

The Assault on Eucharistic Adoration

By Jim Seghers

"My dear Braintwister,

Here are two reasons why the Eucharist is such a danger to us, in addition to the obvious ones. First it teaches them to walk by faith, not by sight. They can't see the Enemy's Son there, so they have to believe it on the authority of the Church--another idea too deadly for us to endure. There are awful things around them all the time: the Enemy, and His Son, and His Spirit, and the saints and the angels. We must persuade them to reduce Reality to Appearance. Once they begin to do that with the Eucharist, the door is open to doing the same with those other awful things.

Second, we've been making subjectivists out of them for centuries now, but the Eucharist stands in our way, for it teaches them to worship the real, objective Presence. It turns them outward. We need to turn them inward, give them ingrown eyeballs, confuse faith with feeling, objective fact with subjective interpretation. We've popularized slyly subjective slogan words like 'nuancing' and 'contextualizing' and 'contemporary hermeneutics' because they'll fall for almost any four-syllable fudge-words if only they come from theologians.

*Your affectionate uncle,
Snakebite"¹*

Introduction.

The belief in the real physical Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist is as old as the Catholic Church because it was taught by Jesus and transmitted by the apostles to the apostolic Church and to their successors.

The highly respected Protestant scholar, J.N.D. Kelly, affirms the universal belief of the early Church in this doctrine. "In the third century the early Christian identification of the eucharistic bread and wine with the Lord's body and blood continued unchanged, although a difference of approach can be detected in East and West. ... It should be understood at the outset, [Eucharistic teaching] was in general unquestioningly realist, i.e. the consecrated bread and wine were taken to be, and were treated and designated as, the Savior's body and blood."² Indeed, belief in the Eucharist was so firm in the early church that it was never a subject of widespread dispute. The first clear-cut denial of Jesus' real, physical presence in the Eucharist came from Berengarius, the archdeacon of Tours in the eleventh century.

The Benedictine Pope Gregory VII considered Berengarius' denial of the real physical presence of Jesus under the species of bread and wine so serious that he ordered Berengarius to sign a retraction, which was a profession of belief in the Real Presence. This statement, cited below, is the first definitive statement by the Church's Magisterium "of what had always been believed and never seriously

¹ Peter Kreeft, *The Snakebite Letters: Devilishly Devious Secrets for Subverting Society as Taught in Tempter's Training School*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, c. 1991, pp. 57-58. This wonderful little book is written after the genre of C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters: A Devil's Diabolical Advice for the Capturing of the Human Heart*. It is well worth reading.

² *Early Christian Doctrines*, San Francisco: Harper, c. 1979, pp.221 & 440. Fr. James T. O'Connor's excellent *The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist*, pp. 1-82 gives an excellent treatment of early patristic literature regarding the Eucharist. Also highly recommended is Robert A. Sungenis' superb work *Not By Bread Alone: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for the Eucharistic Sacrifice*, Santa Barbara: Queenship Publishing, c. 2000.

challenged."³ Almost ten centuries later, Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* will quote Pope Gregory's teaching on the Eucharist verbatim.

"I, Berengarius, believe interiorly and profess publicly that the bread and wine, which are placed on the altar, through the mystery of the sacred prayer and the words of our Redeemer, are substantially changed [*substantialiter converti*—this is the first time these words appear in a Church document] into the true, proper and life-giving flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. After the consecration, it is the true body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin, and which hung on the cross as an offering for the salvation of the world, and which sits at the right hand of the Father. And it is the true blood of Christ, which was poured forth from His side. And Christ is present not merely by virtue of the sign and power of the sacrament but in His proper nature and true substance as is set down in this summary and as I read it and you understand it. This I believe, and I will not teach anymore against this faith. So, help me God and this holy Gospel of God."

Devotion to the Blessed Eucharist reserved in the tabernacle flourished following this brief controversy caused by Berengarius. The feast of Corpus Christi (Body of Christ), which was established by Pope Urban IV in the 13th century was a natural development of the belief in the Real Presence that extended to the words of Jesus. Pope Urban IV commissioned Thomas Aquinas to compose the Liturgy of the Hours for the feast of Corpus Christi, which is celebrated on the Thursday following Trinity Sunday. Three hymns that Aquinas composed "are among the most beautiful in the Catholic liturgy. They express the unchangeable faith of the Church in the abiding Presence of her Founder on earth. They also explain why the faithful adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. ... They are best known by each of their last two verses, which have become part of the treasure of Catholic hymnology."⁴

O Salutaris Hostia sings of the Saving Victim who's death opened wide the gates of heaven to sinful men. *Tantum Ergo Sacramentum* adores the Word made flesh who is hidden from our senses. *Panis Angelicus* praises the Bread of Angels by which the Lord of Lords becomes the life giving food for the poor and lowly.

