

Eucharistic Adoration: Veils for Vision

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To the Virgin of the Annunciation

Eucharistic adoration is an eminently personal form of prayer.¹ Not in the sense that each one of us could fill this time spent in the presence of the Lord with what he or she wants; if this were to be the case, there would be no adoration at all, since it would simply be a matter of meeting oneself and one's ideas about God. Eucharistic adoration is a personal prayer in the sense that the adorer welcomes in his soul the divine person of the eternal Son, through the vision of the human body united to the Son in the womb of the Virgin Mary, just as this body is offered by faith in the sacrament of the Eucharist. Therefore, what is crucial to this meeting is that prayer be guided by the truth of the Eucharistic mystery and not by the feelings of the adorer, even less by the introspection of himself while adoring. In presenting the theological foundations of Eucharistic adoration, the following pages have a threefold goal: to enlighten beginners about the very things which shape this prayer; to help those who are progressing in their adoration to align it to the vision of the *Word who became flesh*; and

¹ The second part of this text was published, with some adaptations, in the review *Vives Flammes* by Les Editions du Carmel, which had commissioned it. However, it is in this form that this meditation was originally conceived and then developed over the course of writing. This English version resulted from the support of Fr. Bernhard Blankenhorn, and the delicate care of Amy Christine Devaud, to whom I express my gratitude.

to accompany and support those who are more advanced in putting into words what they are already experiencing.

After having specified the foundations of Eucharistic adoration, we will address the themes that sustain it in the same order in which the soul welcomes the mystery of the Word become flesh. This is an order that can be followed as steps to take during a time of adoration. One will then take care to allow enough time for each step. But it may be more relevant to focus on a limited number of themes, or even on a single one. We will be careful to ensure that we do not neglect any of the themes presented throughout the various meditations for adoration.

The Hope of Vision

Eucharistic adoration begins and is consumed in vision, in the gaze toward the Body of Christ in his sacrament. God has accustomed us to listen to him, ever since he began to speak to Abraham, to Moses, to David, through the prophets. The Law begins with this commandment: “Hear now, O Israel!” To hear the Word is to welcome it, to put it into practice, and in doing so, to let it bear fruit within us. But seeing God is quite different.

In the days of Christ, the central part of the Temple in Jerusalem, one of the wonders of the world, had two rooms, one called the Holy Place and the other called the Holy of Holies. The entrance to each room was obstructed by a huge curtain (see Exod 26:31–32). The priests usually celebrated their services behind the curtain of the Holy Place. However, they did not enter the Holy of Holies, the dwelling place of God among men (see Exod 29:43–46), which sheltered, before its destruction (probably in 587 BC), the Ark of the Covenant containing the tables of the Law given at Sinai, as well as a relic of the manna, the bread that came down from heaven to feed the people of Israel during the Exodus (see Heb 9:4). Only once a year the High Priest would cross the veil of the Holy of Holies to stand in the presence of God and pronounce the Name above all names, in remembrance of God’s encounters with Moses:

Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose up, and every man stood at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of to the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship. . . . The Lord used to speak with Moses face to face, as a

man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent. (Exod 33:8–11)

Could Moses see God? He had been asking for this in his prayer. But God said: “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you my name, ‘The Lord.’ . . . ‘But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face; for man shall not see me and live; . . . you shall see my back’” (Exod 33: 19–23). The eyes of the body are not equipped to see the invisible. And the eyes of the soul are too fragile to bear the illumination of a face-to-face encounter with the thrice-holy God. On earth, one must content oneself with the hope, the expectation, the search of this unveiled encounter of which Moses was so close.

Thus, the faith of the Jewish people at the time of Christ was embodied in the very architecture of the Temple of Jerusalem: to enter into the presence of God was to pass through the first curtain, then the second. To be able to stand in the Holy of Holies was not only an incredible grace, but also an exceptional one, reserved to the High Priest, once a year. The vision of God was both an object of hope and a matter of fear, which David summarized well in a psalm: “Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart . . . Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob” (Ps 24: 3–6).

