

## H. How to Adore the Eucharist

Dear pilgrims,

This evening, at the Gas bivouac, Eucharistic adoration will be offered to pilgrims. This is undoubtedly one of the most important times of our pilgrimage: the Lord comes to visit our camp, he will really be present in the midst of our chapters, from 9:15 p.m. to 4:30 a.m., patiently waiting for his children to come to him. So, even if we are very tired this evening, even if we have a legitimate desire to spend time with our friends, let us not go to bed before having paid a visit to the Lord present in the monstrance, to adore him.

But what exactly is worship? The aim of this guide is to help us rediscover this central act of faith, which we often confuse with many other things.

### What is adoration?

Know already that "adoration" is not precisely the same thing as "praying"; or rather, adoration is a very special prayer: it is the first and greatest of the four acts of prayer (which are, as a reminder: adoration; thanksgiving; contrition; supplication).

The mistake we sometimes make, when we come to adoration, is to begin our prayer by talking about ourselves, our difficulties, our requests, our regret... I'm not telling you that this is bad, of course! But that's not primarily what it means to adore. To be "worshippers in spirit and in truth," the first thing we must do is not look at ourselves: but look at God. So adoration is not, in itself, a prayer of request. Adoration is a free act, it is entirely "for God", and this is what makes it rich: by adoring, man realises his greatest vocation, which is to pay homage to the Lord and glorify his name.

"We only adore God," we repeat to children who love chocolate a little too much. And in fact, adoration is an intimate act reserved for God: He alone deserves adoration, because He alone is Lord: "*tu solus Dominus*", we sing in the Gloria. To adore is simply to recognize, with our intelligence, that God is Lord, that He is our Creator and our Master, and that we are totally dependent on Him in all things: and it is to rejoice in all this in our heart.

So, how do we do that? I suggest that you remember the two main stages of adoration that the "masters" of adoration, namely the great saints, advise us to follow.

### The first step of adoration: Contemplating the greatness of God

First step: you must start by looking **only** at **God**. It's the minimum level of courtesy: when we meet a friend, we first find out about him, before talking to him about our adventures and our miseries...

So, to adore well, we must first put ourselves in the presence of God and look at him, without looking at ourself. If we did it well, if for a moment we could grasp who is the one who is before me, in this humble host, the Eternal God, Creator, so Great and Mysterious! God is God, and he is there, present! This is what the Three Wise Men experienced when they came: "*They entered the house, saw the little child with Mary, his mother, and falling down, they adored him*"; This is what Saint Thomas understood when he believed in the resurrection of Christ and exclaimed: "*My Lord and my God!*"; this is what the angels of Heaven constantly do, who "*worship God, saying: Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honour, power, and might, be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!*" In these three scenes, no request is made to God, no benefit is requested for men: only the cry of adoration springs forth.

A Dominican said: "*Adoration is the spontaneous reaction of the soul which perceives the greatness of God.*" There is a word to describe this greatness of God: this word is the transcendence of God. Unfortunately, this idea is much neglected today. Of course, God is also a friend, a close friend..., but finally, he is God! And this profound awareness that God is there will provoke joy in us, a very pure joy. Have you ever experienced this joy, this happiness of saying to yourself: "*It's so magnificent that God exists!*" For this is what the Mass tries to bring to life in us, in the exaltation of the prayer of the Gloria, the Sanctus or even in the Preface.

Let us therefore try to begin our adoration with this simple look at God, forgetting ourselves in some way; we could help ourselves by reading the Gloria, a psalm, or the first part of the Our Father (the first 3 requests, all turned towards God)

### The second stage of adoration: recognising oneself as a humble creature

After this simple look at God, worship leads us to look at ourselves. "*Who am I in relation to God?*" The answer is simple: I am a creature. We need to be reminded of this often! Because otherwise we risk falling into pride. If I exist at this moment, if I can breathe, speak, pray, if I can make this pilgrimage to Chartres, it is because God, this Great God so high and so mysterious, thinks of me, loves me, and right now gives me life.

