

DEVOTION TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST

I WOULD NOT KNOW HOW TO GIVE GLORY TO GOD IF I DID NOT HAVE THE EUCHARIST IN MY HEART

The life story of Saint Maria Faustina of the Blessed Sacrament provides us with many shining examples of true devotion to the Holy Eucharist, *or the Blessed Sacrament*. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist is devotion to Christ himself, present throughout the centuries in the Sacred Host. Herein is contained “the whole spiritual good of the Church,”¹ and herein lies St. Faustina’s greatest devotion, so much so that she added “*of the Blessed Sacrament*” to her name as an outward sign of her affection and dedication.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the fervent celebration of the Holy Mass (*or Eucharist*), the worthy reception of Holy Communion (*or Eucharist*) and acts of reparation for the sins committed against this sacrament are all forms of devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Each propels us toward a more intimate and personal relationship with the Savior of the world. St. Faustina summarizes the importance of this sacrament well as she shares with us its role in her life:

I find myself so weak that were it not for Holy Communion I would fall continually. One thing alone sustains me, and that is Holy Communion. From it I draw my strength; in it is all my comfort. I fear life on days when I do not receive Holy Communion. I fear my own self. Jesus concealed in the Host is everything to me. From the tabernacle I draw strength, power, courage and light. Here, I seek consolation in time of anguish. I would not know how to give glory to God if I did not have the Eucharist in my heart. (*Diary*², 1037)

ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament consists of spending time before Jesus, hidden in the consecrated host, but typically placed, *or exposed*, in a beautiful vessel called a monstrance as pictured here. Many Catholic churches have Adoration Chapels where one can come to adore the Lord exposed in the monstrance at various times, sometimes twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. *Adorers* commit to spending at least one hour a week with Jesus and may use this time to pray, read, meditate or simply sit and rest in His presence.

Parishes and shrines also often provide opportunities for communal adoration services or holy hours. Typically the congregation joins together in prayer and some song, reflection on the Scriptures or other spiritual reading, and perhaps a bit of quiet time for personal reflection. This service concludes with Benediction, as a priest or deacon raises the monstrance and blesses those in attendance. At times Jesus allowed St. Faustina to clearly see the reality of the moment:

That same day, when I was in church waiting for confession, I saw the same rays issuing from the monstrance and spreading throughout the church. This lasted all through the service. After the Benediction, the rays shone out to both sides and returned again to the monstrance. Their appearance was bright and transparent like crystal. I asked Jesus that He deign to light the fire of His love in all souls that were cold. Beneath these rays a heart will grow warm even if it were like a block of ice; even if it were hard as a rock, it will crumble into dust. (370)

What compelling imagery, used here to teach or remind us about the supreme power of God that is available to us in the presence of the Holy Eucharist. If an Adoration Chapel is located near you, try

your best to commit to a visit at least once a week. Visit the Lord often, even if only for a few moments. Come to see Him on special occasions such as birthdays or anniversaries. Praise Him, adore Him, ask Him and thank Him for everything.

THRONE OF MERCY

When Jesus is not exposed in the monstrance He is typically still present in the tabernacle. The votive candle burning close to the tabernacle is an indication of His presence there in the form of reposed consecrated hosts. We are to show great respect to Our Lord's presence in the tabernacle and it is a common practice in many parishes for people to regularly spend time in adoration and prayer there. A bow or genuflection with our body *and our spirit* is a sign of our respect for the presence of Jesus. St. Faustina wrote about praying before the tabernacle particularly when she had a pressing spiritual need. Jesus wants us to approach Him there:

Behold, for you I have established a throne of mercy on earth - the tabernacle - and from this throne I desire to enter into your heart. I am not surrounded by a retinue or guards. You can come to me at any moment, at any time; I want to speak to you and desire to grant you grace. (1485)

Kneeling in prayer before the tabernacle is an excellent way to receive graces from the Lord. Guidance in decisions, relief from burdens, inspirations and blessings of all kinds can be given by Jesus from the tabernacle. But our Lord laments when we do not seek His graces:

