**Why do Catholics:**

**Practice Eucharistic Adoration?**

Jesus is with us at all times in the tabernacle, but He is hidden. Because humans understand the world through their senses, when we see Him in the monstrance, He becomes more tangible to us.

Eucharistic Adoration is a chance for us to be embraced by Love Himself within a sacred and silent space. But at its center, it’s an opportunity for us to deepen our relationship with Christ. As with anyone we spend time with, we get to know Him better. The more we get to know Him, the more we benefit from His love, wisdom, and grace. We demonstrate our love for Him by responding to His invitation and by making time to sit with him. It is an opportunity for us to grow in patience and humility. As John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn 3:30).

We know that Jesus sets the example as the perfect human and that he is always the same. However, each time that we participate in Adoration we have a different experience. Christ knows our minds, our needs, and our desires. He treats each of us as individuals with love and compassion. Even though He knows what is best for us, He loves us so much that He does not impose His will on us. He may give us insights and suggestions, but it is up to us whether we act upon them or not.

Because we are different, we experience our encounters with Him in different ways. Not only do we get to know Jesus better, we get to know ourselves better too. Sometimes he shines a gentle light on your soul. You might not always like what you see, but the purpose is not to indict you, but to point out a stain that might be limiting your relationship with Christ. It can be an excellent way to prepare for confession. Adoration can also help you find answers to your questions. Jesus tells us, “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Mt 7:7). This is not a guarantee that all your wishes will be granted. But if you ask Him with an open heart, you will get answers. They may not always be the ones you were hoping for but they will be the Truth.

Holy Hour is a form of Eucharistic adoration made in response to a revelation by Christ to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690). The focus of the hour should be on Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. In response to His question, "Couldst thou not watch one hour?" (Mk 14:37), we respond, "Yes, Lord, we are here with Thee." So we are not only there to benefit from His presence, but to also contemplate on His Agony in the Garden and offer him comfort during his time of suffering.

Some modern proponents of Eucharistic Adoration include St. John Paul II and Mother Theresa. John Paul II spoke of the unifying power of the Eucharist. He said, “The seeds of disunity, which daily experience shows to be so deeply rooted in humanity as a result of sin, are countered by the unifying power of the body of Christ. The Eucharist, precisely by building up the Church, creates human community.” Fr. Robert Barron shares this devotion. When asked in an interview with Catholic TV the single most important thing that priests could do to build up the Church, he answered, “The Blessed Sacrament Adoration…When you put the Eucharist in the very clear center of the parish, I think everything changes.”

Eucharistic Adoration is one of the greatest gifts of the Church. It is an opportunity to grow in Christ’s love, to grow in humility, to deepen our faith, and to receive His grace and wisdom. And as individuals grow in unity with Christ, that love expands and strengthens the unity of the entire Church.

**Fast before Communion?**

There are four requirements that must be fulfilled before we receive communion. We must be prepared, we must be in a state of grace, we must fast, and we must be in communion with the Church. Currently, we are required to fast for one hour before receiving communion. This is not an hour before mass, but an hour before receiving the host. According to the Catechism, fasting is “an expression of interior penance in imitation of the fast of Jesus for forty days in the desert.”

St. Paul says that, “Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself” (1Cor 11:27-29). Fasting is just one of the ways that we make ourselves more worthy to receive Christ on both a physical and spiritual level.

We have it easy. Until Pope Pius XII, the fast was from midnight the previous night. In 1953, Pope Pius reduced it to three hours. And after Vatican II, Pope Paul VI reduced the fast to one hour.

**Make that hand gesture before the reading of the Gospel?**

Leading up to the Gospel reading, the priest says to us, “A reading from the Gospel according to St. \_\_\_,” and we respond by saying, “Glory to you, Oh Lord.” As we say that, we make three little crosses with our thumb, one on our forehead, one on our lips, and one on our chest. This indicates that we receive the Gospel with our mind, our mouth, and our hearts.

