

Love One Another!

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The God project

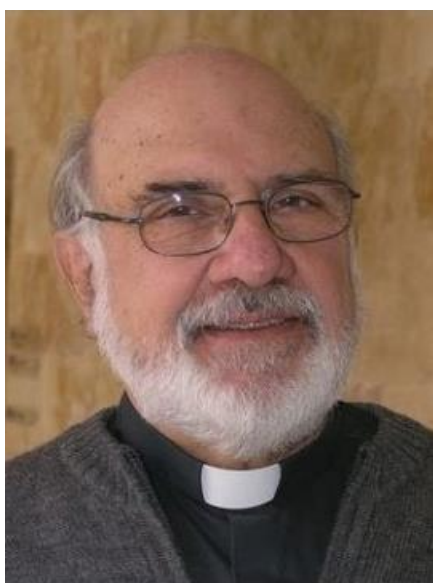
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The Risen Jesus is and always will be with us in the Most Holy Sacrament: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

This truth is the source of the greatest joy and certainty that in union with Christ we shall always prevail. Death, sin and Satan no longer have power over us. Jesus is with us, present in the Most Holy Sacrament, and wishes to give us His very self, His glorified, resurrected life, to treat and heal wounded hearts and minds and to resolve all problems. In the Eucharist, the Lord Jesus makes the mystery of His resurrection accessible to us. He gives us, as St Ignatius of Antioch writes, “a medicine of immortality, an antidote to death” (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 18). That is why “The worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass is of inestimable value for the life of the Church. This worship is strictly linked to the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The presence of Christ under the sacred species reserved after

Mass — a presence which lasts as long as the species of bread and of wine remain — derives from the celebration of the sacrifice and is directed towards communion, both sacramental and spiritual. It is the responsibility of Pastors to encourage, also by their personal witness, the practice of Eucharistic adoration, and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in particular, as well as prayer of adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species” (EE 25).

This understanding is being renewed throughout the world: that Jesus Christ, present in the Most Holy Eucharist, is the greatest treasure that we possess; that the source of our happiness, love, peace and eternal life is found only in Him. We must receive Him in Holy Communion with pure hearts, and abide in the radiance of His love at the adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament. That is why the Lord Jesus present in the Eucharist should be made available to all members of the parish. Churches should be open during the day and should organise adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament. In some parishes, there are organisations which dedicate themselves to perpetual adoration.



One of the most zealous contemporary proponents of organising perpetual adoration in parishes is the Argentine priest Fr Justo Antonio Lofeudo, MSE. Pastors who want to prepare their parishioners for perpetual adoration invite Fr Justo to preach retreats. What seems impossible for the parish in human terms becomes possible thanks to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Thanks to Fr Justo’s ministry, seventy parishes in Spain, Italy and Austria have instituted programmes of perpetual adoration. Fr Justo said: “I am an Argentine priest of the community of the Missionaries of the Most Holy Eucharist, whose mission is to open chapels of perpetual adoration.

All these wonderful things that I have done are in truth not my ministry. It is the Lord who does everything. I am only the privileged voice of these wonders and see with my own eyes and touch the miracles that God works”.

The Lord listens to us

For a long time, I was sent on missions to Mexico and the United States, but for some time I’ve been travelling in Europe as well. My European missions started from a clergy retreat in Medjugorje. On the last day of the retreat, Fr Jozo led the Stations of the Cross, which we celebrated while climbing up

Mount Križevac. When we were reaching the cross at the top of the mountain, Fr Jozo said: “Lord, grant your priests what they desire in the depths of their hearts!” Then 400 priests confessed to each other simultaneously at the summit of the mountain! Can you imagine? After concluding the confessions, we hiked back down the mountain. I went to a cafe at the foot of the mountain, because I was very thirsty. Suddenly, a priest from Spain showed up. I asked him if he would like to drink something with me, but he said he hadn’t brought any money. “No problem,” I told him, “I’m buying!” During our conversation, I told him that I was from a community that promotes perpetual adoration. Then he looked at me perplexed and said: “No way! For seven years, I’ve been thinking about perpetual adoration, but I never knew how to get started!” That was how we discovered that some 15 to 30 minutes after Fr Jozo’s prayer the Lord heard us and granted us what we asked!

