

ADORATION 101

The Church and the Eucharist

In last week's article we learned about the relationship between the Eucharist and the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit. We move ahead in our studies on Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* this week and learn about the unique union between the Holy Eucharist and the Church.

The bond between the Church and the Eucharist cannot be stronger. They were both instituted and established one for the other. It was on Calvary, when the soldier pierced our Lord's side with a lance, and blood and water flowed, that the Church, the Bride of Christ, His mystical Body, was born. Just as God created Eve from the side of the sleeping Adam, He created His Church, the new Eve, from the side of His Son.

Now, the Eucharist makes present Christ's redeeming sacrifice on the cross. We need the Church in order to "make", as Pope Benedict says, the Eucharist which the Church draws her strength from. There is a striking interplay between, an exchange needed, a cooperation required, by both the Head and the Body to make this happen. The Church is able to celebrate and adore the mystery of Christ present in the Eucharist precisely and only because Christ *first* gave Himself to her in the sacrifice of the cross. "*The Church's ability to 'make' "*, Pope Emeritus Benedict exclaims, "*the Eucharist is completely rooted in Christ's self-gift to her.*" Christ loved us first and desires to continue to love us as He did His disciples, through the Holy Eucharist. For all eternity He remains the One who loved us first.

This leads us to our response as being grafted into the Body of Christ, the Church. The aforementioned description of the Church coming from Christ, Him having first loved us and creating It as a result of that love, the Eucharist thus has the power to establish and give organized existence to the Church, they are inseparable. Therefore, the Eucharist can be found at the root of the Church as being a mystery of communion among believers. Since the Church, in all its particular dioceses and individual parishes throughout the entire world, celebrates the one and same Eucharistic celebration (the Holy Mass), which makes present the true Body and Blood of Christ, our Lord preserves the unity (the Catholicity) of His people. This is precisely why the Church is called "Catholic." The Mass, the Eucharist, allows the faithful to be drawn into the open arms of her Lord and Savior. The Body of Christ derives its live-giving Body and Blood from It. Just like our own blood circulates through our body, so does the Blood of Christ circulate through the mystical Body of Christ, His Church, giving her life and unity. NEXT WEEK – The Eucharist and the Sacraments – Paul A. Ray