This doctrine of the real, physical Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist was seriously challenged during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century. Zwingli and Calvin, unlike Luther, denied the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. They taught that the Eucharist was a mere symbol. Many contemporary Protestants have never seriously considered the biblical and patristic basis for the belief of Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist. When they do they are powerfully drawn to the Catholic Church.

The debates over the meaning of the Eucharist during the Reformation led the Council of Trent to formulate the following decrees.

1. "If anyone denies that the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, but says that Christ is present in the Sacrament only as in a sign or figure, or by his power: let him be anathema" (Canon 1).
2. "If anyone says that the substance of bread and wine remains in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and denies that wonderful and extraordinary change of the whole substance of the bread into Christ's body and the whole substance of the wine into his blood while only the species of bread and wine remain, a change

³ Fr. John A. Hardon, S. J. "The History of Eucharistic Adoration: Development of Doctrine in the Catholic Church," p. 4. This excellent 21-page essay can be found on the EWTN web page at www.ewtn.com/library/HOMELIBR/HISTOREA.TXT.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

which the Catholic Church has most fittingly called transubstantiation: let him be anathema" (Canon 2).

3. "If any one denies that in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist the whole Christ is contained under each species and under each and every portion of either species when it is divided up: let him be anathema" (Canon 3).
4. "If anyone says that after the consecration the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are not present in the marvelous sacrament of the Eucharist, but are present only in the use of the sacrament while it is being received, and not before or after, and that the true body of the Lord does not remain in the consecrated hosts or particles that are kept or are left over after Communion: let him be anathema" (Canon 4).

In 1592 Pope Clement VIII instituted Forty-Hours devotion as an uninterrupted time of public adoration of the Blessed Eucharist. The rite of Forty-Hours is not the first example of public adoration of the Eucharist. Some scholars "trace the first beginnings of perpetual adoration to the late 4th century, when converts to the faith in some dioceses were to adore the Blessed Sacrament exposed for eight days after their baptism. It is certain, however, that even before the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi [13th century], not only religious in convents and monasteries but the laity practiced Eucharistic adoration."⁵ King Louis VII of France asked the bishop of Avignon to have the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the chapel of the Holy Cross on September 14, 1226 to thank Jesus for his victory over the Albigenses. The multitude of adorers was so great that the bishop ordered that adoration continue day and night. The Holy See subsequently approved this admirable practice. It continued unabated until the French revolution in 1792, then resumed in 1829. Other examples of Eucharistic adoration abound. For example, the "Benedictines of the Perpetual Adoration of the blessed Sacrament in Austria (1654), took a solemn vow of perpetual adoration."⁶

In the 19th century a number of Apostolic religious Institutes and Perpetual Adoration Associations were founded with the approval of the Holy See. Prayer before the Blessed Eucharist figured prominently in the spirituality of the martyrs, St. Thomas á Becket (1118-1170), St. John Fisher (1469-1535) and St. Thomas More (1478-1535). The great missionary St. Francis Xavier (1506-1553) would spend the night in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament after preaching and baptizing all day. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi (1566-1607), a Carmelite nun, became an apostle of prayer before the Eucharist. St. Margaret Mary (1647-1680) found her strength in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), the parting saint of confessors, wrote a book on visits to the Blessed Eucharist. St. John Vianney, the Cure d'Ars (1786-1859), had a particular love and devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist.⁷

Modern Magisterial Teachings.

Pope Leo XIII praised those who practiced nocturnal adoration of the Blessed Eucharist. St. Pius X devotion to the Eucharist was foundational to his promotion of early and frequent reception of Holy Communion. Prior to his decree on frequent Communion he requested that the Eucharistic Congress be held in Rome. Popes Benedict XV and Pius XI continued the papal urging and support of adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist. Pope Pius XII masterful encyclical, *Mediator Dei* written in 1947, on the Sacred Liturgy became a blueprint for the Constitution of the Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council. Nine complete sections of *Mediator Dei* focus on adoration of the Sacred Eucharist. Pope John XXIII frequently urged priests to pray before the Blessed Sacrament.⁸

Pope Paul VI.

⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 13-17.

In the past forty years pernicious attacks on the belief of the Real Presence has come from within the Church. While the Second Vatican Council was still in secession, Pope Paul VI was warned that prominent theologians were preparing books that undermined the belief in the real bodily Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. To counter act this evil influence the Pope wrote the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* on September 3, 1965—the feast of St. Pius X.

The Holy Father warned against the exaggeration of the sacramental sign, as if this symbolism fully and completely exhausted the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. From the time of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), the Church has used the theological term *transubstantiation* to explain the change that occurs at the moment of consecration. The word transubstantiation means a change of substance. Its use began to appear in the tenth century, but the idea it conveyed is much older. The Eastern Fathers, before the sixth century, used the Greek term *metaousiosis*, "change of being," which conveys the same idea.

Transubstantiation means that at the moment the words of consecration are spoken, the substance or essence of the bread and wine are changed into the substance of the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. The accidents, which are the appearance of bread and wine, however, remain unchanged. *Accidents* are the nonessential, outward qualities or proprieties of a thing. For example, the appearance of water can change from a liquid, or to a solid in the form of ice, or to a gas when it changes into steam. However, in each of these three states the substance of water remains unchanged, only the accidents change.

In our every day experience a substantial change is usually accompanied by an accidental change. For example, in eating and digesting a banana, both the substance of the banana and its accidents are changed in the metabolic process into ones body. In the Eucharist, however, the accidents or appearance of bread and wine remain, but the substance of bread and wine are no longer there. It is the substance: body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. It is his real body and blood. It is Jesus!

In *Mysterium Fide* Pope Paul VI rejected two ideas that would be used to redefine transubstantiation. They were transignification and transfinalization. Transignification means a change of sign. Before the consecration the bread is a sign of physical food; after the consecration it becomes a sign of spiritual food. Transfinalization indicates a change of end or goal. Before the words of consecration the purpose of bread is to make one physically healthy by sustaining physical life; after the consecration its end is to sustain spiritual life.

Paul VI pointed out that transignification and transfinalization does occur at the moment of consecration, but only because there is a change in substance. "As a result of transubstantiation, the species of bread and wine undoubtedly take on a new meaning and a new finality, for they no longer remain ordinary bread and ordinary wine, but become the sign of something sacred, the sign of a spiritual food. However, the reason they take on this new significance and this new finality is simply because they contain a new 'reality' which we must justly term ontological. Not that there lies under those species what was already there before, but something quite different; and that not only because of the faith of the Church, but in objective reality, since after the change of the substance or nature of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, nothing remains of the bread and wine but the appearances, under which Christ, whole and entire, in His physical 'reality' is bodily present, although not in the same way that bodies are present in a given place."

Let us consider this mystery from another perspective. When the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became man, his divinity became hidden. Only his humanity was visible. In the Sacred Eucharist both Jesus' humanity and his divinity are hidden. Who can understand so great a love?

The Holy Father explained that because the whole Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist he is properly worshipped. "Moreover the Catholic Church has held on to this faith in the presence in the Eucharist of

the Body and Blood of Christ, not only in her teaching but also in her practice, since she has at all times given to this great Sacrament the worship which is known as Latria and which may be given to God alone."

To add further clarity to his instruction Pope Paul VI pointed out that Christ is present in many ways: when the Church prays, when she performs works of mercy, in her struggle to reach eternal life, as she preaches, as she governs the People of God, as she offers the Sacrifice of the Mass, and as she administers the Sacraments. But there is yet another manner in which Christ is present in His Church, a manner which *surpasses all the others*; it is His presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist ... The reason is clear; it *contains Christ himself* and it is 'a kind of perfection of the spiritual life; in a way, it is the goal of all the sacraments' [Summa III, Q, 73, A. 3 C]."

Paul VI concluded his insightful encyclical with an exhortation to promote worship of the Eucharist. "In the course of the day the faithful should not omit to visit the Blessed Sacrament." He pointed out that "the Eucharist is reserved in the churches and oratories as in the spiritual center of a religious community or of a parish, yes, of the universal Church and of all of humanity, since beneath the appearance of the species, Christ is contained, the invisible Head of the Church, the Redeemer of the World, the Center of all hearts, 'by whom all things are and by whom we exist' [1 Cor 8:6]."

