

Eucharistic adoration brings us closer to Jesus

written by Aprille Hanson Spivey |



Myths vs. Facts about Perpetual adoration

For those who have never participated in perpetual Eucharistic adoration, setting aside an hour each week can be daunting. Taffy Council, who has coordinated perpetual adoration at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Benton for 18 years, said myths can easily be dispelled about having a holy hour.

- **Myth:** You have to sit and pray the entire time.

Fact: Council said people must be reverent, genuflect in front of the Blessed Sacrament, but as far as structure, that's it.

"It has been my place, the calm within my storm to sit in the chapel and just let him speak to me, to heal me wherever I need to be healed." Jo Ann Gourley

"It's a love story unfolding," she said, and sometimes that means structured praying, just talking to Jesus or reading holy literature.

Many adorers read the Bible, Scripture study books and Arkansas Catholic in adoration.

"I yearn for people to enter into whatever prayer they choose that's going to draw them closer to Christ. By that, I mean that they're going to become more and more aware of who this is before them. That yes, wow, that really is Jesus Christ pressed between two pieces of glass.

He's choosing to be here on this altar."

- **Myth:** I can't sign up for a holy hour because I don't have time. I might miss one or discover it was not the right hour for me.

Fact: "We're flexible and we move according to the changes in people's lives. If someone signs up for an hour and it doesn't work for them, then we're going to work and find them an hour," she said, adding one person had to try five different hours "before finding the hour that worked for them. ... Nothing is forever as far as the hour."

Often there are two adorers during certain hours, so someone is always present. People can also volunteer to just be a substitute when needed.

"We don't have time not to," she added in reference to people who say they're too busy. "Especially when we look around this world today."

- **Myth:** If I don't see spiritual fireworks or have a great epiphany, adoration isn't working for me.

Fact: "People think that every time you go to adoration you're supposed to have some warm fuzzy feeling or a tender moment where you're almost brought to tears because you're so overwhelmed with Christ's love. ... It's not about our warm fuzzies. It's knowing this is Jesus Christ" and being open to that relationship.

- **Myth:** It's not safe to go to church to pray at night or alone.

Fact: "We're doing a good job in this diocese of maintaining a secure environment," Council said. "In the almost 20 years we've gone from no security to adding additional security and I know some chapels even have hired security. I've never heard of any kind of criminal incident in any of our chapels."

Stay with Jesus

Taffy Council, who travels to parishes or corresponds via email or phone calls to give parishes tips on starting and sustaining perpetual Eucharistic adoration, said the bottom line is "to pray and to pray and to pray."

"There will always be one or two persons that the Holy Spirit will inspire in a parish, and I really do believe that. I've seen that over and over. It's that person or persons going to their pastor after they've prayed asking if they can begin the process. If they're a tiny, tiny parish, they can begin to have adoration within the boundaries of their ability," she said.

Council said it's best to use online resources, including <https://mostholyeucharist.com>.

Here are some tips Council said helped her parish's program as well as others:

- Pray; "Each member of the team is asked to pray for the adorers in their assigned group."
- Maintain an intact organizational team: "This ideally consists of pastor, coordinator, four division leaders, 24 hourly captains and a database manager. It is essential for smooth

operation and fostering relationship/effective communication among adorers.”

- Promote the ATF (Adorer To Follow) maneuver; an adorer or team member who asks for a substitute contacts the adorer who comes before to pass along the name and contact information of the substitute, to avoid any surprises, Council said.
- “Provide ongoing inspiration and resources for growth in Eucharistic spirituality.”
- “Refresh adoration at least every two to three years with a Eucharistic mission for all parishioners.”
- “Continue to invite all to sign up for a holy hour.”

For more information, email Council at taffy council@gmail.com.

There are 168 hours in a week. Each week, adults on average watch about 27 to 36 hours of television, spend at least 40 hours working and about 56 hours sleeping.

Faithful Catholics devote at least an hour a week to Mass, but devoting just one more hour to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus can open up another world of spirituality during Lent.

Eleven Arkansas parishes out of 128 have perpetual Eucharistic adoration, adoring Jesus Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Dozens of other parishes offer it from one hour to six days a week.

“We come to know ourselves best when we know God. And there is no greater way to know the Father than through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit within the holy Mass and then going on into Eucharistic adoration,” said Taffy Council, a well-known promoter of perpetual adoration in Arkansas.

‘Here I am’

Council, a parishioner at Our Lady of Fatima Church in Benton, began her parish’s perpetual adoration program 18 years ago. Since then, she has helped several parishes throughout Arkansas, neighboring states and even as far away as California and Nova Scotia to start perpetual adoration or keep theirs afloat. She travels to speak with about three parishes a year and corresponds with more via email and phone calls.

