



# Formative Parenting

*Cultivating Character in Children*

*A Ministry of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Immaculata, Pennsylvania*

## EUCHARIST

Periods of sitting in the sun result in a change of skin color. Periods of sitting *with-the-SON* result in a change in attitude! St. Alphonsus Ligouri so cherished the practice of being in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament that he participated in the Forty Hours' Devotion at every opportunity. If you know the city of Naples then you know that many churches punctuate the neighborhoods, thus providing regular opportunities for Alphonsus to bask in the SON.

In the sacred, consecrated host Jesus Christ – his body, blood, soul, and divinity – awaits to tutor our hearts, to feed our hungers and to nurture our souls. Eucharist is Jesus' gift of himself to us. He told his apostles, "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in your midst" (Matthew 18:20). He promised, "I am with you at all times..." (Mt. 28:20). And so he is – spiritually. But in the Eucharist he places even his physical presence at our disposal. He, whom all the world cannot contain, chooses to come to us in the form of bread and wine. He offers himself to us knowing that we might reject him.

For Catholic Christians, Eucharist is not merely a symbol of Christ given at the Last Supper. Eucharist **is** Jesus who said, "Take, this is my Body... This is my Blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mk. 14:22-24) . . . "I am the bread of life . . . He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day . . ." (Jn. 6:48-54). Eucharist is more than sign and symbol. It is the body and blood of Jesus Christ. When we approach Eucharist with *attention, reverence* and *devotion* we become what we eat! Little by little we come to think as Jesus thinks, to love as Jesus loves, and to serve as Jesus serves.

An old protestant hymn celebrated, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus!" Indeed, we do! Jesus offers himself to us without condition. The choice to enter into a mutual friendship is ours. We can cultivate devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in many ways. This newsletter highlights several Eucharistic practices.

Catholics call the Eucharist "the **Most Blessed Sacrament** because it is the Sacrament of sacraments," explains the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1330. **Consecrated hosts** are reserved in the tabernacle and a burning **sanctuary lamp** signals the Real Presence. Sometimes a large consecrated host, contained in a glass case called a **luna**, is visible in a **Monstrance** and set on the altar for all to see. Prayer on these occasions is called **adoration**. Some parishes arrange to have the monstrance always on display and devout Catholic pledge to sit watch for a specified amount of time. This practice is called **Perpetual Adoration**.

## FORTY HOURS' DEVOTION

Every year a parish sets aside 40 hours for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Make it a family custom to participate in the parish devotion or to visit the Blessed Sacrament as a family. Parents will benefit from *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, written by St. Alphonsus Liguori. A helpful guide for children exists in the book, *My Visit with Jesus*, available by calling 218-727-1730 or writing [Helana@charter.net](mailto:Helana@charter.net).

## VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT (EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION)

Model the custom of making brief visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Teach children various ways to pray. For instance,

- Within your soul sing a favorite hymn and then talk with Jesus about it.
- Write a letter to Jesus.
- Divide the prayer period into four sections for **ACTS: Adore, Confess, Thank, Seek.**

**ADORE:** Express admiration for God's greatness. What about God do you want to praise, honor, worship, revere, admire, commend, value, esteem or glorify?

**CONFESS:** Admit sorrow for your sins, faults, and failings. What life-blocking choices do you acknowledge, admit, regret, or want to disclose to Jesus?

**THANK:** Speak gratitude for the graces and gifts in your life. What kindnesses or favors do you recognize and appreciate?

**SEEK:** Trust your needs and questions to God. What graces or helps do you desire? What problems worry you? Ask, search, beg, and petition Jesus to guide you.

Dr. Patricia McCormack, IHM, a former Catholic schoolteacher and catechist, is a formation education consultant, an author of several books as well as the **Parent Partnership Handbook** feature of *Today's Catholic Teacher*, and director of IHM Formative Support for Parents and Teachers, Arlington, VA. She speaks and writes frequently on topics of child formation.

## SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

St. Alphonsus Liguori taught the practice of praying a spiritual communion throughout the day. Pray it often.

*My Jesus, I believe that You are really present in the Blessed Sacrament. I love You more than anything in the world and I hunger to be nourished by You. But since I cannot receive Communion at this moment, come into my soul at least spiritually. I unite myself to You now as I do when I actually receive You. Never let me drift away from you.*

## CONSECRATION DURING MASS

Prepare in advance to name the persons, events, joys and sorrows of the past week and the hopes, fears and desires of the week ahead. Then, when the priest lifts the **paten** with the unconsecrated host on it, imagine placing the last week on it. And when the priest lifts the **chalice** with unconsecrated wine place the coming week into it. Offer your sacrifice to God. God will transform the sacrifice and use it to shape you more into the image of Jesus.

## THANKSGIVING AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

Take advantage of the intimate minutes when Jesus' physical presence is within your body. If the congregation is singing a hymn, make the lyrics your conversation with Jesus. When silence returns, personalize the messages that the song contained. Spend private conversation time with Jesus before leaving the Church. Consider creating a personal act of consecration or a love message that you speak to Jesus each time that you receive the consecrated host. Though all is grace, assume personal responsibility keeping your friendship alive.