



## Ask, Father James:

### Exposition Visitation and Adoration to the Blessed Sacrament: What's the Difference?

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is prayer before the exposed sacrament in a monstrance and this can sometimes conclude with a benediction (in which the priest blesses the congregation with Jesus in the Monstrance). When we go before the Blessed Sacrament (exposed or not), we engage in Eucharistic Adoration. Many people also spend time with Jesus in what we call a "holy hour" as visitation and adoration without exposition. Like when one makes a quick stop at any church and go kneel before the blessed sacrament to make a Visit to the Blessed Sacrament. More often it is a time just for silent adoration. Spending time in silent meditation, adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication. When we go before the Blessed Sacrament when it is in Tabernacle, not exposed, it is called visitation to the Blessed Sacrament. When Jesus is exposed in the Monstrance, His Real Presence is available for you to sit and talk with Him. He looks at you and you look at Him. Many churches and chapels are open during the day for devotions of adoration or visitation with our Lord.

When we gather to pray in the presence of the exposed Blessed Sacrament, especially when it is exposed in a monstrance, we engage in a liturgical act. A liturgical act is a public act of worship of the whole church. Our prayer in these moments is always in solidarity with the Church: the whole people of God and the communion of saints. Catholics are encouraged to develop the practice of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer and meditation before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament are great ways to spend some special time with Him. The presence of the risen Christ, is experienced in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the adoration after. He himself said; "I will be with you till the end of time (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus encouraged his disciples to spend prayer time in adoration. In the Gospels we read; "Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray... Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" He said" (Matthew 26:36-40).

When we join in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, we do what the angels do. The Seraphim, the highest choir of angels, continuously adore in His divine presence. They have a burning love of God (Isaiah 6:1-7). When we go before the blessed sacrament for adoration, we do as the Seraphim do; giving unceasing praise to God and engaging in the contemplation of God. Being in His presence, before his throne and adoring in Jesus' divine presence is adoration directed to God and his glory. We join the angels who are continually interceding for all of humanity asking God for our purification so that we can be worthy of being in his presence.

It is encouraged that there must always be at least two people praying in the presence of the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them! (Matt.28:20). According to the instruction; *Redemptionis sacramentum*, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the Most Holy Sacrament, when exposed, must never be left unattended even for the briefest space of time. It should therefore be arranged that at least some of the faithful always be present at fixed times, even if they take alternating turns (#138). Canon Law # 937 says: "Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, a church in which the Blessed Eucharist

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is reserved is to be open to the faithful for at least some hours every day, so that they can pray before the Blessed Sacrament." And canon law #941 §1 encourages Eucharistic exposition outside of the Mass in churches and oratories where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. §2 prohibits the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament while Mass is being celebrated. Pope Benedict XVI, quoting St. Augustine in a 2009 speech at the Vatican said; "No one eats this flesh, if he has not adored it before; for we sin if we do not adore."

