



The Eucharist: Disciples and Adorers throughout the Centuries (Mary's Role in our Living a Eucharistic Life)

Thursday, June 16, 2022

Mary, the First Tabernacle, Monstrance, Adorer,
Disciple of the Eucharist

Welcome to the first night of our novena for 2022. Since this is the Year of the Eucharist, our talks this year will join devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary with the Real Presence of Her Son, Jesus, in the Eucharist. Tonight's topic will be "Mary, the First Tabernacle, Monstrance, Adorer and Disciple of the Eucharist."

Old Testament type/foreshadowing

When we think of a tabernacle, we think of the repository, usually of precious metal, where the Eucharist is kept on or near the altar of our Catholic churches. But the word "tabernacle" originally meant "tent" and referred to the Tent of Meeting or "Dwelling Place" of God among His people, Israel, during the Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Tabernacle was made so that God could dwell with His people in a tangible way in all the stages of their journey through the desert and the settling of the Israelites in the Promised Land until Solomon's Temple was built. And so, it is for us as well. We can meet the Real Presence of the Eucharistic Christ in the tabernacles of our churches throughout the world.

In the Old Testament Tabernacle, God's presence was especially signified in the Ark of the Covenant. The Fathers of the Church have seen the Ark as a foreshadowing of Mary as she bears Christ in her womb. The three things present in the Ark, therefore, prefigure Her Son: the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments (Jesus, the Just One and Lawgiver), a jar of Manna (Jesus, the true Bread from Heaven) and Aaron's staff (Jesus, the High Priest of the New and Everlasting Covenant).

In 2 Sam 6, David brings the Ark to Jerusalem, but there is a mishap because it is not being treated with the reverence legislated in the Law of Moses. David says, "How is it that the Ark of the Lord should come to me?" (vs. 9), and has it diverted to the house of Obed-Edom. There it stays for three months, bringing great blessings to the house. St. Luke purposely parallels this story with Mary's visit to Elizabeth. In Lk 1: 43, Elizabeth says "How is it that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" You can see that the only difference between David's words and Elizabeth is "mother" instead of "ark". Mary stays in the house of Zechariah for three months (vs. 56), bringing great blessing to his house, by the sanctification of John still in the womb of Elizabeth.

The Incarnation: Mary, the First Tabernacle of the New Covenant

Let us take a closer look at how Mary becomes the First Tabernacle and Ark of the Incarnate Son of God. But, before we investigate the Annunciation, I would like to point out that Jn. 1:14 says, "the Word was made flesh and pitched His tent among us." This quote is usually rendered, "dwelt" among us, but the original Greek text, ἐσκήνωσεν, shows that John is purposely evoking the Tabernacle of the Old Covenant in order to emphasize that the same God who dwelt in the Tent is now present in the Man called Jesus of Nazareth.



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In Lk 1:35 The angel answers Mary's question with, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." We can see the reference to the Shekinah glory that overshadowed the Old Testament Tabernacle in all the stages of the exodus from Egypt. But we can also see Mary as that precious repository of the Hidden Jesus in our present churches.

Through Mary's consent to the angel's message, God enters our world as a man. The Second Person of the Trinity pitches the Tent of His humanity in the womb of the Virgin and dwells among us as a real human being not merely an appearance of a man. God now has a human face. (Hence why Mary is also called the Gate of Heaven.) But at first, this sacred humanity is veiled in the Holy of Holies of Mary's womb; the hidden Jesus in the tabernacle of His Mother.

At the time of the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth (Lk 1:39-56), the fetal Jesus is no bigger than the tiniest visible particle of the host. Yet already He acts powerfully. Although tabernacled in Mary's womb, He sanctifies John in Elizabeth's womb. Things have not changed, Jesus still acts powerfully in our lives by His Real Presence in the tabernacles of our churches. The only requirements to receive this action is belief in Jesus' Real Presence and our real presence before Him. (A side note: if you are among those wonderfully faithful Catholics who make visits to the Eucharist and have regular Holy Hours, don't let the devil cheat you out of the graces Jesus wants to give you. Realize that spiritual reading is meant to lead you to pay attention to Jesus, not to occupy your whole time in front of Him... Pause, look up at Him, open your heart and mind to Him... then when you get distracted go back to the spiritual reading to refocus... and then always back to Jesus' Real Presence. The danger of spiritual reading becoming a distraction is especially enhanced if you are using a smart phone instead of a real book.)

