

“How good it is to stand before a crucifix, or on our knees

*before the
Blessed Sacrament,*

and simply to be in his presence!

*How much good it does us when
he once more touches our lives
and impels us to share his new life!*

*What then happens is that
we speak of what we have seen and heard (1 Jn 1:3).”*

-Pope Francis



**DIOCESE OF
KANSAS CITY-ST. JOSEPH**
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National

Eucharistic Revival

<https://www.eucharisticrevival.org>



Eucharistic Amazement

Pre-Lenten Retreat on Prayer and Adoration



Many thanks to Reverend Joseph Cisetti, Pastor of St. Therese Little Flower (North) for conducting and hosting this retreat for the Diocesan Year of the Eucharistic Revival in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph .

Saturday, February 11, 2023

Eucharistic Amazement—Letter from our bishop

On the Solemnity of Corpus Christi 2022, our diocese joined every diocese in America to begin a 3-year, grassroots revival of devotion and belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This first year focuses on a diocesan response, next year will focus on parishes, and the final year will be dedicated to the entire nation.

There is no time like the present to deepen your own faith and love for Christ in the Eucharist. Love is stirred, strengthened, and impassioned through little things done consistently over time. If I may offer, here are some simple suggestions to renew Eucharistic Amazement:

-Go out of your way to spend time each week, or even each day, before the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Our churches and chapels have tabernacles, in part, so that you can draw near to him. Adore him, thank him, contemplate his being in your midst, offer him your trials, burdens and needs.

-Stay faithful to the Sunday Obligation to worship God at Mass (the Third Commandment) and consider being a daily Mass-goer and watch how your life changes for the better.

-When before the Eucharist, or when you receive the gift of Holy Communion, pray the words from the Gospel that Saint Thomas the Apostle professed when he touched the body of the Risen Christ, “*My Lord and my God!*” Express your faith in the Risen Lord and the gift of himself to you in the Eucharist.

-Meditate on the words and experiences of the saints about the Eucharist and become familiar with the many Eucharistic miracles that have occurred and been confirmed by the Church over the centuries.

Let us bring our *real presence* before Jesus and love him, *Really Present* to us, in the Holy Eucharist.

The Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr., DD, JCL

St. Augustine described prayer as, “an exercise in holy desire.” Our hope is that this small work has helped you grow in this holy desire. Please remember that there is so much to the rich tradition that is ours. One fine resource is Book IV of The Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC] which is entirely devoted to prayer. It not only explores prayer but gives a commentary on the Our Father. Let us continue to pray for each other.

Cover image: Antique monstrance on display at Benedictines of Perpetual Adoration monastery in Clyde, Mo.

Four square frames depict Christ, made with cloisonné and crystal. This was used as the sisters holy day monstrance. Photo by Megan Marley.

Eucharistic adoration is an opportunity to grow and deepen in a spirit of prayer. Eucharistic adoration can draw us more deeply into the Paschal Mystery we celebrate at the Eucharist. Seeing Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament should lead us to see him better in others. St. John Chrysostom noted that the Jesus who said, “This is my body.” is the same Jesus who said, “I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat.”

When exposition takes place, at least one person must always be present. It should include the Word of God and may conclude with Benediction by a priest or a deacon. “Yesterday evening we came together in the presence of the Sacred Host, in which Jesus becomes for us the bread that sustains and feeds us (cf. Jn 6: 35), and there we began our inner journey of adoration. **In the Eucharist, adoration must become union.... The Latin word for adoration is ad-oratio - mouth to mouth contact, a kiss, an embrace, and hence, ultimately love.**” (Emphasis added)

Pope Benedict XVI.

For me prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.

St. Therese of Lisieux



We are blessed to have a rich and varied tradition of prayer. Pope Francis describes prayer as, ‘*The breath of faith.*’ The intent of this small work is to help explore some of the treasure that is ours and to breathe in more deeply faith that is ours.”

