

The Eucharist: Catholic Beliefs and Practices
The fifth in a series of teachings on the Eucharist

I recently dedicated the new adoration chapel in Billings, located on the campus of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish. It is dedicated solely for the purpose of adoring Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. When we worship God at the Mass, we express our belief that



God is present in the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine. It is not an accidental, but a substantial presence. From the Mass, we are sent forth as a Eucharistic people and to carry Christ with us and in us in the whole of our lives. All we do is meant to be an act of worship of God. As people of faith, we do not separate the practice of faith only to certain times during the week. The dismissal from Mass reminds us that we are to reflect Who we have received in the Eucharist. Sadly, many in

our world, and even in the Catholic Church, have a poor understanding about Who is present in the Eucharistic species. It is a key reason why adoration is an important practice for us and why adoration has been promoted by Pope's St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis. To adore Christ in the Eucharistic is a special way to perpetuate the Mass and grow in understanding of the mystery of salvation through Christ.

When the Lord instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, he wanted to perpetuate His actual presence to us in a physical way. After His Ascension to the right hand of His heavenly Father, he would not have been substantially present to us had He not instituted the Eucharist. The practice of adoring Christ in the Blessed Sacrament has a long history in the Church. Dr. Lawrence Feingold, Associate Professor Theology and Philosophy puts it this way:

Since the Son of God became man for us and has devised a marvelous way to remain with us in the Eucharist in the substantial presence of His humanity, it follows that adoration of and intimate encounter with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is not an afterthought, but rather an essential aspect of the Eucharist. As Israel adored the special presence of God in the Ark of the Covenant and in the Holy of Holies in the Temple, how could the Church not fittingly adore the substantial presence of Christ, who makes Himself present with much greater generosity in every tabernacle?