“We come to Mass as community. We participate in the liturgy together with all of our senses — we’ve got the bells, the smells, we extend our hands, we pray together,” Council said. “... It makes even more sense to then take the grace of that sacrament before the Blessed Sacrament: ‘OK Lord, here I am; I’m bringing what you just gave me and I’m here to spend this time with you and let’s unpack it.’”

Council said a common misconception about perpetual adoration is what’s expected of each person. (See sidebar, page 12.)

“He just asks us to be there,” she said. “Where else today can we find a place that we can just

be. There are no expectations but simply to come and look at Jesus and let Jesus," speak his will in our life.

Changing lives

Jo Ann Gourley has been praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament even before perpetual adoration started at Our Lady of Fatima. Getting in the chapel is a process, walking to the back of her van with a cane to unload her wheelchair. Stormy weather presents challenges, but she's been blessed by help when needed. She was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1994.

"Going there helps me to deal with what I'm going through. I have come to the adoration chapel at the time when it first came about at Our Lady of Fatima; I was going through a divorce and the MS had just taken a turn for the worse," leaving her to raise two children on a fixed income. "I was hurt that he would allow this" but "sitting at the chapel has been a time of getting to know God better and knowing he is with me through it all. It just gives me a lot of strength."

She adores from 9 to 10 a.m. on Fridays, taking a break in the summers when the heat is overwhelming.

"It has been my place, the calm within my storm to sit in the chapel and just let him speak to me, to heal me wherever I need to be healed," she said.

Judy Wurtz, perpetual adoration coordinator for St. Paul Church in Pocahontas admits she was "one of the doubting Thomas'" when fellow parishioner Pennie Earsa and others suggested perpetual adoration.

"I said, 'I just don't think we can get it 24 hours seven days a week,' but I'll take an hour if you want me to do it," Wurtz said.

But when a priest with the Missionaries of the Most Holy Eucharist came to speak, "I guess the Holy Spirit moved me. I heard an inner voice of Jesus saying to me, 'Judy, get the ball rolling.'"

With about 200 adorers in a parish of just 400 families, that ball has been rolling for the past 22 years.

While there are challenges at times, dedicated adorers pick up the slack. Earsa and her husband Daniel have two adoration hours. Up until this year, she also went by herself from 2 to 3 a.m.

"It's like being with a true friend. I can just speak to him and he listens and sometimes if I listen well enough, he speaks to me," she said. "I think when one part of the family hurts, the whole family hurts. We can present our petitions to Jesus right there for the desires of the whole parish so they can be united and heal."

Todd Krauser, parishioner at Christ the King Church in Little Rock for the past six months, jumped back into adoration after a hiatus while attending a church without a perpetual adoration program.

"You feel like you're missing something," he admits.

Though his schedule is busy as co-president of Metro Appliances & More in Maumelle, he makes the time from 4 to 5 a.m. every Tuesday. He has read the Bible cover to cover and prays the rosary. "It just makes me take a step back ... to put my family in perspective and where everything is at. Say a prayer over the company every single day and giving thanks."

From about March until November, sunrise to sunset, Rob Roberts is busy on RDR Farms, where his family raises rice, soybeans and corn. The Pocahontas parishioner felt called about four years ago to start adoration, taking 2 to 3 a.m. Mondays.

In adoration, he'll pray and read the Bible. After, he'll head home and pay the bills for the week before work begins.

"If it wasn't for this hour in adoration there would be times of the year where I would just drift away more than I would now. I still go to church on Sundays as usual, but it brings me back and a little bit closer to where I need to be," he said.

'Save the world'

Transformed lives are a hallmark of adoration, but getting Catholics to surrender in the busy world can be a little like herding cats. But there's always a light bulb moment, Council said, likening it to hearing a favorite song.

"Every time you hear it, something just kind of pings inside of you ... That's your 'ah-ha' moment about that song. There's something about that that touches your heart. The word of God is like that. The same thing happens for us when we are before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."

In an effort to help perpetual adoration programs run more smoothly, Council said a secure website is in the final stages that will be open to all parishes that adorers can use to as an up-to-date database for communication, information and catechesis. It will be free and include a Spanish version.

Amid the countless distractions that can pull faithful away from God, Eucharistic adoration is a chance to make a difference in our lives and the world.

"We're living in a culture of fear and a lot of sin. Eucharistic adoration can save the world, saints have talked about that. It can save the Church," Council said. "We cannot afford not to take the time to come to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."