



From A Bishop's Journal (749)

As We Near the International Eucharistic Congress (1)

The 49th International Eucharistic Congress will take place in Québec City from June 15 to 22, this year. Some people of the diocese have already registered to attend this great event; registration can be done by internet or through our diocesan delegate, Mrs. Jeannine Cormier. Besides these indispensable formalities, there is the great “eucharistic” current that must always be kindled in each one of our milieus. This is why I invite you to deeply experience times of eucharistic adoration, in the next few weeks and months.

Eucharistic Renewal

In the last few years – especially after the five unforgettable diocesan eucharistic congresses that we held from 1996 to 2000 – I noticed a certain renewal in the practice of eucharistic adoration, in our diocese. Some parishes have a fixed day and time for adoration. For fourteen years now, there has been eucharistic adoration at the Diocesan Centre, following the Mass. The main reason for this is to pray the Lord to continue sending us Gospel workers. In Edmundston, there are also many who join the Blessed Sacrament Sisters in their adoration. It is a great source of joy for me to see so many faithful of every age taking the time to pray before Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament. I sometimes meet them at important gatherings, sometimes on the steps of a church that is open for prayer, and sometimes in a humble chapel. I often notice the peaceful joy that inhabits those who come to spend a little time before the Blessed Sacrament. Their peaceful countenance and their kind gestures do not pass unnoticed. I usually celebrate Mass every day with personnel of the diocesan services, and our prayer is for all of our faithful, and those beyond the Diocese. I thank God for the gift He gives us of His Son in the Eucharist, and for the faithful who profit from this, to be with him in the peace and quiet of contemplation.

Eucharistic Devotion

Through the centuries, Eucharistic devotion has been a support to believers and communities in demanding situations. This devotion nourished their hope, deepened their faith, and energised the love of many. This brings to mind those people who were in concentration camps, who succeeded in hiding the eucharistic bread at the peril of their lives. I think about priests and religious who found strength and courage by praying long hours at the feet of Jesus. I think also of the sick and their caregivers who bow before the Blessed Sacrament in hospital chapels, praying for courage and

healing. So as to have the eucharistic practice bear more fruit, I offer you a few reflections to guide you in deepening the meaning of these liturgical act, and to profit from the graces of these moments of recollection and adoration.

Different Paths

We can come to eucharistic adoration through different paths and for different reasons. Some have been invited by a family member or a friend. Others probably first came out of curiosity, intrigued by a practice that used to be a part of their parents' or grandparents' religious life. Several of our young people were introduced to eucharistic adoration at the World Youth Days. Older people came to it by way of days of recollection or annual retreats. Whatever path they took to come to adoration, everyone came to it in response to a call. Why? Perhaps because they had already experienced the soothing calm and quiet of prayer, in their hectic and agitated lives. It may also be because they have discovered there the loving and discreet Presence that brings them healing and grace. Perhaps, too, it may be that they have realised that this daily or weekly practice paces their lives as it gives them direction and new meaning. But whatever the reason, they desire to continue taking time for prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Greatest Form of Worship

Adoration is the spontaneous reaction of someone in the presence of his/her Creator. It springs automatically from the heart that contemplates the grandeur of creation, the beauty of an artistic work, or the mystery of the human person. Creation is like a living "icon," a living "image" of the Creator. Whoever admires creation implicitly worships the One who is its source. The practice of worship or adoration is found in all religions, in various guises. With the people of Israel especially, adoration was held in high esteem, and is part of their creed: "Listen, Israel, the Lord your God is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength." It is in this sense that the Psalms open us to this great reality that is adoration. And the Son of God, by being born in the Jewish nation, developed this human attitude of adoration. It corresponds in fact perfectly with the relationship he has with the Father in the Spirit, from all eternity. This is why during his life on earth Jesus took time to pray, in the mountains and even in the Garden of Gethsemane. His whole life was praise, love, and worship of the Father whose will was his daily bread. He offered not only his prayer but his life itself in a gesture of love and fidelity. When we contemplate Jesus on the cross, we see and worship the perfect adorer. He is the model of all those who worship. Christ is the Father's most perfect adorer.

The Value of a Life

Our adoration and worship should therefore not only be inspired by the example of Jesus, but it should be united to Jesus' own adoration. Christian adoration is not a private act, however. It is an act of believers who are united to Christ the adorer. By being in us, his Spirit joins us to Christ, his prayer becomes ours, and his adoration is the source of ours. In his long periods of adoration and petition, Blessed Charles de Foucauld, in his little hermitage at Tamanrasset in the land of the Touareg, was constantly united to Jesus' own adoration. After his murder, the small pyx with the sacred host was discovered next to his body. May we become intimately united to Christ, in our daily

prayer and adoration. According to Father Jules Monchanin, the value of a life is measured by its weight in adoration.

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