“Conversion is a process, an ongoing deepening of faith, constantly growing closer to Christ”

The God project: 24/7

You have to recognise that this is not a human project; it’s God’s project. We’re talking about perpetual adoration; that means twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week: every day of the year. We promote perpetual adoration in accordance with encouragements offered by Church teaching in a variety of different documents, such as St John Paul II’s *Redemptionis Sacramentum* and Benedict XVI’s exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, in which they ask that every city have at least one church designated for perpetual adoration. The request is repeated by the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy in a letter to bishops. The letter also repeats a request for adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament for the intention of vocations to the priesthood and for the holiness of priests, since there is no better way of asking for these graces.

In *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, we read: “The worship of the Eucharist outside the Sacrifice of the Mass is a tribute of inestimable value in the life of the Church. Such worship is closely linked to the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice”. Hence devotion to the Holy Eucharist, both public and private, should be zealously instilled in the faithful outside of the Holy Mass, so that they can praise and glorify Jesus who is really and truly present and is the “High Priest of the good things to come” and the “Redeemer of the whole world” (n. 134).

A mission beyond human capacity

My first mission in Europe, in the Spanish parish of Cancelada, was very difficult. The parish was small, and even though people were very committed, we couldn't attract a sufficient number of people. So the pastor proposed that we go door to door and tell people about perpetual adoration. Imagine that you hear the doorbell, and when you open, there are ... two priests! People expect Jehovah's Witnesses or salespeople, but not two priests! We visited people who never went to church, and we prayed with the sick. It was a beautiful thing, and precisely because of this we succeeded in organising perpetual adoration.

I had already had an experience like this in Mexico. I remember that one day I rang at someone's door, and a woman opened and said: "please come in, I'm a university professor, an ear doctor. I work in several offices. I'm divorced. My daughter lives with me ..." I thought that the woman would tell me anything to come up with an excuse not to get involved in perpetual adoration. But she said: "Father, when you rang at the door I felt like it was Jesus Himself ringing for me! God knows that I don't have time, but please sign me up for Sunday evening between 10 and 11". Then she gave me a chocolate and said: "Thank you for helping me to arrange to meet with my Best Friend!"

... there must be something in this!

The most amazing thing is that it's not only the faithful who find what they are looking for in the chapel of perpetual adoration. In one place, a certain person at adoration had to leave for six weeks, so she had to find someone to fill in for her so that "her" hour wouldn't leave a hole in the schedule. She asked her brother-in-law to fill in for her and gave him the day and hour. He agreed to do it, but asked: "Fine, but what am I supposed to do?" She told him: "Nothing, you just have to be there". "But why?" "Because the Most Holy Sacrament is there". "Most Holy what!?!". It turned out that he was one of those people who as they say in Italian "devour priests"; they don't want to have anything to do with the Church. But he filled in for the woman because he wanted to help her. When she returned, he said: "I want to sign up, too; the peace that I found there is like nothing I've experienced in my life, ever!" And that is how his conversion came about.

"This understanding is being renewed throughout the world: that Jesus Christ, present in the Most Holy Eucharist, is the greatest treasure that we possess; that the source of our happiness, love, peace and eternal life is found only in Him"

This isn't an isolated event. The former archbishop of Seville told me that one time his doctor, who was not a believer, asked him: "What's going on in that chapel of St Onofrio? I heard that people are going there; they adore in peace, don't say anything, are there day and night ... Something must be going on there!" So, out of curiosity, he decided to go. Then the archbishop told me that from that day, the doctor converted, and he now gets up half an hour early every day to go to the chapel before he starts his day at the hospital. See! This was a person without faith, and the Lord presented him with a new dimension of reality: the Holy Unity of the Triune God.

A similar event occurred in a chapel in the Italian town of Prato, in a neighbourhood where there are many atheists and communists. Now there are 900 people engaged in adoration! It was there that one woman left a note saying: "For more than ten years I didn't set foot in a Catholic church, and if I happened to go into a church before that, it was only to observe its artistic quality. I still don't know why I'm here, but I believe in the peace that I've found here and that I can always find here. Maria Garcia".