Three years after the publication of *Mysterium Fidei*, the Holy See promulgated the *Creed of the People of God* on June 30, 1968. It reaffirmed the teaching of *Mysterium Fidei*. "We believe that the Mass, which is celebrated by a priest acting *in persona Christi*, by the power received through the Sacrament of Orders, and which is offered by the priest in the name of Christ and of the members of his Mystical Body, is truly the sacrifice of Calvary that is made sacramentally present on our altars. We believe that the bread and wine consecrated by the Lord at his Last Supper were changed into his Body and Blood, which were to be offered for us on the Cross. Likewise the bread and wine consecrated by the priest are changed into the Body and blood of Christ, now gloriously seated in heaven. And we believe that the Presence of the Lord—hidden under the appearance of these realities, which continue to appear to our senses as they were before—is truly, really, and substantially present.

"Therefore in this Sacrament, Christ is not able to be present other than through a change of the whole substance of bread into his Body and a change of the whole substance of wine into his Blood, while the properties of bread and wine that appear to our senses remain intact. This hidden change is fittingly and properly called transubstantiation by the Church.

"Thus, if it is to be in harmony with Catholic Faith, any interpretation of theologians that seeks some understanding of this Mystery, must preserve the truth that, in the very nature of the things themselves, that is as separate from our mind, the bread and wine cease to exist after the Consecration. After the Consecration, under the sacramental species of bread and wine, there are present for our adoration the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus, just as he himself wished, so that he might offer himself to us as food and associate us in the unity of his Mystical Body. The one and individual existence of Christ the Lord, glorious in heaven, is not multiplied but is made present in this Sacrament in the various places throughout the world where the Eucharistic sacrifice is enacted. Moreover, the same existence remains present in the most Blessed Sacrament after the sacrifice has been celebrated. In the tabernacle on the altar this most holy Sacrament is the living heart of our churches. Because of this, we have the pleasant duty of offering honor and adoration in the Sacred Hosts upon which our eyes gaze to the Word Incarnate himself, when our eyes are not able to see and who has become present before us without leaving heaven."

The Attack of Modern Theologians.

The modern assault on the Eucharist was begun by the famous German, Catholic theologian Karl Rahner (1904-1984) in his book *New Theology* published in 1966, and in the *Encyclopedia of Theology* which he edited.

According to those who studied Karl Rahner like Fr. Regis Scanlon, Rahner was a Hegelian idealist. As a result he denied that the physical is real or that the physical aspects of a thing are part of its substance. Only the idea, the mental event, is real. Rahner believed that the physical aspect of a thing is merely the deficient, flawed mode of the idea. Thus, he rejected that the substance of a thing is its matter and form because the word substance has no real meaning to him.

Rahner used the word "transubstantiation," but redefined it with a meaning contrary to that of Trent. The word substance was used to convey the "meaning," or the "idea" of a thing only. Thus, the term transubstantiation was pillaged of its meaning. Therefore, according to Rahner's definition, only the idea or meaning of the bread and wine changes at the words of consecration, but not the bread and wine themselves.

These faulty ideas led to a further errors, namely, that the community effects the change at the moment of consecration not the priest, since it is the collective will or mind of the assembly that assigns the new meaning to the bread and wine. Another German theologian, Hans Küng, would subsequently make this connection and claim that the congregation effects Jesus' presence in the Eucharist, not the words of consecration uttered by the priest. Küng taught that it is the community offering the bread and wine, which creates the mindset that gives the Eucharist meaning.

Küng's ideas are similar to the position published in 1924 by excommunicated ex-Jesuit Alfred Loisy in his book *My Duel with the Vatican*. Loisy claimed that those who preside over the Eucharist became priests only when the Christian community made the Eucharist into a liturgical act. For Küng the Eucharist is merely a commemoration of thanksgiving because only the meaning is changed after the consecration, what once served a profane use now becomes a mere symbol of Christ who is now present - but not physically. Christ would be in the bread and in the wine, but only in the sense that they are symbols of Christ for the community that worships. Christ is not present as a physical reality.