The Two Veils of Adoration

The Eucharistic adoration of Christians is not reserved only to some High Priest or to the mystical heirs of Moses, and it is not practiced only in Jerusalem, nor is it restricted to yearly meetings, nor does it need the removal of thick embroidered curtains. Yet it is a continuation of the Jewish experience to which we just referred; it draws its purpose and its essential features from it. The Christian aspires to see God face-to-face; on earth, however, his desire cannot be fulfilled beyond the vision Moses had. (And who could be equal to Moses?). For this reason, the Christian knows that he will have to pass through curtains, that a face-to-face encounter with God here on earth can only be veiled. As it was in the Temple, the encounter with God is possible only by passing through two veils, the veil of the sacrament of the Eucharist and the veil of Christ’s flesh. These veils are no longer made of heavy cloth; their nature is different as well as their function.

It is indeed the function of any veil to both hide and give access to what

is hidden. If one stands on the outside, like the people who waited bowing before the Tent where Moses met God, the veil hinders the view. But the veil is not an impenetrable wall. On the contrary, it is made to be crossed, to lead to the vision—even if it is from *behind*—the one whom God calls into his presence.

Christ's flesh, whose figure was the curtain of the Holy of Holies, fulfills well this double role of the veil: his flesh is manifested to those who believe, and it is hidden from those who do not believe. The Incarnation constitutes a new presence of God in the world, a visible presence in mankind as well as a personal presence since Christ is God himself, and the eternal Son of the Father. "The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory," says St. John (John 1:14). God's dwelling among men is renewed, as it is transferred from a building of stones to a body of human flesh: "Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' . . . But he spoke of the temple of his body" (John 2:19, 21). This explains why, at the moment of his death on the Cross, "the veil of the Sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matt 27:51). Through his Incarnation, Christ removes the veil which was reserved for Moses's encounter with God (see 2 Cor 3:14). This encounter is now accessible to every believer, immediately, in the flesh of the Word, flesh offered to our sight, touch and hearing: "Which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have watched and touched with our own hands, the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). Touching or seeing the humanity of Christ, if one has faith, is touching or seeing the eternal Word made flesh. So it is with the apostle Thomas after the resurrection: he touches the wounds of Christ and, crossing the veil, confesses his Lord and his God (see John 20:28). In the face-to-face encounter with Christ, the eyes of the body see the flesh of the Word and faith knows the Word made flesh, but this face-to-face encounter remains, as it was for Moses, confused and enigmatic (see 1 Cor 13:12), because faith is not yet the vision of God as He is in himself.

Along with this dimension of manifestation, the flesh of Christ is a veil in another dimension, which is highlighted in the Epistle to the Hebrews. When the High Priest passed through the veil of the Holy of Holies once a year, it was also to offer a sacrifice of blood for the sins of the people. Similarly, Christ on the Cross pierced the veil of the death of his flesh so as to offer the sacrifice of his blood which saves the world from death and sin (see Heb 9). If, through faith, we can see the Word made flesh, through the offering of Christ's blood, we can stand in the presence of the Word made flesh with the innocence of a heart purified by the Holy Spirit. Incarnation

makes the encounter possible; the grace of the Holy Spirit enables us to make this encounter a true adoration.

In the Eucharistic adoration, a second veil is added to the first one, in the same way that the veil of the Holy Place preceded the veil of the Holy of Holies. Indeed, since the Ascension, when Christ ascended into heaven, his humanity has left the realm of visible realities. It is no longer a question of seeing the Body of Christ with the eyes of our flesh. This does not mean that we are deprived of the adoration made possible by the Incarnation. In fact, the Body of Christ now comes to our eyes of flesh in a sacrament, which consists of a sensible sign containing what it means. The sacrament of the Eucharist, instituted by Christ during his Last Supper with his disciples, consists of the signs of bread and wine—they appear to our eyes as if they were still bread and wine—containing in fact the Body and Blood of the Lord. They have the appearance of bread, but contain the true Body of Christ. The Church refers to this as the “substantial presence,” the presence of substance under the appearance of bread.² Once again, the veil plays its role in hiding and manifesting: the non-believer stops at what he sees; the appearances of bread and wine mislead him about what is placed on the altar; he believes he is just dealing with bread and wine. The believer on the other hand is carried from the visible to the invisible, from the consecrated bread to the Body of Christ, from the consecrated wine to the blood of Christ. The sacrament is for the believer a veil that he is to traverse, because he knows, in faith, that in the appearances of bread and wine are hidden in fact the true Body and Blood of the Lord. For St. Augustine, and after him St. Thomas Aquinas, this passage from the visible to the invisible was the main issue at stake in the discourse on the Bread of Life (John 6), where Christ had taught his disciples to seek the true manna for eternal life, his flesh given as food, instead of just expecting food for the stomach.

