

THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU WORSHIP OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST, PART 3

“When the faithful honor Christ present in the sacrament, they should remember that this presence is derived from the sacrifice and is directed toward sacramental and spiritual communion. The same piety which moves the faithful to Eucharistic adoration attracts them to a deeper participation in the paschal mystery. It makes them respond gratefully to the gifts of Christ who by his humanity continues to pour divine life upon the members of his body. Living with Christ the Lord, they achieve a close familiarity with him and in his presence pour out their hearts for themselves and for those dear to them; they pray for peace and for the salvation of the world. Offering their entire lives with Christ to the Father in the Holy Spirit, they draw from this wondrous exchange an increase of faith, hope, and love. Thus they nourish the proper disposition to celebrate the memorial of the Lord as devoutly as possible and to receive frequently the bread given to us by the Father. The faithful should make every effort to worship Christ the Lord in the sacrament, depending upon the circumstances of their own life. Pastors should encourage them in this by example and word” (*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, 80).

Continuing our series on Christ’s abiding presence for us in the Eucharist, we move now to worship of the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass, particularly Eucharistic adoration. As mentioned above in the formal rite for such worship, our adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass flows from and leads to more fruitful celebration of the Eucharist within Mass, deepening our participation in the paschal mystery of his saving death and resurrection. Through it, we develop a closer relationship with Christ, our Lord and brother, bringing him our praise and thanks, our needs and hopes, for ourselves and our loved ones but also for the whole world. From it, we nourish our faith and hope in the unending love of Christ, who promised to be with us always, not just on Sundays, even until the end of the age.

The first and simplest form of Eucharistic adoration takes the form of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. This can be done by anyone, alone or in groups, anytime the church is open, and typically does not have a formal ritual or structure. People often take time before Mass for such adoration, which is why we ask that conversation and visiting before Mass generally be limited to the gathering space and kept to a minimum within the church itself to allow for this prayer.

A more structured and communal approach to Eucharistic adoration takes place in the ritual of Eucharistic exposition and benediction. Presided over by a priest or deacon, the ritual begins when the Blessed Sacrament is removed from the tabernacle and placed in an ornate display case called a monstrance, which is then placed on the altar for all to see and adore. All kneel as the Blessed Sacrament, exposed in the monstrance, is revered with incense and hymns. Readings from Scripture and various prayers and reflections generally follow, focusing on Christ’s presence in the Eucharist, and time for silent adoration and personal prayer is usually also included. While the ritual itself does not call for the service to continue for a specified length of time, a common practice is to pray in this way for an hour, or to make a holy hour. At the conclusion of the service, the priest or deacon again incenses the Blessed Sacrament and, wearing a special vestment called a humeral veil, blesses the people by making the sign of the cross

over them with the monstrance. He then removes the Blessed Sacrament from the monstrance and returns it to the tabernacle while the people sing a concluding hymn.

Whether in the tabernacle or in a monstrance, Christ is really and truly present for us in the Blessed Sacrament, calling us to come and spend time with him. May we answer his call by regularly participating in Eucharistic adoration here at St. Boniface. Keep your eyes on the bulletin for information about opportunities for this “wondrous exchange” that are being planned during Lent and beyond, and may our adoration of Christ fill our lives, and our parish, with his richest blessings.