

Living the Spirit Adoration

Have you ever heard of writer's block? Sometimes when I have that dread difficulty I simply wait for some inspiration to come. I am not slow to say a short prayer to the Holy Spirit, if the writing I desire is one of these inserts. Of course, I cannot allow anyone to think my efforts are inspired as is the writing we so love as sacred in the Scriptures.

Yet, in some small way it happens that I find myself aware of what I want to write about. Today I looked over the books on my bookcase. I took down a few and glanced at them for a moment. No, none of these are helpful. Then I saw my "Biblical Theology," a volume of meanings of words used in theology based on the bible. So, here I am thinking about what I read in that volume, ready to share some thoughts with you.

I must recall that in my memory I have another thought about adoration. I once read that "adoration puts God in his place and us in ours." Everyday in various ways Christians manage to adore God. What else would we be doing at Mass? What else is the content of our daily prayers? Or even what else is our call for help from God but an acknowledgement that He deserves our adoration by our believing in all we have learned of His very being? We even say in the Gloria: "We adore you" as we sing or say a prayer brought long ago into our liturgy, our act of worship.

The definition given in the book referenced above is this: "Adoration is the expression both spontaneous and conscious, imposed and willed, of the complex reaction of man seized by the proximity of God: man in a state of awareness sharpened by his own insignificance or his own sin; a state of silent confusion, veneration, trembling and thankfulness, jubilant homage in all his being." This long definition is supported by studying the Scriptures in detail, something which I cannot manage to write about here. One finds the reason for this definition in Genesis, the Psalms, and Job and throughout the Bible in the many forms that adoration takes place and is recorded.

Sometimes as believers, inspired by our faith, we come to the realization of our insignificance. It cannot be otherwise when we realize the grandeur of all of God's creation. A psalm asks "What is man that you are mindful of him?" So many times we realize how great God is and how small we really are. Our acts of adoration help us to meditate on the meaning of all this. We may be small but we are loved. We have received gift after gift from God. We become overwhelmed with the desire to find thankfulness. We simply learn how in many ways we adore Him.

Adoration to be true must meet something of the definition above. It must lead to bodily expression in words, acts and desires. Many of our prayers are clearly words expressing our adoration of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We pray with an awareness that God is God and we are not, but that we are His creatures. We feel secure in being in our place before Him.

Don't you know so many prayers that do this? The Mass is a beautiful prayer. For us it can be so very comforting, for it is an offering of adoration not just by ourselves alone, but by the Church, and ultimately a joining in the action of adoration of the Crucified Christ. I write this because adoration has its human rewards. One who adores God does not find it without some rewards.

We read in the Bible how there were two gestures of adoration, prostration and the kiss. All peoples and the whole earth (Ps 99) adore God, bowing before Him. The Bible notes how pagans kissed their idols (gods). This was a gesture that showed man wanting to touch God. In the early days of Christianity we find the image of adorers extending their arms, with a desire to touch or embrace their God. There are so many gestures in our worship that give meaning to our desire to adore the Lord. Our gestures show the Lord how willing we are to serve Him, and give Him the worship that is His due.

This desire for us to worship properly and from the heart has brought about many customs and been an incentive for many of man's activities in his religious desires. One sees how the great cathedrals were built by many acts of sacrifice of their builders. I often recall how it was said that St. Patrick's Cathedral was built with the pennies of the poor, the servant girls who were brought America to help the rich make their fortunes and even raise their children. The very existence of our churches is a remembrance of the many acts of adoration that made them a sign of our faith in a God we love and adore.

Rightly adoration is God's right alone. We have heard many times how we must not put anyone or anything in His place. We do not adore idols of gold, money, success, human creation, masterpieces. We do not love anyone in the same way as we love and adore the Lord. Christian adoration must always be in spirit and in truth. It contemplates how God is one in three Persons; it transforms adoration and brings it to perfection by our entire consecration of spirit, soul and body. That is why true adorers no longer need Jerusalem or a national religion. All is theirs, because they are Christ's and Christ is God. (Jn 2, 1Co and 1 Th). True adoration unites us to Christ, the Father's well beloved Son, and with Him we repeat His cry: Abba, Father (G 4).

My reflection on this theme has led me to wonder if we need in our world today to bring more love into our acts of adoration, our religious duties of worship and the many works we as Church engage in. There are simple things we should check ourselves on, taught us years ago that may need refining. How do we act in sacred space? How do we come dressed to it? How attentive are we in our prayers at Mass. Do we show the world that we are true adorers of the Lord by living the Spirit? Do we adore the Lord with love, without which there is not true adoration? Are we aware of our sinfulness, and do something about it, as we come before the Lord in prayer?

Often preachers tell their listeners to take a few minutes to ponder on what they heard. May I dare suggest that you do the same with what you have read. If you do, please do so with the joyful knowledge that there is a God waiting as always to love you. Let Him do so!

God love and bless you always!
Monsignor David Morrison