

ADORATION 101

Shepherd, Father and Friend

I've decided to take a brief detour this week from my series on Pope Benedict's Apostolic Exhortation on the Sacrament of Charity to give my own humble testimony of a certain man of God who took me under his wing as a newly born Catholic, gave me a chance and showed me what true Eucharistic devotion is.

Ever since our Lord healed me from a fatal addiction to alcohol, my heart was firmly set upon the very Heart of Christ. In time and with patience, our Lord, in His mercy, brought me out of Protestantism into the fullness of the faith by showing me the Heart of Christ within the Holy Eucharist. Call it love at first sight. There was always something missing within my Protestant years, and the very first time I went to Holy Mass I was downright raptured by the love of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist that I nearly collapsed!

I knew God was calling me to be a Catholic. After several failed attempts at contacting a priest about coming into the Church, I met with Fr. John Riccardo. After I told him my entire journey he asked me, "Do you know who Fr. Ben is?" I didn't. He then encouraged me to contact him and that Father would get me into the Church. Low-and-behold, Fr. Ben got back to me the very same day I emailed him! I went through RCIA and was confirmed in April of 2010!

Now, already having a deep devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus I soon discovered, unbeknownst to me, that St. Cyril's cultivated an atmosphere which encouraged devotion to the Sacred Heart and actively lived it out. In addition to First Friday Holy Masses, the treasure trove of "Catholicity" made what Fr. Ben helped build upon a true diamond in the rough! Any priest, I thought, who put forth this much effort and labor to ensure his flock had ample opportunities to deepen their love for Christ was at once someone who also understood the Heart of Christ. This is where I needed to be.

As the years past, I came to realize that my premonition was true. I saw and understood that Father had a heart for Christ, someone who truly trusted Him, and who was a living example for me and so many, as a beacon of joy and cheerfulness; an almost carefree childlike faith shown through him that was accompanied with conviction, firmness, and a love of Holy Mother Church. I saw someone who clearly knew the second greatest commandment to love thy neighbor, and who lived it. I saw someone whose first love was Jesus, and Jesus Eucharistic. I saw someone I wanted to emulate.

THANK YOU, Fr. Ben, for trusting Jesus, taking me in and believing in me. Thank you for your shining example of selfless love and patience. Thank you for being my first shepherd, priest and friend and most of all, thank you for always bringing me closer to the Heart to Jesus! – Paul A. Ray

HAPPY EASTER TO ALL!