

Right or Wrong?

Let's look at a new phenomenon you may know very little about. It is the remarkable rise of eucharistic adoration in Catholic parishes and institutions in every part of the world. Why is it happening? And what is it?

"The Catholic Church," says the Catechism, "offers to the ... Eucharist... adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts ... exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession," (No. 1378).

But why do we do this? "In the ... Eucharist, the body and blood, ... soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really and substantially contained. This presence is called real, by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence ... but because it is presence in the fullest sense ... it is substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present," (No. 1374).

This conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, promised in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel and fulfilled at the Last Supper, is called Transubstantiation. "Substance," as Cardinal Avery Dulles put it, "denotes the basic reality of the thing, i.e., what it is in itself." A change in appearance does not affect the substance of the thing. When the Angel Raphael stood before Tobiah, his appearance was that of a "young man," but his substance was that of an angel (Tobit, 5:5, 12:15).

"Christ is present," wrote Cardinal Dulles, "by his dynamic power and action in all the sacraments, but in the Eucharist, His presence is, in addition, substantial. For this reason, the Eucharist may be adored. It is the greatest of all sacraments," (Feb. 15, 2005).

You are in the real presence of Christ every time you step into a Catholic Church with the lighted lamp or candle indicating that the Blessed Sacrament is in the tabernacle. At any such time one can be with Christ in adoration. The term, eucharistic adoration, however, is usually applied to the exposition of the sacrament

to view. Christ is as fully present in the closed tabernacle as he is in the monstrance during exposition. It is conducive to devotion for us to be able also to look upon him in the host in which “the whole Christ is truly, really and substantially contained.”

“The central problem of the church today,” wrote Professor Peter Kreeft of Boston College, “is that most of the generation now becoming adults ... are not merely unaware of right doctrine... but of Christ himself, his real presence. Nothing less than Christ could have Christianized the world, nothing less than Christlessness has de-Christianized it, and nothing less than Christ can re-Christianize it,” (Crisis, March 1988).

When John Paul II instituted eucharistic adoration at St. Peter’s basilica in 1981, he said, “The best ... way of establishing everlasting peace on the face of the earth is through... perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.” Why is this so? “Above all,” said Benedict XVI, “Above all, the Eucharist is the great school of love. When we participate regularly and with devotion in Holy Mass, when we spend a sustained time of adoration in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, it is easier to understand the length, breadth, height and depth of his love that goes beyond all knowledge” (cf. Eph. 3:17-18). In his message in 2005 for the National Day of Young Catholics of the Netherlands, Benedict XVI exhorted them to “Go to the encounter with him in the blessed Eucharist, go to adore him in the churches, kneeling before the tabernacle: Jesus will fill you with his love and will reveal to you the thoughts of his heart. If you listen to him, you will feel ever more deeply the joy of belonging to his mystical body, the church, which is the family of his disciples held close by the bond of unity and love.”

Benedict XVI has insisted on this point: “Eucharistic adoration is an essential way of being with the Lord.... In the sacred Host, he is present, the true treasure, always waiting for us. Only by adoring in this presence do we learn how to receive him properly.... Let us love being with the Lord! There we can speak with him about everything. We can offer him our petitions, our concerns, our troubles, our joys. Our gratitude, our disappointments, our needs and our aspirations,” (Sept. 11, 2006).

What can we at Notre Dame do to fix a world in cultural meltdown? The greatest event in the history of the world is the Incarnation, when God became man. It’s just

possible that Christ, the God who became man for us, can give us some answers. Why don't you go ask him? Maybe you don't feel like it. Then pray for the desire to see him. Maybe you have too much to do. As Peter Kreeft put it, "that's why you can't afford not to give God five loaves and two fishes of your time so that he can multiply it." In short, we need to go meet with the Boss.

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