My Heart overflows with great mercy for souls, and especially for poor sinners. If only they could understand that I am the best of Fathers to them and that it is for them that the Blood and Water flowed from My Heart as from a fount overflowing with mercy. For them I dwell in the tabernacle as King of Mercy. I desire to bestow My graces upon souls, but they do not want to accept them. You, at least, come to Me as often as possible and take these graces they do not want to accept. In this way you will console My Heart. Oh, how indifferent are souls to so much goodness, to so many proofs of love! My Heart drinks only of the ingratitude and forgetfulness of souls living in the world. They have time for everything, but they have no time to come to Me for graces. (367)

FERVENT CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY MASS

Weekly attendance at Sunday Mass is one of the Five Precepts of the Church³ or "positive laws" established by the Church to assure us to receive the minimum of graces needed to walk along the path of righteousness. However, not everyone who attends mass receives the same amount of grace as this is dependent upon an individual's disposition or openness to receiving these graces. Here follows just a couple of selections from St. Faustina's *Diary* that may help us better understand the value of Holy Mass and lead us to a more fervent celebration every time we attend:

Oh, what awesome mysteries take place during Mass! A great mystery is accomplished in the Holy Mass. With what great devotion should we listen to and take part in this death of Jesus. One day we will know what God is doing for us in each Mass, and what sort of gift He is preparing in it for us. Only His divine love could permit that such a gift be provided for us. O Jesus, my Jesus, with what great pain is my soul pierced when I see this fountain of life gushing forth with such sweetness and power for each soul, while at the same time I see souls withering away and drying up through their own fault. O Jesus, grant that the power of mercy embrace these souls. (914)

During Holy Mass, I saw the Lord Jesus nailed upon the cross amidst great torments. A soft moan issued from His Heart. After some time, He said, **I thirst. I thirst for the salvation of souls. Help Me, My daughter, to save souls. Join your sufferings to My Passion and offer them to the heavenly Father for sinners.** (1032)

After Holy Mass, I went out to the garden to make my meditation, since there were not yet any patients in the garden at this time, and so I felt at ease. As I was meditating on the blessings of God, my heart was burning with a love so strong that it seemed my breast would burst. Suddenly Jesus stood before me and said, **What are you doing here so early?** I answered, “I am thinking of You, of Your mercy and Your goodness toward us. And You, Jesus, what are You doing here?” **I have come out to meet you, to lavish new graces on you. I am looking for souls who would like to receive My grace.** (1705)

The value of the Holy Mass extends beyond our physical presence there. Toward the end of her life St. Faustina records how she spiritually places herself in prayer and by uniting herself with all the Masses in the world garnered blessings for one thousand souls! May we strive to obtain graces for souls in this manner as often as possible, no matter where we may be or what we may be doing:

When I immersed myself in prayer and united myself with all the Masses that were being celebrated all over the world at that time, I implored God, for the sake of all these Holy Masses, to have mercy on the world and especially on poor sinners who were dying at that moment. At the same instant, I received an interior answer from God that a thousand souls had received grace through the prayerful mediation I had offered to God. We do not know the number of souls that is ours to save through our prayers and sacrifices; therefore, let us always pray for sinners. (1783)

WORTHY RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

The most fervent celebration of Holy Mass includes a worthy reception of Holy Communion.⁴ Another of the five Precepts of the Church is that one receive Holy Communion at least once a year, during the Easter season. A worthy reception means the Eucharist is consumed after a proper fast and while the soul is in the state of grace, free from any mortal or serious sin. If one is in mortal sin they must seek reconciliation with God and the community through the Sacrament of Penance before receiving the Host worthily.

Yet, worthy reception of Holy Communion includes more than the absence of mortal sin. It includes the disposition of our hearts and minds. It includes the posture of our bodies and the spirit of our souls. It even includes the clothes that we wear.⁵ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1387) (link to http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm) When we come before the Lord to receive His Body and Blood how do we present ourselves? Do we act and look as though we believe we are about to receive the most precious of all gifts?