Edward Schillebeeckx in his book *The Eucharist* published in 1968 expressed similar ideas. He stated that we don't adore the host, but Christ who the host symbolizes, because the host is only a symbol of the presence of Christ in the people. The Eucharist merely represents the presence of Jesus amid the community when the Mass begins. According to Schillebeeckx that presence becomes deeper and deeper as we come closer together as a people. "The Eucharist begins with a real presence and its aim is to make this presence more intimate. Indeed anyone who denies this concept is bound to misunderstand transubstantiation and make it too objective [This is exactly what the Catholic Church teaches]. The signs of the Eucharistic bread only imply a presence as an offer emanating from the Lord in his assembled community. ... What takes place in the Eucharist is a change of signs [transignification]."⁹

These theologians rejected Trent's infallible definition of transubstantiation. However, the First Vatican Council forbids the changing of the Church's meaning of a dogma. "If anyone shall have said that it is possible that to the dogmas declared by the church a meaning must sometimes be attributed according to the progress of science, different from that which the Church has understood and understands: let him be anathema." This idea is reaffirmed by Paul VI in *Mysterium Fidei*: "It is, in fact, the teaching of the First Vatican Council that 'the same signification (of sacred dogmas) is to be forever retained once our Holy Mother the Church has defined it, and under no pretext of deeper penetration may that meaning be weakened'."

Tragically after their publications these books by Rahner and Schillebeeckx became standard texts in the majority of the seminaries in the United States.

⁹ *The Eucharist*, p. 20.

American theologians soon followed the lead of Rahner, Küng and Schillebeeckx. For example, Tad W. Guzie taught at Marquette. In his 1974 book, *Jesus and the Eucharist*, transubstantiation was reduced to mere symbolism, and so was the Real Presence.

Monika Hellwig was a professor of theology at Georgetown. On July 1, 1996 she was named the director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities of the N.C.E.A. Hellwig is a leading radical feminist theologian whose agenda is "to smash the idols of Church and culture." In her book, *Understanding Catholicism* in 1981, p. 139 she stated the following. "It has generally been assumed that this [Jesus' words: "Take and eat, this is my body."] was intended to mean this bread is my body and that the task of interpretation was concerned with what is meant by equating the two. Scholars [like herself, of course], however, have suggested that it was *more probably* intended to mean that his [Jesus'] action of blessing, breaking, sharing and eating in such an assemblage in his name and memory was to be seen as an embodiment of the present spirit and power of Jesus *in the community*." Clearly, for Hellwig transubstantiation becomes changing the community into Jesus, not changing the bread and wine into Jesus.

On a more popular level Anthony J. Wilhelm's *Christ Among Us* was widely circulated. "When we say the bread and wine become Christ *we are not saying that the bread and wine are Christ*. Nor are we practicing some form of cannibalism [The Church has always rejected this notion] when we take this in communion. What we mean is that the bread and wine are *a sign of Christ's presence* here and now in a special way, *not in a mere physical way* as if *condensed into a wafer* [the Church never taught that Christ was condensed in a wafer.]. *Somehow* [he doesn't offer a clue] his presence has taken over the bread and wine so that for us who believe [in what?] it is no longer merely bread that is present but Christ himself"¹⁰

Wilhelm is a former Paulist priest. In April 1984, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, ordered Archbishops Gerety of Newark and Hunthausen of Seattle to withdraw their imprimatur. Archbishop Gerety, on Ratzinger's orders, told Paulist Press not to market or reprint Wilhelm's book. Unfortunately, almost two million copies sold! Ridiculing the Church's Magisterium, the November 16, 1984 issue of the radical *National Catholic Reporter*, recommended *Christ Among Us* under the heading "Books to Read Before the Burning."

The implications and consequences of these errors are grave. Catholics were taught that the Eucharist is not the true body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, but merely a sign of Jesus' presence in the community. It was claimed that adoration (*Latria*) of the Eucharist becomes pointless, even idolatrous. It was taught that kneeling during the Mass should be eliminated since Jesus is only present in the ministers, that is, the congregation. The priesthood (ordination) and the words of consecration become meaningless because it is the faith of the community that effects Christ's presence. Worship and liturgy becomes horizontal, that is, focused on the congregation, in which the special presence of Jesus resides and is effective. Ultimately, liturgy is reduced to the worship of oneself.

It also began to be taught that Eucharistic devotion, forty-hours, perpetual adoration, and the like should be discouraged. It was falsely claimed that these archaic practices represented a flawed, pre-Vatican II vertical devotion to a God above us rather than to the God within. For Example, "Fr. Michael Witczak, associate professor of liturgy and director of worship at Milwaukee's St. Francis Seminary, asserted at a workshop in Milwaukee (held from June 25th-28th, 1996) that some theologians contend that eucharistic adoration is 'too vertical,' that is, 'contercultural.' It is not right, he insisted, to spend time with God 'one-on-one.'"¹¹ This last sentence is so silly that it recalls the words of George Orwell: "Some ideas are so ridiculous that only intellectuals could hold them!"

