



## **THE YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST**

### **January Theme – ADORATION**

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Adoration is an attitude of awe and reverence before God, and for the purpose of this article that awe and reverence is expressed in prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed or not. (One of the dangers of the current popularity of exposition is that we may forget adoration is possible without exposition – some of us may remember for example, the visits to the Blessed Sacrament we were encouraged in times past to make)

### **History**

The Blessed Sacrament was kept for distribution of Communion to the sick from early in the Church's history, and in some cases people also kept it in their homes for consumption during the week but before the ninth century there is little evidence of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament outside of the Mass.

For various reasons, from the ninth century the reception of Communion became increasingly rarer and as people were no longer receiving Communion, the way of contact with Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament became adoration either before the tabernacle – visits to the Blessed Sacrament became part of popular piety in the 13<sup>th</sup> century – or adoration at the consecration – elevation of the host at “consecration” was added to the Mass in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass grew in popularity and although this diminished in the 1970s there has been a resurgence in popularity with some parishes even having perpetual exposition.

The official Church has encouraged the devotion and the Pope has expressed the hope that this Year of the Eucharist will see an increase in this devotion.

### **Theology**

The Catholic Church believes in the real sacramental presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and we believe that it is an enduring presence i.e. that Christ is present until the bread/host is consumed, no matter how long after the Eucharistic celebration this may be.

As mentioned in the previous section, consecrated bread has been kept from earliest times for distribution to the sick, although it was not until the Middle Ages that tabernacles became a part of sanctuary furnishing.

Given that the consecrated bread was kept and that Christ was enduringly present, then it was and is natural to adore this sacramental presence.

### **Practice**

Other than encouraging it, the official Church has given no guidelines for adoration before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. However for adoration before the exposed Sacrament there are official norms.

The documents giving the norms stress the pre-eminent place of the Mass – “The celebration of the Eucharist in the Mass is truly the origin and purpose of the worship shown to the Eucharist outside of Mass.”

This gives rise to certain norms e.g. no exposition in a church during the celebration of Mass; if exposition follows Mass the host used should be consecrated at that Mass; no more than six candles should be used at exposition so that it is not seen as more festive or important than Mass.

Adoration (with or without exposition) is meant to draw us “into an ever deeper share in the paschal mystery” and should “foster those right dispositions that enable (the faithful) with due devotion to celebrate the memorial of the Lord and receive frequently the bread given us by the Father.... Prayer before Christ sacramentally present extends the union with Christ that the faithful have reached in communion” and “invites us to the spiritual union with Him that culminates in sacramental communion.”

Adoration then should lead us to a deeper love of the Lord and therefore to a fuller participation in the celebration of the Eucharist.

In this year of the Eucharist the Pope urges us to take advantage of the great gift the Lord gives us in the Eucharist. We may never plumb the depths of this gift of love but let us do all that we can to celebrate it well and take every opportunity to “*come adore this wondrous presence.*”