Father Joseph Cisetti

I-Lectio Divina (Divine Reading)

“*When I found your words I devoured them.*” -Jeremiah 15:16

Lectio Divina is an ancient, reflective way of both studying and praying the Word of God. Lectio consists of four general elements. This prayer method may simply give form to what we already do. The elements of lectio may be likened to a cow chewing its cud or looking at a gem from different angles.

- 1) **Reading** (lectio)—After an opening prayer, simply and slowly read the scripture passage aloud or silently and note what stands out to you.
- 2) **Meditating** (meditatio)—Read the passage again and think about it. You may use your mind to reconstruct the event described. This includes engaging the Word of God, listening to it, and letting it interpret you. Another part of this may be to make a practical application from all this lesson to your life.
- 3) **Praying** (oratio)—Meditation can be a springboard to prayer. It may lead us to pray for others or ourselves, e.g., Jesus healing a leper may lead us to pray for those who are lepers in our world today.
- 4) **Contemplating** (contemplatio)—This stage is the simplest and can also be the most challenging. We remain sitting with the Word in both exterior and interior silence, not thinking but resting in the Word and opening oneself up to God.

Some notes:

- ◆ These four stages are flexible, not set in concrete and people may find themselves going back and forth among the different elements. While the structure may be valuable, it is not an end.
- ◆ With lectio, less is more. This is not a race. Simply spend as much time with a passage or even part of a passage or even a single line or word as feels appropriate.
- ◆ This is suitable to both individual and common use, as well as in an ecumenical context.
- ◆ Some people find it helpful to make notes as they do lectio.

Some variations:

- ◆ Mini-Lectio: praying over just a small piece of scripture every day.
- ◆ Macro-Lectio: sitting down and reading an entire gospel in one sitting.
- ◆ Breaking Open the Word: reading, discussing, and praying with a scripture passage in a group.

Reading you should seek; meditating you will find; praying you shall call; and contemplating the door will be opened to you.

Guigo II the Carthusian

II-Meditation

Ignatian Meditation

This form encourages people to focus on a particular saying or scene and then use the faculties of the intellect (including the imagination) and memory to stir the will to make applications in our hearts. It is living the mystery of the life of Christ within our own lives.

- 1) Choose a scripture passage or topic.
- 2) Place yourself in the presence of God and ask for his blessing.
- 3) Imagine the scene, possibly using the senses, e.g., picture the scene in your mind, imagine the sounds, smells, and atmosphere, etc.
- 4) Sit with it and ponder, placing yourself into the story and in connection with the various characters or groups of characters.
- 5) Listen, reflect and ask what it's saying to you and let it lead you into prayer.
- 6) Make some points to remember.
- 7) Make a practical application to your life.
- 8) Make an act of thanksgiving and close with an Our Father.

Augustinian Meditation

This form is like Ignatian meditation but rather than going back from the present to the event, it involves bringing the past even into the present, e.g., when meditating on Jesus healing a blind man, we place it in our day rather than projecting ourselves back.

- ◆ It is good to give yourself about 20 minutes to do this, at least when starting out.
- ◆ With this type of prayer especially, there is a temptation to over focus on technique. Technique can be helpful, but it is more important to just do it.

For Further reading: An outstanding resource for this is *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *Book of Privy Counseling*.

VIII—Eucharistic Adoration

Eucharistic adoration is simply prayer before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. We do this at Mass, but it more popularly refers to time spent in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament either before the tabernacle or with the host exposed in a monstrance (exposition).

This is a very free form of prayer that can encompass nearly all other forms of prayer, e.g., while at adoration we can do lectio, meditate, contemplate, pray the Rosary et al. Further, this can be an opportune time to reflect and converse with God or simply to rest in his presence, quite literally. It is a form of prayer that can be both personal and communal.

Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament can help to focus our prayer in a very special way. It allows us to quietly and more leisurely contemplate what we celebrate at Mass, i.e., Jesus self-giving to us and our self-giving with Him through the Holy Spirit to the Father.

