

# Eucharistic devotion has diminished since Vatican II

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier columnist

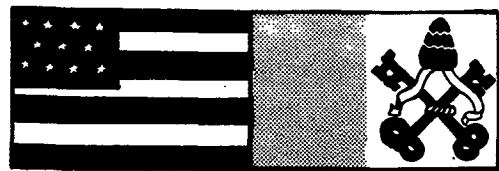
Question: Do you think there has been less devotion to the Blessed Sacrament since Vatican II?

Answer: Yes. Not because of Vatican II, but because of the exaggerated sociological sentiments of the many who took over liturgical things.

I first became conscious of this at a three-day seminar I attended at Christ the King Seminary in the Buffalo diocese more than 20 years ago.

The seminar was supposed to focus on preaching, and I went to improve my mind. It had the usual format with speeches by the director, Father McNulty, a Dominican, and a team of three or four others — including one woman.

As is the custom, there was a get-acquainted coffee hour the first night. Participants met in the cafeteria, sipped coffee and sized one another up while exchanging



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

ideas.

I sat at a table with two other priests and a tense woman in her 40s. Not wearing a habit was not yet common then, but it turned out that the lady was a Dominican nun. She wore earrings, which I later discovered usually indicates the theological and liturgical thrust of the wearer.

The priests were discussing some odds and ends when she interposed sharply: "Priests are too hung up on the Blessed Sacrament."

With miraculous restraint I remained

silent, though wondering how one could be too concerned about Our Lord. My two priest companions looked at her in astonishment. She continued, "Yes. Priests are too hung up about the Blessed Sacrament. They ought to be out among the people, bringing social justice and helping the poor."

Now the sister was not denying the Real Presence, but evidently felt that eucharistic devotion took away time and energies that might better be used for upgrading the status of the poor and disadvantaged.

The next day — still mulling over the encounter — I met Father McNulty and asked: "What gives with that sister? She is seething with anger, and thinks we priests are too devoted to the Blessed Sacrament."

"Oh, she's a very intelligent sister," he replied. "In fact, she writes articles for the sisters' spirituality periodicals. She is

having trouble with her community, and we thought if she worked as part of our team we might be able to save her vocation."

Since meeting her these past 25 years or so, we have watched the gradual decline of appreciation for and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Eternal reverence toward the Blessed Sacrament has deteriorated — affecting the interior — and many youngsters do not even know what the Blessed Sacrament is. Many churches are locked after morning Mass until the following day.

Sometime this is necessary because of vandalism, but it does not take a liturgical Einstein to discover means of keeping many churches open. Our Lord said to Margaret Mary, "Behold this heart which has loved men so much, but in return I receive coldness and indifference, especially toward the sacrament of my love."

Although some parishes bring the children en masse or in small groups to "make a visit to Our Lord," children in many Catholic schools are not educated to appreciate the fact that Jesus is present in this special eucharistic way. We used to speak of our churches as "the House of God" with a special consciousness that Christ is in the tabernacle and would stop in for a visit, or get to Mass early to pray in the Divine Presence. There is a thrust today to take the Lord away from the center of the sanctuary, park Him in some unseen place — a stand on the side, a room removed, a side altar visible from only the church auditorium.

One of our loveliest hymns was composed by Thomas Aquinas: "Adoro Te, devote, latens Dieta" (I adore Thee devoutly, O hidden Godhead).

Our leaders and our parents would do well to maximize not minimize devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

# Painful experience improves sufferer, spectators

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) John 10:1-10; (R1) Acts 2:14, 36-41; (R2) 1 Peter 2:20-25.

In the gospel, Jesus contrasts Himself with the false shepherds of Israel, who have just expelled the blind man He had cured from the synagogue. The "blind" shepherds do not care at all for the sheep. They kill them for eating. ("The thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy.")

The true shepherd pastures them. He seeks only their wool (their good works), not their lives.

Jesus is not only the good shepherd who cares for and is committed to His sheep, but He is also the gate. All those who would be shepherds must pass through Him. Today the gate is the successor of Peter, the Holy Father. Those who dissent from him to not pass through the gate.

Peter, a good shepherd, calls the strays back to the fold: "Reform ... be baptized ... be forgiven ... receive the Holy Spirit." Three thousand people hear his voice and follow him (R1).

Those who have returned to the fold will have a hard row to hoe because they must follow the example of the Good Shepherd: He did no wrong; when insulted, He returned no insult; when made to suffer, He did not counter with threats.

In fact, Peter wrote: "If you put up with suffering for doing what is right, this is acceptable in God's eyes" (R2).

C.S. Lewis, in his book *The Problem of Pain*, writes "... pain is not good in itself. What is good in any painful experience is — for the sufferer, his submission to the will of God; and, for the spectators, the compassion aroused and the acts of mercy to which it leads" (p.110).

St. Teresa of Avila, the great Spanish Mystic and reformer, has written in her



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Way of Perfection:

"Do not think of complaining about the aches and ailments from which women suffer, for the devil (bad habits) sometimes makes you imagine them. They come and go; and unless you get rid of the habit of talking about them and complaining of everything, you will never come to the end of them. For this body of yours has one fault: the more you indulge it, the more things it discovers to be essential to it. It is extraordinary how it likes being indulged; and ... the poor soul is taken in and prevented from making progress ...

"Learn to suffer a little for the love of

God without telling everyone about it ... I am thinking of those minor pains which you may have and still keep going without worrying everybody else to death over them," she writes.

Rollo May says that our best work comes in the painful valleys. He says that our growing is always born in pain and suffering. We never grow on plateaus, or even the heights, but we do in the dips and troughs of life.

Nothing seems more certain than that pain serves a useful purpose in our lives. Just as a personality will never fully develop without some hardships, so will the ultimate joy never be ours without some pain.

Father J.B. Tabb wrote: "The little flower that bloomed in Bethlehem/ Never gave forth so sweet an odor/ Until it was placed/ In the vase of the cross."

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**THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER**

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**Grief... Is help available?**

Grief is the name of a complex combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences. It occurs when we lose someone or something very important to us.

It is a natural reaction to the realization that we are not all powerful, that we ourselves are mortal.

Everyone deals with grief in a different way.

**GRIEF RESOURCE INFORMATION FORUM** and the **PASTORAL CARE CENTER** at Rochester General Hospital jointly sponsor a monthly bereavement group called **WORKING THROUGH LOSS**.

The group provides information, education and peer support for adults recovering from the death of a significant person in their lives.

The group meets the second Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:30 p.m. in the E-5 conference room at Rochester General Hospital.

Easy-to-follow signs are posted upon entering the hospital from the parking ramp.

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