

## **‘I love Him and He loves me’**

*The following is an edited version of a column in the October 2006 issue of **In Stephen’s Footsteps**, a newsletter published by the Office of the Diaconate.*

The chapel was small, with no more than 12 seats. The altar was prominent, standing on a platform just a few inches above the floor. The Tabernacle, small and mounted in a corner, was still the focus of attention for any visitor coming into the sacred space.

Entering, I genuflected, rose and closed my eyes.

With no thought, nor effort, I stood in majestic Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris; I was in my parish church, familiar surroundings; I was in a retreat house chapel, waiting on the Lord’s word to me.

I found myself in a fieldstone rural church, kneeling in multicolored rays of sunlight, incensed by the wooden pews and bare planks of the well-walked floor. I stood in the inner-city church, a refuge from what seems like a world gone mad. Alone it seemed, I found myself before my Eucharistic Lord in a mission church with no glass windows but iron grating to admit a refreshing breeze.

It was the city church where I served as an altar boy, the suburban church where we were married, the churches where our children were baptized. It was St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City, our own Cathedral of the Assumption in Trenton, the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. It was the Chapel of the Assumption in the diocesan Pastoral Center.

It doesn’t matter where I was; our Eucharistic Lord was there. It was the same Jesus, really, truly present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in the Tabernacle, our Bread of Life. Praise and thank God for the wonderful gift of the Eucharist, the one Bread which at once signals our unity and makes it. It is the ever-present gift of our loving Savior, ever-living, ever-loving in His Church.

It is said that St. John Marie Vianney, the humble Cure of Ars, patron of parish priests, had observed in his parish church an elderly gentleman who remained day after day a long time after morning Mass. He just sat quietly, gazing at the Tabernacle.

After some time, the saintly cure approached him and asked what he was doing. “I’m just looking at my Lord in the Tabernacle,” said the man. “I look at Him, he looks at me. I love Him and He loves me.”

In a 1959 encyclical on St. John Vianney, (*Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia*), Pope (now Saint) John XXIII quoted the words of the saintly French priest: “You do not need many words when you pray. We believe on faith that the good and gracious God is there in the Tabernacle; we open our souls to Him; and feel happy that He allows us to come before Him; this is the best way to pray.”

These are words of wise and holy counsel urging us to lives of sanctity. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus draw us to Himself in the Holy Eucharist, and may we always be models of respect and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in our lives and all our actions.

“May the Heart of Jesus, in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, be praised, adored and loved, with grateful affection, at every moment, in all the Tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. Amen.” (*The Divine Praises*)