

DAILY EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

Brother Charles experienced the Eucharist as the 'treasure' of the presence of Jesus and the center of his life. As priests, we also have come to experience the Paschal Mystery of Jesus as the rhythm and pulse of our own lives and ministry.

While this is predominantly experienced while presiding over the celebration of the Eucharist, the prayer of Christ's Risen Body, and while ministering to God's people, the fraternity also invites us to rest in His Mysterious Presence in a quiet and contemplative way of Adoration.

For Brother Charles the central Mystery of the Eucharist was uncomplicated and profound: Jesus handing over His life for His people. This unrepeatable self-offering is powerfully and symbolically entered into and imitated in another simple way by our silent presence to Jesus.

As Rene Voillaume describes this reality: "To live by the Eucharist means handing oneself over to people, and becoming for them out of love and out of Eucharistic contemplation, food that is worth eating." Some groups also choose to celebrate the Eucharist together as part of their day.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

The Fraternity Life stresses contemplative prayer and time devoted exclusively to it. The life of Fraternity, while not denying other forms of prayer or ruling them out *a priori*, points in the direction of a prolonged period of an hour each day spent in this type of prayer. As mentioned earlier, this prayer of adoration would be spent in the Eucharistic presence. de Foucauld would describe it as "that state in which the soul looks wordlessly on God, solely occupied with contemplating Him, telling Him with looks that it loves Him, while uttering no words, even in thought." For Brother Charles it was the experience of love, waiting on and with Jesus. "I live at the feet of my God, pouring out my heart in love of Him, telling Him I love Him, while He tells me I shall never love Him as much as He loves me, however great my love would be. They are hours of incomparable happiness." Members of Fraternity find themselves praying for this grace, allowing themselves to be drawn back to the Mystery of Eucharist celebrated in community, now nourishing them in the silence with Jesus given for us.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

This prayer primarily is an act of love for Jesus. In the presence of Jesus we need to realize the

authenticity of our ministry as we struggle with balancing our prayer and action. Above all we need a personal relationship with Jesus loved for His own sake.

This prayer time will not come easily or immediately to most priests. Often we did not learn to pray in the seminary and we have not prayed very much since. The main struggle in our prayer may well be making ourselves available to Jesus in the Eucharist without any sense of warmth or intimacy at all, "wasting time with Jesus." Perhaps this is the greatest gift we have to give to the Lord in these days.

WHAT IT TAKES

Perseverance has always marked prayer in all circumstances, waiting on Jesus even in the midst of anxiety and darkness. It requires faith and personal love for Jesus in order to pray, as well as a willingness to let Him take a look at our lives. It takes courage to say "no" to an activity or nervous drives. First we must come to a conviction about the need for this prayer in our lives.

The focus of this prayer time is not on "getting in the hour", nor is it even postulating the necessity of making formal prayer the center of our lives. Many priests today seem to find Christ more easily in their parish and in their ministry than in prolonged periods of reflection and prayer. If we develop a fixation about the "requirement" of an hour of adoration, we will become discouraged by the effort required or will react to the observance expected. Much more is at stake than being faithful to a rigid prayer schedule. It is a question of a living faith in Jesus that is difficult (though not impossible) to find by any other means. Because we are imperfect, it is almost impossible for us to live in the spirit of Adoration, seeking and seeing Jesus in what we do, unless we set special time aside for prayer in a daily, weekly, and monthly rhythm. We do need a prolonged time just to calm down and to be open to the Lord, to meet Jesus on personal terms.

We believe that Christ is present to the whole of our lives, in the world around us, in the people with whom we live and work. We know when we are truly present to others, that we likewise encounter Jesus. Yet, this Jesus-in-life we often miss. Prayer and contemplation are needed even to focus our hearts and minds to see Christ revealing and giving Himself to us in the rest of our life. This prayer also helps us detect the obstacles in ourselves which make us hesitate to give ourselves to Christ.

HOW PRIEST FRIENDS WILL HELP

The Fraternity can be of great help in sustaining this practice. We are able to reflect upon our self-deception or excuses, assisting us to see that such prolonged daily prayer is possible for a priest who really desires it. We might explore with our brothers what might be a rhythm of prayer that can be sustained...

