



Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Office of the Cardinal
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**Pastoral Letter of Cardinal Justin Rigali
on the Fifth Anniversary of His Installation
as Archbishop of Philadelphia
Memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary
October 7, 2008**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Priests, Deacons, Religious and Lay Faithful of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia,

Five years ago I was installed as the eighth Archbishop of Philadelphia, a privilege and a responsibility which have increased with each passing year as I have been supported by your vibrant faith. In this Year of Saint Paul, I join my voice to his in giving “thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus....”¹

As I have done before, I am writing to you on the anniversary of my installation as your Archbishop to offer some reflections on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, whose celebration is “the source and the summit of the entire Christian Life.”² In this pastoral letter I wish to reflect on *adoration of God*, which became a part of each of our lives on the day of our Baptism, when we were “plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ” and became “the true adorers whom the Father seeks.”³

Adoration at Mass

At Mass we offer adoration to the Father through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. At the same time we adore Christ Himself truly present under the signs of bread and wine. All Eucharistic Adoration is first expressed in our full, conscious, and active participation in the celebration of

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:4.

² *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 6.

the Mass.⁴ In the celebration of this holy and living sacrifice we eat the Body of Christ and drink his Precious Blood in fulfillment of the Lord Jesus' command: "Do this in memory of me." The Mass is itself a great act of adoration which prepares us for all subsequent acts of adoration. And these acts in turn lead us back to celebrate the Eucharist once again in the community of Christ's Church and to eat His Body and drink His Blood. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Benedict XVI recalled the words of Saint Augustine in this regard: "No one eats that flesh without first adoring it; we would sin were we not to adore it."⁵

Eucharistic Adoration is fostered, in the first place, by a desire to celebrate the Sacred Liturgy with the Church, in willing obedience to all liturgical norms. In our own day, we are blessed by the gift of a third edition of the *Roman Missal*, whose publication in English we keenly anticipate. As we prepare for the realization of this important milestone in the implementation of the liturgical renewal of the Second Vatican Council, we have the opportunity to seek ways to deepen our fidelity to the norms which regulate the celebration of the sacred mysteries, which enact the Sacrifice of both Christ and His Church.

For this reason, I have appended to this Pastoral Letter certain norms regarding the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. It is my hope that these norms will serve as a reminder of the importance of carefully observing the prescriptions of the liturgical books in all their richness.⁶

Priests, deacons, religious, liturgy committees, liturgical ministers and various parish groups are invited to engage in study and implementation of the new *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the Post-Synodal Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI *Sacramentum Caritatis*, and the instruction of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*. Now is an excellent opportunity to deepen our appreciation of the action of the Lord Jesus in the celebration of the Eucharist, and of His real presence under the appearances of bread and wine. Above all we are called to join the gift of our hearts, minds, and lives to the perfect Sacrifice offered by him.

Worship of the Holy Eucharist Outside of Mass

⁴ Cf. *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, 3.

⁵ "Nemo autem illam carnem manducat, nisi prius adoraverit; peccemus non adorando." Saint Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 98:9, CCL XXXIX, 1385, as quoted by Pope Benedict XVI in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 66.

⁶Cf. *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 38.

Our adoration of Christ truly active and present in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist overflows and continues in our worship of the Lord truly present in the reserved Blessed Sacrament. Such adoration “prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself.”⁷ Our prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is linked with our participation in the Holy Mass, and it deepens our desire once again to worship with all our heart, mind and body in the Eucharistic celebration.

Our holy Catholic faith proclaims that the Blessed Sacrament which we adore is truly Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. Whoever comes to Him will never hunger, and whoever believes in Him will never thirst.⁸ In a world filled with fear, Christ has given us the good news of His healing and enduring presence. Here are the promises He has made to us:

- “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”⁹
- “For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven.”¹⁰

Our reaction to so great a mystery, our response to such great love, must be to fall on our knees in faith and love, in praise and adoration! Christ’s gift to us of His love and life in the Eucharist is the greatest challenge of our lives.

This is why I encourage all Catholics—clergy, religious and lay faithful—to pray regularly before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. These moments of quiet prayer before the Lord bring blessings beyond all measure. The Lord Jesus calls to us as He did to His Apostles: “Could you not wait an hour with me?” How important it is for us to respond to the Savior’s call!

How blessed we are to be able to pray before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. But the Church has given us an even greater blessing in the liturgical rites for adoration of the Most Blessed

⁷ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 66.

⁸ Cf. John 6, 35.

⁹ John 6, 48-51.

¹⁰ John 6, 53-58.

Sacrament exposed in the monstrance. In our own day, we have witnessed a wonderful increase in appreciation for the adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament and for the fruits of Christian living that it produces. I strongly urge all priests to do everything possible to generously promote Eucharistic adoration and exposition in accordance with the norms and rites of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, and in the spirit of all the encouragement repeatedly given to this practice by Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

Often these liturgical rites are celebrated in order to adore the exposed Blessed Sacrament for as little as a half hour or an hour, often concluding with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Such celebrations are an important part of the liturgical life of every parish and should be held regularly.

Sometimes these liturgical rites are fittingly celebrated with adoration of the exposed Blessed Sacrament for longer periods of time. I would encourage all pastors and their pastoral collaborators to continue to emphasize the practice of Forty Hours Devotion so much a part of the heritage of Saint John Neumann and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and also, in the proper circumstances, Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.¹¹

Mary, “Woman of the Eucharist”

Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament is adoration offered to the living God in the person of Jesus Christ. It is both an ecclesial act of the whole Church in the celebration of her Sacred Liturgy and a personal act of each Catholic gazing upon our Lord and Savior.

We are never alone, however, in adoring the Lord. For whenever we look upon Him who gave His life for us on the Cross, we are joined with all the angels and saints, who forever sing His praises in heaven. We are reminded of our fellowship with this great heavenly communion each time we sing “Heaven and earth are full of your glory, hosanna in the highest!”

First among those who gaze upon the face of the Lord with us is Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, whom Pope John Paul II called “Woman of the Eucharist.” Just as she stood with Saint John at the foot of the Cross on Calvary, so we kneel before the altar in each of our churches and look upon Him

¹¹ In this regard, I recommend a resource of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, entitled *Thirty-One Questions on Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament* (USCCB Publications, 2001).

who was pierced for our sins. Our participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is joined with the participation of the Blessed Virgin in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of her beloved Son. Through Eucharistic adoration, we are drawn more deeply into the paschal dying and rising to which we were joined in Christ at our Baptism, and which we celebrate and renew in every celebration of the Holy Mass.

May Mary, Mother of Him whom we encounter in the Holy Eucharist, and our Mother, pray for us, that we may learn to love her Son with obedience and trust, listen to God's word and do His will. For the same Christ whom she was blessed to carry in her womb and who feeds us with His Body and Blood commands us to love and serve all our brothers and sisters, particularly those in special need.

Dear faithful of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, as I renew on this anniversary my desire to serve you, in the name of Jesus, as your Bishop and Shepherd, I ask you all to join me in a renewed and total archdiocesan commitment to Him, which we express in the simple words: "Come, let us adore Him!"

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Card. Rigali". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cardinal Justin Rigali

Archbishop of Philadelphia

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