

Pope Francis and the Renewal of the Church through the Mass and Eucharistic Adoration

- Introduction
 - Tonight we come before the Lord Jesus on this retreat asking him for all the graces we need to be attentive and responsive to the way he wants to reshape us and through that reform rebuild his Church living stone by living stone through the ministry of the Living Rock, the 266th Peter, Pope Francis. This time in the presence of the Eucharist gives us a chance to ponder together the meaning of the Eucharist in our life. The teaching of the Church is that Jesus in the Eucharist is the Source and Summit of any life that’s truly Christian. To be truly Christian, our lives must flow from Jesus in the Eucharist and be directed to him. Otherwise we’re not living a truly Christian life.
 - Litmus test for whether we’re living a Eucharistic life is whether we can live without the Eucharist.
 - SC 95 (*Sacramentum Caritatis*): At the beginning of the fourth century, Christian worship was still forbidden by the imperial authorities. Some Christians in North Africa, who felt bound to celebrate the Lord's Day, defied the prohibition. They were martyred after declaring that it was not possible for them to live without the Eucharist, the food of the Lord: *sine dominico non possumus*. . . . These martyrs of Abitinae, in union with all those saints and beati who made the Eucharist the centre of their lives. . . . teach us to be faithful to our encounter with the risen Christ. We too cannot live without partaking of the sacrament of our salvation.
 - Deacons in a particular way are to this have a “Eucharistic amazement,” to have not only a deep understanding of the liturgy, but make their whole lives liturgical.
 - JP II Detroit, 1987: As ministers of the altar you must be *steeped in the spirit of the liturgy*, and be convinced above all that it is "the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed and at the same time the source from which all her power flows”
 - In the Basic Norms for the Formation of Deacons, it says that the love with which deacons are called to exercise their *diaconia* is meant to flow from Jesus in the Eucharist:
 - 73. The source of this new capacity to love is the Eucharist, which, not by chance, characterises the ministry of the deacon. In fact, service of the poor is the logical consequence of service of the altar. Therefore the candidate will be invited to participate every day, or at least frequently, within the limits of his family and professional commitments, in the celebration of the Eucharist and will be helped to penetrate ever deeper into its mystery.
 - The Directory on the Life and Ministry of Deacons adds that the Holy Eucharist must be the “touchstone of the deacon's life and activity, the indispensable means of perseverance, the criterion of authentic renewal and of a balanced synthesis of life.”
 - So much of the Deacon’s loving service involves the Holy Eucharist. The directory on the life and ministry of Deacons say, “As an ordinary minister of Holy Communion, the deacon distributes the Body of Christ to the faithful during the celebration of the Mass and, outside of it, administers Viaticum to the sick. He is equally an ordinary minister of exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament and of eucharistic benediction. It falls to the deacon to preside at Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest.”
 - Tonight in this holy hour I wanted to share with you some of Pope Francis’ thoughts on the Holy Eucharist to guide our meditation tonight and give us some things to ponder before the Lord as we all come to spend time with him at this time when he celebrated the Last Supper and then went out into the Garden of Gethsemane and asked us to keep vigil with him.
 - Pope Francis takes adoration of the Lord very seriously.
 - (Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio) “In my view, prayer should somehow be an experience of giving way, of surrendering, where our entire being enters into the presence of God. It is

there where a dialogue happens, the listening, the transformation. Look to God, but above all feel looked at by God. Sometimes the religious experience in prayer occurs to me when I pray aloud with the Rosary or the psalms. Or when I joyfully celebrate the Eucharist. But the moment I most savor the religious experience, however long it may be, is when I am before the tabernacle. At times, I allow myself to fall asleep while sitting there, looking at Him. I feel as if I were in someone else's hands, as if God were taking me by the hand. I think you have to reach the transcendental otherness of the Lord, that the Lord is everything but He always respects our freedom.