The celebration of the Eucharist (The Mass) is the source and summit of the Christian faith. Everything we do as Catholic Christians flows from the celebration of the Eucharist and leads towards it. So too, Eucharistic adoration flows from the celebration of the Eucharist and leads us to it. Adoration is an act of thanksgiving for what we have received and an act of preparation for what we will receive. The ultimate destination of the Blessed Sacrament is not the tabernacle or a monstrance but the human heart.

VII—Contemplative Prayer

The word contemplation holds many different meanings. It may be:

- ◆ Used the same as meditation, i.e., using the intellect and will. It involves putting things into the mind.
- ◆ Taken as a more prayerful and thoughtful outlook on life, standing before and listening to God in emptiness. Like the third form of meditation.
- ◆ A type of prayer that involves resting in God without using the faculties of the soul (intellect, memory and will). It involves emptying things out of the mind.

This third more specific understanding is being used here.

Contemplative prayer involves simply sitting and resting in the presence of God, not using the intellect or memory. It consists not in doing but simply in being. The goal is to gently quiet the intellect and rest in the presence of God.

One species of contemplative prayer may involve choosing a word, such as God or Jesus, and simply repeating it perhaps vocally or interiorly. This word is a means not an end. It is like an infant's pacifier. The purpose of the word is to quiet the mind. Once in some sort of interior silence, it may be set aside but then used again as necessary.

Some notes:

It is good to start with a brief scripture passage such as, "Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:1

- ◆ The point is to quiet the intellect, not suspend the intellect. Only God does the latter.
- ◆ Similarly, interior silence is a relative silence.
- ◆ The effectiveness of this prayer is not necessarily determined by what happens during the prayer time.
- ◆ As with all prayer, distractions are inevitable. These distractions can be good thoughts but in either case, the solution is to gently refocus oneself and again quiet the mind.
- ◆ The goal is union with God by simply resting in God. This can be likened to spiritual sunbathing. While a sense of calm may be the fruit of this prayer, the goal remains union with God.

N.B.: With both these types of mediation, some find it helpful to keep a notebook.

A Third Way

Another type of meditation is to simply sit in silence with God and reflect on what has been happening in your life and/or what will be happening. You may wish to quietly ponder whatever comes to mind in the presence of God. It can simply be sitting in silence. One good time to do this is while driving to work in the morning and spending that time with God rather than listening to the radio.

The memory and imagination will prove most helpful if they are employed to nourish piety, by searching in the Scriptures, in the Liturgy, and in spiritual writers the choicest texts, the most beautiful similes, the richest imagery, and if the imagination is used to enter into God's presence, to picture in their details the mysteries of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin. Thus, far from stunting this faculty, we shall fill it with devout representations which will replace dangerous fancies. -Adolphe Tanquerey (The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology)

III—Praying the Psalms

Speaking of the Psalms, St. Ambrose said, "All with eyes to see can discover in it a **complete gymnasium for the soul**, a stadium for all the virtues equipped for every kind of exercise; it for each to choose the kind he judges best to help him gain the prize" (emphasis added).

The Book of Psalms (the Psalter) is called the prayer book of the Bible. The Psalter is a book of prayer poems meant to be sung. While other parts of the Bible contain prayers within them, The Book of Psalms is the only book made up entirely of prayers. The Psalter forms part of the Wisdom literature of the Bible. The books of this section reflect on life and the right way of living.

Hebrew Poetry is different from our style of poetry and obviously, we use a translation from Hebrew. It does not have the rhyme and rhythm as we think of it but a rhythm of sense. Psalms may be alphabetic with each section starting with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Quite often there is repetition and the use of parallelism where something is said, and then repeated either in the same vein thought, a higher expression or with a contrast. There are many categories of Psalms, and some may overlap.

Why do we pray the Psalms?

- ◆ Wide range of emotions, even being angry with and complaining to God.
- ◆ Closest words of Jesus we must pray after the Our Father.
- ◆ Prayer of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the apostles, et al.
- ◆ Poetic expression
- ◆ Both as a prayer and a springboard for prayer.
- ◆ The New Testament authors saw the Psalter as a prophetic source.
- ◆ To praise God
- ◆ “The masterwork of prayer in the Old Testament” CCC 2585
- ◆ Significant role in the liturgical life of the Church.
- ◆ Role of honesty

Ways of praying the Psalms

Augustinian Method: Psalms become the voice of Christ praying to the Father and the Church joins him in this prayer.

