

## Pope Francis and the Holy Eucharist

- Introduction
  - Gospel Passage: “Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage.” After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.”
  - Tonight we come before the Lord Jesus at the beginning of this retreat asking him for all the graces we need to be attentive and responsive to the way he wants to reshape us and through that reform rebuild his Church living stone by living stone through the ministry of the Living Rock, the 266<sup>th</sup> Peter, Pope Francis.
  - We begin with the passage of the adoration of the Magi. They made a journey of many months to get to Bethlehem and there they not only presented Jesus gifts of precious gold, frankincense and myrrh, but something far more precious, they laid down and gave him homage. When Pope Benedict XVI went to Cologne in 2005 for World Youth Day, he pondered in great depth this scene, since the relics of the wise men are reputedly kept in Cologne Cathedral and the theme of WYD 2005 was “We have come to worship Him.” Pope Benedict pondered what adoration means by the Greek and Latin words respectively for worship. In Greek the word is *proskynesis*, which means to prostrate oneself in homage before the incredible majesty of God. The Latin word, however, is *ad-oratio*, or “mouth-to-mouth contact,” a loving kiss. Together they show what happens in adoration: that even though we’re not worthy to be in God’s presence, that we’re so small in comparison with his greatness, he bends down, lifts us up and embraces us not only on the outside but on the inside. That’s what we have the awesome privilege to do tonight.
  - This will be the only holy hour in which I’ll preach, but I wanted to share with you some of Pope Francis’ thoughts on the Holy Eucharist to guide your meditation tonight and give you some things to ponder before the Lord as we all come to spend time with him during these days.
  - He is one who takes adoration of the Lord very seriously.
    - (Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio) “In my view, prayer should somehow be an experience of giving way, of surrendering, where our entire being enters into the presence of God. It is there where a dialogue happens, the listening, the transformation. Look to God, but above all feel looked at by God. Sometimes the religious experience in prayer occurs to me when I pray aloud with the Rosary or the psalms. Or when I joyfully celebrate the Eucharist. But the moment I most savor the religious experience, however long it may be, is when I am before the tabernacle. At times, I allow myself to fall asleep while sitting there, looking at Him. I feel as if I were in someone else’s hands, as if God were taking me by the hand. I think you have to reach the transcendental otherness of the Lord, that the Lord is everything but He always respects our freedom.
  - I’d like to ponder 12 things he says about adoration that can help us not only in our adoring the Lord but in our helping the whole world come to adore him!
- Importance of Adoration in manifesting that we’re truly Christian (Daily homily, Sept 7, 2013)
  - Instead of being “Christians without Christ: those who seek out novelties, special things, they seek out private revelations, ... what then is the rule for being a Christian with Christ? And what is the ‘sign’ that someone is in fact a Christian with Christ? It is simple, the Pope explained: “whatever

leads you to Jesus is valid, and only what comes from Jesus is valid. Jesus is the center”. And the “sign”, he said, is “a man or a woman who adores Jesus is a Christian with Jesus. If you can’t worship Jesus, something is missing”. The rule is to “follow what comes from Jesus and to do what leads to Jesus. The sign is adoration of Jesus, prayer and adoration before Jesus”.