- I'd like to ponder about a dozen things he says about adoration that can help us not only in our adoring the Lord but in our helping the whole world come to adore him!
- Adoration manifests that we're truly Christian (Daily homily, Sept 7, 2013)
 - Instead of being "Christians without Christ: those who seek out novelties, special things, they seek out private revelations, ... what then is the rule for being a Christian with Christ? And what is the 'sign' that someone is in fact a Christian with Christ? It is simple, the Pope explained: "whatever leads you to Jesus is valid, and only what comes from Jesus is valid. Jesus is the center". And the "sign", he said, is "a man or a woman who adores Jesus is a Christian with Jesus. If you can't worship Jesus, something is missing". The rule is to "follow what comes from Jesus and to do what leads to Jesus. The sign is adoration of Jesus, prayer and adoration before Jesus".
 - Benedict XVI talked about this reality in *Verbum Domini* when he wrote about the connection between worshipping Jesus, adoring him at Mass and letting our life become a Mass:
 - 66. During the early phases of the reform, the inherent relationship between Mass and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was not always perceived with sufficient clarity. For example, an objection that was widespread at the time argued that the eucharistic bread was given to us not to be looked at, but to be eaten. In the light of the Church's experience of prayer, however, this was seen to be a false dichotomy. As Saint Augustine put it: "*nemo autem illam carnem manducat, nisi prius adoraverit; peccemus non adorando* – no one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we should sin were we not to adore it." In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and desires to become one with us; **eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church's supreme act of adoration. Receiving the Eucharist means adoring him whom we receive. Only in this way do we become one with him, and are given, as it were, a foretaste of the beauty of the heavenly liturgy. The act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration** itself. Indeed, "**only in adoration can a profound and genuine reception mature.** And it is precisely this personal encounter with the Lord that then strengthens the social mission contained in the Eucharist, which seeks to break down not only the walls that separate the Lord and ourselves, but also and especially the walls that separate us from one another."
 - Our law of prayer shows us what we really believe. *Lex orandi, lex credendi* (June 18, 2008 catechesis at the International Eucharistic Congress)
 - "We are to see if the law of prayer corresponds to the law of faith. We are to consider what the People of God believes and how the People of God lives, so that the Eucharist can become more and more the source and summit of the life and mission of ... the Church." A very rich intuition that goes looking for Christ in his most humble beneficiaries and witnesses: in the holy faithful People of God.
- Adoration crushes our idolatries (Daily Mass Oct 15, 2013)
 - Pope Francis began: "The Lord has told us that the first commandment is to adore God, to love God. ... The liturgy today speaks to us about" the vice that opposes it.
 - "St Paul doesn't mince words when he describes the sin of idolatry. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety, for idolatry is a form of impiety, it is a lack of pietas. What is lacking is the sense we all have within us to adore God ... we all need to adore, because we have God's very imprint within us" and "when we do not adore God, we adore creatures"
 - Lest we think idolatry to be a thing of the past, Pope Francis reminds us: "today there are many idols and many idolaters ... today, too, the streets are lined with idols". And he added: "we all have

an idol hidden within us. We might ask ourselves before God: ‘what is my hidden idol, what occupies the Lord's place in my heart?’” He continued, “There was a French writer, a very religious man, who got angry very easily and often; it was his great shortcoming. He said: whoever does not pray to God prays to the devil. If you do not adore God, you adore idols, always!” The Pope suggested that we all ask ourselves: “what is my idol?”

