

ADORATION 101

The Sacrament of Charity:

The Eucharist and Holy Matrimony

We continue our studies into Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "*Sacramentum Caritatis*" (The Sacrament of Charity) by examining his insight on the relationship between the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Pope Benedict immediately refers to Pope St. John Paul II's wisdom when he described the Eucharist as, "... the Sacrament of our redemption and the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and the Bride." "The entire Christian life bears the mark", he continues, "of the spousal love between Christ and the Church." Baptism is our entry into the Church and our "nuptial bath" which precedes the ultimate wedding feast.

The Eucharist, first of all, strengthens the marital vows of husband and wife so they may live as Christ calls them to live within their marriage. The Eucharist is also the source of every believer's strength when striving towards the end for which they were created. It gives us the power to live as Christ commands us to live. St. Paul reminds us that conjugal love is a sacramental sign of Christ's love for His Church, a love culminating in the Cross, and it is His expression of His "marriage" with humanity.

Just as a husband and wife live in intimacy with one another through the Sacrament of Matrimony, Christ is able to live in an intimate union with all of us through the Eucharist. It's establishment was for just that, It is the very Heart of union between God and us as consummation in marriage is for the couple. Both have the ability to lead to new life.

Pope Benedict then touches upon some pastoral concerns involving marriage, mainly polygamy. Without getting too specific, he encourages us and reminds us that, "*During the Catechumenate, Christ encounters them (those struggling in their marriage) in their specific circumstances, and calls them to embrace the full truth of love, making whatever sacrifices are necessary in order to arrive at perfect ecclesial communion.*" The Church must remain gentle yet firm; understanding that all marital situations and circumstances involve good pastoral care with the understanding of the intrinsic relationship between Matrimony and the Eucharist.

NEXT WEEK: The Eucharist and the Indissolubility of Marriage – Paul A. Ray