

ADORATION 101

The Sacrament of Charity:

The Eucharist and Eschatology

Moving forward in Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Letter on the Sacrament of Charity we come now to uncovering the relationship between eschatology and the Holy Eucharist. Eschatology is the branch of Church teaching that treats of the last things: death, the particular (when we die) and general (at the end of the world) judgment, heaven, hell and purgatory.

The Holy Father tells us that the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist, are specifically for our journey here on earth. A "foretaste of heaven to come" - our goal in life - which he reminds us is what we were all created for. We need to be guided towards our goal. In our wounded nature we eagerly anticipate our heavenly reward by remaining obedient to Christ through participation in the goal itself, Jesus. In other words, in His love, God gave Himself as a ransom for our sins in order that He may be with us for eternity. But we need a boost. And that boost is none other than God Himself, veiled in the Blessed Sacrament. "Even though we remain 'aliens and exiles' in this world," His Holiness tells us, "through faith we already share in the fullness of risen life."

By His gift of self, Christ inaugurated the eschatological age. This means that the whole of human history, especially with God's chosen people, have been given a way to reunite themselves with their Creator. Jesus gathered His scattered people and was able to bring about the promises God made to the fathers of old. At the Last Supper, therefore, Christ gave the Twelve a mandate to celebrate His memorial. Showing He wished to "transfer [onto] the entire community which He founded the task of being, within history, the sign and instrument of the eschatological gathering of the People of God." What Christ did for us then He continues to do for us today in the Liturgy of the Eucharist through Apostolic Succession!

The Eucharistic banquet is a foretaste of the final banquet foretold by the prophets, and described in the New Testament as the "marriage feast of the Lamb," to be celebrated with joy with the communion of saints! The Blessed Sacrament is of the utmost importance in the Christian life. So much so that our Lord even said, "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:52) **NEXT WEEK:** We begin on Mary and the Eucharist – Paul A. Ray

(Based on *Sacramentum caritatis*, para. 30-31)