

IN HIS PRESENCE

How to Get the Most from
Eucharistic Adoration

INTRODUCTION

PRAYING FERVENTLY, GAZING RADIANTLY

Look to him, and be radiant.

— Psalm 34:5

Once, the [*Divine Mercy*] image was being exhibited over the altar during the Corpus Christi procession.... When the priest exposed the Blessed Sacrament, and the choir began to sing, the rays from the image pierced the Sacred Host and spread out all over the world. Then I heard these words: These rays of mercy will pass through you, just as they have passed through this Host, and they will go out through all the world. At these words, profound joy invaded my soul. (*Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska*, 441)

Adoration has been a central Catholic devotion for centuries, beloved by saints, popes, and countless devout men, women, and children.

Among them was St. Faustina — who added “of the Blessed Sacrament” to her religious name:

One hour spent at the foot of the altar in the greatest dryness of spirit is dearer to me than a hundred years of worldly pleasure. (*Diary*, 254)

Striving to be in constant union with Jesus, she visited the Blessed Sacrament throughout her day as much and often as possible, sometimes if only to quickly genuflect at the chapel’s door as she passed by, smiling to Our Lord.



WHAT DID ST. FAUSTINA LEARN IN FRONT OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT?

There’s a Polish proverb that goes: *Z kim sie zadajesz takim sie stajesz* — “You become the one you befriend.”

When St. Faustina knelt in front of the tabernacle, she prayed fervently, gazing radiantly at the altar. Jesus in the Eucharist was to her a living person with whom she wanted to talk at every moment. All the basic forms of prayer — adoration, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving — were part of those visits.

I wrote this book to help you, and encourage you, to pray and adore with St.

Faustina. She wept in front of Our Lord in the Eucharist, interceded for others, shared her joys with Him, and acknowledged her weaknesses. She obtained self-knowledge, asked for healing, adored, loved, listened, thanked, and rested in Him.

As St. Faustina's soul united with Jesus, the fruit of her adoration was an image of Divine Mercy and a deeper and deeper relationship with the living Host. It gave her nourishment to confront her many challenges, as from that source sprang a fountain of love for all.

St. Faustina had a peace that radiated to all. She offered faith, hope, and charity — and love, compassion, and healing, as she went about doing good, as she left the chapel and went back to the world, herself becoming a “living host.”

[Jesus said to her:] “I delight in you as in a living host; let nothing terrify you; I am with you.” (Diary, 923)

St. Faustina immersed herself in the fire of His love and the abyss of His mercy, and she came to know herself and her God. It was adoration that called her forth to go out and help others, and adoration empowered her to share Jesus' compassion to everyone she encountered.

Jesus was her teacher. He taught her to treat trials as a positive opportunity to learn love of neighbor. She had grudges but she took them to Jesus, and He erased the memory from her soul, transforming it into overwhelming kindness and concern for others. Simply put, He taught her not to judge others.

This is how she became holy, how she became a saint.



WHAT CAN YOU LEARN BY ADORATION?

Just as He patiently waited for St. Faustina, Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament waits for you. Just as she grew more like Him, so can you. You can become a “living host.” You can come to better know yourself and your God, and apply that knowledge, that truth, in all facets of your life.

You can become a saint.



WHAT IS ADORATION?

Here's how the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains it:

Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator. It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free

from evil. Adoration is homage of the spirit to the “King of Glory,” respectful silence in the presence of the “ever greater” God. Adoration of the thrice-holy and sovereign God of love blends with humility and gives assurance to our supplications. (2628)



WHAT IS EUCHARISTIC ADORATION?

Again to the *Catechism*:

It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to his Church in this unique way. Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence; since he was about to offer himself on the cross to save us, he wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which he loved us “to the end,” even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us, and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love:

The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease. (1380, quoting St. John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Dominicae Cenaе*, on the mystery and worship of the Eucharist)



ST. FAUSTINA CAN HELP YOU ADORE GOD?

Like St. Faustina, sometimes you’ll be able to adore God before the Blessed Sacrament and, at other times, at home or another place when you’re unable to visit a church or chapel... Let this wonderful saint be your spiritual companion in your times of adoration.