- This crushes our idolatries (Daily Mass Oct 15, 2013)
  - Pope Francis began: “The Lord has told us that the first commandment is to adore God, to love God. ... The liturgy today speaks to us about” the vice that opposes it.
  - “St Paul doesn't mince words when he describes the sin of idolatry. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety, for idolatry is a form of impiety, it is a lack of pietas. What is lacking is the sense we all have within us to adore God ... we all need to adore, because we have God's very imprint within us” and “when we do not adore God, we adore creatures”
  - Lest we think idolatry to be a thing of the past, Pope Francis reminds us: “today there are many idols and many idolaters ... today, too, the streets are lined with idols”. And he added: “we all have an idol hidden within us. We might ask ourselves before God: ‘what is my hidden idol, what occupies the Lord's place in my heart?’” He continued, “There was a French writer, a very religious man, who got angry very easily and often; it was his great shortcoming. He said: whoever does not pray to God prays to the devil. If you do not adore God, you adore idols, always!” The Pope suggested that we all ask ourselves: “what is my idol?”
- The world, with all its idolatries, is trying to prohibit this worship in life, and we need to resist it (Nov 28, 2013 daily Mass homily)
  - Pope Francis concluded by inviting those present to reflect on “this general apostasy called the prohibition of worship”, and to ask themselves: “Do I worship God? Do I adore Jesus Christ the Lord? Or do I do so by halves and play games with the prince of this world? Worshipping to the very end with trust and fidelity is the grace we should ask”.
- To adore the Lord, we need to do more than show up. (Daily Mass homily, Nov 5, 2013)
  - [In the parable of the banquet, we’re invited by Christ to enter the banquet for free].
  - God's mercy, the Pontiff said, reaches even to those who decline the invitation or pretend to accept it but do not truly participate in the feast. Listing the excuses given by those in the parable who were too occupied to attend, Pope Francis said: “They participate in the banquet in name only, but they do not truly accept the invitation”. “They say yes,” but they really mean no. He likened the invited guests in the Gospel to “Christians who are content to remain on the guest list”. Unfortunately, he said, “being listed as a Christian is not enough... If you do not enter into the banquet, you are not a Christian; you will be on the list, but this does not help your salvation”.
  - Pope Francis concluded his homily by exhorting those present to pray for the grace to understand “how beautiful it is to be invited to the banquet, how beautiful it is to share one's gifts with others, how beautiful it is to be with God” and to the contrary, what a pity it is “to vacillate between yes and no; to say yes, but to content ourselves” with only remaining on the guest list.
- Adoring the Lord is a response of gratitude to God’s gift. (Open Mind, Faithful Heart)
  - The response to Christ’s generosity should not be simply a courteous, conventional “many thanks.” Christ’s surrender calls for us to give our lives, and our lives are given by following the way the Lord marked out on the cross. Our gratitude to him should encompass all that we are. This “giving thanks” with our lives becomes real every day in the celebrating of the Eucharist, which is the thanksgiving par excellence and that at the same time calls to mind the passion of the Lord. The Eucharist grounds the Church, nourishes her, and keeps her alive. ... In celebrating the Eucharist, we make present the very hour of the Church’s birth, which coincides with the hour of the Lord’s death. Our way of giving thanks is to assume that death and take on its very form. This is what ultimately determines the shape of our belonging to the Church.
  - It’s our *logike latreia*
    - Rom 12:1 — Offer your bodies as a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice to God, your logike latreia, the only worship that makes sense.
    - Pope Francis says that this is what is seen in the widow’s mite (Nov 25, 2013 daily Mass homily) “The widow went up to the temple to adore God, to tell him that he was above all

things and that she loved him, and she gave all she had to live on. Hers was more than generosity, it was something else”, the Pope said. “She had no thought for herself. She could have said: ‘Lord, you know I need this to eat today’. However, she chose to adore God to the very end”.

- This transforms us
  - (Open Mind, Faithful Heart) “The hidden manna is Jesus himself, who entrusts himself to us in the Eucharist, thus making us blessed. The truth of God is the bread of the soul. In the form of this bread, the Lord gives himself mysteriously and totally, creating a relation of intimate communion with those who are faithful.”
  - (Corpus Christi homily, June 17, 2006) “If there is no encounter with Jesus, life becomes inconsistent, loses its meaning. The Lord has given us a Eucharist — an encounter — every day, for us, for our families, for the entire Church, and our heart must learn to hold fast to this daily Eucharist, which is synthesized in the Sunday mass, so that every day may be saved, blessed, converted into an offering, placed ... in the hands of the Father.”
- All our liturgical rites are meant to foster this adoration, this total gift of ourselves to God
  - (Nov 22, 2013 daily Mass) The Pope noted that the essential meaning of Judas Maccabeus’ act was “to reconsecrate the temple so that there glory might be offered to God”. The Pope said: “The temple is the place where the community goes to pray, to praise the Lord, to give thanks, but above all to adore: the Lord is adored in the temple. And this is the most important point. This is also true for liturgical ceremonies: in this liturgical ceremony, what is most important? The songs, the rites, they are all beautiful... but what is most important is adoration: the whole community together looks at the altar where the sacrifice is celebrated and adores.” He then asked: “Are our temples places of adoration? Do they foster adoration? Do our liturgical celebrations foster adoration?”
  - Corpus Christi Homily, May 30, 2013) This evening we are the crowd of the Gospel, we too seek to follow Jesus in order to listen to him, to enter into communion with him in the Eucharist, to accompany him and in order that he accompany us. Let us ask ourselves: how do I follow Jesus? Jesus speaks in silence in the Mystery of the Eucharist. He reminds us every time that following him means going out of ourselves and not making our life a possession of our own, but rather a gift to him and to others....
- But it doesn’t stop just at adoring Jesus in the Eucharist. It leads us to love him in others.
  - (Assisi, Seraphic Institute, October 4, 2013) The bishop asked that in the chapel of this institute there be perpetual Eucharistic Adoration. ... On the altar we adore the Flesh of Jesus; in the people we find the wounds of Jesus. Jesus hidden in the Eucharist and Jesus hidden in these wounds. They need to be heard! Maybe not so much in newspapers as news; there they take notice for one, two, three days, then something else comes up, and another thing.... The wounds should be heard by those who call themselves Christian. The Christian adores Jesus, the Christian seeks Jesus, the Christian knows how to recognize the wounds of Jesus. And today, all of us, here, need to say: “These wounds must be heard!”. But there is something else that gives us hope. Jesus is present in the Eucharist, here is the Flesh of Jesus; Jesus is present among you, it is the Flesh of Jesus: the wounds of Jesus are present in these people.
  - (Angelus, June 2, 2013) The Feast of Corpus Christi asks us to convert to faith in Providence, so that we may share the little we are and have, and never to withdraw into ourselves. Let us ask our Mother Mary to help us in this conversion, in order to follow truly and more closely the Jesus whom we adore in the Eucharist.
  - We’re called to give them something to eat.
  - God rains down manna every day. He gives us our day our daily bread.
- Jesus in the Eucharist calls us out of ourselves and into communion with him and others, but we need to respond (Corpus Christi Homily, May 30, 2013)
  - This evening we too are gathered round the table of the Lord, the table of the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which he once again gives us his Body and makes present the one sacrifice of the Cross. It is in listening to his word, in nourishing ourselves with his Body and his Blood that he moves us on from being a multitude to being a community, from anonymity to communion. The Eucharist is the

