

BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

This popular devotion began in the thirteenth century. It is an extension of that very brief section of the Mass when, just before the Communion, special devotion is addressed to Jesus present on the altar under the outward signs of bread and wine. The Mass, however, is addressed primarily to God the Father and it would overturn the nature of the Eucharistic action to give the Mass over to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The love of devout hearts felt the need of expressing their faith in our Lord's sacramental presence and their adoration of him who comes to be with us in this lowly form. And out of this need grew the custom of taking the Sacred Host from the tabernacle at some time when Mass was not being offered, and holding a little service of adoration. A very old Christian tradition dictated that any people who might be in the church when the Blessed Sacrament was being reposed in the tabernacle, be blessed with the Sacrament, and this usual blessing naturally became a part of the service of adoration. Thus Benediction supplies a need of souls who have entered into the meaning of our Lord's real, objective presence in the Blessed Sacrament and, at the same time, guards against the danger of making devotion to the Blessed Sacrament a substitute for the Eucharistic action of offering to the Father.

While the Priest places the Blessed Sacrament on the altar, it is usual to sing the following hymn. Some other hymn may be substituted, provided it be addressed to Jesus.

O SAVING Victim! opening wide
The gate of heaven to man below,
Our foes press on from every side,
Thine aid supply, thy strength bestow.

All praise and thanks to thee ascend
For evermore, blest One in Three;
O grant us life that shall not end,
In our true native land with thee. Amen.

Then may follow a Litany or other devotions, after which (or, in case no special devotion is said here, immediately after the opening hymn of adoration) the following hymn is always sung. During the second line of the first verse, all bow profoundly.

THEREFORE we, before him bending,
This great Sacrament revere;
Types and shadows have their ending,
For the newer rite is here;
Faith, our outward sense befriending,
Makes our inward vision clear.

Glory let us give and blessing
To the Father and the Son,
Honour, thanks, and praise addressing
While eternal ages run;
Ever too his love confessing
Who from Both with Both is One. Amen.

Then follows the versicle and prayer.

V. Thou didst give them bread from heaven.

R. Containing within itself all sweetness.

(During Eastertide and the Octave of Corpus Christi, Alleluia is added to both versicle and response.)

Let us pray.

O GOD, who under a wonderful sacrament hast left unto us a memorial of thy Passion: grant us, we beseech thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of thy Body and Blood; that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruit of thy redemption. Who livest and reignest, world without end. R. Amen.

Having put on the humeral veil, the Priest ascends to the altar, takes the Blessed Sacrament and, turning, makes the sign of the cross over the people. Look up and adore, saying in your heart: My Lord and my God; repeating the Holy Name over and over; or simply asking, in your own words, Christ's blessing upon yourself and upon those for whom you wish to pray.

Descending the steps, the Priest puts off the veil and says the following, the People repeating each sentence after him.

The Divine Praises

BLESSED be God.

Blessed be his Holy Name.

Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus.

Blessed be his Most Sacred Heart.

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

Blessed be the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.

Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.

Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste Spouse.

Blessed be God in his Angels and in his Saints.

While the Priest reposes the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, the following psalm with its antiphon may be sung. Often some other hymn is substituted.

Antiphon. Let us forever adore the Most Holy Sacrament (*in Eastertide, Alleluia*).

Psalm 117

O PRAISE the Lord, all ye heathen;
★ praise him, all ye nations.

For his merciful kindness is ever more and more towards us; ★ and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praise the Lord.

Glory be to the Father.

Antiphon. Let us forever adore the Most Holy Sacrament (*in Eastertide, Alleluia*).

FOR A MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Antiphon. O Sacred Banquet wherein Christ is received, the memory of his Passion is renewed; the mind is filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us. (*Alleluia*)

V. Thou didst give them bread from heaven. (*Alleluia*)

R. Containing within itself all sweetness. (*Alleluia*)

Let us pray.

O GOD, who under a wonderful sacrament hast left unto us a memorial of thy Passion: grant us, we beseech thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of thy Body and Blood; that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruit of thy redemption. Who livest and reignest, world without end. R. Amen.