

## ADORATION 101

### SACRAMENT OF CHARITY: *The Eucharist and the Sacraments*

In last week's column on Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (The Sacrament of Charity) we spoke about the Eucharist in the life of the Church (paragraphs 14-15 in the document). We learned how and why the Church considers It the "*Source and Summit*" of our Christian faith. This week, we will take a closer look at the Holy Eucharist and the Sacraments.

One of the most beautiful things I discovered when becoming Catholic was how all of the Church's teachings, and theology in general, were all connected to one another. All of the Church's doctrines need one another, and when one goes, they all go. It's like a web, a network, interconnected and sustaining the Church so it can truly be, as the Second Vatican Council calls it, the "sacrament of salvation" for the human race. The Eucharist, as Source and Summit, is at the very center of it all.

Pope Benedict here quotes from the Second Vatican Council's document called *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (On the Ministry and Life of Priests) when describing the Holy Eucharist in relation to the other Sacraments of the Church: "*All the sacraments, indeed all Church ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and directed towards It. For in the Most Blessed Eucharist is contained the entire spiritual wealth of the Church, namely, Christ Himself our Pasch (Sacrificial Lamb) and our living bread, who gives life to humanity through His flesh – that flesh which is given life and gives life by the Holy Spirit. (PresOrd, 5)*"

The Church herself can also be understood as a sacrament. Strictly speaking, a Sacrament is a sensible sign, instituted by Jesus Christ, by which invisible grace and inward sanctification are communicated to the soul. Focusing on this, Pope Benedict continues, can aid us in fully understanding the close relationship of the Eucharist with the others Sacraments and the Christian life. It shows us the means by which God uses to apply the graces won for us by Christ on Calvary, and our own responsibility once accepting them. In short, it shows us the path we are to take, a guiding light for this life, that we must remain on to fulfill our ultimate destiny.

The Church, with the primacy on the Eucharist, along with the other Sacraments, is the whole of our lives. She *receives* from Christ, the Redeemer, the Sacraments, and *applies* them to the faithful in order that through them, our lives may become a pleasing act of worship toward God. They all work and operate in cooperation with one another. This gives understanding, meaning and purpose to our existence and is the firm ground by which we live our lives the way they were meant to be. **NEXT WEEK:** The Eucharist and Christian Initiation – Paul A. Ray