Children in catechism are often told: "*if God stopped thinking about you for a moment, you would not exist*": it's so true! The idea that must be born here, in this second stage, is that of our total dependence on God. We exist only because God loves us and gives us existence. And not just existence, the initial flick, but at every moment, God keeps us, carries us, communicates his life to us, and more: his gifts, his graces, the benefits. We are

permanently connected to God. This is also the origin of the word religion, "to connect" in Latin. To adore is to recognize and love this: it is to try to perceive this invisible link which permanently connects me to God. And from this look springs a new joy: *Lord, I am happy to be your child. I rejoice in this dependence I have on you.* This joy is the joy of the Magnificat, the joy of the Virgin Mary who recognizes herself as the humble servant of the Lord and who loves this humble position: this pure joy is the opposite of the attitude of the sinner who, on the contrary, refuses to be dependent, refuses to receive and claims to direct his life alone; it is the cry of Satan, "*I will not serve!*"

This joy of receiving everything from God can sometimes, it is true, be difficult to achieve in the face of the trials of life and the sorrows that we go through. But adoration, once again, helps us to see that, if God sometimes allows certain difficulties, his hand constantly accompanies us and carries us, and he can bring great good out of it: our future is in the hands of God, and since God is good, we are assured that he will take good care of us. Adoration helps our souls find peace and consolation, like a child who, when in pain, takes refuge in the arms of his parents.

Of course, once these two stages of adoration are completed, our conversation with God can continue with the three other acts of prayer: giving thanks for the graces received; asking forgiveness for our sins; asking for graces (the true prayer of supplication). And moreover, our prayer will be all the more fervent and true as we have taken the time, beforehand, to adore God as we should.

### **The effort of adoration: courage and perseverance!**

Adoring is one of the greatest actions we can do on this Earth, just as it is in Heaven. It is first of all an act of justice: because we are creatures, and ultimately, we were created to glorify God, to recognize his greatness and our dependence on Him. And what is very great is that by accomplishing this mission of being "adorers", we find our happiness and our salvation: because this God to whom we turn in adoring him is also this God who gives us fills our heart.

But adoring is not an easy act. If life were like a river, adoring is like trying to go upstream to return to our source, which is God: because we come out of God to return to God, this is what Saint Augustine expressed in a famous sentence: "*You have made us for yourself, O my God, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.*" This return to God, which is the goal of our entire life, will fill us with happiness, but it requires a real effort of meditation, regularity, and perseverance, to return to the source every day in adoration. So take courage, dear pilgrims! To help you, you will find in the pilgrim's booklet numerous spiritual texts to nourish your prayer of adoration.

### **Gestures of adoration**

Adoration is an interior prayer; but as we are body and soul, certain bodily gestures can help us to adore better.

Among these actions are these:

**Genuflexion.** When entering a church, before the real presence, the liturgy asks us to genuflect. By this gesture, it is the entire body which lowers itself before the Presence of God; we recognize that He is greater than us and that we owe Him homage and respect.

Traditionally, when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in the monstrance, a genuflection on both knees is made, accompanied by a deep inclination.

Kneeling prayer expresses the same idea as genuflection, except that, lasting longer, it manifests our desire to remain humble and small before the Lord.

The joined hands come from an ancient medieval tradition: when a vassal took an oath of loyalty to his lord, he knelt in front of him with his hands joined, and the lord came and put his hands around those of the vassal: this gesture symbolizes that we place our whole person in the hands of God, and that God assures us of all his protection in return.

### **Some quotes on adoration**

*If you pass a church, enter to greet Our Lord. Could you walk past a friend's door without saying hello?*  
Saint Jean Vainney, Curé d'Ars

*Every gesture of reverence, every genuflection that you make before the Blessed Sacrament is important, because it constitutes an act of faith in Christ, an act of love towards Christ.*  
Saint John Paul II

*Strange little inclinations have replaced the biblical prostration of our brothers from the East or the medieval genuflection as if, among us, the love of Christ was a little affected by rheumatism. What luck though: there is Someone before whom we can kneel.*  
Bernard Bro