Excerpted and adapted from
St. Faustina Prayer Book for Adoration by Susan Tassone

THE REALITY OF CHRIST — PRESENCE

The sacraments are objective realities, really pledges given by Christ through His Church that the grace and mercy of God will flow upon us by a devout and believing fulfillment of the sacred sign. In recent decades theologians have emphasized the essential link between the seven sacraments and the Church herself, which can in a certain way be called the fundamental sacrament. This emphasis on the communal nature of sacraments is very useful as we shall see with regard to the celebration of the Eucharistic Presence, and corrects a well-intentioned but distorted view of the sacraments as sort of the individual's "direct line to God."

The Latin word "*sacramentum*" simply means a pledge or promise to give something, an IOU given by God, not so different in this respect from the covenant promises given in the Old Testament to Israel. The Greek word most often used for a sacrament, "*mysterion*," stresses the invisible power of the sacramental sign; this term finds its root in the Greek verb "to close one's eyes." It stresses the invisible effects of the sacrament. Because they are external or perceptible promises of the immense reality of grace, of God's covenant of mercy with His children, sacraments are signs, but they are effective signs, not merely symbolic ones. They cause what they signify. God in His love binds himself to His creatures.

A review of the theology of the seven sacraments, their essential relationship to the Paschal Mystery of Christ's atonement and second coming, their objective value (which puts them beyond the strength and weakness of those who use them), their New Testament origins, and their relationship to the whole Church community are fascinating subjects but beyond our purposes here. An accurate and excellent summary of Catholic sacramental theology can be found in Part II of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. A thorough study of the sacraments and especially of the Eucharist is one of the fascinating adventures available to the thinking Christian. What is officially taught at the various levels of credence from dogma to opinion is intellectually captivating but complex. As Monsignor James O'Connor points out, even the Council of Trent, which defined much of the Catholic teaching on the Eucharist, properly left much undefined (*The Hidden Manna: A Theology of the Eucharist*).

While it is obvious to the informed reader, and for the record it should be noted, that there are a number of controversies raging in the Catholic Church and the whole Christian world about the sacraments and many other things, at times these controversies have been rooted in ecumenical aspirations or in an attempt to minimize the differences between different Christian Churches.

Whatever may be said about this well-intentioned effort to find areas of agreement, it stands to reason that when it comes to Eucharistic devotion, ecumenically minded writers are going to have their difficulties and will often have a bias against this devotion that is generally not shared by non-Catholic Christians.

Despite this, there is the remarkable fact that the preeminent Lutheran theologian Yngve Brilioth, in his monumental work *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, shows profound respect for Eucharistic devotion as practiced by Catholics past and present.

It is obvious that some members of the Anglican communion have managed to withstand the theological chaos and preserve Eucharistic devotion as it has come to flower with those referred to as “ritualists.” Around 1990 I witnessed this myself at England’s Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, where the Anglican shrine leaves the Catholic completely in the shadows, sad to say, when it comes to Eucharistic devotion.

What Do We Mean by the Presence of God?

When we speak of the presence of God, it is an act of faith in the omnipresence and omniscience of our Creator. Faith may make us aware of His presence, but often some scene of natural grandeur or the silence of some solitary place will draw our minds into a deeper experience of relationship and reverence with our Creator. Then the Psalmist’s words will be so meaningful:

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!
If I make my bed In Sheol, thou art there!
If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there thy hand shall lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me.

— Psalm 139:7–10

This experience of Divine Presence is an act of faith, which is to say it is also an act of decision or of the will. When we do not consciously make an act of faith, yet an awareness of the Divine Presence envelops us spontaneously, we have an example of one of the most profound religious experiences possible. One example of such an experience of the Divine Presence was the conversion of the French atheist and Communist André Frossard. While waiting for a friend, he had gone into the chapel of a cloistered convent as a “complacent atheist.” Standing in the back of the chapel, he was literally overwhelmed by the presence of a God in whom he did not believe. His own words describe this experience of an unexpected presence that has been the source of many unexplainable conversions:

The end of the chapel was rather brightly lit. The high altar was draped in white and covered with a great many plants and candelabra and a variety of ornaments. Above it hung a large metal cross; at its center there was a white disc, and three others that were slightly different were fixed to the extremities of the cross.

In the interest of art. I had previously visited churches, but I had never before seen a host, much less a monstrance with a host in it. I was therefore quite unaware that before me was the Blessed Sacrament below which many candles were burning...

I didn't see the point of all this, naturally, since I was not looking for it. Standing by the door, I looked out for my friend, but I was not able to identify him among the kneeling figures... Then, for no particular reason, I fixed my eyes on the second candle on the left-hand side of the cross.

It was at this moment that, suddenly, the series of extraordinary events was set in motion whose extreme violence was about to dismantle the absurd creature that I had been until that moment and give birth to the dazzled child I had never been.

