



Five novice masters inviting to adoration



SEVERAL PEDAGOGICAL STEPS

TO RE-INITIATE PERSONAL ADORATION

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Previous brief commentaries

Is it not remarkable that we still feel and have always felt challenged by the spiritual practice of **adoration**. It is at the center of our spirituality, in the life of our founders and in their insistence in recommending it to the community, and yet we keep moving uphill in this which appears so very fundamental. We find that we are faced with **mystery**: the fact that God, who is close and tangible, remains far away in his infinite transcendence and therefore is elusive. Indeed, adoration confronts us with our fragile humanity and the absolute greatness of God. So we must start from here, from the difficulty of the creature-creator encounter and from the invitation to dispose ourselves to a mysterious spiritual encounter (led by the Spirit) as fragile as our carnal condition.

So it will always be difficult to revitalize an attitude very proper to a follower of Jesus: seeking the face of God ("I seek your face, Lord"). And when we seek, we speak about activity, of work, of the effort that we called "asceticism". We are faced with a reality that urges us: prayer, and therefore adoration, requires a human effort to overcome and work that allows us to enter into that spiritual realm beyond that is not ours but is given as a gift within and beyond our willingness to truly receive it.

It is also true that the longing for God that we find in our own hearts invites and impels us to meet with Him, even though it costs, "My soul thirsts for God." It is a gift of God. It is the same Spirit who dwells in us and dynamizes us in the practice of love that is particularly expressed in adoration.

It is also worth commenting that adoration before the Blessed Sacrament results in a continuity or permanent attitude in our life. Perhaps that was the basis of the proposal of our founders, that continual adoration is an attitude and authentic practice throughout all stages of our life. As we advance in adoration, life feels more profound and true. The presence of God is most palpable in the world around us, from the beauty of nature to the pain of the poor and suffering of sinners. So almost naturally it produces continuity between ordinary life with all of its activities and

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concerns and the time of adoration in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament of Jesus, God with us.

Some pedagogical steps

- Return permanently to **the proper experience** of prayer and of **adoration** understanding it as a special form of prayer. Return to the experience of initial formation, review and share the life of prayer in community and search for ways to enter more deeply into it. It is a first and always valid school for review and to be shared from one's proper experience.
- If not already done, begin (or resume) some bodily practices that others have taught us and help us **to dispose ourselves** to this prayer of **adoration**: interior and exterior silence, stillness of mind, and serenity of soul. Here, Father Anthony de Mello S.J. (in "Sadhana" and many others) has helped us very much.
- Some have also been helped by or need **a method** to support them during the time of adoration. The method inherited from St. Ignatius may be useful: moments of adoration, of thanksgiving, of petition, and of offering.
- We will recover our practice of adoration to the extent that we make of it a real **habit**. I mean, when we integrate it in our life, no matter what happens, so that it becomes a necessity without which something is missing. What usually accomplishes this is to join adoration to an unavoidable moment of the day: "before" or "after" meals, study, work, sleep, etc. Here we are taking into consideration our fragile human condition that needs small daily rituals as vital as the great sacraments. During pastoral activity that is overwhelming, we cannot rely on having unexpected or spontaneous free time during the day to make our adoration. We have the counsel of Fr. Voillaume to the little Brothers of Jesus: "If you hope to have desires and time for prayer each day, you will never pray." We need the effort and the habit.
- But we must go deeper. If the adoration does not burst forth from **an authentic experience of life and faith**, everything will be useless, an empty ritual; it will be a worthy effort, but unsatisfactory to the spirit. The first and most fundamental effort will be to nourish faith, to look at Jesus in the Gospel: Jesus prays; he is poor and simple, close to the people, compassionate and kind. It is in the Scriptures that we drink of the living water that nourishes our faith. Also spiritual reading. It doesn't hurt to occasionally read a text on the subject of prayer and adoration. Anyway, permanently nourish faith.
- Adoration is more fluid when we are **attentive to the reality** around us, with its successes, joys, failures and pains. Focus on others results in active and effective concern for them when we surrender ourselves in love before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.
- As you cannot **learn** to walk without walking, to love without loving, so we **learn adoration by adoring**. I think in the end this is how we have all learned: in many hours before the Blessed Sacrament with a blank mind and

spirit in the cold days of training. Perhaps we did not know what to do or how to adore. But little by little, in that faithful combination of the flesh and the spirit in adoration, we learned to live this mysterious, personal, unique encounter with God in union with Jesus who surrendered himself.

A brief final reflection

We do well in the congregation to retrieve this precious legacy of our founders. I believe with great conviction that the world today needs **adorers** committed to the encounter with Jesus in the desire to be faithful in following him and sharing his mission. We can contribute to the authentic search for truth about the cosmos and life that many live passionately by sharing our ongoing search for the face of God from our experience of a personal encounter with Jesus.

As with any spiritual experience we entrust ourselves to the work of the Spirit who enables us to say "Abba".