Traversing the Veils

Eucharistic adoration invites us, carried by faith, to cross two veils: the veil of the sacrament, which leads us from the visible species of bread to the Body of Christ, invisible since the Ascension; and the veil of the Body of Christ, which leads us from his humanity to his person as eternal Son of the Father.

² Unfortunately, we have become accustomed to referring to the “real presence” of Christ in the Eucharist. This is very inadequate, for Christ is really present in many other ways than in the Eucharist. The specificity of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist is that it is a substantial presence, a carnal presence, of that human body which has been united to the Word.

But let us take a moment to consider the unique feature of each of these two veils over all others. It can be stated this way: to adore the Eucharist is nothing else than to worship God. If there were anything else in Eucharistic worship other than the worship of the One and Only God, our adoration would be idolatry. If the veils were to create any distance between God and us, if they were intermediaries before whom we would bow down before worshipping God, our adoration would be a form of idolatry.³ The essential condition of Eucharistic adoration is that the veils bring us closer instead of presenting us with a screen, giving us God instead of holding us at a distance. The double separation of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies kept the people away from meeting the presence of God in the Tent, so that no one except Moses or the High Priest could see, because the curtains of the sanctuary created a separation. Conversely, the sacrament of the body and humanity of Christ is exactly what allows every believer to see Christ in his mystery. This is why adoring the Eucharist means experiencing in a concrete way two truths of the Catholic faith that were affirmed by the Councils of Ephesus (431) and Trent (1551). On the one hand, because the Body of Christ is his body, where the Body of Christ is, there is Christ in his entirety. There is only one and the same adoration of the Body of Christ and of the Word made flesh.⁴ On the other hand, because the Eucharist is the sacrament of this body, what our eyes see on the altar after the consecration contains the Body of Christ: it is indeed the body, the same body which was born of the Virgin, that walked along Galilee and died in Jerusalem, but under the species of bread.⁵

Eucharistic adoration is then indeed a vision of the eternal Word, the Son of God, in his flesh (first veil) and in the particular mode of a sacrament (second veil). It is not similar to the vision that the angels and saints have of the Son, because the angels and the saints see God face-to-face, just as he is in himself; nor is it similar to the vision that the Virgin Mary or the apostles had of Christ as he lived by their side, since they had to cross only one veil, the veil of Christ's humanity; it is a vision of the Word made flesh such as he gives himself to be seen, through faith, in a sacrament. This is why our

³ During God's encounters with Moses, as reported in Exod 33, quoted above, the people would not bow down before the curtains of the Tent, but before the cloud that stood at the entrance of the Tent.

⁴ See the eighth anathema by St. Cyril of Alexandria received at the Council of Ephesus.

⁵ See Council of Trent, *Decree on the Holy Eucharist*, October 11, 1551, canon 1. The term "species" means what presents itself to the senses, what the senses perceive, not because they are victims of an illusion, but because this is how the sacrament belongs to the visible world.

adoration can be only an encounter with the Word made flesh through that which the sacrament allows us to know about the Word made flesh. In other words, our adoration of the Word made flesh is molded by the sacrament, for it is in this way that Christ wants to meet us on this earth, by illuminating us with his Truth through the sparkling of his Eucharistic manifestation.

As a result, the expression “passing through the veil” acquires a new meaning. When the veil is a screen, as it was in the case of Moses and the High Priest, when the veil hides a reality that is located behind it, passing through the veil consists in pulling aside the curtain so as to reach the other side thereof. With the veil represented by the sacrament of the body of the Word, it is quite different: there is nothing to hide beyond the sacrament, nor beyond the Body of Christ; there is nothing to go beyond in order to reach the vision. In the vision of the Eucharist, we already find what makes the angels and the saints blessed: we see a sacrament, while the angels and the saints see face-to-face, but it is the same Word made flesh who is being worshipped. A common temptation of Eucharistic adoration is to reduce it to a form of mental prayer, a meditation, or to some other spiritual exercises under the gaze of the consecrated host. The sacrament of the body is then only a pretext for encountering God beyond the sacrament: one is in front of the sacrament, but *does something other than seeing the sacrament*, as if the exposition of the sacrament were only an ambiance conducive to reaching the true place of contemplation. The Eucharist is then reduced to the curtain of the sanctuary, as it once was in the Temple of Jerusalem, only considered as a temporary intermediary, when in fact it is the very thing to be seen. Eucharistic adoration is either a vision of the Eucharist in faith, or it is not.

