes an inexhaustible source of holiness”³ and a practice “of inestimable value for the life of the Church,” so much so that “it is the responsibility of Pastors to encourage, also by their personal witness, the practice of Eucharistic adoration, and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in particular, as well as prayer of adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species.”⁴

2. What is the relationship of Eucharistic adoration to the Mass?

The celebration of the Eucharist in the sacrifice of the Mass is “truly the origin and purpose of the worship that is shown to the eucharist outside Mass.”⁵ Eucharistic adoration extends Holy Communion in a lasting way⁶ and prepares us to participate more fully in the celebration of the Eucharistic mystery. It leads us to “acknowledge Christ’s marvelous presence in the sacrament” and “invites us to the spiritual union with him that culminates in sacramental communion.”⁷

3. What is the importance of Eucharistic devotion?

“This practice, repeatedly praised and recommended by the magisterium, is supported by the example of many saints. Particularly outstanding in this regard was Saint Alphonsus Liguori, who wrote: ‘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.’ 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.”⁸

4. What happens as we contemplate the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament?

When we contemplate Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament we are given the opportunity to thank him for his passion, death, and glorious resurrection, the marvelous saving act that brought about our redemption. Christ draws near to us, more intimate with us than we are with ourselves. He strengthens our share in his divine life, the life that transforms us into his likeness and, in the Spirit, he gives us access to the Father. As Pope John Paul II reflected in his recent encyclical letter:

It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple (cf. Jn 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. If in our time Christians must be distinguished above all by the ‘art of prayer,’ how can we not feel a renewed need to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most

Holy Sacrament? How often, dear brother and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!⁹

7. What is the social aspect of Eucharistic adoration?

“Devotion to the divine Eucharist exerts a great influence upon the soul in the direction of fostering a ‘social’ love, in which we put the common good ahead of private good, take up the cause of the community, the parish, the universal Church, and extend our charity to the whole world because we know that there are members of Christ everywhere. . . . This zeal at prayer and at devoting oneself to God for the sake of the unity of the Church is something that religious, both men and women, should regard as very specially their own since they are bound in a special way to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and they have, by virtue of the vows they have pronounced, become a kind of crown set around it here on earth.”¹⁰

8. Should priests encourage the faithful to pray before the Blessed Sacrament?

Pope Paul VI urged that the faithful “should not forget about paying a visit during the day to the Most Blessed Sacrament in the very special place of honor where it is reserved in churches in keeping with the liturgical laws, since this is a proof of gratitude and a pledge of love and a display of the adoration that is owed to Christ the Lord who is present there.”¹¹ “Pastors should see that churches and public oratories where, according to law, the holy eucharist is reserved, are open every day at least for some hours, at a convenient time, so that the faithful may easily pray in the presence of the blessed sacrament.”¹²

Notes

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| 1 Second Vatican Council, <i>Lumen gentium</i> , no. 11. | Bishop Albert Houssiau of Liege, Belgium. |
| 2 Second Vatican Council, <i>Sacrosanctum concilium</i> , no. 12. | 7 ICEL trans., <i>Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass</i> (HCW), no. 82. |
| 3 John Paul II, <i>Ecclesiae de Eucharistia</i> (EE), no. 10. | 8 EE, no. 25. |
| 4 EE, no. 25. | 9 EE, no. 25. |
| 5 See Sacred Congregation for Rites, <i>Eucharisticum mysterium</i> , no. 3c. | 10 Paul VI, <i>Mysterium Fidei</i> (MF), nos. 69, 71. |
| 6 See Letter of Pope John Paul II to | 11 MF, no. 66. |
| | 12 HCW, no. 8, no. 135. |

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