

**Homily for the 20th Anniversary of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration
St. Mary's Hospital Chapel, Decatur**

March 3, 2015

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Reverend Fathers and Deacons, consecrated religious, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ: it is good that we are here to celebrate this 20th Anniversary of Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration here at St. Mary's Hospital. For the past twenty years, men, women, and children have come to this chapel both day and night to spend time with our Lord, resting in His loving presence, thanking Him for His countless blessings, and bringing to Him their various needs and intentions.

When Jesus instituted the Sacrament of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, as we just heard in the Gospel, He left us the greatest gift possible, the gift of Himself in His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, truly present in the Eucharist, while remaining hidden under the forms of bread and wine. Our reception of this great sacrament at Mass is the "source and summit" of our entire lives as Christians, as it brings us into a deeper communion with the Lord and with all of those united to Him in the bond of His love.

Contrary to some who would suggest otherwise, that bond with Christ and His Mystical Body is strengthened through the practice of Eucharistic Adoration, for “[t]he act of adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself.”¹ Spending time in prayerful adoration seems like a waste of time to our efficiency-driven culture. The truth of the matter is that time spent with Jesus is never time wasted but always time used well; it is not simply time spent sitting, but an experience of love. Our time in prayer is an opportunity for us to further develop our personal relationship with the God who loves us. It is out of that awareness of being beloved sons and daughters of God that we more lovingly follow Him in our daily lives.

As you are probably aware, our diocese is embarking on a path more intensely focused on stewardship and discipleship. The inclusion of the theme of discipleship with stewardship is intentional, as stewardship is the result of committed discipleship. The disciples in the Gospel were those who knew the Lord and were close to Him. We are all called to be disciples and the same must be true for us, that we know Him and are close to Him. This takes place in the Mass and is strengthened in Eucharistic Adoration.

It is therefore timely that we have this celebration today, as the presence of this chapel, and other places in our diocese like it, are very crucial to the success of promoting this way of life. These sacred places of adoration provide the opportunity for the faithful to strengthen their bond of communion with the Lord and so become more dedicated disciples who serve Him and His Church as good stewards of the many gifts that they have received from Him.

The strengthened bond of communion with the Lord resulting from Eucharistic Adoration also necessarily includes our bond of communion with others. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, highlights this theme in an address from this past summer on the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*, when he said the following:

This communion of ours with the Lord commits us, his disciples, to imitate him, making of our existence, with our attitudes, bread broken for others, as the Master broke bread which is really his flesh. For us, instead, it is our generous behavior towards our neighbor which demonstrates the attitude of breaking our life for others.²

In Eucharistic Adoration, this communion with others takes place first in the form of prayer. Particularly here in this hospital, when we come

to adore the Lord we bring with us those patients who are in need of healing and of comfort, the nurses who provide compassionate care, the doctors who seek to alleviate the pains of the body, and the families who feel helpless.

In addition to those prayers, we bring before the Lord the many intentions of others who have asked for our prayers, those for whom we have promised to pray, and indeed for all of those of whom we are aware who are in need of God's assistance in their lives. We also pray for the needs of our parishes and the diocese, placing special emphasis on praying for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, that more young men and women will have the courage to respond to the Lord's invitation to follow Him more closely in the Sacrament of Holy Orders or in consecrated religious life.

We are also encouraged to pray for holy marriages and families, particularly during this time that the Church has dedicated to this topic. The institution of marriage and the structure of the family have been under assault in recent decades and our prayers are very much needed in order to bring clarity and healing in our culture.

We are also mindful at this time of the urgent need for prayers for our brothers and sisters who are suffering persecution because of their Christian faith, particularly those who are suffering daily at the hands of extremist terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in the Middle East and Boko Haram in Nigeria. Although the situation is indeed grave and may seem hopeless, our faith reminds us that “nothing will be impossible for God” (Luke 1:37), and so we trustingly bring those prayers before the Lord who waits day and night to hear and answer them.

In this regard, Pope St. John Paul II emphasized the intimate connection between Eucharistic Adoration and our hope for conversion and peace when he said:

The best, the most effective, and the surest way of bringing about an everlasting peace on the face of the earth is through the great power of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, because only Jesus has the power and the love to redirect the course of human history back to the path of peace, which He promised.³

As we continue this greatest act of adoration of Jesus in the celebration of the Mass, I express my deep gratitude to all of you who are involved in this important apostolate of Eucharistic Adoration here at St.

Mary's Hospital. I have no doubt that the many hours of prayer here in this chapel have contributed to Lord's bestowing many blessings on this community, on our diocese, and on the Universal Church. Some of these blessings have been visible, while many of them have remained invisible, but all have nonetheless served to strengthen the Mystical Body of Christ in significant ways.

This chapel is a place of extreme importance for the future of our Church and the world. It is my prayer that you will see the great opportunity that you have in contributing to the continued mission of the Church by praying for all of her needs throughout the world. I also pray that you will see this chapel as a place for deepening your relationship with the Lord, and personally inviting others to do the same. By doing so, each of us will grow to be more committed disciples of the Lord who seek to offer ourselves in service to the building up of the Kingdom where we all hope to be at the end of our journey, adoring our Lord face to face for all eternity.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, §66.

² Pope Francis, Angelus Address, 22 June 2014.

³ Pope St. John Paul II, Address, 2 December 1981.