Therefore, the crossing of the veil involves a double dimension: on the one hand, the mystery is there, before our eyes, in the veils, and is there only to be seen; on the other hand, there is indeed a crossing, a progression of the soul in receiving the mystery. An example of this can be found in the apparition of Mam're in Gen 18:1–2: “And the Lord appeared to him [Abraham] at the Oak of Mam're, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth.” The three men are standing close to Abraham, and yet Abraham must run to meet them and bow down before them. Crossing the veil implies a movement towards what is already present. The soul experiences a movement in that, supported by a sensible sign, it rises from the visible reality to the invisible reality that is contained in the sacrament, and then towards the very mystery of the Word. The movement begins when the eyes see bread on this earth; in this vision, from this earthly similitude, the soul

grasps what Christ meant when he referred to his flesh as the “Bread from Heaven”; in so doing, in this grasp, the soul opens up to receive within itself the totality of the mystery of Christ contained in the sacrament, so as to know God. The soul has not left the veil of the sacrament, it has not left the veil of the flesh of the Word, and yet it has crossed the veil to stand in the presence and adoration of the Word made flesh.⁶

It would be impossible to pass through the veil if grace did not sustain and elevate the soul as it progresses. The gift of this grace is to be attributed to the presence of the Holy Spirit, the source of all sanctification, that is to say, of all the gifts that place us in the presence of God. Thus, Eucharistic adoration is nothing else but the reception of the divine Word in the soul by the imprint of the Holy Spirit in the soul: adoration goes from God to God, it immerses us in the eternal glorification of the Word by the Spirit. The imprint of the Spirit is manifested by the act of the theological virtues: charity draws us to the Word made flesh by lighting up in us a burning love for God; hope makes the vision on earth, in the sacrament, an anticipated and, at the same time, painfully desired possession of the heavenly face-to-face vision; finally, faith gives us the ability to receive the Word into our soul as the One whom we know because we see the sacrament of his flesh.

The Practice of Adoration

Now that the theological foundations have been established, we can see how they help us in the practice of Eucharistic adoration. It is, as we have just said, a vision in faith, a vision of the veils through which the soul crosses by faith. Two acts are thus combined, the act of seeing and the act of believing. Eucharistic adoration consists first and foremost in seeing, in keeping our eyes fixed on the Eucharist. We can certainly rest our eyes regularly, either for a time of meditation or by the reading of some Gospel passages, but these pauses must serve to rekindle our desire to see the sacrament of the Body of Christ. On the other hand, the gaze of the eyes would be pointless if it were not sustained by the act of faith, if faith did not allow us to pass through the

⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas was attentive to highlighting the developments of this paragraph. Christ is entirely in the sacrament; this is the Catholic faith. But it is necessary to distinguish two ways in which Christ is in the sacrament: his body and blood are there by virtue of the Eucharistic conversion of bread and wine; but because of the unity of Christ (Thomas speaks of natural concomitance), where his body is, where his blood is, the whole of Christ is present (see *Summa theologiae* III, q. 76, a. 1). Our knowledge takes this path of access to the fullness of the mystery of Christ when it adores the Eucharist.

veils of the sacrament of the body and humanity of Christ. Faith springs from hearing (Rom 10:17). Therefore, the vision of the eyes must be enlightened by listening to all that the Lord has revealed concerning the veils through which we meet and adore him. We can gather the things we are to hear into three septenaries, each echoing the others, which we will present in order.

