

Adoration

Paul Turner

Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament draws the worshiper into spiritual communion with God. Whether done on one's own time or at a scheduled service, adoration of the Eucharistic presence of Christ fosters our devotion for participation in the Mass.

Jesus instituted the Eucharist for our eating and drinking. Sharing communion at Mass brings us nourishment, healing and sustenance. There is no substitute for participation in the Eucharist; adoration should enhance it, not replace it.

Catholics reserve leftover communion breads in a tabernacle. The primary purpose for this custom is to have the Body of Christ ready for the dying at any time. The tabernacle also provides communion for the sick or those unable to come to Mass. Because it houses the sacramental Body of Christ, it serves as a place for adoration.

Adoration may be private or public. When adoring the Blessed Sacrament in private, Catholics usually go to any church where the communion hosts are kept inside the tabernacle. They say whatever prayers they wish. Public adoration may take place in the context of a brief service (traditionally called "Benediction" although that only refers to the blessing which concludes it) or over a more extended period of time. The Blessed Sacrament is usually presented for adoration outside the tabernacle on an altar or a stand.

Extended periods of adoration used to be common. They filled the void for people who were not receiving communion frequently. However, in the twentieth century, the church urged people to more frequent communion and has forbidden exposition during Mass. Participation in the Eucharist at Mass accomplishes spiritual communion more perfectly and renders simultaneous adoration unnecessary. Prolonged periods of adoration may happen in church where a large number of the faithful are gathering and when the bishop has given his approval. If Mass is celebrated, the Blessed Sacrament should be returned to the tabernacle.

Whether the Blessed Sacrament is inside or outside the tabernacle, adoration may invite us into prayer and prepare us for the Eucharist.

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