First, were the words: *spiritual life*.

They were not said to me nor did I form them in my mind; it was as though they were being spoken by someone close to me who was seeing something which I had not yet seen.

The last syllable had hardly brushed my conscious mind when an avalanche descended upon me. I am not saying that the heavens opened: they didn't open — they were hurled at me, they rose suddenly flashing silently from the depths of this innocent chapel in which they were mysteriously present.

How can I describe what took place in words which refuse to carry the sense, which indeed do worse, for they threaten to intercept what I have to say and in doing so to relegate my meaning to the land of fancy? Were a painter to be given the gift of seeing colors that are unknown to man what would he use to paint them with?

What can I say to describe that which I apprehended?

It was an indestructible crystal, totally transparent, luminous (to such a degree that any further intensity would have destroyed me), with a color near to blue; a different world, whose

brilliance and density made our world seem like the wraith of an unfulfilled dream. What I saw was reality; this was truth, and I was seeing It from the dim shore on which I still stood. Now I knew that there is order in the universe and at its beginning, beyond the shining mists, the manifestation of God: a manifestation which is a presence, which is a person, the person whose existence I should have denied a moment ago, the presence of him whom the Christians call *Our Father*. And I knew that he was gentle, that his gentleness was unparalleled and that his was not the passive quality that is sometimes called by the name of gentleness, but an active shattering gentleness, far outstripping violence, able to smash the hardest stone and to smash something often harder than stone, the human heart.

This surging, overwhelming invasion brought with it a sense of joy comparable to that of a drowning man who is rescued at the last moment, but with this difference that it was at the moment in which I was being hauled to safety that I became aware of the mud in which, without noticing it, I had till then been stuck; and now I wondered how I had ever been able to breathe and to live in it. (*I Have Met Him: God Exists*)

Commenting later on this experience, Frossard said that the fact that he emerged from the chapel a Catholic was similar to what his experience would have been if he had gone to the Paris Zoo and come out a giraffe. Ordinarily our experiences of God are not so startling or unexpected. Believing Christians usually need only make an act of faith that Christ is present.

We believe that He Is the Word through which “all things were made” (Nicene Creed [ICEL translation]). And so to use the words of the Irish poet Joseph Mary Plunkett, we “see His blood upon the rose / And in the stars the glory of His eyes” (“I See His Blood upon the Rose”). Yet Christians who undertake to serve the poor and needy occasionally have the profound and spontaneous experience of Christ’s presence as they respond to His words in Matthew 25: “I was hungry and you gave me food.... I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (verse 35).

We also experience Christ’s presence as an aspect of the omnipresence of God. Christians believe they can address prayers to Christ at any time or place because, to use the words of Saint Augustine. God “is ever mindful of us all” (*Confessions*, Book 9, Chapter 3). But again, to do this usually requires an act of faith. As the ancient prayer called “The Deer’s Cry,” or “St. Patrick’s Breastplate,” puts it so well: “Christ with me. Christ before me. Christ behind me. Christ in me. Christ beneath me. Christ above me.”

A PRESENCE TO BE ADORED

The obvious occasion for Saint Thomas Aquinas's theological study of the Eucharist was the clash between theologians, some Catholic, some heretical, over the meaning of Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers on the Blessed Sacrament. Saint Thomas's profound study did not come out of a vacuum but was deeply influenced by the events that preceded it.

The early incidents of Eucharistic devotion are fragmentary and occurred in different parts of Europe at a time when communications were extremely primitive. We who live in a time when all parts of the world can contact each other in a few minutes do not realize that communication from one end of medieval Europe to the other took many months. In terms of contacts with each other, cities on the continent, to our way of thinking, were worlds apart. Evidence that perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the Cathedral of Lugo, Spain, may have arisen as early as the sixth century will come as a rude awakening. There is evidence that a portable tabernacle described as containing "the relics of holy God" was a focus of veneration as early as the seventh century in Luge's sister Diocese of Braga. The Eucharist had been reserved from the time of the Fathers so that the Sacrament could be given to the dying. Although by no means conclusive, evidence does exist to support at least the possibility that even in the late patristic and early medieval era devout souls had been quietly and apparently with little knowledge of each other drawn to pray to Christ present in the Eucharist. Saint Guthrac (d. 714) spent his last hours on earth in what may have constituted adoration and supplication before the Eucharist in the English Abbey of Croyland.

