

“Kissing the Lord”

The What and the Why of Eucharistic Adoration

I. Introduction — Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day, Cologne, Germany, August 2005

We all eat the one bread, and this means that we ourselves become one. In this way, adoration becomes union. God no longer simply stands before us as the One who is totally Other. He is within us, and we are in him. His dynamic enters into us and then seeks to spread outwards to others until it fills the world, so that his love can truly become the dominant measure of the world.

I like to illustrate this new step urged upon us by the Last Supper by drawing out the different nuances of the word "adoration" in Greek and in Latin.

The Greek word is proskynesis. It refers to the gesture of submission, the recognition of God as our true measure, supplying the norm that we choose to follow. It means that freedom is not simply about enjoying life in total autonomy, but rather about living by the measure of truth and goodness, so that we ourselves can become true and good. This gesture is necessary even if initially our yearning for freedom makes us inclined to resist it.

We can only fully accept it when we take the second step that the Last Supper proposes to us. The Latin word for adoration is ad-oratio - mouth to mouth contact, a kiss, an embrace, and hence, ultimately love. Submission becomes union, because he to whom we submit is Love. In this way submission acquires a meaning, because it does not impose anything on us from the outside, but liberates us deep within.

II. Brief History

- A. The Eucharist was reserved in the early Church in order to bring the Eucharist to the sick, to those without a priest, or by deacons to other bishops and priests to reinforce their Communion.
- B. The Eucharist would often be kept in priests' homes for this purpose. During times of persecution, it was kept with those at risk to sustain them through trying times.
- C. At this time, there's no evidence that Christians would come to spend time in prayerful adoration of the Lord.
- D. In the height of the Middle Ages, various developments started to change the Church's practice.
 1. Greater realization of meaning of the Lord's abiding presence in the Eucharist.
 2. Apparition of the Lord to Bl. Juliana Liège in the 1100s, pointing out the indifference to the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist and asking for celebration of this gift and adoration of the Lord.
 3. Beginning of Corpus Christi processions in 1260s.
 4. Adoration of the Lord by King Louis XVII and his court in thanksgiving for a victory over the Albigensians.
 5. Religious communities were founded dedicated to prayer in the presence of the Eucharist. St. Clare's taking the Eucharist out against Frederick Barbarosa.
- E. Against the attacks of the reformation contrary to the Eucharist, the Church started to pray more specifically to the Lord in the Eucharist. Confraternities formed. Rise of 40 hour devotions.
- F. Sacred Heart Devotion — 1670s. Against Indifference to Christ, especially in the Eucharist.
- G. Development of perpetual adoration at shrines and in parishes. Sacre Coeur in Paris. Holy Hours.

III. Present Situation and Encouragement from Popes.

- A. John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucaristia*, 2004:
 1. “In many places, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is also an important daily practice and becomes an inexhaustible source of holiness.”
 2. “Unfortunately, alongside these lights, there are also shadows. In some places the practice of Eucharistic adoration has been almost completely abandoned.”
 3. “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. “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!”
 5. “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.”
 6. “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. A Christian community desirous of contemplating the face of Christ ... cannot fail also to develop this aspect of Eucharistic worship, which prolongs and increases the fruits of our communion in the body and blood of the Lord.”

B. John Paul II, *Mane Nobiscum Domine*, 2004-2005:

1. "During this year *Eucharistic adoration outside Mass* should become a particular commitment for individual parish and religious communities. Let us take the time to kneel before Jesus present in the Eucharist, in order to make reparation by our faith and love for the acts of carelessness and neglect, and even the insults which our Saviour must endure in many parts of the world. Let us deepen through adoration our personal and communal contemplation, drawing upon aids to prayer inspired by the word of God and the experience of so many mystics, old and new."

C. Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 2007

1. "In this act of prayer, and not just in words, the intrinsic relationship between eucharistic celebration and eucharistic adoration [is shown]. A growing appreciation of this significant aspect of the Church's faith has been an important part of our experience in the years following the liturgical renewal desired by the Second Vatican Council."
2. "During the early phases of the reform, the inherent relationship between Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was not always perceived with sufficient clarity. For example, an objection that was widespread at the time argued that the eucharistic bread was given to us not to be looked at, but to be eaten. In the light of the Church's experience of prayer, however, this was seen to be a false dichotomy. As Saint Augustine put it: "*nemo autem illam carnem manducat, nisi prius adoraverit; peccemus non adorando* – no one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it."
3. "In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and desires to become one with us; eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church's supreme act of adoration. Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we receive. Only in this way do we become one with him, and are given, as it were, a foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly liturgy."
4. "The act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself. Indeed, "only in adoration can a profound and genuine reception mature. And it is precisely this personal encounter with the Lord that then strengthens the social mission contained in the Eucharist, which seeks to break down not only the walls that separate the Lord and ourselves, but also and especially the walls that separate us from one another."
5. "Therefore, I heartily recommend to the Church's pastors and to the People of God the practice of eucharistic adoration, both individually and in community. Great benefit would ensue from a suitable catechesis explaining the importance of this act of worship, which enables the faithful to experience the liturgical celebration more fully and more fruitfully. Wherever possible, it would be appropriate, especially in densely populated areas, to set aside specific churches or oratories for perpetual adoration. I also recommend that, in their catechetical training, and especially in their preparation for First Holy Communion, children be taught the meaning and the beauty of spending time with Jesus, and helped to cultivate a sense of awe before his presence in the Eucharist."
6. "Besides encouraging individual believers to make time for personal prayer before the Sacrament of the Altar, I feel obliged to urge parishes and other church groups to set aside times for collective adoration. Naturally, already existing forms of eucharistic piety retain their full value. I am thinking, for example, of processions with the Blessed Sacrament, especially the traditional procession on the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, the Forty Hours devotion, local, national and international Eucharistic Congresses, and other similar initiatives. If suitably updated and adapted to local circumstances, these forms of devotion are still worthy of being practised today."

IV. Practice of Eucharistic Adoration

A. Eucharistic Holy Hour, Component Parts

1. Exposition of the Lord in monstrance or in covered ciborium
2. Adoration by hymns, like ancient hymns written by St. Thomas Aquinas for first Corpus Christi. *O Salutaris Hostia. Tantum Ergo Sacramentum. Adoro Te Devote. Panis Angelicus. Lauda Sion Salvatorem.*
3. Silent adoration and mental prayer
4. Communal adoration with vocal prayer, like the Rosary, various prayers of the saints, litanies.
5. Benediction — Christ blesses us in the Eucharist.
6. Divine Praises — Blessing is a prayer of praise. We praise God for who he is and for some of his greatest works.
7. Reposition
8. Hymn of thanksgiving — Te Deum, Holy God We Praise Thy Name, Laudate Dominum Omnes Gentes.

B. 40 Hours Devotion

1. In Parishes or Shrines.
2. Begin and End with the Celebration of the Mass.
3. Unite to Christ's 40 hours in the tomb.

C. Perpetual Adoration

1. Adoration 24/7 by a community of faith.
2. Commitment to be present with the Lord, generally for an hour a week.
3. Generally, the adorer structures his or her own holy hour with spiritual reading, the rosary, mental prayer, simple adoration.
4. Great sign of a community's faith in the real presence of the Lord and love of him.

V. Questions and comments