Benedictine Method: Not with Christ to the Father but to Christ. Psalms become the voice of the Church praying to the exalted Christ, the Lord of all creation.

Inserting oneself into the Psalm or praying on behalf of others.

Problems with violence

Something to be aware of with the Psalms is that one can find expressions of great beauty and poignancy that can quickly turn to a cursing or a violent word, that we find shocking.

What are we to do with this in prayer?

There are several approaches that can assist but not necessarily solve this problem. One approach is to realize that his was a very different day and age that is pre-Christian, that we do not hesitate to call imperfect and provisional. A commentator has wisely said, that there remains parts of us as pre-Christian as well. Another approach is to see this prayer as a type of catharsis, getting some of the poison out. A third method is to realize in prayer we place ourselves completely before God, what is good and what is bad. A fourth way to see this is

VI—Vocal Prayer, Devotional Prayer, Praying With the Eyes

Prayer may be understood in three different species: Liturgical, Devotional and Personal. The first is the official Prayer of the Church. The second may be communal or individual and the third obviously, is personal.

While vocal prayer does not exhaust the world of prayer, it is an important part of it. Jesus taught us to use vocal prayer when addressing the Father. Vocal prayer may involve a set prayer to be recited or something more spontaneous. Vocal prayer can help carry us when other types of prayer are more difficult. There is value in memorizing some prayers so we can always have them with us.

Devotional prayer is not on the same level as liturgical prayer but should flow from it and lead toward it. Sometimes it may be known as popular religiosity. Devotional prayer is something valuable and may hold an emotional element not always suited to liturgical prayer. It may involve ethnic or more local expressions of faith. It is often lay led.

Among these are the Stations of the Cross and there is a rich array of these meditations both traditional and contemporary; Novenas which call us to persevere in prayer; Litanies, the Angelus, and the Rosary.

These may overlap with other activities such as May Crownings, prayers for the dead at a cemetery, St. Joseph Tables or Posadas.

Just as one can pray while reading *lectio divina*, is too one can pray with the eyes with what has been called *visio divina*. This may be done with icons, religious art and even with art that is not specifically religious.

.It is also possible to maintain a prayerful awareness throughout the day such as saying grace before meals, praying for the dead while driving past a cemetery or reading an obituary or saying a prayer when hearing a siren.

For further reading:

Emile Griffen, *Simple Ways to Pray*

Henri Nouwen, *Praying with Icons*.

Sister Wendy Beckett, *Sister Wendy's Book of Meditations*.

C. A prayer with a body and a soul--Without meditation the Rosary is a body without a soul and its recitation is in danger of becoming a mechanical repetition of formulas and of going counter to the warning of Christ.

D. The Rosary is an excellent prayer, but the faithful should feel serenely free in its regard. They should be drawn to its calm recitation by its intrinsic appeal.

III. St. John Paul II & *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*

A. The Rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer.

B. With the Rosary, the Christian people sit at the school of Mary and are led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love.

C. To recite the Rosary is nothing other than to contemplate with Mary the face of Christ.

D. In contemplating Christ's face we become open to receiving the mystery of Trinitarian life.

E. The succession of Hail Marys constitutes the wrap on which is woven the contemplation of the mysteries.

F. This anthropological significance of the Rosary, is far deeper than may appear at first sight. Anyone who contemplates Christ through the various stages of his life cannot fail to perceive in him the truth about man.

G. The Rosary is simply a method of contemplation. As method, it serves to an end and cannot become an end.

H. The center of gravity in the Hail Mary, the hinge, as it were, which joints its two parts, is the name of Jesus.

IV. Twenty episodes of moving beyond one's comfort zone.

V. Methods and variations, teasing out the horizontal dimensions—How these mysteries connect with our own lives.

Each time we recite the Rosary, the Gospel enters anew into the life of individuals, families, peoples, and the entire world. The Rosary is an effective means for opening ourselves to God, for it helps us to overcome selfishness and to bring peace to hearts, in the family and in the world.