¹⁰ Fifth edition, 1990, p. 216.

¹¹ *Wanderer*, September 25, 1997.

In catechetical material the symbolism of the Eucharist as a meal was emphasized while the Real Presence was downplayed or ignored. The result of the onslaught of erroneous teaching and inadequate catechesis was reflected in the *New York Times*/CBS Poll - Spring, 1994. The data reflected that 2 adult Catholics out of 3 believed the Eucharist is merely a symbol.

Pope John Paul II.

The exhortations of Pope Paul VI urging Eucharistic adoration reflected similar charges by his predecessors. However, under the urging of Pope John Paul II many dioceses and parishes have seen a genuine revitalization in Eucharistic adoration, especially in the form of perpetual adoration. John Paul II, perhaps more than any other Pope, is the Pope of the Real Presence. It is a message that he has repeated in numerous documents and addresses.

"The Eucharist, in the Mass and outside of the Mass, is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and is therefore deserving of the worship that is given to the living God, and to him alone."¹² In his profound encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* Pope John Paul II elaborated the three forms in which Jesus has instituted the Eucharist: as a Sacrifice-Sacrament, as a Communion-Sacrament, and as a Presence-Sacrament.¹³

In his apostolic letter *Dominicae Cenae* (1980) Pope John Paul II stated publicly: "The Church and the world have a great need of Eucharistic worship. Jesus waits for us in this Sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet him in adoration and in contemplation that is full of faith and ready to make reparation for the great faults and crimes of the world. May our adoration never cease."

In 1981 the Holy Father called on the Apostolate for Perpetual Adoration to join in the mission of establishing Perpetual Adoration Chapels in parishes throughout the world. He proclaimed that "the best, the surest, and the most effective way of establishing everlasting PEACE on the face of the earth is through the great power of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament."¹⁴

In 1984 while in Korea, Pope John Paul II stated that it was his ardent desire that Eucharistic chapels be set up in every parish in the world. Setting the example, the Holy Father erected a chapel of perpetual adoration in the Piazza Venezia in Rome at the request of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. He also instituted daily exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. Peter's Basilica. In 1991 the Pontifical Council for the Laity issued a decree establishing an international association of lay Catholics called the Association of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration.

In the celebration of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, Pope John Paul II declared that the year 2000 will be "intensely Eucharistic." An International Eucharistic Congress held in Rome in June 2000 highlighted this Eucharistic emphasis. He urged that the year 2000 be characterized by increased adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In his Message for the 37th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, May 14, 2000, Pope John Paul II declared: "The Eucharist [is] the source of all vocations and ministries in the Church . . . Each believer finds in the Eucharist not only the interpretative key of his or her own existence, but the courage to actualize it."¹⁵

In submission to the urging of Pope John Paul II, Eucharistic adoration is recharging many U. S. parishes. "Mary Ann Wirtz in Cleveland tells of cases of alcoholism overcome and marriages saved. Father Richard Talaska in Milwaukee points to increasing attendance at Mass and confession. Deacon James Stahlnecker in Staten Island, N.Y., speaks of the profound sense of peace people experience in the midst of busy

¹² Opening address in Ireland, Phoenix Park, September 29, 1979.

¹³ March 4, 1978, IV, 20.

¹⁴ Cited from the Apostolate for Perpetual Adoration web site: www.catholicity.com/grotto/padore/.

¹⁵ Text quoted from *Lay Witness*, May 2000, p. 52.

lives."¹⁶ This author has personally observed the powerful impact of Eucharistic adoration on three parishes: St. Peter in Covington, Louisiana, St. Margaret Mary in Slidell, Louisiana, and [St. Charles Borromeo in Picayune, Mississippi](#).

Objections to Eucharistic Adoration.

In spite of the teaching of the Church's Magisterium, the ardent urging of Pope John Paul II, and the transformation of those who participate in Eucharistic adoration, there are those in the Church who are opposed to this practice. It is understandable that some priests who were taught the twisted views of Rahner, Küng, Schillebeeckx, and others might lack the proper understanding of the Eucharist and its vital role in Christian piety and spiritual formation. As a result some priests may lack a deep personal piety centered on the love of the Hidden Jesus, even though they may intellectually recognize the Eucharist as the real Jesus.

