

Adoremus 2018 – Encounter with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

Adoremus 2018 is a national initiative of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, aiming to increase understanding of and devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist – Adoremus just means “Let us adore”. Having enjoyed the privilege of attending Adoremus in September, my aim is to share some simple thoughts with families – in my school and in my parish – and with all those who would like to learn more. I have tried to distil the key points as concisely as I am able, through the filter of my own frail understanding. In future reflections, I will try to share what I heard about the Mass and about teaching children about the Eucharist. This time, I am focussing on the speakers from the first day (Canon Mervyn Tower and Canon David Oakley) who spoke about the encounter with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.



Meeting Jesus in the Eucharist

For me, Adoremus was a very spiritual experience, witnessed most powerfully when walking with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of Liverpool. 10,000 people, young and old, giving praise in song and action while bringing Jesus closer to those who have need of His mercy and yet who have never experienced His presence. Most who observed the procession were going about their everyday business – buying their papers, eating at Subway, pushing pushchairs through the rain... Reflecting on this, I am acutely aware that many Catholics – of my generation and younger - also haven't had the opportunity of this encounter with the risen Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.



For some years – much of my lifetime - adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was not part of the regular practice of the faith in most parishes in my experience. The tide has been slowly changing and Adoremus seems a turning point from which this practice can surely grow. I am blessed to worship in a parish which now has regular adoration, but prior to this, my only experience was as a child of 6 or 7 years old going to Benediction with my Grandma in the local convent – the words (so many words!) went over my head but I retain the beautiful image of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, surrounded by gold and candles, adored on bended knee by the many adults around me. The feeling of peace and absolute serenity before the Blessed Sacrament was why I chose to go again and again with my Grandma despite the difficult words – and also why, I think, when I finally went to Benediction again as an adult in my own parish, it felt like coming home.

Why adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament?

- **Receiving love as a gift from God** – In order to give love (and do good works) we must receive love from the God who made us. In *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) Pope Benedict talked about each of us becoming more Christian, as a result of an unmediated encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. We are ever renewed in the Eucharist and ever formed for mission.
- **Becoming closer to Jesus** – The aim is not just knowing Jesus, but spending time with Him – hanging out together, not just saying hi across the street. St Teresa of Avila called adoration a “companionable close sharing between friends”
- **Refreshing our faith through an encounter with Jesus as “the living bread”** – the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life (Catechism of the Catholic Church) – it is the food for a pilgrim people on a journey towards God and God's plan for us. Jesus is “*living bread*” – never stale – so our experience of Him must be ever refreshed. Like the manna in the desert, it cannot be stored away.

- **Fulfilling our human need for God** – the Eucharist as an answer to the needs in our lives and in our world. The Eucharist as God’s fulfilment of our needs – again like the manna to meet the needs of Moses and his people. Equally, the disciples instinctively turned to Jesus when they needed help and guidance. We often think that our worldly worries are ours alone to solve. Before the Blessed Sacrament, we can recognise that God is with us in the Eucharist to help us shoulder our burden.

So what? Now what?

- Go to (or go back to) **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in your parish** – or in one nearby. (*At St Erconwald’s, for two hours after Mass on Mondays and Fridays; at All Saints 7.30-8pm on Saturdays; at Molesey there is Adoration on Tuesdays 10am-11am and Saturdays 10.45-11.15am.*) Like most things, it might feel difficult or unfamiliar at first, but you can build up to that “companionable close sharing between friends” - friendship takes time, even with God! The following simple document, based on St Teresa’s guidance, may be a starting point for contemplative prayer <http://saintrobertwarrington.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Contemplative-Prayer.pdf>
- Think about **organising times of quiet prayer before the Blessed Sacrament** in your parish or school. (*Last year at Cardinal Newman, we celebrated a “mini-24 hours for the Lord” in front of the Blessed Sacrament. We hope to have more opportunities for Adoration in 2019.*) Remember Pope Benedict’s words:

“In a world where there is so much noise, so much bewilderment, there is a need for silent adoration of Jesus concealed in the Host. Be assiduous in the prayer of adoration and teach it to the faithful. It is a source of comfort and light, particularly to those who are suffering.” “With the Synod Assembly, therefore, I heartily recommend to the Church’s pastors and to the People of God the practice of Eucharistic Adoration, both individually and in community” *Pope Benedict XVI, February 22, 2007, Sacramentum Caritatis*
- **Try “NightFever”** – two of the most impressive young “witnesses” at Adoremus spoke about coming back to the Church through Night Fever, an international initiative run by young people who seek to make an encounter with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament available to all. It runs in big cities in 27 countries across the world including London and Southampton. <https://nightfever.org/us/location/gb/london/>
- Have a go at some **further reading (or listening)** from some of the documents quoted here:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html 2005 Benedict XVI Deus Caritas Est

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Sacrament of the Eucharist

http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html#Adoration_and_eucharistic_devotion 2007 Benedict XVI Sacramentum Caritatis

With acknowledgement to the keynote speakers from Day 1 of Adoremus: Canon Mervyn Tower and Canon David Oakley. Their presentations are reproduced in full here:

<http://catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Special-Events/Adoremus-National-Eucharistic-Pilgrimage/Symposium-Day/Scriptural-Context> (Canon Mervyn Tower - Scriptural Context)

<http://catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Special-Events/Adoremus-National-Eucharistic-Pilgrimage/Symposium-Day/Eucharist-and-the-Church> (Canon David Oakley - Eucharist and the Church)