Do you realise everything that is represented in those few words? First, this is an atheist who will have nothing to do with faith. Secondly, she doesn't know what she comes to the chapel for, but she comes; and this bears witness to the fact that God is calling her, even though she doesn't realise it yet. Thirdly, in the chapel she rediscovered a previously unknown peace. Fourthly, she looked for that peace, and that is where the path to conversion begins.

"Be not afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ!"

I'm also aware of five incidences of aborted suicide attempts, where the persons didn't go through with the suicide because in the middle of the night they found their way to the perpetual adoration chapel. They were able to enter because there were people there who had committed themselves to adoration. You can't leave the Most Holy Sacrament unattended. These days, when so many churches are closed, our answer fulfils what St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI requested at the beginning of their pontificates. St John Paul II said: "Be not afraid! Open, open wide the doors to Christ!" We open the doors wide, and this has permitted five people who were intent on suicide to find the Lord, who is the Resurrection and the Life, and to withdraw from their suicides and give their testimony.

He, who is the Resurrection and the Life

One of those events took place in the chapel in Prato. The pastor was taking part in the adoration at around four in the morning. He heard the doors open and someone enter the church. The person sighed desolately, but remained in the church. She was a desperate woman who had lost her job and her house and didn't have anywhere to go. Her entire life seemed to be one massive failure. She had wanted to go to the bridge and throw herself into the river. But instead of turning left, she had mistakenly turned right. Suddenly she saw a light. First it was a physical light, but when she entered the chapel, it was the light of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. When she realised this, she understood her error. She began to cry and reunited herself with God in the sacrament of confession. And even though it may be difficult to believe, she returned to the chapel that same day to thank God when she unexpectedly found work.

It is I!

How many setbacks and how many resurrections in the chapel of perpetual adoration? Many! So many seemingly hopeless life situations ... I know of a married couple that had already submitted their case for divorce, but thanks to participating together in perpetual adoration, they reconciled with each other and are together again. Why? Because the Eucharist is not just "some sacrament out there", but is the living Christ! In all the Eucharistic miracles, we are reminded of the same thing — that the host is made up of living human cells! The Lord tells us: "Pay heed, it is me! How attentive are you when you receive me?" This prompts us to ask ourselves about the way we receive Holy Communion. What is our level of awareness, our awareness of Him whom we are receiving? Do we realise that Communion is not just a piece of bread, but, as Benedict XVI said, "a personal encounter with our Saviour and Creator"? That He is alive! That He is working in us!

"When we come to the chapel of perpetual adoration, we receive peace and love, which is all that we should take to other people"

The road to conversion

In Mexico, we opened an adoration chapel in one of the bad neighbourhoods. One person accompanied his friends to adoration and stayed with them in the chapel to return home with them as well. He wasn't a practising Catholic — he only came with them out of concern for their safety. After two or three weeks, he couldn't stand it anymore and went to confession. After forty years

of being so far from Jesus! Can you imagine? How great is the Lord's power! It's so great that this person couldn't remain close to Jesus, being aware of his sins, because in His light one notices all one's sins and inadequacies. That is why even the saints perceive themselves as sinners. Sometimes those who are separated from God come to confession and say: "actually, I don't have any sins. I didn't kill anyone, I didn't steal anything ..." They behave this way because they are unaware of their sins. But when we come to adore Holiness, we realise that we should strive to achieve it ourselves, too. That is exactly where the path to conversion begins, because conversion is something ongoing. None of us can say: "I'm already converted!" Conversion is a process, an ongoing deepening of faith, constantly growing closer to Christ. Holiness is unity with Him!

You don't have to do anything

People often ask me: "What should I do during adoration? How should I go about adoring?" My feeling is that we learn to adore by adoring. We have been endowed with the capacity to know God to the extent that He makes Himself known, that He reveals Himself to us. So what course should we finish to be able to adore? None! It seems to me that our greatest problem isn't a lack of preparation, but rather that we grow attached to the thought that we have to "do something". And in the case of adoration, it's exactly the opposite! We have to let Him "do something". The one who will "do something" is God. He stands before us during adoration, but we also stand before Him. "Exposed" to His working in us, we must open our hearts and forget ourselves. That is what is most important in adoration! Let yourself to be loved. Let Him encompass you, embrace you; let go of your own self. And if a contemplative prayer comes to you, so much the better. If you engage Him in dialogue, so much the better.

