

Reverence for the Lord's Presence

Corpus Christi (Year C)

June 23, 2019

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In the Hindu tradition, whenever two people meet, they fold their hands and bow to each other. They do this as a sign of reverence towards the mystery of the other person that they are standing before. As people living in the secular western world, we may find this practice odd. Yet, I think we can learn a lot from the Hindus about reverence.

This weekend is *Corpus Christi* Sunday, the second Sunday after Pentecost in which we honor the Body and Blood of Christ in a special way. The Church has always asked us to show reverence toward the Eucharist. Currently, just like the Hindu practice, the bishops have asked us to bow in reverence right before receiving the holy Eucharist. This is just one small gesture in comparison with traditional Catholicism.

One of the strengths of traditional Catholicism was its ability to instill a deep sense of reverence before the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Recall some of the old practices: receiving communion while kneeling, only the priest touching and handling the Eucharist, purifying the sacred vessels with care and then in a special sink known as the *sacrarium*, keeping silent while in the presence of the tabernacle, refraining from receiving communion if in a state of sin, and fasting from midnight the night before attending mass and presenting oneself for holy communion. While we don't have to do most of those things anymore, there was something healthy behind all of it. Reverence goes a long way in helping us be more aware of the mysterious nature of life.

One modern day example of someone who showed great reverence for the Eucharist was Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Even after many people in the church adopted a more informal and casual approach to Jesus, she continued to be extremely devout in honoring the Body and Blood of Christ. In the rule of life for the Missionaries of Charity, she specified, “the sisters should use every means to learn and increase in that tender love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.” The Blessed Sacrament was to be the center of their lives.

There is a story that when Mother Teresa had to spend some time in the hospital for an illness, someone would bring a little wooden box into her room each day. Her doctors thought it was strange how she would just sit in her bed and stare at that box. As it turns out, that box was a portable tabernacle and inside the box was the sacrament of the Body of Christ. She needed to reverence that little host every day without exception in order to have the strength to live out her faith. In fact, I would argue that because she was able to reverence the Body of Christ everyday, she was then able to reverence the poorest of the poor.

We need reverence in our lives to remind us of the mysterious nature of life.

What, if anything, do I show reverence towards in my life?

To revere nothing is to be entirely secularized. As religious people, we are the ones who should constantly remind the world of the mysterious dimension of life. Let us start by bowing in reverence before the great mystery of *Corpus Christi*, the Body and Blood of Christ.