

## Eucharistic adoration: peaceful, despite the squabble

Max Lindenman | Sep. 16, 2009



A priest holds a monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament during a procession in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ June 7, 2007. (CNS photo)

These days, some things may still be impossible to find online, but adoration chapels are not among them. Go to [www.therealpresence.org](http://www.therealpresence.org) [1], pick out your state on the big map and click. Up will pop a list of churches that expose the consecrated host for adoration, along with hours of operation and contact numbers.

Regardless of the city, the list should be striking for its length.

In the metro Phoenix area, where I live, no fewer than 45 churches make some kind of arrangements for adoration. Of these, eight have perpetual adoration chapels, and quite a few others have chapels that stay open limited hours, but which were built -- and appointed quite lavishly -- for the purpose.

In the developing world, adoration seems to be even more of a crowd-pleaser. According to a news item that ran last June through Catholic Exchange, the flood of worshipers who adore the Blessed Sacrament at Uganda's Holy Trinity monastery has prompted Aid to the Church in Need to endow the tiny community with \$7,000 -- enough to support 12 additional professed nuns and one novice. Nuns credit the practice of adoration with reconciling feuding neighbors and spouses.

But here, apparently, is the rub. Perhaps because of its appeal to the less literate, or because of its association with the highly regulated life of contemplative orders, eucharistic adoration enjoys the reputation in some circles of an embarrassing throwback to some best-forgotten dark age. In a column posted to NCRonline.org Sept 8, Fr. Richard McBrien calls it "a doctrinal, theological, and spiritual step backward."

Having entered the church at Easter in 2008, I'm lucky to be unburdened with any such prejudice. I enjoy adoring the host and find it spiritually enriching. Being somewhat monkey-minded -- to steal a friend's wonderful expression for a style of thinking that lacks focus but not force -- I find sitting or kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament a powerful incentive to shut down and shut up.

Though it's a battle I sometimes lose, the brilliance of the monstrance and the whiteness of the host itself beguile me, more often than not, into a mood of pure reverence. For a South Park fan, this is a rare and wonderful thing.

This trek toward serene communion is never a purely personal one -- quite the opposite. In an adoration chapel, no one is ever alone, literally or figuratively. Whether kneeling in one of the prie-dieus or sitting in the pews,

one becomes aware by the smallest signs -- a scraping foot off to the side, a muffled cough to the rear -- of being part of an ad hoc community, joined in purpose.

On especially good days, when I enter the chapel with my brain buzzing less than usual, these small sensory cues, together with some other, more mysterious agent, bring me into a liminal space where the unity becomes one of spirit.

Adoration also has its more tangible benefits. Dark and cool by design and silent by convention, adoration chapels are some of the most profoundly still places to be found in any urban area. For overscheduled, over stimulated people who wish to extend their Communion experience beyond the single weekly Mass they can make, they can serve as vital spiritual oases.

Defending adoration from critics who condemn it on theological grounds is, frankly, beyond my abilities. Yet it seems to me that criticism of adoration, however it may be expressed, ultimately emerges from a fear quite common among Catholics whose lives in the Church have straddled the Second Vatican Council. That fear, boiled down, is that reversion to any antique practice will lay out a welcome mat for all manner of superstition and excess.

I sympathize. When it comes to ecumenism and the individual's right to exercise his or her own conscience, my knee jerks as quickly to protect the church's recent gains as anyone else's. But really, I wonder if the slope is quite that slippery. My generation took up swing dancing without re-fighting the zoot suit riots; I trust Catholics can adore the host without, say, forming the Fr. Coughlin Society.

The proof exists in my very own parish. Though fiercely liberal and generally low-church, it's also home to a chapter of Adore Ministries, an outreach group for young people, whose devotions include -- you guessed it -- eucharistic adoration.

These are the Millennials you've read about. They are by no means the Catholic Right's answer to Mao's Red Guards. They're into social justice. Some vote Democrat. They may adore the host, but they're sophisticated enough to know there's no danger in chewing it. They even precede their evenings of adoration with 45 minutes of Christian college rock.

The last might count as an aesthetic sin. But a little tackiness, judiciously applied, could keep the Vatican II spirit alive forever.

[Max Lindenman is a freelance writer based in Phoenix, Ariz. He entered the church in 2008, and covers Phoenix's Catholic beat for Examiner.com.]

**Support independent reporting on important issues.**



**Source URL (retrieved on 06/23/2017 - 02:11):** <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/eucharistic-adoration-peaceful-despite-squabble>

**Links:**

[1] [http://www.therealpresence.org/chap\\_fr.htm](http://www.therealpresence.org/chap_fr.htm)

[2] <https://www.ncronline.org/donate?clickSource=article-end>