- The world, with all its idolatries, is trying to prohibit this worship in life, and we need to resist it (Nov 28, 2013 daily Mass homily)
 - Pope Francis concluded by inviting those present to reflect on “this general apostasy called the prohibition of worship”, and to ask themselves: “Do I worship God? Do I adore Jesus Christ the Lord? Or do I do so by halves and play games with the prince of this world? Worshipping to the very end with trust and fidelity is the grace we should ask”.
- To adore the Lord, we need to do more than show up. (Daily Mass homily, Nov 5, 2013)
 - [In the parable of the banquet, we’re invited by Christ to enter the banquet for free].
 - God's mercy, the Pontiff said, reaches even to those who decline the invitation or pretend to accept it but do not truly participate in the feast. Listing the excuses given by those in the parable who were too occupied to attend, Pope Francis said: “They participate in the banquet in name only, but they do not truly accept the invitation”. “They say yes,” but they really mean no. He likened the invited guests in the Gospel to “Christians who are content to remain on the guest list”. Unfortunately, he said, “being listed as a Christian is not enough... If you do not enter into the banquet, you are not a Christian; you will be on the list, but this does not help your salvation”.
 - Pope Francis concluded his homily by exhorting those present to pray for the grace to understand “how beautiful it is to be invited to the banquet, how beautiful it is to share one's gifts with others, how beautiful it is to be with God” and to the contrary, what a pity it is “to vacillate between yes and no; to say yes, but to content ourselves” with only remaining on the guest list.
- Adoring the Lord is a response of gratitude to God’s gift. (Open Mind, Faithful Heart)
 - The response to Christ’s generosity should not be simply a courteous, conventional “many thanks.” Christ’s surrender calls for us to give our lives, and our lives are given by following the way the Lord marked out on the cross. Our gratitude to him should encompass all that we are. This “giving thanks” with our lives becomes real every day in the celebrating of the Eucharist, which is the thanksgiving par excellence and that at the same time calls to mind the passion of the Lord. The Eucharist grounds the Church, nourishes her, and keeps her alive. ... In celebrating the Eucharist, we make present the very hour of the Church’s birth, which coincides with the hour of the Lord’s death. Our way of giving thanks is to assume that death and take on its very form. This is what ultimately determines the shape of our belonging to the Church.
 - It’s our *logike latreia*
 - Rom 12:1 — Offer your bodies as a pleasing and acceptable sacrifice to God, your *logike latreia*, the only worship that makes sense.
 - Pope Francis says that this is what is seen in the widow’s mite (Nov 25, 2013 daily Mass homily) “The widow went up to the temple to adore God, to tell him that he was above all things and that she loved him, and she gave all she had to live on. Hers was more than generosity, it was something else”, the Pope said. “She had no thought for herself. She could have said: ‘Lord, you know I need this to eat today’. However, she chose to adore God to the very end”.
 - This transforms us
 - (Open Mind, Faithful Heart) “The hidden manna is Jesus himself, who entrusts himself to us in the Eucharist, thus making us blessed. The truth of God is the bread of the soul. In the form of this bread, the Lord gives himself mysteriously and totally, creating a relation of intimate communion with those who are faithful.”
 - (Corpus Christi homily, June 17, 2006) “If there is no encounter with Jesus, life becomes inconsistent, loses its meaning. The Lord has given us a Eucharist — an encounter — every day, for us, for our families, for the entire Church, and our heart must learn to hold fast to

this daily Eucharist, which is synthesized in the Sunday mass, so that every day may be saved, blessed, converted into an offering, placed ... in the hands of the Father.”