sacrament of communion that brings us out of individualism so that we may follow him together, living out our faith in him. Therefore we should all ask ourselves before the Lord: how do I live the Eucharist? Do I live it anonymously or as a moment of true communion with the Lord, and also with all the brothers and sisters who share this same banquet? What are our Eucharistic celebrations like?

- So let us ask ourselves this evening, in adoring Christ who is really present in the Eucharist: do I let myself be transformed by him? Do I let the Lord who gives himself to me, guide me to going out ever more from my little enclosure, in order to give, to share, to love him and others? ... Let us pray that participation in the Eucharist may always be an incentive: to follow the Lord every day, to be instruments of communion and to share what we are with him and with our neighbor. Our life will then be truly fruitful.
- This transformation happens naturally for someone who truly receives (Only Love Can Save Us, Letters, homilies and talks of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio):
  - Jesus did not say [to Zacchaeus]: “You have to change your life.” He simply went to visit him at his home. That was enough for Zacchaeus to know what he had to do. It’s what Jesus does in the Eucharist. He simply says to us, ‘I want to visit you in your heart. I ask you to receive me in the Eucharist.’ And that is all that is needed.
- This transformation doesn’t happen under our own power. Jesus in the Eucharist gives us strength.
  - (May 26, 2013 Homily, First Communion Mass): How does Jesus give us strength? You know this, you know that he gives us strength! Louder, I can’t hear you! In Communion he gives us strength, he really helps us with strength. He comes to us. But when you say, “he gives us Communion”, does a piece of bread make you so strong? Isn’t it bread? Is it bread? This is bread, but is what is on the altar bread? Or isn’t it bread? It seems to be bread. It is not really bread. What is it? It is the Body of Jesus. Jesus comes into our heart
- Adoration transforms us more and more into the likeness of the One we worship, into his love for others, and helps us grow in holiness
  - Pope Francis loves to cite Paul VI’s words in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 76: Our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life, and as the Second Vatican Council suggests, preaching must in turn make the preacher grow in holiness, which is nourished by prayer and above all by love for the Eucharist ((Open Mind, faithful heart)
- Our law of prayer shows us what we really believe. *Lex orandi, lex credendi* (June 18, 2008 catechesis at the International Eucharistic Congress)
  - “We are to see if the law of prayer corresponds to the law of faith. We are to consider what the People of God believes and how the People of God lives, so that the Eucharist can become more and more the source and summit of the life and mission of ... the Church.” A very rich intuition that goes looking for Christ in his most humble beneficiaries and witnesses: in the holy faithful People of God.
  - Eucharistic life — Martyrs of Abitene. My own story as an 18 year old recognizing that I could be doing nothing better on a Monday, Tuesday, etc., than coming to receive him — and thanks be to God’s grace, have never gone a day without Mass ever since, in 25 years (except for Good Friday, when there is no Mass but still the opportunity to receive Holy Communion). Can you live without Jesus on a Sunday? On a Monday? Did you make the effort to attend daily Mass each day during your break
  - Eucharistic amazement — Mary’s enraptured gaze as she holds Jesus is linked to the way we look at him with wonder and amazement (John Paul II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*).
- Let’s give him permission to transform us now! *Ave verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine! Venite, adoremus!*