An Overview of Spirituality and Method, (Fifth Edition, April 1987), sometimes called the 'American Experience'

When I Pray it is God who does the Work

Priests who belong to the Fraternity freely commit themselves to a pool of time spent with God daily. Being human, I need the discipline, however voluntarily accepted. People ask, 'But what do you do during the time you spend in church?' And the answer is deceptive, because it's 'Nothing much.' Mentally, the beginning of the hour (I attempt an hour) is like diving into a swimming-pool. It's saying 'Yes' to spending the time, recognizing that Jesus is present to me and I to him. Just as swimming is different from walking because it's done in a new element, so prayer involves a letting-go, a dampening-down of the verbalizing, logical processes of my brain, a new way of being. And I cannot do this at once - it takes a few minutes for the sediment of ordinary anxieties and preoccupations to begin, even, to settle. On some days the sediment will not settle at all, and I shall spend all my time hauling my attention back to God like a child with an unruly balloon. It really does not matter, because - and this is a truth it took me years to learn - when I pray it is God who does the work, not I. Whether I have nice thoughts, or distracting thoughts, or no thoughts at all, is of secondary importance. If in good faith I have carved out a slice of time exclusively for him, then he will use it. It depends on the circumstances. Some-times I can spend the time quite still, before the Blessed Sacrament. Some early mornings or late evenings I use the closed church as a walking circuit, and the prayer adopts the rhythm of my steps. Either way, there's a predictable pattern. A downward slope into prayer; then a level time, when I can deliberately concentrate on God's reality and closeness in a kind of interface, simply admitting that he's there, owning this colossal fact.

Tony Philpot, Brothers in Christ, p.23



PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you.
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only Your will be done in me and in all
your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands, I commend my soul;
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give
myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without
reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for You are my Father.

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Jesus Calls:

"Behold I have prepared my banquet, everything is ready, come to the feast!" Mt 22:4

Brother Charles' Response:

How the infinite grace of the Holy Eucharist must make us love a God who is so good, so close to us, so totally with us and in us; how the grace of the Eucharist must make us love the beauty and supreme perfection of the one who gives himself to us, who comes inside us! ... How the Holy Eucharist must make us kind and good toward all mankind!

de Foucauld TO THE SMALLEST OF MY BROTHERS
P. 93

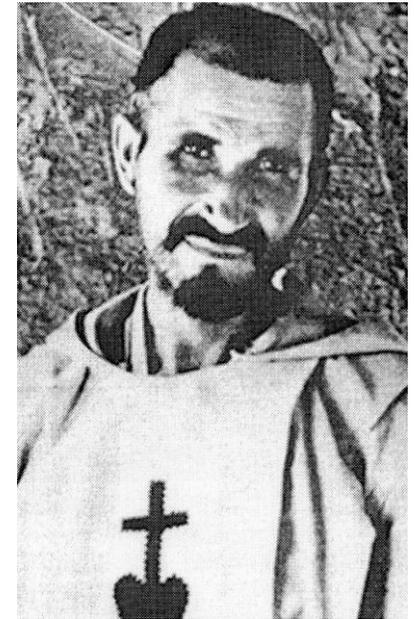
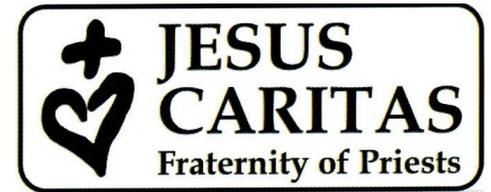
My Response

Jesus is present in Eucharist under the infinitely humble form of bread and wine. He does nothing to impose himself upon me or seduce me. He waits for me to make the first move, rely with confidence in His word upon which I rely totally. The impressive silence of the Eucharist, living off His life, I bring this humble and silent presence to my brothers. The tone of my witness as well as the intensity of my fraternal charity stems from the Eucharist.

Lafon, FIFTEEN DAYS WITH CHARLES DE FOUCAULD,
P. 76

HOW IS IT DONE IN PRACTICE?

Generally each priest chooses the time and place for his own hour of adoration. The Blessed Sacrament does not have to be exposed. It is generally done solo, although in churches that have eucharistic adoration it could be done as a group. Some of the time may be spent in the Liturgy of the Hours, spiritual reading or praying the scriptures.



Eucharistic Adoration