Pope Francis

a negative example of teachings, how we are not to pray, or letting our Christian faith inform a pre-Christian work. Finally, we can look at these challenges in a figurative way. St. Augustine held that scripture commends nothing but charity and condemns nothing but cupidity or disordered desires. It follows that if the literal approach does not commend charity, we are to interpret it in a figurative sense, e.g., the enemy in a given setting is to be seen as representing sin and evil.

Categories of Psalms

A complete gymnasium for the soul. St. Ambrose

The psalms of David, in sublimity, beauty, pathos and originality, or in one word poetry, are superior to all the odes, hymns and songs in any language. John Adams

Hymns of Praise

8, 19, 33, 66, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 14, 117, 145-150

Hymns of Thanksgiving

18, 30, 32, 34, 40, 65-67, 75, 92, 107, 116, 118, 124, 136, 138

Individual Laments

3-7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 38-43, 51, 57, 59, 61, 64, 69-71, 77, 86, 88, 89, 102, 109, 120, 130, 139, 141-143

Communal Laments

12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129, 137

Liturgical Psalms

15, 24, 50, 68, 81, 82, 115, 134

Wisdom Psalms

1, 19, 36, 37, 49, 73, 78, 112, 119, 127, 128

Trust Songs

11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131

Royal Psalms of the King

2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 78, 89, 101, 110, 132, 144

Zion Hymns

46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122

Royal Psalms of God as King

29, 47, 93, 95-99

Historical Psalms

78, 105, 106, 135

Penitential Psalms

5, 32, 38, 51, 101, 130, 143

Psalms of Ascent

120-134

IV—The Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours (LH) is a collection of psalms, scripture readings and other writings known as the official prayer of the Church. The LH is liturgical rather than devotional prayer. It is also known as the Divine Office. Clergy and religious assume a responsibility to pray the office daily but it is the prayer of the entire Church. The Second Vatican Council envisioned the LH becoming the prayer of the entire People of God.

The Liturgy of the Hours represents:

- ◆ A sanctification and consecration of the day
- ◆ A fulfillment of St. Paul's mandate to "Pray always" I Thessalonians 5:17
- ◆ A joining with the Church throughout the world in prayer as (ecclesia orans)
- ◆ A prayer on behalf of the Church and the world
- ◆ Praying for those who have no one to pray for them
- ◆ A prayer that leads towards and flows from the Eucharist
- ◆ Allowing ourselves to be informed and formed by the Word of God
- ◆ An exercise of the priestly office of all believers
- ◆ Prayer with the Church in heaven
- ◆ A prayer of harmony with mind and voice

The Liturgy of the Hours consists of:

I. Morning Prayer (Lauds)

A. *It is said in the morning in order that the first stirring of our mind and will may be consecrated to God.* -St. Basil the Great

B. This hour also recalls the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

II. Evening Prayer (Vespers)

A. An act of thanksgiving

B. A recollection of the evening sacrifice of Christ.

These two hours are the two hinges on which the daily office turns; hence they are to be considered as the chief hours and celebrated as such.

III. Office of Readings

A. Seeks to provide God's people, and those consecrated to God in a special way, with a wider selection of passages from sacred Scripture for meditation, together with the finest excerpts from spiritual writers.

B. It may be recited at any hour of the day.

III. Daytime Prayer

IV. Night Prayer (Compline)

www.liturgyofthehours.org

www.divineoffice.org

www.ibreviary.org

For further reading: *General Instruction for The Liturgy of the Hours*,
www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Rites/GILH.pdf

V—The Rosary

This ancient prayer form is both simple and sophisticated. It is oral, mental and (usually) tactile. Like *Lectio Divina* it is a way of praying the scriptures. It involves meditation and both Ignatian and Augustinian meditation can be easily adapted to praying the Rosary.