First Septenary: The Sacrament of the Body, the Holy Place

The first septenary includes the themes through which we cross the first veil, the veil of the sacrament:

- I. "This is my body . . ." (Matt 26:26). This is the starting point of all Eucharistic adoration, the act of faith in the sacrament. A priest, acting in the person of Christ, has spoken the words of Christ over the bread. What was bread was converted into the body of the Lord (this is referred to as transubstantiation), now exposed in the monstrance.⁷ Adoration of the Eucharist is inseparable from the Mass, in that our act of faith is supported by the words of Christ which we have seen applied to bread by a priest. *Therefore: before my eyes, the Body of Christ.*
- II. "...given..." (Luke 22:19). The Body of Christ separated from his blood represents ("makes present") the Passion, since it was at his Passion that Christ shed his blood, as a victim of the sacrifice of his life for the salvation of the world. This body, placed on the altar, is the body offered in sacrifice, just as the shedding of the blood offered before God is for the remission of sins. Eucharistic adoration is therefore once again inseparable from the Mass in which the separate consecration of the bread and wine represented the Passion. *Before my eyes, the sacrifice of Christ, source of salvation, remission of sins of humanity, an offering even onto death for the resurrection.*
- III. "...for you..." (1 Cor 11:24). The Eucharist alone attests to the truth of this "for us," which, since the sacrament is before our eyes, could be written "to us" reaching us beyond the centuries and over the wide-open spaces. In this "for us" are expressed, on the one hand, the mercy of God who humbled himself to the point of death for our salvation, and on the other hand, the intensity of this mercy, since the

⁷ The Church has been led to use the term "transubstantiation" because the conversion of bread into the Body of Christ knows no equivalent among the changes that take place in our world.

Father has sent his own Son. God himself gives himself up for us. *Your body given up, even before my eyes; your life laid down even for my life; You yourself to myself.*

- IV. "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The sacrament of the body has been continuously offered on the altar since the beginning of the Church. From the Body of Christ offered as a sacrifice on the Cross flows the grace that prolongs this sacrifice in the life of his Mystical Body, and the dispensation of this grace was given to the apostles. In the continuity of the priesthood from this origin, from the celebration in communion with the bishop and the successor of Peter, in the fidelity of the Church to the celebration of the Eucharist, the unity of the Mystical Body with its Head is expressed. *Before my eyes, Christ gives birth to the Church, and the Church is united to Christ.*
- V. "If anyone eats of this bread . . ." (John 6:51). If the Eucharist is presented to me under the sign of bread, which is food, it is to be eaten. Now bread is common or daily food, taken from the fruits of creation. It was also the food of the communion sacrifices of Israel: to eat a bread offered in sacrifice, some of which had remained in the Temple, was to share the table of God, the sign of the Covenant with him. This was especially true of the bread of Easter. Therefore, this Bread which is given by God is the food of communion with creation and with God. In the Eucharist, the Bread which is the Body of Christ, we see that all the Covenants since Abel are thus recapitulated and fulfilled, so that the Peace of God can be restored. *Before my eyes, the most desirable food par excellence since it unites Earth and heaven, and man, with God; before my eyes, the food that gives Peace.*
- VI. "... has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:54). Bodily food sustains the life of the body, spiritual food sustains spiritual life. Bodily food is a daily necessity, and this is all the more true of spiritual food, through which the spiritual life develops and flourishes. But the latter differs from the former in that the spiritual food given by God brings eternal life. To eat the sacrament is to receive, already on this earth, the eternal life into which Christ has entered since his Ascension, an eternal life which enables one to pass through death and which will unfold at the last day in the resurrection of the body. *Before my eyes, the living flesh of Christ, source of eternal life and of the resurrection of bodies, including my body.*

VII. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven . . .” (John 6:51). The preceding steps have allowed us to pass through the veil of the sacrament, to fill ourselves with all that it makes manifest of the mystery of Christ in his humanity. Because the sacrament of the Eucharist is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, in the host presented for adoration on the altar we find the flesh of Christ (I), the memorial of the saving Passion of the flesh (II), God who gives himself out of mercy (III), the origin of the Mystical Body of Christ (IV), the entrance into Peace (V), and finally eternal life, even that of the body (IV). All this is summarized in the Gospel of St. John by the identification of Christ with the Bread of Life. This identification leads us towards the second veil: the Bread of Life is not from the earth; it came down from heaven. In the Old Covenant, the Word was for the people of God the food that God gives, a daily food: from heaven came the Word so that it could be heard and put into practice on earth. This sending of the Word is deepened when the Word is made flesh: the Word becomes carnal, and when the flesh is in the sacrament, this divine Word becomes corporally edible. Christ is truly the Bread of Life. Communion with God is extended right into the flesh.

