

Pope: Vatican II did not downplay eucharistic adoration

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Jun. 7, 2012

ROME -- A misunderstanding of the Second Vatican Council has led some Catholics to think that eucharistic adoration and Corpus Christi processions are pietistic practices that pale in importance to the celebration of Mass, Pope Benedict XVI said.

"A unilateral interpretation of the Second Vatican Council has penalized this dimension" of Catholic faith, which is to recognize Jesus truly present in the Eucharist and worthy of adoration, the pope said June 7 during a Mass marking the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The evening Mass outside Rome's Basilica of St. John Lateran preceded a moment of silent adoration and the pope's traditional Corpus Christi procession with the Eucharist through the streets of Rome.

In his homily, the pope told the thousands of people gathered on the basilica lawn that it is important to recognize the centrality of the celebration of Mass, the moment in which the Lord gathers his people, nourishes them and unites them to himself in offering his sacrifice.

But if Christ is seen as present in the Eucharist only during Mass, "this imbalance has repercussions on the spiritual life of the faithful," who need to be aware of "the constant presence of Jesus among us and with us," the pope said.

"The sacrament of the charity of Christ must permeate all one's daily life," he said.

Celebration and adoration are not in competition, the pope said. "Worshipping the Blessed Sacrament constitutes something like the spiritual environment in which the community can celebrate the Eucharist well and in truth."

Pope Benedict said Mass is most meaningful when the faithful recognize that in the Blessed Sacrament, the Lord is present, "awaits us, invites us to his table and then, after the assembly disperses, remains with us with his discrete and silent presence."

Spending time in prolonged silence before the Eucharist "is one of the most authentic experiences of our being church," and it finds its complement at Mass when Catholics "celebrate the Eucharist, listening to the word of God, singing, approaching together the table of the bread of life."

Truly entering into communion with someone, he said, is accompanied by "exchanging glances and intense, eloquent silences full of respect and veneration."

"If this dimension is missing, even sacramental communion can become a superficial gesture on our part," the pope said.

Pope Benedict said another misunderstanding -- one influenced "by a certain secular mentality" of the 1960s and '70s -- was the idea that the Bible teaches that with the coming of Christ, rituals and sacrifices no longer

should have meaning; basically, he said, some people believe "the sacred no longer exists."

It is true that Christ inaugurated a new form of worship, one tied less to a place and a ritual and more to his person, but people still need "signs and rites," the pope said. In fact, without its annual Corpus Christi procession, "the spiritual profile of Rome" would change.

Preceded by members of parish eucharistic associations, children who recently made their first Communion, religious, seminarians, priests, bishops and cardinals walking to the Basilica of St. Mary Major, Pope Benedict rode on the back of a truck facing the Blessed Sacrament, which was held in a gem-studded gold monstrance.

Thousands of people carrying candles walked behind the pope. People watching from the sidewalks behind metal barriers tossed flower petals in front of the truck and joined in singing eucharistic hymns and reciting litanies.

Darkness fell as the procession made its way to St. Mary Major, and the evening ended with the pope blessing the crowd with the Blessed Sacrament.

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