

# Participating in God's Love

40 Hours Devotion Reflection

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My brothers and sisters in Christ,

Thank you for inviting me to be with you during these sacred days of Forty Hours Devotion. It is always a privilege to spend time before Our Eucharistic Lord and to proclaim His truth and His love in His presence.

I often say when I preach at Forty Hours: if my words ever get in the way, then simply continue to adore Him.

And I mean that sincerely.

We are here for Jesus Christ. We are here to adore the Lord truly present in the Holy Eucharist. My role is simply to help us enter more deeply into the mystery already before us — the mystery of God's love made present in the Eucharist.

Before entering into any great mystery, we prepare ourselves. Athletes stretch before a game. We prepare our minds and bodies to enter fully into what lies ahead.

The same is true spiritually.

Our minds are often crowded with the noise and distractions of daily life — family gatherings, responsibilities, conversations, worries, and the constant activity of the world around us. Then suddenly we enter a quiet church and attempt to contemplate the infinite mystery of God.

So tonight, let us “stretch” spiritually.

Let us pause and consider the vastness of creation itself.

At this very moment, the earth is spinning at roughly one thousand miles per hour. We are traveling around the sun at nearly sixty-seven thousand miles per hour, while the sun itself is approximately ninety-three million miles away.

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Most of us cannot even fully grasp the physical universe around us.

And yet tonight we are invited to contemplate the Creator of that universe.

The God who created all things — visible and invisible, physical and spiritual — has revealed Himself to us. More astonishing still, He took on our human flesh. He entered into our world. He died. And He rose again.

That is the heart of Christianity.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ makes no sense without first speaking about death. Yet we often grow uncomfortable when speaking about death. We become silent around it. But Christianity proclaims the greatest possible hope:

There is life after death.

This world is not the end.

Jesus Christ entered death itself and rose victorious. He was seen alive after His death. Because of Him, we live with hope, joy, peace, and confidence that eternal life awaits those who belong to Him.

The resurrection changes everything.

During my years in seminary, one word continually emerged in my philosophical studies: participation.

Philosophy pointed toward the idea that somehow human beings participate in realities greater than themselves — realities beyond what we can fully see or comprehend.

Then during my theological studies, another word became central: mystery.

The more we learn about God, the more we realize how infinite He truly is. We cannot even fully comprehend the physical universe around us. How much less can we fully comprehend God Himself?

And yet these two realities come together beautifully in the life of faith:

We participate in the mystery of God.

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God is not distant. God shares His life with us. He invites us into communion with Him. As Sacred Scripture says, we become “partakers of the divine nature.”

This is exactly what happens in the Holy Eucharist.

Jesus Christ, who gave Himself completely on the Cross, remains truly present among us. At the Last Supper He said:

“Take and eat. This is my Body.

Take and drink. This is my Blood.”

When we receive Holy Communion, we are not simply remembering Jesus. We are participating in His divine life. We are being drawn into communion with the living God.

That is the great mystery before us tonight.

And why does God share His life with us?

Because God is love.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel:

“There is no greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

Christ laid down His life for us. In the Eucharist, He continues to give Himself entirely to us.

What, then, are we called to do?

We are called to love.

The greatest commandments are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

But we cannot give what we have not first received.

In the Eucharist, Christ strengthens us with His own divine love so that we may love others as He loves us.

Years ago, when Pope Benedict XVI became pope, there was much discussion and debate throughout the Church about what direction he would take. Yet his very first encyclical gave the answer clearly and beautifully.

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Its title was Deus Caritas Est — “God Is Love.”

Pope Benedict reminded the Church that everything begins with God's love for us. And he explained that the Christian life is a response to that love.

He wrote that the purpose of the encyclical was to awaken “a renewed energy and commitment in the human response to God's love.”

That response is not abstract.

Pope Benedict says we learn love by contemplating the pierced side of Christ on the Cross. There we see the total self-giving love of Jesus, who offered Himself completely to the Father for our salvation.

And where do we encounter that same self-giving love today?

In the Holy Eucharist.

The Eucharist is the glorified presence of Jesus Christ, who gave Himself entirely for us. Every time we adore the Blessed Sacrament or receive Holy Communion, we participate in that total gift of self.

And this participation must transform us.

Pope Benedict wrote these powerful words:

“A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.”

In other words, if our worship does not lead us to love others more deeply, then we have missed something essential.

The Eucharist is not meant to remain only within the walls of the church. The love we receive from Christ must become visible in the way we treat others, forgive others, serve others, and sacrifice for others.

Tonight, as we adore Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, may we enter more deeply into the mystery of His divine love.

May we recognize that we are called not only to worship Him, but also to participate in His life.

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And may every moment spent before the Eucharist strengthen us to go forth and live a concrete practice of love in the world.

Amen.