The Lord clearly expresses His desire to come to us with “all kinds of graces” yet complained to St. Faustina that we often fail to truly recognize Him:

November 19. After Communion today, Jesus told me how much He desires to come to human hearts. **I desire to unite Myself with human souls; My great delight is to unite Myself with souls. Know, My daughter, that when I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, My hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul. But souls do not even pay any attention to Me; they leave Me to Myself and busy themselves with other things. Oh, how**

sad I am that souls do not recognize Love! They treat Me as a dead object.
(1385)

To this sad remark, St. Faustina responds with a prayer of Adoration which we too may offer to console the Sacred Heart:

O Treasure of my heart, the only object of my love and entire delight of my soul, I want to adore You in my heart as You are adored on the throne of Your eternal glory. My love wants to make up to You at least in part for the coldness of so great a number of souls Jesus, behold my heart which is for You a dwelling place to which no one else has entry. You alone repose in it as in a beautiful garden. (1385)

REPARATION

Making reparation for offenses committed against the Blessed Sacrament places us firmly in the footsteps of St. Faustina. May we pray as she did, that “no sacrilege be committed” against it and may we receive the same grace as she did for this act of love as we read about in entry 160:

The crusade day, which is the fifth of the month, happened to fall on the First Friday of the month. This was my day for keeping watch before the Lord Jesus. It was my duty to make amends to the Lord for all offenses and acts of disrespect and to pray that, on this day, no sacrilege be committed. This day, my spirit was set aflame with special love for the Eucharist. It seemed to me that I was transformed into a blazing fire.

The Diary entry continues with a somewhat charming tale about a Host that fell onto the hands of the saint. In this discourse, St. Faustina reveals the deep reverence she has for the Host, and the impact this experience had upon her for the entire day. During her lifetime, Communion was only distributed directly on the tongue, typically while kneeling at the altar rail, so to have the Sacred Host in hand was not the common occurrence it is today:

When I was about to receive Holy Communion, a second Host fell onto the priest's sleeve, and I did not know which host I was to receive. After I had hesitated for a moment, the priest made an impatient gesture with his hand to tell me I should receive the Host. When I took the Host he gave me, the other one fell onto my hands. The priest went along the altar rail to distribute Communion, and I held the Lord Jesus in my hands all that time. When the priest approached me again, I raised the Host for him to put it back into the chalice, because when I had first received Jesus I could not speak before consuming the Host, and so could not tell him that the other had fallen. But while I was holding the Host in my hand, I felt such a power of love that for the rest of the day I could neither eat nor come to my senses. I heard these words from the Host: **I desired to rest in your hands, not only in your heart.** And at that moment I saw the little Jesus. But when the priest approached, I saw once again only the Host. (160)

Whether the Lord is placed on our tongues or in our hands, may we prepare well for every Holy Communion. And, whether the Lord is exposed in the monstrance, or hidden in the tabernacle, whether we are physically or spiritually attending Mass, let us unite our complete being with Jesus Christ, The Divine Mercy, so that we may obtain every possible grace and blessing for ourselves, our families and our country.

May we learn well from St. Maria Faustina of the Blessed Sacrament and seek her intercession as we reflect upon the very last entry she made in her Diary, just a few weeks before her death. It is about preparing for Holy Communion. What could be a more perfect ending?

One day, when I was preparing for Holy Communion and noticed that I had nothing to offer Him, I fell at His feet, calling down all His mercy upon my poor soul: May Your grace, which flows down upon me from Your Compassionate Heart, strengthen me for the struggle and sufferings, that I may remain faithful to You. And, although I am such misery, I do not fear You, because I know Your mercy well. Nothing will frighten me away from You, O God, because everything is so much less than what I know [Your mercy to be] - I see that clearly. (1803)

¹ The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324)

² All references to Diary: Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul © 1987 Congregation of Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M, Stockbridge, MA 01263. All rights reserved. www.marian.org

³ According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church citations 2041 – 2043 the five Precepts of the Church are:

1. You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor.
2. You shall confess your sins at least once a year.
3. You shall receive the sacrament of the Eucharist at least during the Easter season.
4. You shall observe the days of fasting and abstinence established by the Church.
5. You shall help to provide for the needs of the Church.

⁴ It is in keeping with the very meaning of the Eucharist that the faithful, if they have the required dispositions, *receive communion when* they participate in the Mass. As the Second Vatican Council says: "That more perfect form of participation in the Mass whereby the faithful, after the priest's communion, receive the Lord's Body from the same sacrifice, is warmly recommended." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1388)

⁵ To prepare for worthy reception of this sacrament, the faithful should observe the fast required in their Church. Bodily demeanor (gestures, clothing) ought to convey the respect, solemnity, and joy of this moment when Christ becomes our guest. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1387)

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