Mary, the First Monstrance

In the Nativity, and Presentation of Our Lord, we see Mary as the first monstrance. A monstrance, as its name implies, is a vessel used to show – monstrare – the Sacred Host, for our adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Jesus will first appear in His Mother's arms when He is born in Bethlehem. Luke 2:16+ tells us that the shepherds, following the announcement of the angels, find Jesus with Mary and Joseph. Matthew tells us that magi find "the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they paid him homage." (Mt 2:11a) In the presentation in the Temple, Mary carries Jesus to the Temple where the faithful Simeon and Anna recognizes the Real Presence of Their Lord in her arms. At the Wedding feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-12), Mary shows Jesus in a new way. Through her intercession, she has Jesus show Himself in His first public miracle and, "his disciples believed in him." She also teaches us how to adore Him through obedience: "Do whatever He tells you."

Mary, First Adorer of the Hidden Jesus

The seers at Fatima referred to Jesus' Real Presence in the Eucharist as the "hidden Jesus." Let us revisit some of the mysteries we have already been considering in this talk. For nine months, Jesus is hidden in Mary's womb. From the moment of His Incarnation, Mary is adoring the Divine Presence dwelling in her. Mary sees nothing with her bodily eyes, just as we gazing upon the Blessed Sacrament see only a thin wafer of bread. At first, she must believe and trust the angel's word, applying the infused virtue of Faith, just as we must believe Jesus' words that consecrate the host: "This is my Body." True faith enlivened by charity unites us to God, leading us to adoration of Him and charity to others.

Mary led by the Holy Spirit, visits Elizabeth and receives her confirmation of the angel's words, "blessed is she who has believed for the promises of the Lord will be fulfilled in her." (Lk 1:45) Not that she doubted the angel's words, but the Lord always gives both internal and external help in believing the truths He reveals to us. It is good for us to ask Mary to help us believe and adore Her Son hidden in the Eucharist.



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At Bethlehem, Mary sees Jesus for the first time. Yet still she must believe that this small vulnerable infant is Her Creator and Lord. She believes and adores and helps Joseph, the shepherds and the Magi adore. During the years of Jesus' hidden life at Nazareth, side by side with Jesus in daily life and duty, He shows no outward sign of being God's own Son. Yet Her faith and love lead her to ponder and adore every action, word and event of Jesus' life. (see Lk 2:19 and Lk 2:51)

On Calvary, Mary offers the greatest adoration, joining in Her Son's offering to the Father. Above all the Faithful, Mary participates in the Eucharistic Mystery of Jesus' oblation both in the actual historical events as well as in its sacramental offering for the rest of her life on earth between Jesus' Ascension to her own Assumption.

Mary, First Disciple of the Hidden Jesus

In our final consideration of Mary's relationship with the Eucharistic Jesus, let us look at her under the title of the first disciple of the hidden Jesus. Although she was the most important and influential woman in all of history, she passed her earthly life mostly unnoticed by the world. Even before Jesus' Incarnation, the Holy Spirit had taught her the silence, humility and inconspicuousness of the Eucharist.

God emptied Himself to take on our human nature and lived with us as a man among men. Mary lives that ordinary hidden life with Him at Nazareth for thirty years. She passes as just an ordinary woman of the country – “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”—yet she is the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven.

After the Ascension, Jesus continues to be with His Church in the Eucharist, but now even his human appearance hides under the species of bread and wine. Mary likewise lives a key but hidden role in the life of the Church. Mary appears only once in the Acts of the Apostles as present at Pentecost together with other holy women and relatives of Jesus. (Acts 1:14) The rest of Acts deals with the life and activity of the early Church, especially the apostolic activity of Saints Peter and Paul.

But what was Mary's role in the early Church? Why did Jesus leave her on earth for so many years after His Ascension? Of what did her life consist in the early Church? A clue might be found in Jn 19:26-27, especially verse twenty-seven: “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother.” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own.”

May I suggest one of Mary's key missions in the Church was to show the faithful of the early Church (and us) how to offer, receive and adore Jesus in the Eucharist. Whether Mary lived the hidden life in Jerusalem or in Ephesus with St. John the Evangelist, her life was a life centered in the Eucharist. The rest of her earthly life was spent adoring and receiving Jesus in the Eucharist and interceding for the Church before Him.

Even in her life in Heaven, Mary still points to the Hidden Eucharistic Jesus. At every Marian Shrine in the world, you may go to see where Mary appeared, but she will inevitably lead you to adore the Eucharist, whether Fatima, Lourdes or Guadalupe, to name a few.

Mary, Mother of the Eucharist, pray for us.



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