- All our liturgical rites are meant to foster this adoration, this total gift of ourselves to God
 - (Nov 22, 2013 daily Mass) The Pope noted that the essential meaning of Judas Maccabeus’ act was “to reconsecrate the temple so that there glory might be offered to God”. The Pope said: “The temple is the place where the community goes to pray, to praise the Lord, to give thanks, but above all to adore: the Lord is adored in the temple. And this is the most important point. This is also true for liturgical ceremonies: in this liturgical ceremony, what is most important? The songs, the rites, they are all beautiful... but **what is most important is adoration**: the whole community together looks at the altar where the sacrifice is celebrated and adores.” He then asked: “Are our temples places of adoration? Do they foster adoration? Do our liturgical celebrations foster adoration?”
 - Corpus Christi Homily, May 30, 2013) This evening we are the crowd of the Gospel, we too seek to follow Jesus in order to listen to him, to enter into communion with him in the Eucharist, to accompany him and in order that he accompany us. Let us ask ourselves: how do I follow Jesus? Jesus speaks in silence in the Mystery of the Eucharist. He reminds us every time that following him means going out of ourselves and not making our life a possession of our own, but rather a gift to him and to others....
 - Pope Benedict XVI: (Seminarians in Altötting Sept 11, 2006) “**Eucharistic adoration is an essential way of being with the Lord.** Altötting now has a new "treasury". Where once the treasures of the past were kept, precious historical and religious items, **there is now a place for the Church's true treasure: the permanent presence of the Lord in his Sacrament. In one of his parables the Lord speaks of a treasure hidden in the field; whoever finds it sells all he has in order to buy that field, because the hidden treasure is more valuable than anything else. The hidden treasure, the good greater than any other good, is the Kingdom of God - it is Jesus himself, the Kingdom in person. In the sacred Host, he is present, the true treasure, always waiting for us.**
- Adoring the Lord doesn’t stop just at adoring Jesus under the species of the Holy Eucharist. It leads us to love him in others.
 - (Assisi, Seraphic Institute, October 4, 2013) The bishop asked that in the chapel of this institute there be perpetual Eucharistic Adoration. ... On the altar we adore the Flesh of Jesus; in the people we find the wounds of Jesus. Jesus hidden in the Eucharist and Jesus hidden in these wounds. They need to be heard! Maybe not so much in newspapers as news; there they take notice for one, two, three days, then something else comes up, and another thing... The wounds should be heard by those who call themselves Christian. The Christian adores Jesus, the Christian seeks Jesus, the Christian knows how to recognize the wounds of Jesus. And today, all of us, here, need to say: “These wounds must be heard!”. But there is something else that gives us hope. Jesus is present in the Eucharist, here is the Flesh of Jesus; Jesus is present among you, it is the Flesh of Jesus: the wounds of Jesus are present in these people.
 - (Angelus, June 2, 2013) The Feast of Corpus Christi asks us to convert to faith in Providence, so that we may share the little we are and have, and never to withdraw into ourselves. Let us ask our Mother Mary to help us in this conversion, in order to follow truly and more closely the Jesus whom we adore in the Eucharist.
 - We’re called to give them something to eat.
 - God rains down manna every day. He gives us our day our daily bread.
- Jesus in the Eucharist calls us out of ourselves and into communion with him and others, but we need to respond (Corpus Christi Homily, May 30, 2013)
 - This evening we too are gathered round the table of the Lord, the table of the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which he once again gives us his Body and makes present the one sacrifice of the Cross. It is in listening to his word, in nourishing ourselves with his Body and his Blood that he moves us on from being a multitude to being a community, from anonymity to communion. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion that brings us out of individualism so that we may follow him together, living out our faith in him. Therefore we should all ask ourselves before the Lord: how do I live the

Eucharist? Do I live it anonymously or as a moment of true communion with the Lord, and also with all the brothers and sisters who share this same banquet? What are our Eucharistic celebrations like?