Second Septenary: The Humanity of Christ, the Holy of Holies

Because the sacrament of the body leads us to the whole mystery of Christ, any text from the Old or New Testament can find its place as support for worship in that it tells us about Christ. However, as we have seen, Eucharistic adoration is not a meditation with the help of revelation, it must be born out of what the sacrament manifests to us. To clear the second septenary, to enter into the second veil, namely that of the humanity of Christ, we must extend the teaching of the first septenary.

- I. “And the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14). The Body of Christ is his flesh; the eternal Word has flesh as his own, flesh that he received from the Virgin Mary. Indeed, as it is for us, Christ speaks of “his” body as a human body, because his body is united to his human soul. Christ could be hungry or thirsty in his body, feel human joys or distresses because of his body, learn or desire realities of this world through his body. But, unlike us, when Christ says “my body,” he who speaks is not a man; he is the eternal Son of the Father. The eternal Son of the Father was born in time as the son of the Virgin Mary. Facing the Body of Christ in the sacrament, we therefore face the body united to

the eternal Son, the body through which he was born upon our earth, among us. This is the foundation of worship. *This body is your body, O eternal Son. That is why I bow down and worship.*

- II. "... when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him . . ." (Zech 12:10). St. John evokes this text of the prophet Zechariah the moment he sees the soldier piercing the heart of his Lord on the Cross (John 19:37). He identifies himself with the soldier, with the point of the spear penetrating that heart. He sees what is invisibly accomplished in this visible act: his sin and his death are as it were inscribed, buried in the flesh of the Word. Three days later, he will look again at this same gaping wound. The piercing that had been inscribed in the flesh of Christ is still there, and yet Christ is alive. Again, John will see what has been accomplished invisibly. Christ had buried our sin and death in his flesh and in his heart as the eternal Word, but instead of sin and death being communicated to the Word, the opposite happened: the Life of the Word broke sin and death. The wounds in the flesh of the resurrected Christ show the realization of salvation for humanity. In the vision of the sacrament, which is the memorial of the Passion, we are invited to share the same experience. *In the glorious wounds of this body, your body, O living Savior, Living Son of the Living God, all the sins of mankind, from all time and for all time, have been buried and all death has been overcome. Therefore, I bow down and worship you.*

- III. "... and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). Christ was lifted from the earth two times, on the Cross and at the Ascension. On the Cross, he was lifted in the eyes of all while he lowered himself inwardly, "obedient unto death." For it was our sins and our death that he bore in his flesh: he was lifted because it was for our sake that he lowered himself. At the Ascension, on the other hand, he was exalted in the eyes of his disciples because he was returning to the Father with his glorified, victorious flesh. He was then lifted up, not because he lowered himself into our misery, but because, having lowered himself to the point of overcoming evil, it was his turn to be exalted into eternal glory. In these two elevations, Christ draws all things to himself: on the Cross because he liberates all of humanity; at the Ascension because he takes with him all those he has saved. The Eucharist places us in front of this double elevation because, on the one hand, the body separated from the blood is the memorial of the Passion in the flesh, and on the other hand, the body that is

contained in the sacrament now lives in heaven, in the glory of the Father. *Before my eyes, your body which was lifted up on the Cross to free us from sin and death; before my eyes, your body which is now eternally glorified. All of humanity is doubly drawn to this body, for its liberation and for eternal life. Therefore, I bow down and adore you.*

- IV. "He is the head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18). All those who are united by faith to Christ are united to him in such a way that it is his life that animates them. He thus gathers all those who are saved in him, to form his Mystical Body, the Church, his fullness of grace flowing through them as it does from the head to the members. This grace extends to the dead and to the living, to the baptized and to those whom God has invisibly led to Christ. It unites the assembly of the saints and the angels who see Christ in his glory. Before my eyes is the body through which a multitude of all races, languages, and nations are saved; before my eyes is the source of our communion with Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah, with all the saints and angels. *Before my eyes, the Lamb who is the sun which never sets illuminating the new Jerusalem. Therefore, I bow down and worship you.*
- V. "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col 1:19–20). Bread and wine are the nourishment and drink from creation, which in Judaism were the nourishment and drink of the sacrifices for communion with God. The sacrament of the Eucharist, by presenting itself to us under the species of bread and wine, leads us to recognize in the body and blood of Christ the fulfillment of these figures from the Old Covenant: by the body offered on the Cross, by the blood that is shed on it, God has led all things towards reconciliation with him. God has established his peace in creation. St. Paul can therefore draw a parallel between creation and salvation: through Christ all things were created, and through Christ all things were reconciled; in Christ all things subsist, and in Christ all things are established in peace. Therefore, Christ is worshipped in the sacrament of his body not only because we are face-to-face with the source of salvation, but also because we are face-to-face with the source of our existence and of the existence of all that surrounds us. More than that: we are face-to-face with the One who brings all things back to God. *Before my eyes is the body of the One through whom all things were, in whom all things*

remain, through whom all things return to God and are established in peace. Therefore, I bow down and worship you.

