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Drawn to Adoration

by Joe Diele

It was Holy Thursday. I was in the seventh grade and I had just attended the Mass of the Lord's Supper. I was an altar boy and it was my first experience of the wonderful ceremonies of Holy Week. Following the Mass, there was a procession around the church. The priest intoned the traditional hymn of the Eucharist, Sing my tongue the Savior's glory. The choir led us through the rest of the verses as we wound our way through the church to the altar of repose. The church was hazed in clouds of incense, offered as praise by two altar servers. Following the song, the prayer, the placing of the Eucharist in the repository and a further incensation, the procession gently and quietly moved to the sacristy.

church was darkened except for the spots around the repository and the smell of incense and violets hung in the air. I remember walking to a bench and sitting; I watched in the silence. I remember waiting without words, but knowing an inner peace I had never known before. I knew that his was most wonderful and fulfilling. I remember this as one of those key religious experiences in my life. I knew in whose presence I sat.

It has been a long time since that Holy Thursday and sitting in the still presence of the Divine. Our liturgy has changed and I have changed. Nevertheless, what has not changed is, that day in and day out, I am drawn, I am beckoned to sit in the Divine Presence. I like to think of the Eucharist as a magnet - calling...attracting...drawing me to sit and be present to the one who is always present to me. I like to think in this Divine Presence we experience in the Eucharist, as that attraction we feel for another. We have all had those experiences of infatuation and desire, when we can think of no one else or nothing else but the object of our desire. So it is with the Eucharist. We are drawn closer to think not of anything or anyone in particular but drawn by a presence that fills our hearts, our minds, our very souls. We are drawn by One who desires us as a beloved.

The Eucharistic Presence is the Divine Presence. Some will say is not God to be found in a sunrise or in the beauty of tulips shining out their colors on a spring day? Is God not found in the giggle of a child or in the sustaining love of a friend or relative whom we have not seen, why should we think it is idolatry to sit in front of the broken bread. This bread is broken for us and, in each fragment, in each grain of flour, we meet the faces and the names of God's people.

Individually, we pray to our God in as many different ways as we are different human beings, But, for us, Eucharistic adoration is a way that we, as community, can give praise to God. Surely, God does not need our praise and there is nothing we can say or do that can add to God. Nor is there anything we can say or do that would take anything away from God. . . God is God. Yet, we are reminded by St. Catherine that God is madly in love with us and therefore needs as much as we need God. To adore God, to praise God for being God, is simply our human, finite posture before God, who is an infinite outpouring of love



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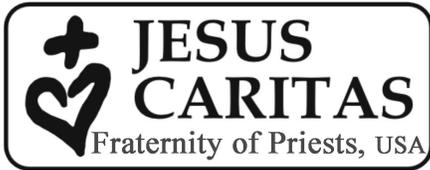
There are many wonderful and different methods of prayer. The Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, Centering Prayer, Christian Zen Practice, Lectio Divina, the Ignatian Exercises, the Quiet Prayer of St. Theresa of Avila, but I want to suggest that Eucharistic Adoration be another method.

One can sit in the Divine Presence found in the Eucharist and just sit. One need not do anything. One may sometimes practice another method of our Christian heritage, but, by just sitting in the Eucharistic Presence, we are drawn, deeper and deeper, into the mystery of God. We meet in the Eucharist our brothers and sisters. Each afternoon, as I sit, and watch, and wait, I hear again the stories of my people who are suffering with AIDS, cancer, abuse and poverty. I see in this bread the Incarnate God, made so by the Holy Spirit, the lives, the tales, the joys and sorrows of God's people. Eucharistic Adoration is not so one would be isolated enjoying his own good feelings about God, but rather that one might be present to the Body of Christ, broken and poured out on every street corner, every hospital bed, every tearful eye and hope-filled person. To recognize God in the Eucharistic bread is to recognize God in the flesh.

As a compass is drawn to the North, so we are drawn to God and God's people when we dare to adore God broken and poured out for love of us. We encounter in the Eucharist One who has loved us unconditionally and One who is ever drawing us closer to the divine presence in each person. All flesh is made holy because the Word becomes our flesh. All creation is graced by the Divine Presence because we see in bread and wine fruits of the earth, the Divine One pouring out creation as a gift, given in abundance so that every cup overflows and every net is near to breaking.

Now, I spend about two hours each day in Eucharistic Adoration. I do not have the pleasure of smelling incense or violets but, sometimes, as I sit I can sense the terrible smell of going with a family the morgue or the urine-soaked elevators of my people in the projects. I do not necessarily feel the soft light of our chapel or of that church when I was a child. Now it is the harsh, bright light of a hospital Intensive Care Unit or a Police Station. The Eucharist puts me in touch with the world where I am to minister to God's people. Adoration draws me closer to the heart of God because it draws me closer to the hearts of my people.

While sitting in adoration, we need not say anything or do anything. We simply sit, and in the sitting, in the stillness, we find that we are with the One who knows us, the One who calls us friend. It is in Eucharistic Adoration that I meet the God who loves me and those whom God has called me to love. Like a moth to the fire, like lovers to the arms of their beloved, like a magnet to metal, when we dare to sit in the Eucharistic Presence, we are drawn deeper and deeper into the very heart of God and into the very heart of God's people. The people, their stories and their fears are not a distraction but rather a call to love. All prayer in the Christian tradition is a call and a reminder to love. For us, love is the lesson we are learning, love of a married couple? To all these examples of the Divine Presence, I say yes. I, as every Catholic, believe that God is everywhere. There is no place, nor human experience, where God is not



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present. Yet I hold, as the Christian community, that we need to have a common experience of the Divine Presence. For us, the Eucharist is that common place where all of us, as a community, might see and remember that God is in our midst. The Eucharist is the source and summit of all our Christian worship.

Some will say that Eucharistic adoration becomes idol worship and, of course, that would be harmful to anyone who believes in the living God. Yet God is present when we gather at a table, bless, break and share the bread. Why then, how could God not be present to this community when we have gathered up the fragments reserved for the sick and the dying? If we do not see it as idol worship when we sit for hours listening to the waves embrace the shore or when we feel the embrace of a loved one or the call we have been given, love is the goal of our lives. The very object of our love is God and God is discovered in the Eucharist. When we can sit still with the one who loves us, then we can learn to sit still with the frightened patient, the abused child, the grieving friend. When we learn to sit still before the One who is ever drawing us to the heart of reality, we discover those whom God has placed before us, for no other reason except the we learn to love.

Paul remind us in Corinthians You are the Body of Christ. It is true, we are the Body of Christ because we consume the Body of Christ. . .but, to be this Body, we must recognize this living Body of God in the broken bread and poured out wine and human flesh, where we discover Emmanuel, God with us.