

What is the Eucharist?

The Eucharist is the sacrament that Jesus established when he took bread and wine, blessed them, and declared them to be his body and blood (see Luke 22:17-20). He commanded his disciples to "Do this in memory of me." He had earlier foretold that his presence in the Eucharist would be real and substantial: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever ... Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (John 6:51, 54-55). When a Catholic priest follows this command of Jesus and offers the words of consecration, the bread and wine are permanently changed, and they become Jesus: his body, blood, soul, and divinity.

How long is Jesus present in the sacrament of the Eucharist?

Jesus is present in the sacrament permanently. His presence is abiding, not something that vanishes at the conclusion of Mass. The hosts remaining after Communion are kept in a special place of honor called the tabernacle.

Why is the Blessed Sacrament reserved in a tabernacle?

The tabernacle was first intended for the reservation of the Eucharist in a worthy place so that it could be brought to the sick and those absent from the Mass. As faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist deepened, the Church became more conscious of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord under the Eucharistic species.

What is the relationship of Eucharistic adoration to the Mass?

The celebration of the Mass is the origin and purpose of the worship shown to the Eucharist outside the Mass. Eucharistic adoration extends Holy Communion in a lasting way even as it prepares the faithful to participate more fully in the celebration of the Mass. It leads us to acknowledge Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament and invites us to deeper spiritual union with him in the reception of Holy Communion.

What is the importance of Eucharistic adoration?

Eucharistic adoration is the respect and worship we give to Jesus, who is truly present to us under the appearance of bread and wine. 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. As St. Alphonsus Liguori noted, "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."

What forms does this adoration take?

We show our adoration in many ways. The most intimate form of adoration is Holy Communion, when we receive Jesus' body into our own. The most common and ordinary way we adore Jesus is by genuflecting - that is, kneeling briefly on one knee - whenever we pass the tabernacle in a church (see Philippians 2:10). Outside the Mass, the Church gives us further opportunities to worship Jesus. We may visit him at the tabernacle. And we may adore him when the Sacrament is brought out from the tabernacle for public worship. This is commonly called "exposition."

What is exposition of the Blessed Sacrament?

Exposition is the placement of the sacred host outside the tabernacle for public adoration. This can take many forms. The simplest form is the opening of the tabernacle doors. Another form is the removal of the sacred vessels from the tabernacle for a more prominent and visible placement. The Church also permits a "full" exposition, when the sacred host is clearly visible in a vessel called a "monstrance."

What is the purpose of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament?

There are three purposes of Eucharistic exposition: (1) to acknowledge Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament; (2) to lead us to a fuller participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, culminating in Holy Communion; and (3) to foster the worship which is due to Christ in spirit and in truth.

What conditions are necessary for proper exposition of the sacrament?

The sponsors of this devotion should make sure that a suitable number of worshippers are present during the entire time of exposition. The Church also asks us to light four to six candles around the sacrament, and permits us to use incense. The Blessed Sacrament may never be left exposed without at least one worshipper present.

What is Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament?

Benediction is a rite in which a priest or deacon pronounces a blessing over those who are present for Eucharistic adoration. As he gives the blessing, he elevates the monstrance or other vessel that contains the sacred host. Benediction normally follows a period of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, just prior to its reposition into the Tabernacle.

What are the fruits of Eucharistic adoration?

People who observe Eucharistic adoration experience a deeper devotion to Jesus, and this manifests itself in countless ways. The primary fruits are repentance and conversion which lead to increased charity - that is, the love of Christ alive in his people. The adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist also leads to greater reverence at Mass, a deeper desire for personal holiness, and a stronger sense of union with the parish and the whole Church. Ever since the early centuries of Christianity, the Church has linked Eucharistic devotion to service to the poor. More recently, the practice has led to an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.

How long have Christians practiced Eucharistic adoration?

Christians have adored the Eucharist as long as the Church has celebrated the Eucharist - that is, from the time of the Apostles. The earliest texts that speak of the Mass are probably older than some of the New Testament books. In every generation since the generation of the Apostles, the Church Fathers wrote about Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist. In the second, third, and fourth centuries, Christians in lands as far-flung as Italy, Egypt, North Africa, and Cappadocia (modern-day Turkey) testify to the special care given to the Eucharist that was reserved for the sick and homebound.

What is proper etiquette during Eucharistic adoration?

When we are not taking part in vocal prayers and hymns with other adorers, we should be praying silently. Whenever we pass before the place where the sacred host is reserved, we should genuflect. We should observe the modest dress and decorum that are appropriate to very solemn occasions. We should avoid any actions that might disturb or distract others or draw attention to ourselves rather than Jesus.

How should we pray during Eucharistic adoration?

There are many ways to pray. We may meditate silently by gazing on the sacred host. We may silently speak to Jesus from our mind and heart. We may also rely on devotions and prayers from Catholic tradition, such as the reading of Scripture, recitation of the rosary, or the litanies. When two or more are gathered before the Sacrament, they may pray or sing hymns together.

What is the best way to promote Eucharistic adoration?

The best way to promote Eucharistic adoration is by doing it! Make frequent visits to Jesus at the tabernacle. Invite your spouse, your children, your neighbors, and co-workers to join you. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, "Because Christ himself is present in the sacrament of the altar, He is to be honored with the worship of adoration. "To visit the Blessed Sacrament is...a proof of gratitude, an expression of love, and a duty of adoration toward Christ our Lord".