

FROM THE FATHERS

"On the feast of Corpus Christi", by St Thomas Aquinas (1225-74)

Since it was the will of God's only-begotten Son that men should share in his divinity, he assumed our nature in order that by becoming man he might make men gods. Moreover, when he took our flesh he dedicated the whole of its substance to our salvation. He offered his body to God the Father on the altar of the cross as a sacrifice for our reconciliation. But to ensure that the memory of so great a gift would abide with us for ever, he left his body as food and his blood as drink for the faithful to consume in the form of bread and wine.

O precious and wonderful banquet, that brings us salvation and contains all sweetness! Under the old law it was the flesh of calves and goats that was offered, but here Christ himself, the true God, is set before us as our food. What could be more wonderful than this? No other sacrament has greater healing power; through it sins are purged away, virtues are increased, and the soul is enriched with an abundance of every spiritual gift. It is offered in the Church for the living and the dead, so that what was instituted for the salvation of all may be for the benefit of all. Yet, in the end, no one can fully express the sweetness of this sacrament, in which spiritual delight is tasted at its very source, and in which we renew the memory of that surpassing love for us which Christ revealed in his Passion.

WE BECOME WHAT WE PRAY: NOTES ON THE SACRED LITURGY

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

From the Eleventh Century there developed in the Western Church a particular love and devotion to Christ's Sacramental Presence in the Holy Eucharist which was manifested in a desire to look upon the Eucharistic Host. It was at this time, for example, that the Host began to be elevated at Mass so that the People could gaze upon Christ sacramentally present among them and for them. Solemn Processions of the Host also developed from this time. By the Fourteenth Century, in addition to veneration of the Host within the Eucharistic Rite, the liturgical form of Exposition – a rite of veneration of the Host outside of Mass – had become popular. Many popular Medieval rites ended with a blessing, usually with a relic or a crucifix, but Exposition ended with a blessing given with the Blessed Sacrament itself. Today, the rite commonly called 'Benediction' consists of a time of exposition of the Eucharistic Host, prayers, adoration, and censing, concluding with Benediction. This can either stand alone or, commonly in many of our parishes, takes place after the saying/singing of the Evening Office.

PRAYERS TO REMEMBER

With solemn faith we offer up,
And spread before thy glorious eyes
That only ground of all our hope,
That all-sufficient Sacrifice,
Which brings thy grace on sinners down,
And perfects all our souls in one.

Father, behold thy dying Son,
And hear the blood that speaks above;
On us let all thy grace be shown,
Peace, righteousness, joy, and love:
Thy kingdom come to every heart,
And all thou hast, and all thou art.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

LET US ADORE FOR EVER THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT



God gives. It is what he does. It is what he is - our God is the God of the gift. His giving is a manifestation of the super-abundance of his divine life, his infinite, inexhaustible plenitude. His giving is a manifestation of what he is, Love. Everything that is created is only so because of his free, unwarranted desire to give, and Salvation History reverberates with his giving: the Cosmos, the Covenants, the Passover, the Law, a People and their homeland flowing milk and honey, the Temple, the Prophets. But all these gifts are types and shadows of a greater gift to come, the incarnation of the Word-made-Flesh. The God-Man is God's full, final, perfect, and irrevocable self-gift. Throughout Salvation History, the God of the gift has been preparing for this richest expression of his abundance, the lavish gift of his presence and his very self and essence all-divine, in the person of Our Lord. Such a perfect gift now given will forever be with us. His self-gift abides with us perpetually in the Blessed Sacrament of his Body & Blood. Christ's incarnation continues amongst us in his Universal Church, in the sacraments of his Universal Church, and intensely so in the Blessed Sacrament. This makes the Holy Eucharist the Church's rarest treasure because it is the Sacrament of Christ's abiding presence, a Real Presence which perpetually summons up in us a remembrance of his suffering death and passion which - for love of our race and for its making forever new again - he willingly endured. A devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is a devotion to the gift of Christ's death-embracing love for you and his victory over all the powers that once delighted in your separation from God.