VI. "And this is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God" (John 17:3). All food is intended to strengthen and satiate. It strengthens us in that it provides what our nature needs in order to survive. It satiates us in that, once it is consumed, our living nature needs nothing else. On these two levels, the Body of Christ is properly the Bread of Life, food for the spiritual life. It strengthens us since it gives us the very source of life, it satiates us because being united to God fulfills every hope and desire. But there is more, because in the domain of spiritual nourishment, one becomes what one eats. Those who love wisdom become wise. In the same way, those who eat the flesh of the Word are assimilated into the mystery of the Word, Wisdom begotten of the Father. Now, only the Wisdom begotten of the Father knows the Father. That is why eating the flesh of the Word introduces us into the eternal knowledge that the Word possesses of the Father and which is his life. Adoration thus prolongs in us the fruits of Eucharistic communion by a vision in faith which is knowledge of the Father. *Before my eyes, the flesh of the Word in whom resides the fullness of the divinity, eternal Wisdom who assimilates me to it and leads me into the knowledge of the Father. Therefore, I bow down and worship you.*

VII. "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come' . . . And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price . . . Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:17, 20). The vision in faith is not yet the vision in glory. Repeated communion in the sacrament is not yet eternal communion in the unveiled face-to-face encounter. Eucharistic adoration, if it leads us to the mystery of Christ, still leaves a distance between God and us, signified by the distance between the altar bearing the monstrance and the place where I am kneeling. All that this second septenary has revealed to us is a light in our earthly sojourn, but a light that has not yet captured the fullness of our life. Joy of the possession of such treasures; pain that this possession is still so badly consumed. This gap is also part of the experience of adoration because it makes us enter into the waiting of the Church that only the return of her Spouse can fulfill. Ineffable groans of the Holy Spirit in the hearts that seek to hasten this coming!

Third Septenary: Pronouncing the Names

The first septenary has brought us through the first veil, the one of the sacrament. The second has brought us through the second veil, the one of the humanity of Christ. In the third septenary, it is no longer a question of crossing a veil, for we are in the presence of him whom the veils have given us. Like the High Priest having entered the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem, all that remains is to pronounce the Names that name the One we worship. These Names contain all that precedes, they do not need commentary, they must simply be said and repeated slowly, tenderly, like kisses exchanged between the soul and its Spouse. A kiss of the soul when it lovingly pronounces the Name of the Spouse it knows; a kiss of the Spouse because the Name pronounced inside the soul is a true knowledge of the Spouse, that is to say, a sharing of his mystery.

- I. The sacrament of the body (first veil); the eternal Word made flesh (second veil): *Jesus, Son of Man, Son of God, the Word, Only-Begotten.*
- II. The representation of the Passion (first veil); the pierced flesh of the eternal Word (second veil): *Lamb of God, Suffering Servant, High Priest of the good things to come, Redeemer.*
- III. The sacrament that came all the way to us (first veil); the flesh of the Word taken up to heaven (second veil): *First-born of a multitude of brothers, Messiah-King, Lord.*
- IV. The sacrament celebrated by the Church (first veil); the Mystical Body of the eternal Word (second veil): *Head of the Church, Author of grace, eternal Pastor.*
- V. The sign of bread (first veil); through him all was made and reconciled (second veil): *Prince of Peace, Creator and Savior, Art of the Father.*
- VI. The sign of nourishment (first veil); the nourishment that assimilates us to itself (second veil): *Eternal Wisdom, Image of the invisible God, Splendor of the Father's glory, Effigy of his substance.*
- VII. The Bread come down from Heaven (first veil); the expectation of the glorious return (second veil): *Giver of the Holy Spirit, Bridegroom of the Church, the Lord who comes.*