



TYPES OF PRAYER IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

PART 3 OF 4

Many people in parishes and throughout the universal church call the prayer time before the Blessed Sacrament “adoration.” Why? Perhaps because it begins with an *a*, perhaps because this is a worthy form of prayer or perhaps because this style of prayer was very popular through the history of the church. However, as most who pray will say, adoration is only one of the many forms of prayer. There are many types of prayer expressed in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is either *exposed*, with the Blessed Sacrament placed in a monstrance, or *not exposed*, before a tabernacle in a Blessed Sacrament chapel. This article will examine other prayer forms and styles and suggest that one must not limit the naming of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament as “adoration” since many prayers are offered and not all are in adoration.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard, SSS (1811–1856) was the founder of the Congregations of the Blessed Sacrament (both men’s and women’s communities). When Pope John XXIII canonized Saint Peter Julian at the end of the first session of the Second Vatican Council, he named Saint Eymard “the apostle of the Eucharist.” During Eymard’s preaching on the Eucharist and his special homilies at “40 hour devotions,” he stated that every prayer time in the presence of the Eucharist should include four types or styles of prayer. These types of prayer flow from the Mass, or the Eucharist, since these were styles also used during this liturgy. Our prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament flows from the Mass and is a continuation of the “great thanksgiving,” Eucharist, the gift of Christ. Let us look briefly at these four ways of praying before the Blessed Sacrament that Saint Peter Julian described. He used an anagram ARTE, that stood for *Adveniat Regnum Tuum Eucharisticum*, “For thy Eucharistic Kingdom Come.”

Adoration. We come to pray and adore the Lord for his presence among us. We marvel at his life-giving presence and acknowledge the gift that has been freely given to us. The Eucharist is God’s

gift of self, the entire Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—made manifest in the presence of bread and, in some places where special permission has been granted, wine. This holy sacred bread, Christ’s body, is so rich and meaningful. We cannot help but be in awe and adore it with reverence. During the Mass, we join the angels and saints in saying “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Deepening this prayer after Mass allows us to recognize the importance of Christ among us.

Reparation. We come to pray and ask God to forgive us our faults and sins. We spend time asking pardon and peace. We realize that we are on a journey of faith and have at times missed the mark. Knowing God is present and in our midst, we ask for forgiveness and guidance for making reparation for our sins (penance) and better serving God and the community of faith. During the Mass, there is a brief moment in the Act of Penitence and within the eucharistic prayer that recognizes our need for forgiveness. Prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament allows us to spend more time examining our conscience.

Thanksgiving. We come to pray and to express gratitude to God for his many gifts and blessings in our lives. Not just at seasonal times of the year, like November and December, but at each Mass or Eucharist, we give thanks to God. Eucharist is derived from a Greek word meaning “thanksgiving.” Prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament extends our thanksgiving expressed at Mass. In fact, in the rubrics for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, one of the main reasons for continuing this prayer and liturgical ritual is to prolong our thanksgiving. Most of us are unable to stay or spend more time in prayer or thanksgiving after Mass because of our work schedule or other commitments, yet one of the main purposes of prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is to continue to express our gratefulness for God’s gift to us, manifested in the Eucharist. The Eucharist, as thanksgiving, reminds us of our need to be a people who express and give witness to our blessedness. Spending time with this focus of prayer allows us to acknowledge God’s goodness in our lives and the world.

Educational OPPORTUNITIES

National Association of Pastoral Musicians Regional Conventions

Stamford, Connecticut, June 27–30; Grand Rapids, Michigan, July 18–21; and Sacramento, California, August 1–4. For more information about NPM conventions and its other educational opportunities, visit the NPM Web site at npm.org.

Liturgical Music Conference: St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota

Rites and Ritual Music: The Music, Liturgy, & Theology of Baptism, Wedding, Funeral, RCIA Rites, June 26-30. For more information, visit the music department's Web site, csbsju.edu/music/litmusic.htm.

34th Annual Liturgy Conference: University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana

Liturgy and Spirituality, June 19-21. For more information, visit the Center for Liturgy Web site at liturgy.nd.edu/conference/2006spirituality.shtml.

Georgetown Center for Liturgy: Washington, DC

Leading from the Heart: A Long Distance Learning Program for Presiders and Preachers (ongoing). For more information, visit the Center's Web site at georgetown.edu/centers/gcl/index.htm.

2006 Institutes of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate

The Forum provides several institutes throughout the year. For more information, visit the Forum's Web site at naforum.org.

Entreaty. We come to pray and petition God for the needs in our lives and in the world. Perhaps we are best at saying to God our needs and desires. Youth spend time before a test or assignment asking God for help. Adults, prior to a job interview, request divine intervention. We pray for healing and an end to wars, famine and other afflictions that we, as the church, suffer throughout the world. Spending time before the Blessed Sacrament in this form of prayer offers us the opportunity to place our requests and needs before a God who is already aware of our concerns. We place before God our requests, knowing that God has stated through sacred Scripture, "ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find" (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9).

Other ways of praying before our Lord could be described, but these four, codified by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, provide a guide for spending our hour in prayer in the presence of the sacrament. Praying in this style and with eucharistic passages from sacred Scripture or with images from the world (such as photographs of people we remember in our prayer) provides varying opportunities to witness and demonstrate our love to the God who has loved us into being. Through our adoration, penance, thanksgiving and petitions, we demonstrate an examination of our conscience and expand our prayer experience. Our vocation and baptism mandate calls us, as Christians, to share our faith and to be people of prayer. Let our prayer before the Blessed Sacrament challenge us to be people who live our lives reflectively, gratefully, and for God and one another. Then we will live and be the Eucharist and take it to the world to serve God and one another.

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Blessed Sacrament Father John Thomas Lane is pastor of the Roman Catholic community of Saint Charles, Albuquerque, New Mexico. He is a frequent speaker, writer, liturgical and vocation - al consultant, and the Webmaster for blessedsacrament.com.