“As early as the ninth century, the faithful were making the sign of the cross on their forehead and breast at the reading of the Gospel. Then, in the 11th century, we find the deacon and the faithful making the sign of the cross on the forehead, mouth, and breast after the words "A reading of the holy gospel . . ." (Jungmann, Mass of the Roman Rite).

Fr. Pollard added that it is straight from the instructions for the mass:

134. At the ambo, the priest opens the book and, with hands joined, says, Dominus vobiscum (The Lord be with you), and the people respond, Et cum spiritu tuo (And also with you). Then he says, Lectio sancti Evangelii (A reading from the holy Gospel), making the sign of the cross with his thumb on the book and on his forehead, mouth, and breast, which everyone else does as well. The people say the acclamation, Gloria tibi, Domine (Glory to you, Lord). The priest incenses the book, if incense is used (cf. nos. 276-277). Then he proclaims the Gospel and at the end says the acclamation, Verbum Domini (The Gospel of the Lord), to which all respond, Laus tibi, Christe (Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ). The priest kisses the book, saying quietly, Per evangelica dicta (May the words of the Gospel).

What struck me in doing this research is that not only do we receive the Gospel, but we are then to digest the Word, live it, and pass it on. As we read in Mark, “And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.’” (Mk 16:15) This hand gesture helps reinforce how we are supposed to integrate the Gospel in our own lives and to spread it to others. As we read in Matthew, “Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house”(Mt 5:15).

**Confess to a Priest?**

I think that this is a stumbling block for many people. They might think that they already have a direct relationship with God, and question or doubt the need for a “middleman.” But God is a lot smarter than we are. Karl Keating gives a great summary of why we confess to a priest in *What Catholics Really Believe*.

Jesus gave the apostles—and through succession, bishops and priests— the power to forgive sins. He said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (Jn 20:22-23).

Sin does not only affect the sinner. Keating uses the powerful image of the vine: Jesus is the vine and we are the branches (Jn 15:5). Whenever one branch is ill, it affects nearby branches as well. Keating said, “Since every sin is social in its effects—it affects every other Christian, even every other person—Christ established a social means for forgiveness.” We tell our sins to a priest, and he represents not only Jesus but the entire community of the Church.

**Worship Statues?**

The short answer is: They don’t. Catholics only worship the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Any other being—be it Our Lady, a saint, or an angel—we can honor them, ask for their intercession, and offer them gratitude. But we never worship them. Worship is for reserved for God alone.

We are commanded to avoid idolatry. But in Exodus, God gave explicit instructions to Moses for making the ark that included images of two cherubim made of gold. (Ex 25: 18-21).We may not understand why God was so specific with the design. But he did tell Moses to speak to the Israelites and tell them, “They are to make a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell in their midst.”

As we discussed earlier about learning through our senses, we have visual representations to help us better understand the world around us, especially when it comes to things that are invisible. As stated in the *Essential Catholic Survival Guide*, “Catholics use statues, paintings, and other artistic devices to recall the person or thing depicted.” They continued, “Catholics also use statues as teaching tools. In the early Church, they were especially useful for instruction of the illiterate.”

**Pray to Guardian Angels?**

Most of us know the children’s prayer:

Angel of God,

My Guardian dear,

To whom His love commits me here.

Ever this day be at my side,

To light and guard, to rule and guide.

According to the *Cathechism* which quotes St. Basil, “Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life.” In Psalm 91 we learn, “For he commands his angels with regard to you, to guard you wherever you go” (Ps 91: 10-12). In Matthew’s Gospel we hear Jesus say, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 18: 10).

Several saints were able to see their guardian angels. We pray to our guardian angel not as a form of worship, but to offer our gratitude to them in guiding and watching over us. There is a helpful description in the *New Catholic Answer Bible,* “Catholics ask the saints and angels for their help, then, for the same reason they ask Christians on earth to pray for them and assist them in other ways: It has pleased God to make us interdependent as members of Christ’s Body” (see 1 Cor 12:12-27).

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