In some places by the tenth century the Eucharist had been moved out of the sacristy and into the church, and was placed in a vessel that would eventually become the tabernacle. As we move into the medieval period, Eucharistic devotion begins to become a more important part of Catholic life.

The Eucharist and the Emergence of the Modern Person

The men and women of modern European civilization rose out of a period of immense conflict and revolution, actually out of an incredible storm. Although at times these conflicts were harmful to the Church, nevertheless there emerged from these circumstances a new kind of Christian in the twentieth century. This person belonged to the very large group of what we call middle-class people. Universal education, the opportunity for travel, and cultural enrichment have spread through society by electronic means — and all of these have produced a society of people who are no longer burdened with the struggle to earn their daily bread. Few now work sixty or seventy hours a week to simply survive. In fact, it is often the more educated who work long hours, while the average citizen is only employed for forty hours a week. While it is tragic that this potential for

a truly enlightened human life has backfired into the present anticulture, nevertheless the obvious fact is that very large numbers of men and women now have a more active awareness of their inner lives, their needs and gifts, their psychological aspirations. It has become, for good or ill, an age of popular psychology. This gradual change from a largely peasant population to a middle-class society is reflected in all aspects of religious life and even in the forms of liturgical piety and Eucharistic devotion.

The eighteenth century began to see larger numbers of people drawn to quiet adoration of the Eucharist. Priests like Saint Alphonsus Liguori, women religious, lay brothers who formerly had not been able to read or write, working people, shopkeepers, inventors, and scientists became aware that Christ awaited them in the tabernacle. The visits developed from the simple adoration of the previous ages into opportunities for profound introspection and self-examination. In a word, they became more psychological.

One of the most interesting aspects of this development was the number of converts brought to the Catholic Church by Eucharistic devotion. Two remarkable examples are Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and the Venerable John Henry Newman, both converts from the Anglican Church and both devotees of the Eucharist.

At the same time in Italy, people like Saint Alphonsus carried on the tradition of Saint Charles Borromeo and placed a strong emphasis on the Eucharist as a place for the individual to know and love Christ. France, which as we have seen has always been associated with Eucharistic piety, produced a whole school seeking the renewal of the priesthood through the Eucharist, typified by Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint John Eudes in the seventeenth century and continuing thereafter into the eighteenth century. A most unusual example of Eucharistic piety is Saint Benedict Joseph Labre, the homeless and apparently mentally disturbed beggar who spent long hours of his life rapt in silent ecstasy before the Eucharist in Rome, even in the sacrament-chapel of St. Peter's.

In the nineteenth century, France, recovering from the French Revolution, produced such outstanding Eucharistic saints as John Marie Vianney, Peter Julian Eymard, and Thérèse of Lisieux, all of whose lives centered on the presence of Christ. It can be honestly said that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries no Catholic saint could be found who did not place Eucharistic piety at the center of his or her life. In the beginnings of the Liturgical Movement, especially with the Benedictine Dom Prosper Gueranger, Abbot of Solesmes, a strong emphasis on Eucharistic piety as well as on the liturgy of the Mass and the reception of the Holy Eucharist was observable.

The twentieth century presents many interesting contrasts. It began with a great Eucharistic pope, Saint Pius X, and the elaboration of great liturgical reform by the Benedictine monks. Up until the Second World War there was a

strong conjoining of private Eucharistic piety with the liturgical reforms. After the war, many of the liturgists of that time criticized what they saw as an excessive attention paid to the Eucharistic Presence rather than to the Mass. They were displeased with the outpourings of public sentiment in solemn Corpus Christi processions, particularly the presence of civil authorities or even military personnel. They were not at all moved by the somewhat baroque decorations that had come to surround the presence of Christ in the Eucharist — a dozen candles, flowers, etc. They reacted along with almost everyone else against the baroque in all of its forms.

A simplicity of liturgical vesture became a theme of the Liturgical Movement. In music, art, and architecture simple lines were favored. Many people seemed to be unaware that some of the simplicity and minimalism was not only aimed at the baroque but directed against any sense of the transcendent in human thinking. The minimalist architecture of the German Bauhaus movement was transported into churches and shrines. Probably those who had initially conceived these designs would be astonished that they were so easily incorporated into Christian religious expression. Certainly, some of the simplicity also arose from the new kinds of construction materials that were mass-produced and required greater simplicity of design.

