

Reflection #2: Renewed Amazement

“As soon as is possible... we must return to the Eucharist with a purified heart, with a renewed amazement, with an increased desire to meet the Lord, to be with him, to receive him and to bring him to our brothers and sisters with the witness of a life full of faith, love and hope.” - Cardinal Robert Sarah, “Let Us Return to the Eucharist with Joy”

Fireworks, parades and other spectacles astound and thrill us for however long they last--until we head home or click off our devices. We remain mere spectators, however, unless our life orientation, our capacity to behold, wonder, and perceive what lies below the surface is reshaped by what we have experienced. The crowds who witnessed Jesus' miraculous healings, mastery over nature, dominion over evil spirits, ability to turn water into wine and multiply loaves and fish did not automatically enter into a deeper relationship with God.

We are beckoned to abide, adore, and offer ourselves to God in return for the gift of his very person, his enduring presence as Emmanuel, God-with-us. The Eucharistic Jesus, reserved in tabernacles in churches and chapels around our Diocese and throughout the world, is the Son at the center of a spiritual solar system –an entire universe ordered by the axial coordinates of the Cross. All we are, all we say and do, is intended by the Creator to revolve around Jesus.

Pope Francis cautions us—citing the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas á Kempis—against the sort of spiritual voyeurism that flits from one thing to the next, superficially occupying our senses before passing on to the next stimulating bundle of impressions being supplied to us on the internet (see *Evangelii Gaudium* n. 91). How quickly we can become the “ugly Americans” touring cyberspace, pausing for a moment as we take a virtual snapshot, then checking off our list in a wearying “been there, done that” mentality. No wonder our hearts remain restless, missing the peace that only Christ's presence can bring! Our “spiritual attention deficit disorder,” aided and abetted by the digital explosion, must yield by choice to seek out Jesus and stay with him—for a brief visit. And for those who have cultivated the habit and desire, to spend an hour with Jesus in the garden, where suffering and consolation mingle as he shares with us our own personal portion and cup.

Moses, the Magi, the Samaritan woman at the well, even Nicodemus who first came to Jesus at night and then ministered to his sacred body as it was laid in the tomb: all were willing to bend their knees, their wills, and humble themselves before a God available to us in signs and senses. Yet God remains irreducible to our preconceptions or preferences. When Jesus tells his disciples in John 6 that unless they eat his flesh and drink his blood, they will not have life within them, many listeners grumble and go away. Jesus wonders if those who linger also wish to leave. Yet, with freedom of the Spirit, Simon Peter exclaims, “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:66-68).

Adoration is the only fitting response to the immediate experience of the God who alone is adequate to satisfy our own hearts' desires. We harbor a longing that exceeds even our own awareness; God has instilled the capacity to transcend ourselves. God often initially provides us with an "ecstatic" slipping beyond self-consciousness or hesitation, in order to unite us with his Beauty and Mystery. We sense how Love Divine, joy of heaven has come down to earth. This pure and unlimited love is meant for beholding, consuming, and bearing life to others.

When we come before Christ's Eucharistic presence, it is not primarily our own consolation or stimulation that we should seek. Spiritual fireworks will yield to stillness, silence; sense absence guides ready souls to the presence beheld only by faith. The tabernacle of Eucharistic reservation unites and resonates with God's presence dwelling within our hearts. We are enfolded in love, raised beyond sin and death to freedom and true life. Jesus remains with us, in us. Amazement yields to enduring communion, transforming our prayer by God's generous initiative. Contemplation is God's anointed blessing for those who can stand the strain and allow God's grace to draw them beyond their own distractions.

St. Ignatius of Antioch counsels: "He who has the word of Jesus can truly listen also to his silence, in order to be perfect, that he may act through his speech and be known by his silence. Nothing is hidden from the Lord, but even our secrets are close to him. Let us then do everything in the knowledge that he is dwelling within us that we may be his temples, and he God within us" (Letter to the Ephesians).

As with Mary, Mother of our Eucharistic Lord, we take all things to heart, pondering a Mystery that continues to reveal himself, but only to those seeking more than self-gratification. How marvelously are the words of the Psalmist realized: "There is one thing I ask of the Lord, only this do I seek: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord, to inquire at his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

◆ Reflection Questions

- *How has a "spiritual attention deficit disorder" crept into my own spiritual life?*
- *When I seek to meet Jesus in the Eucharist, what ultimately am I seeking?*
- *How can I become more attentive to Jesus dwelling within me?*

◆ Petitionary Prayers

- *For the courage to focus, that dying to the distractions which overwhelm, refiling exhausted patience, and calming the soul which questions, we might behold the miracle of the Eucharist with renewed amazement, we pray...*
- *For the grace to be grounded, that our hearts may once again be firmly rooted in the Eucharistic fountain of life, we pray...*
- *For the grace to see Jesus, that our Eucharistic Lord might again stir our hearts to gaze on the beauty of God, we pray...*