

## *What's All This Talk About "Adoration" and the "Blessed Sacrament" I Am Hearing About?*

### **Part 4 – "The obligation to advance in Christian perfection."**

We will have a brief excursus from our series on Eucharistic Adoration to discuss something that lead up to its necessity: **The obligation to advance in Christian perfection.**

At the beginning of St Paul's epistle to the Romans, the Apostle writes of how the justice or righteousness of God is revealed "*from faith to faith*" (my translation, *Rom 1:17*). Thus St Paul points out that faith is not a *static* virtue but a *dynamic* one: *From faith to faith*. And faith, according to the *Catechism*, is the surrendering of one's intellect and will to God (CCC, ¶ 143), and there is always room for *more* surrendering of one's intellect and will. Moreover, St Paul praises the Christians of Thessalonika, because he recognizes that their "faith is *growing* abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is *increasing*" (2 *Thess 1:4*).

So, not only does faith grow, so too does love or charity, which is the *end* and the *champion* of the virtues. Here we come to grips with an important truth: That **Christian perfection consists of growth towards heroic charity.**

Many Catholics operate on the assumption that the Christian life is something we can 'coast' through, or take on 'autopilot' or put on 'cruise control.' Not so! Jesus *commanded* us, "Be *perfect*, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Mt 5:48*). Similarly, St Paul speaks of Christian *maturity* in these words: "Him [= Christ] we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man *mature in Christ*" (*Col 1:28*).

Notice, too, St Paul's use of the word "wisdom" here. It is one of the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (*Is 11:2-3*) and, indeed, the *summit* of the seven Gifts which we must exercise, beginning with the lowest and climbing to the highest: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (*Ps 111:1; Prov 9:10*).

Many Catholics, moreover, are content to be simply free of mortal sin, which—though it is a good start—is not enough. We must not only avoid mortal sin *and* venial sin, we must also be *detached* from sin *and* *advance* in virtue. In *Luke 9:23*, the Lord Jesus says: "If any want to become My followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow Me." Here, Jesus gives us the pattern of Christian perfection in three steps: (1) "deny"—to renounce sin; (2) "take up his cross"—to practice virtue; (3) "follow Me"—to *imitate Christ*, who is the model and exemplar of perfection.

But is this possible? Barely!—but God has given us the help of *grace* to assist us in advancing towards Christian perfection: "Without Me you can do nothing" (*Jn 15:5*); "For *God is at work in you*, both to *will* and to *work* for his good pleasure" (*Phil 2:13*). Thus the collect serves us well: "Direct, we beseech you, O Lord, our actions by your holy inspirations, and carry them on by your gracious assistance, that every prayer and work of ours may begin always with you, and through you come to completion. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

How does this factor into our overall subject of Eucharistic Adoration? Since it is *Christ* we imitate, and since the Eucharist is the *Sacrament of Charity*, we seek the face of Jesus Himself, so that He may mold us into a more perfect disciple. "Thou hast said, 'See ye My face.' My heart says to thee, 'Thy face, Lord, do I seek!'" (*Ps 27:8*).