Not only were new buildings simple, but they were often ugly. A deconstructionist trend moved from the attraction of the simple to the glorification of the damaged. Found objects, partly disfigured by time, often spoke of the ancient and the mysterious. But as artists began to glorify the ugly, like comic-book pictures and soup cans, this spirit entered into the life and expression of the Church. The simple, the folkloric, even the improvised could always speak of God as it does so beautifully in the scenes of the life of Saint Francis. But the hideous began to make its way into church under the banner of deconstruction. A pilgrimage of horror could be conducted through several abbeys and chapels of great religious houses in America. I remember my consternation when I finally got to an abbey church originally designed by Pugin and made famous by Thomas Merton, only to find that it now looked for all the world like an airplane hangar. An informed and cultured friend who accompanied me could say only, “An enemy hath done this.” Sadly, liturgy, like everything else, began to be ugly.

Finally, as we have seen, there was a growing skepticism, often unspoken, about the reality of Christ’s presence. As a result of the demythologizing efforts of some Scripture scholars, the figure of Christ became more and more remote. Christ was no longer someone you poured out your heart to but someone you thought about. People no longer concentrated on what Christ had accomplished and done in His short earthly life, but rather on what He had not done, not meant, not said, and not even known. Despite the efforts of the recent popes to preserve in the midst of all this a respect and love for Eucharistic devotion, many diocesan officials and religious superiors carried on what some have called open

war against Eucharistic devotion. Ignoring the encouragement of popes, Eucharistic processions were considered passé and even forbidden. The tabernacles were relegated to obscure corners of the church or even to other buildings. When architectural changes were made in churches, the Eucharist was positioned in such a way that no one could even kneel before it. One has only to visit some contemporary churches and even cathedrals to observe the fact that only a very small number of people are even able to pause to pray before the tabernacle. In one seminary I found the tabernacle absurdly perched on the third-story gallery, much like a fire escape. As this place was in the care of Franciscans, I was surprised that the Poverello was not seen at night weeping in the chapel.

Excerpted and adapted from *In the Presence of Our Lord* by
Father Benedict J. Groeschell, C.F.R., and James Monti

SCRIPTURE FOR EUCHARISTIC MEDITATION

Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy.
— *Psalms 43:4*

Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it
to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”
And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he
gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you; for this
is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for
many for the forgiveness of sins.”
— *Matthew 26:26–28*

For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is
great among the nations, and in every place incense is
offered to my name, and a pure offering.
— *Malachi 1:11*

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to
you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was
betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he
broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also

the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

— *1 Corinthians 11:23–26*

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning
— *Lamentations 3:22–23*

“I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.”
— *John 6:51*

As a hart longs for flowing streams,
so longs my soul
for thee, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
— *Psalms 42:1–2*

My Lord and my God!
— *John 20:28*

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.”
— *John 6:53–56*

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
— *Ephesians 5:2*

“I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you.”
— *John 14:18*

“Remain here, and watch with me.”

— *Matthew 26:38*

“Could you not watch one hour?”

— *Mark 14:37*

“If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also.”

— *John 12:26*

“Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

— *Exodus 3:5*

“And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you of all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.”

— *Exodus 25:21-22*

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

— *Hebrews 4:16*

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.”

— *John 15:9*

“I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

— *Jeremiah 31:3*

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

— *John 15:5*

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

— *John 1:14*

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there

am I in the midst of them.”

— *Matthew 18:20*

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

— *John 12:32*

“For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.”

— *John 18:37*

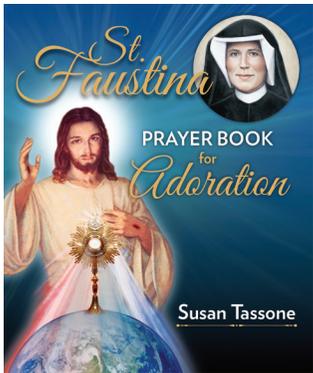
But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

— *John 19:34*

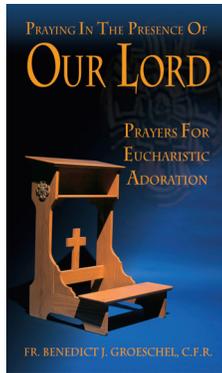
“Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

— *Matthew 28:20*

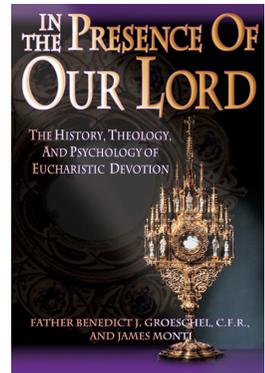
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