- So let us ask ourselves this evening, in adoring Christ who is really present in the Eucharist: do I let myself be transformed by him? Do I let the Lord who gives himself to me, guide me to going out ever more from my little enclosure, in order to give, to share, to love him and others? ... Let us pray that participation in the Eucharist may always be an incentive: to follow the Lord every day, to be instruments of communion and to share what we are with him and with our neighbor. Our life will then be truly fruitful.
- This transformation happens naturally for someone who truly receives (Only Love Can Save Us, Letters, homilies and talks of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio):
 - Jesus did not say [to Zacchaeus]: “You have to change your life.” He simply went to visit him at his home. That was enough for Zacchaeus to know what he had to do. It’s what Jesus does in the Eucharist. He simply says to us, ‘I want to visit you in your heart. I ask you to receive me in the Eucharist.’ And that is all that is needed.
- This transformation doesn’t happen under our own power. Jesus in the Eucharist gives us strength.
 - (May 26, 2013 Homily, First Communion Mass): How does Jesus give us strength? You know this, you know that he gives us strength! Louder, I can’t hear you! In Communion he gives us strength, he really helps us with strength. He comes to us. But when you say, “he gives us Communion”, does a piece of bread make you so strong? Isn’t it bread? Is it bread? This is bread, but is what is on the altar bread? Or isn’t it bread? It seems to be bread. It is not really bread. What is it? It is the Body of Jesus. Jesus comes into our heart
- Adoration transforms us more and more into the likeness of the One we worship, into his love for others, and helps us grow in holiness
 - Pope Francis loves to cite Paul VI’s words in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 76: Our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life, and as the Second Vatican Council suggests, preaching must in turn make the preacher grow in holiness, which is nourished by prayer and above all by love for the Eucharist (Open Mind, faithful heart)
 - Pope Benedict spoke about how the Eucharist transforms us and through us transforms the world in Cologne during World Youth Day in 2005:
 - By making the bread into his Body and the wine into his Blood, Jesus anticipates his death, he accepts it in his heart, and he transforms it into an action of love. What on the outside is simply brutal violence - the Crucifixion - from within becomes an act of total self-giving love. This is the substantial transformation which was accomplished at the Last Supper and was destined to set in motion a series of transformations leading ultimately to the transformation of the world when God will be all in all (cf. I Cor 15: 28).
 - In their hearts, people always and everywhere have somehow expected a change, a **transformation of the world**. Here now is the central act of transformation that alone can truly renew the world: violence is transformed into love, and death into life.
 - Since this act transmutes death into love, death as such is already conquered from within, the Resurrection is already present in it. Death is, so to speak, mortally wounded, so that it can no longer have the last word.
 - To use an image well known to us today, this is like inducing nuclear fission in the very heart of being - the victory of love over hatred, the victory of love over death. Only this intimate explosion of good conquering evil can then trigger off the series of transformations that little by little will change the world.
 - All other changes remain superficial and cannot save. For this reason we speak of redemption: what had to happen at the most intimate level has indeed happened, and we can enter into its dynamic. Jesus can distribute his Body, because he truly gives himself.
 - This first fundamental transformation of violence into love, of death into life, brings other changes in its wake. Bread and wine become his Body and Blood.
 - But it must not stop there; on the contrary, the process of transformation must now

gather momentum. The Body and Blood of Christ are given to us so that we ourselves will be transformed in our turn. We are to become the Body of Christ, his own Flesh and Blood.

- We all eat the one bread, and this means that we ourselves become one. In this way, adoration, as we said earlier, becomes union. God no longer simply stands before us as the One who is totally Other. He is within us, and we are in him. His dynamic enters into us and then seeks to spread outwards to others until it fills the world, so that his love can truly become the dominant measure of the world.
 - I like to illustrate this new step urged upon us by the Last Supper by drawing out the different nuances of the word "**adoration**" in Greek and in Latin. **The Greek word is *proskynesis*.** It refers to the gesture of submission, the recognition of God as our true measure, supplying the norm that we choose to follow. It means that freedom is not simply about enjoying life in total autonomy, but rather about living by the measure of truth and goodness, so that we ourselves can become true and good. This gesture is necessary even if initially our yearning for freedom makes us inclined to resist it.
 - We can only fully accept it when we take the second step that the Last Supper proposes to us. **The Latin word for adoration is *ad-oratio* - mouth to mouth contact, a kiss, an embrace, and hence, ultimately love. Submission becomes union, because he to whom we submit is Love.** In this way submission acquires a meaning, because it does not impose anything on us from the outside, but liberates us deep within.
 - Jesus' hour seeks to become our own hour and will indeed become so if we allow ourselves, through the celebration of the Eucharist, to be drawn into that process of transformation that the Lord intends to bring about. The Eucharist must become the centre of our lives.
 - (God is With Us) B16 loves to quote Deut 4:7, which is fundamentally about the joy and holy pride the Jews have in the law as a gift from God. He applies it *a fortiori* to the gift of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist: **"What great nation is there, that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us?" Let us beseech the Lord to reawaken in us the joy at his presence and that we may once more adore him. Without adoration, there is no transformation of the world."**
- The Reform of the Church, the Missionary Metamorphosis of Christ's Body that is meant to change the world begins with the transformation that occurs in what we're doing right now.