"He transforms me, and the power of this transformation shines on others"

To adore Jesus, "lie close to his breast"

Consider how St John Paul II encourages us to adore the Most Holy Eucharist: "It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple (cf. John 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. If in our time Christians must be distinguished above all by the 'art of prayer', how can we not feel a renewed need to spend time in spiritual conversation, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament? How often, dear brother and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support! [...] The Eucharist is a priceless treasure: by not only celebrating it but also by

praying before it outside of Mass we are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of grace” (EE 25).

You can't stand in the rain and not get wet

Don't get discouraged if it seems like you are staring at a wall during adoration. It is not true! He is there whether you feel it or not. You will receive graces even though adoration seems to you like a struggle. You can't stand in the rain and not get wet. You can't be exposed to the sun and not get tanned. This case is the same. You can't face the Blessed Sacrament and not be permeated by the rays of grace. St Faustina Kowalska had the following vision during adoration: she could see the rays of Divine Mercy coming out of the Blessed Sacrament and touching even those who were far from It. St John Paul II used to say that the person who spends time in adoration is an advocate for the whole world. When we adore, we benefit first, but so do those for whom we pray. Others also benefit: especially those who can enter and encounter the Lord because the chapel is open.

A forgotten dimension of adoration and the apparitions in Fatima

There is one other, frequently forgotten, dimension of adoration, and that is reparation. Reparation for apostasy, desecration and sacrilege, for our own sins, which are not few. Reparation and interceding for someone are inseparable. What did the Fatima apparitions reveal? Most people would answer: entrusting to the Immaculate Heart of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, consecrating Russia, and everyday rosary prayer. But there is something even more important than that: the Eucharist itself. In the first apparitions in Fatima, the angel prepares the children for Mary's coming. Two years before the apparitions, the angel teaches the children how to intercede and make reparations for sinners in front of the Most Holy Sacrament! He teaches them this prayer: “Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore Thee profoundly. I offer Thee the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifferences whereby He is offended. And through the infinite merits of His Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I beg of Thee the conversion of poor sinners.”

St John Paul II used to say that the person who spends time in adoration is an advocate for the whole world

A secret discovered through grace

Jesus is present among us in His Eucharistic form, and that presence is unique, indescribable, real and alive! We too can discover the secret of this presence if we accept the grace that He gives us. Hence, it is God's grace which is calling and enabling us to touch this unfathomable mystery which we will only fully understand once we are in eternity. It is a mystery of love which is calling us to draw closer to it. If we look beyond the "curtain" of the Eucharistic form in which He is hidden, then we will realise that it is God Almighty Himself.

We shouldn't be afraid to open churches even at night

When we were organising perpetual adoration in Pamplona, people were saying that it was very fortunate that the bishop chose this chapel because it was located very close to the police station, so it would be very well protected. My response was: "It is quite the contrary. The police are fortunate that the Lord will be adored day and night near the station." Imagine: some time after the inauguration of perpetual adoration in this chapel, ETA carried out a terrorist attack on the city. Were any people hurt? No! There were only material losses. The Lord really protects us from evil, and it is most important for us to start realising that. He is not just standing there, but really acting with all of His might! This is the most beautiful thing! If I want to understand it and I start to adore him, He transforms me, and the power of this transformation shines on others. God's plan is for my conversion to lead to the conversion of other people.

We receive so as to be able to share with others

When we come to the chapel of perpetual adoration, we receive one grace after another; we receive peace and love, which is all that we should take to other people. "... If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). Eucharistic adoration is precisely "remaining in Him", because I can't offer anything to another person that I don't first receive from God. It is during adoration, during this hour, that I can receive peace to take to others. I can receive love so that I can be its messenger and everything else that is good: joy, patience ... That's

what is most beautiful about adoration! Every meeting with the Lord becomes a meeting with a friend, just as the other lady mentioned: a meeting “with my Best Friend”.