

The Most Holy Eucharist Series

TREASURY OF GOD'S BLESSING FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS

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The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist gives us what we call "the grace of realization." Our Lord enlightens our minds and inspires our wills with the foundational grace of realizing His physical presence on earth and responding to this faith by coming to Him in the Holy Eucharist. Christ's Presence in the Blessed Sacrament is the fountain of graces, emanating from Him out to the whole world, radiating divine power and even working miracles for those who believe.

Now, we go on to explain how Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is a source of actual graces by granting the needs of those who appeal to His goodness. Then after seeing how the Blessed Sacrament provides for all we truly need, we will examine how the Real Presence is a treasury of God's love, in which He is ready to do wonders for others, provided we come to Him with trustful confidence.

SOURCE OF ACTUAL GRACES FOR OURSELVES

In order to appreciate the Real Presence as our source of actual graces, we should briefly explain what the Church means by "actual graces." An actual grace is a temporary supernatural intervention by God to enlighten the mind or strengthen the will to perform supernatural actions that lead to heaven. Actual grace is divine assistance which enables us to obtain, retain or grow in supernatural grace and the life of God. For the sake of completeness, we should add that in God's providence, He uses persons, places and things as instruments or channels of actual graces which enlighten and inspire us on our road to heaven. In God's providential plan, He wants everything in our lives to be a channel of grace.

One of the most authoritative documents explaining how to understand the Real Presence as a source of actual graces is the Encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII. In this document, he traces to the Church's earliest days the practice of adoring Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Unfortunately for Catholics today, books and journals dripping with error are telling them adoration of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist is a dispensable exercise. Many Catholics are being told the only reason the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle is to provide Holy Communion for those who are sick or unable to receive by coming personally to Church.

But the faith of the early Christians tells us of the rich history of Eucharistic adoration. In the first three hundred years of the Church's history, there could not even be any churches. "Churches" were all underground. The Blessed Sacrament was reserved to provide for those especially awaiting trial and possible execution for their Catholic faith. But this Jesus was always adored even after Mass and outside of Mass and tended to be the object of special veneration. Once we believe Jesus is really on earth in the Eucharist, we can easily understand how the Church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has uncovered the depths of what this means and the corresponding practices of piety.

Pope Pius XII also points out how the worship of our Lord in the Eucharist and begging for His grace is a witness to the development of doctrine in the Catholic Church. The following quotation is lengthy but its teaching is basic to our understanding of the Real Presence:

[The Eucharist] contains, as we all know, 'truly, really and substantially' the Body and Blood, together with the Soul and Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the Church, since her origin, has adored the Body of Christ under the species of bread. St. Augustine affirms, 'But no one eats the Flesh, unless he has first adored it,' adding that 'not only do we not sin by adoring, but that we do sin in not adoring.'

From these principles of doctrine was born and has developed, step by step, the worship of adoration of the Eucharist distinct from the Holy Sacrifice. This worship of adoration rests upon a valid and solid motive. For the Eucharist is both a sacrifice and a sacrament. It differs from the other sacraments because it not only produces grace, but it contains in a permanent way the very Author of grace.

The Church commands us to adore Christ hidden under the Eucharistic veils and ask Him for the supernatural and earthly gifts which we always need. (*Mediator Dei*, 129-131)

Notice what we are being told. We are told the Church **commands** us to adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and to ask Him for the gifts we always need. Another name for those gifts that come from God is actual grace. We are in constant need of actual graces for a number of reasons: to know God's will at every moment of the day, to know how God wants us to do His will every day, to be ready to do God's will once we know what He wants and to actually do God's will in every action we consciously perform.

Go through the Gospels and what do we find? We find person after person asking Jesus for whatever they needed, or actually, for whatever they wanted. Christ would respond favorably if He knew the person really needed what he or she was asking for. This faith in Christ's Real Presence on earth inspired them to adore Him, and they adored Him by begging Him to grant their requests but always implicitly, to grant what they **needed**.

So today, that is why Jesus Christ is on earth in the Holy Eucharist - that we may come to Him to tell Him that we love Him, to adore Him as our Incarnate God, to plead with Him to be merciful to us sinners, to pray that He grant us not what **we** want, but what **He** wants. In other words, to meet our needs. This is so important. One of the most necessary actual graces for which we should beg our Lord in the Eucharist is to enlighten our minds to distinguish between what we want and what we need. That is why I like the translation of the Beatitudes that says: "Happy are those who hunger and thirst for what is right." (Matthew 5:6)

TREASURY OF GOD'S BLESSINGS TO OTHERS

Finally, the Holy Eucharist as the Real Presence is meant to be a treasury of God's blessings to others; but we need to discover this treasury at our disposal if we are to obtain for others the immeasurable graces found in the Blessed Sacrament.

First, the power of the Real Presence to provide us with the graces we need personally does not stop with just ourselves. Christ now on earth in the Holy Eucharist wants us also to come to Him and entreat Him to bless others with His grace. As we read the Gospels, we may be astonished at how often people approached Jesus to ask Him to bless others. One of the most memorable events of this altruistic charity, (as opposed to selfish charity in which we love others only as long as and in so far as they love us), was the occasion of a Roman centurion. He came to Jesus asking Him to cure the centurion's servant who was at the point of death. Christ obliged and was on his way to the centurion's house when the centurion sent messages to Jesus to stop Him. They relayed the centurion's request: "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. But only say the word, and my servant will be healed" (Matthew 8:8). It is not coincidental that the Church has chosen these words of the Roman centurion to say at Mass before we receive our Lord in Holy Communion.

On the last day, we shall be judged mainly on our practice of altruistic charity – our selfless love for others – by meeting their needs.

So we ask ourselves: "What is the highest form of charity that we can practice toward others?"

The answer: The highest form of charity we can practice toward others is to meet their needs. Meeting people's wants is not charity. Authentic, altruistic charity is meeting people's needs.

We ask again: "What is the greatest need others have?"

We answer: The greatest need others have is the grace of God.

One more question: "Where can we most effectively obtain these graces that others so constantly need?"

Answer: At the foot of the tabernacle or before the exposed monstrance, where Jesus Christ is really present in the fullness of His incarnate divine love – a treasury of graces for others.

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