

Understanding Adoration

Our word 'Adoration' is thought to come from the Roman gesture of moving a hand to the mouth (*Ad* = to or towards, *os/oris* = mouth). This was used in ancient Rome to acknowledge the gods of the empire. Made towards statues of the gods, it implied the recognition of their divinity and one's personal submission to their power. The gesture itself was also understood as prayer. (A hand-to-mouth gesture we have in today's culture is 'blowing a kiss' — in itself this could be a beautiful gesture to God, though not part of our current traditional practice.)

In Matthew's gospel we are told *Adore the Lord, your God and worship him alone* (Mt 4:10). Our catechetical teaching explains *These words mean to adore God as the Lord of everything that exists; to render to him the individual and community worship which is his due; to pray to him with sentiments of praise, of thanks and of supplication; to offer him sacrifices, above all the spiritual sacrifice of Christ; and to keep the promises and vows made to him.* The simplest Christian definition of adoration is *the humble acknowledgement by human beings that they are creatures of the thrice-holy creator.*

Gestures of Adoration

St Thomas Aquinas explains that both angels and humans adore God spiritually, but humans in addition adore with our bodies. This is a great prompt to us, especially before the Eucharist. Kneeling, putting hands together in prayer, bowing, genuflecting, making the sign of the cross as we pass a church which contains the Blessed Sacrament and similar gestures, includes our bodies wonderfully in adoration prayer.

The Spirit of Adoration

Saints and other authors encourage celebration of God as *the source, the perfection and end of our being*, and so celebrate God's infinity, immensity, immutability, eternity, all-powerfulness, wisdom, perfection, holiness, creation, goodness, sovereignty, providence, mercy, justice, etc.

Holy Scripture talks of the need to *magnify the Lord with me and exalt his name in the assembly* (Ps 33[34]:3) and *make his name great among the peoples* (Mal 1:11). The Lord's Prayer can lead us to meditating on the *Hallowed be your name* as well as crying out God's greatness and perfection (e.g. in the *Divine Praises*) against blasphemy, profanations, corruptions, heresies and the like. Some find it fruitful to pray to and meditate on God as creator, as sanctifier, as judge, as spouse, as healer, as redeemer, at different times in prayer.

St Francis of Assisi calls all creation to join in adoring God the creator in his *Canticle of the Sun* and *Canticle of the Creatures*, and so widens the understanding of adoration beyond prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

Bl. Edmund Rice wrote all the important letters of his ministry before the Blessed Sacrament — this great witness, and others too, can help us deepen our own adoration spirit.

Acknowledgements

Time before the Blessed Sacrament is a series of leaflets produced by the Spirituality Committee in preparation for *Adoremus*. It is intended for individual reflection as part of a time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament or Exposition. It could also be used with small groups.

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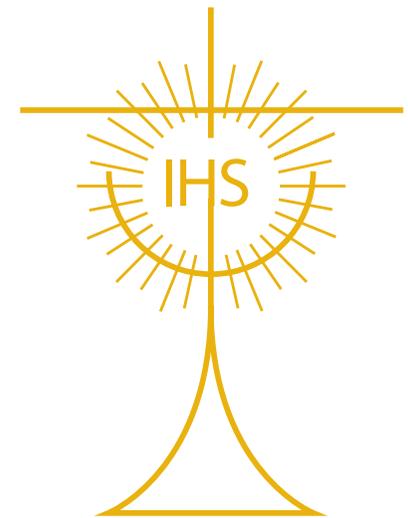
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Time before the Blessed Sacrament

Adoring

Adore the Lord, your God and worship him alone.



ADOREMUS
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Looking at Scripture

Having listened to what King Herod had to say, the wise men set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were given a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their country by a different way.

Matthew 2:9b-12

Reflection

With what determination did the Magi come to adore?

With what determination do I come to adore the Lord?

Overcoming what difficulties did the Magi visit Our Lord?

Overcoming what difficulties have I come to adore?

With what grace and inspiration did the Magi set out?

With what grace and inspiration have I come here today?

With what graces was their encounter with Jesus and Mary blessed?

With what graces is my encounter with Jesus and Mary in prayer blessed?



With what lasting effects on their lives, their love, their commitments, their thoughts and their habits might this event bear fruit?

With what lasting effects on our lives, our loves, our commitments, our thoughts and our habits will this bear fruit?

With what growth in intimacy with the Lord was this encounter blessed?

With what growth in intimacy with the Lord will my visit be blessed?

Prayer

Come, adore this wondrous presence;
bow to Christ, the source of grace!
Here is kept the ancient promise
of God's earthly dwelling-place!
Sight is blind before God's glory,
faith alone may see his face!

Glory be to God the Father,
praise to his co-equal Son,
adoration to the Spirit,
bond of love, in Godhead one!
Blest be God by all creation
joyously while ages run!