

WHY EUCHARISTIC ADORATION?



Eucharistic Adoration provides us with a chance to be with our Savior one on one. Through this practice, we are invited to spend time alone with God in his real, physical form and to bring to Jesus all our cares, concerns, prayers, hopes and thoughts. We set aside a special time, a respite from our hectic modern lives, to create a personal space in which to meet our God.

By doing so, we grow more in tune with God. We put ourselves in position to talk to him, and also to listen. We reserve a time and a space when we ask Jesus to come into our hearts and minds, and when we walk away, we are transformed.

The best kind of friend is the one with whom you can spend time without having to say anything. You can just share the moment and enjoy each other's company, knowing your relationship is deeper than the spoken word. That kind of silent communication is what takes place between you and Jesus when you participate in Eucharistic Adoration.

Eucharistic Adoration is the spiritual practice of spending time in the presence of the exposed Host.

One of the things that most identifies us as Catholics is our belief in the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Christ. Many Christian denominations have a service that commemorates the Last Supper, and quite a few distribute bread and wine (or grape juice) at that service.

For Catholics, the Eucharist is no mere symbol of Jesus; we believe that the consecrated Host is actually the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ. We take great joy (the word Eucharist means “thanksgiving”) in having this amazing gift that we can see, touch, and even taste. It is the most profound way we experience the presence of Christ in our world today.

Receiving Communion at Mass is our best opportunity to fully experience Christ within our parish communities. We sit at the table of the Lord with our fellow believers and become one collective body as we share in Jesus's sacrifice in a tangible way.

Even the most holy people we can think of have found blessings, grace, and strength in Eucharistic Adoration.

“Jesus has made himself the Bread of Life to give us life,” Mother Teresa once said. “Night and day, he is there. If you really want to grow in love, come back to the Eucharist, come back to that Adoration.”

How Does It Work?

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed for adoration. It is placed in a monstrance, a beautiful receptacle that holds the Host in glass so it can be seen.

Of course, if another parishioner is scheduled for a given hour, that doesn't mean that you should feel excluded. Those schedules allow for a minimum number of worshippers—there is no maximum. Your church would love to have the problem of having to turn people away due to lack of space.

A good way to get familiar with the practice of Eucharistic Adoration is to stop in during a time that works for you. You don't have to schedule ahead and you don't have to spend an hour. You can pop in for a short visit or stay as long as you like.

What Do I Do?

If you are interested in Eucharistic Adoration, you might find yourself fitting in a visit here and there or even signing up for one of those vacant slots on the schedule. For those used to jam-packed days when lunch is eaten behind a steering wheel and bathroom breaks have to be scheduled, an hour of quiet might seem daunting. Just what are we supposed to do?

Everyone finds their own ways of spending time with Jesus. Some spend an hour on their knees, gazing adoringly at the monstrance. Say a rosary, read Scripture, write in a journal, read a spiritual book (there are dozens available specifically for Holy Hours) or do absolutely nothing at all. Whatever happens in that space and time is OK. The point is to make time for Jesus as you make time for your spouse, your kids, your friends—any important relationship.

The Franciscan tradition offers some ideas to get you started.

St. Clare of Assisi instructed her sisters to follow a four-step process for meditation.

- **Gaze.** Simply spend some time looking at the Host. Except for the Elevation at Mass and the few moments when we receive Communion, it's not something we get to see. The profound reality of the Real Presence is so essential to our faith; it's worth spending some time on.

- **Consider.** Is there a special concern weighing on your mind? Even complicated issues sometimes can untangle themselves when considered in the light of Christ's presence. This is also a good time to simply consider Christ. You might start with pondering his Agony in the Garden, or the Passion and Death that followed. You might reflect on his sacrifice for you, and how the evidence of his presence in front of you confirms that even death did not exhaust his love.

- **Contemplate.** Pray. Whatever is on your mind, whatever thoughts can't quite fit into the few minutes your day usually allows for prayer—you have time for them now. Pour out your heart to the One who is anxious to receive your worship, your praise, your pleas, even your anger.

- **Imitate.** Spending time in Eucharistic Adoration usually has a profound effect on a person's life. Take whatever insights you have gained from your time in prayer, or whatever peace you have been granted, and bring it back to your daily life. With time, you may find that the hour you thought you could never fill is not long enough.

"When you look at the crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you. When you look at the Sacred Host, you understand how much Jesus loves you now," Mother Teresa said.

"...The time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on earth. Each moment that you spend with Jesus will deepen your union with him and make your soul everlastingly more glorious and beautiful in Heaven, and will help bring about everlasting peace on earth."

In every case, the object of Eucharistic Adoration is to draw closer to Jesus and, then, to bring that presence of Christ to our needy world.

Notable comments of the Eucharist:

St. Francis of Assisi

Concerned citizens brought St. Francis to their parish priest who was living in sin; they wanted the saint to reprimand him and condemn his sinful way of life. Instead, St. Francis knelt, took the priest's hands and said, "I know not whether this priest is sinful. I only know that these hands, and these hands alone, make present upon the altar my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Francis's respect for the clergy was based on the priest's power to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, "in whom all things in heaven and on earth are made peaceful and are reconciled to God the Almighty."

St. Clare of Assisi

When the Poor Clares at San Damiano were threatened by Muslim Crusaders, Clare defended her sisters with a monstrance. Though she was too ill to walk, she had her sisters help her confront the invaders while she held the Blessed Sacrament aloft. Fear gripped those battle-hardened men, and they fled, leaving the sisters in peace.

St. Anthony of Padua

Though Anthony was renowned for his preaching—even persuading fish to listen—he still had his detractors. One, a man named Bonvillo, challenged Anthony to impress his donkey. He would starve the beast for three days and then offer it a choice between St. Anthony and a pail of food. Anthony himself fasted for those three days and appeared at the appointed time holding a consecrated Host. The hungry animal ignored the food Bonvillo offered and knelt down to honor the Eucharist. At this, the donkey's master followed his example and was converted.

St. John Vianney

This parish priest from France had great reverence for the Eucharist and was delighted to discover that many of his parishioners did as well. One farmer would never pass the church door without stopping inside. He'd leave his tools by the front door and kneel before the tabernacle, sometimes for a few minutes, often for several hours. When the pastor asked the man what prayers he uttered during these times, the man replied, "I say nothing to him. I look at him and he looks at me."