Parenthetically, it is important for the laity to pray for our priests not criticize them. Our priests are greatly challenged by the danger of being overworked and underprayed. The success of their ministry has little to do with their natural gifts and everything to do with their relationship with Christ. Holy priests form holy parishioners and transform parishes. Just as we must grow spiritually, so must our priests. We need to express our love for them by supporting them with our prayers.

However ridiculous the criticisms of Eucharistic Adoration, it is important that they be addressed. Each of the most commonly voiced criticisms are listed followed by an appropriate response.

Eucharistic Adoration is no longer the mind of the Church because it is contrary to the spirit of Vatican II. This claim is utterly false. It demonstrates either deception or ignorance. There is not a single document that can be cited to support this counterfeit allegation. The opposite is true as this essay amply demonstrates.

Eucharistic reservation and adoration is a late adoration in Catholic piety that began in the 13th century which lost its connection to the Church's roots.

This statement shows a faulty knowledge of the history of Eucharistic devotion. Fr. Hardon's fine essay as well as the data presented here abundantly demonstrates that Eucharistic adoration is an authentic development of Catholic doctrine. He affirms that "as early as the Council of Nicea (325) we know that the Eucharist began to be reserved in the churches of monasteries and convents."¹⁷ Fr. Benedict J. Groeschel and James Monti in their co-authored book, *In the Presence of Our Lord: The History, Theology, and Psychology of Eucharistic Devotion*, devote the second part of this work citing the history of the devotion of the Church to the Blessed Eucharist.

Eucharistic adoration shows a failure to appreciate the Eucharist as a shared meal.

This objection exemplifies a superficial understanding of the Eucharist. Cardinal Ratzinger points out "the Eucharist that Christians celebrate really cannot adequately be described by the term 'meal'.¹⁸ In the Eucharist Jesus shares himself in order to transform us into himself. This is a reality much more profound than a "shared meal." In the words of Cardinal Ratzinger: "It has always been clear that the goal of the Eucharist is our own transformation, so that we become 'one body and spirit' with Christ (cf. 1 Cor 6:17)."¹⁹

¹⁶ "24 hr. Adoration is Recharging U.S. Parishes," *National Catholic Register* 3/7-11/1999.

¹⁷ Hardon, "History of Eucharistic Adoration," p. 3 www.ewtn.com/library/HOMELIBR/HISTOREA.TXT.

¹⁸ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, translated by John Saward, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, c. 2000, p. 78.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

This practice fosters a distorted piety that is too vertical.

This objection is absurd! How can one express too much honor, worship, and ardent love for Jesus. The Eucharist is the fundament of our love for others, not the other way around.

Private devotion before the Blessed Sacrament detracts from the appreciation of the Eucharistic celebration on Sunday because it fails to recognize Christ's presence in the assembly, in his word, in the minister, and in the sharing of the Eucharistic bread and cup.

This statement is seriously flawed because it fails to recognize that the real, physical presence of Jesus is the source of these lesser manners in which he is present. In the words of Pope Paul VI: "But there is yet another manner in which Christ is present in His Church, a manner which surpasses all the others; it is His presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist ... The reason is clear; it *contains Christ himself* and it is 'a kind of perfection of the spiritual life; in a way, it is the goal of all the sacraments' [*Summa III, Q, 73, A. 3 C*]."20

This objection also attempts to set up a false conflict between the appreciation of the Mass and private adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Those who engage in personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament are isolating themselves from the Mystical Body of Christ.

Our solidarity with one another becomes a reality only because we are united to Christ, our Head. Adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist strengthens our bond to Jesus and deepens our love for one another. This objection reveals a faulty understanding of the mystery of the Mystical Body of Christ.

Eucharistic adoration, outside of Mass, detracts from the preeminent importance of the Eucharist as both sacrifice and sacrament.

This objection reveals a flawed understanding of the mystery of the Eucharist. Pope John Paul II points out in [Redemptor Hominis](#), as we have discussed earlier, that there are three profound aspects to the Eucharist as sacrament: Sacrifice, Communion, and Presence. This question only considers the Eucharist as sacrifice and falsely places it in opposition to the Eucharist as Presence. It ignores altogether the aspect of Communion. One must consider each aspect of the Eucharist as a sacrament to avoid the kind of distortions of this awesome reality that is implied by this question.

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²⁰ *Mysterium Fidei.*