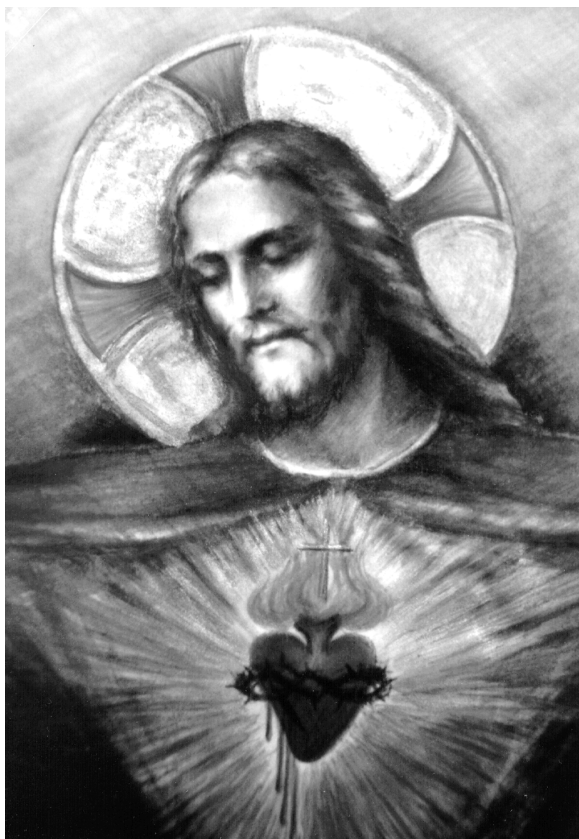


VISITS
TO THE
BLESSED
SACRAMENT
AND THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY





Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy
Sacrament of the Altar.

VISITS
TO THE
BLESSED
SACRAMENT
AND THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

By
St. Alphonsus Liguori

*Re-edited from the critical Italian edition
and newly written into English (c. 1952) by
The Redemptorist Fathers*



TAN Books
An Imprint of Saint Benedict Press, LLC
Charlotte, North Carolina

Imprimi Potest: Michael Curran, C.S.S.R.
Provincial Superior
Limerick
October 23, 1952

Imprimi Potest: † Patrick
Bishop of Limerick
Limerick
November 1, 1952

Published in Ireland around 1952. Retypeset and
republished in 2000 by TAN Books, an Imprint of
Saint Benedict Press, LLC, with permission of the
Redemptorist Provincial, Dublin.

Fontispiece courtesy of Discalced Carmelite Nuns,
Danvers, Massachusetts.

Library of Congress Control No.: 00-131561

ISBN: 978-0-89555-667-7

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

TAN Books
An Imprint of Saint Benedict Press, LLC
Charlotte, North Carolina
2012

Dedication To Our Lady

By The Author

MY most holy Queen, on the point of publishing the present little work, which treats of the love of your Son, I know not to whom I can better dedicate it than to you, my most beloved Mother, who, among all creatures, are His greatest lover. I believe that in making to you this little offering of a work composed for the sole purpose of inflaming souls more and more with the love of Jesus Christ I shall greatly please you, who desire to see Him loved by everyone as He deserves. To you, then, I consecrate it, such as it is; do you graciously accept and watch over it, not indeed that I may receive the praises of men, but that all who read it may, for the future, correspond by their greater devotion and affection to the tender, the excessive love which our most sweet Saviour has been pleased to show us in His Passion and in the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament. As such, I place it at your

feet and beseech you to accept, as entirely yours, both the gift and the giver, who has long since placed all his hope in you and wishes and hopes ever to call himself, and to rejoice in being,

Most gracious Lady,

Your most loving, though most unworthy
servant,

ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI.

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Instructions On The Visits

These Instructions are from the edition of the Visits published sometime between 1907-1944 by Mission Church Press, Boston, with the Imprimatur of William [O'Connell], Archbishop of Boston. The above heading and the Instruction subheadings were added by the present publisher, 2000.

The Visit To The Most Blessed Sacrament

OUR holy Faith teaches us, and we are bound to believe, that in the consecrated Host Jesus Christ is really present under the species of bread. But we must also understand that He is thus present on our altars as on a throne of love and mercy, to dispense graces and there to show us the love which He bears us by being pleased to dwell night and day hidden in the midst of us.

It is well known that the Holy Church instituted the festival of Corpus Christi with a solemn octave, and that she celebrates it with the many usual processions and such frequent expositions of this Most Holy Sacrament, that men may thereby be

moved gratefully to acknowledge and honor this loving presence and dwelling of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar by their devotions, thanksgivings and the tender affections of their souls. O God, how many insults and outrages has not this amiable Redeemer had, and does He not have daily, to endure in this Sacrament on the part of those very men for whose love He remains upon their altars on earth! Of this He indeed complained to His dear servant Sister Margaret Alacoque [St. Margaret Mary], as the author of the *Book of Devotion to the Heart of Jesus* relates:

The Heart of Jesus

One day, as she was in prayer before the Most Holy Sacrament, Jesus showed her His Heart on a throne of flames, crowned with thorns and surmounted by a cross, and thus He addressed her: "Behold that Heart which has loved men so much, and which has spared itself nothing, and has even gone so far as to consume itself, thereby to show them its love; but in return the greater part of men show Me only ingratitude, and this by irreverence, tepidity, sacrileges and contempt which they offer Me in this Sacrament of love; and that which

I feel the most acutely is that they are hearts consecrated to Me." Jesus then expressed His wish that the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi should be dedicated as a particular festival in honor of His adorable Heart, and that on that day all souls who loved Him should endeavor, by their homage and by the affections of their souls, to make amends for the insults which men have offered Him in this Sacrament of the Altar; and at the same time He promised abundant graces to all who should thus honor Him.

We can thus understand what Our Lord said of old by His prophet: that His delight is to be with the children of men (*Prov.* 8:31), since He is unable to tear Himself from them even when they abandon and despise Him. This also shows us how agreeable to the Heart of Jesus are all those souls who frequently visit Him and remain in His company in the churches in which He is under the sacramental species. He desired St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi to visit Him in the Most Blessed Sacrament 33 times a day; this beloved spouse of His faithfully obeyed Him and, in all her visits to the altar, approached it as near as she possibly could, as we read in her Life.

Saints and the Blessed Sacrament

But let all those devout souls who often go to spend their time with the Most Blessed Sacrament speak: let them tell us the gifts, the inspirations which they have received, the flames of love which are there enkindled in their souls, the paradise which they enjoy in the presence of this hidden God.

The servant of God and great Sicilian missionary, Father Louis La Nusa, was, even in his youth and as a layman, so enamored of Jesus Christ that he seemed unable to tear himself from the presence of his beloved Lord. Such were the joys which he there experienced that his director commanded him, in virtue of obedience, not to remain there for more than an hour. The time having elapsed, he showed in obeying (says the author of his Life) that in tearing himself from the bosom of Jesus Christ he had to do himself just such violence as a child that has to detach itself from its mother's breast in the very moment in which it is satiating itself with the utmost avidity; and when he had to do this, we are told that he remained standing with his eyes fixed on the altar, making repeated inclinations, as if he knew not how to leave his Lord, whose presence was so sweet and gracious to him.

“Depart from me, O Lord!”

To St. Aloysius it was also forbidden to remain in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament; and as he used to pass before it, finding himself drawn, so to speak, by the sweet attractions of his Lord and almost forced to remain there, he would tear himself away with the greatest effort, saying with an excess of tender love: “Depart from me, O Lord, depart!” There it was also that St. Francis Xavier found refreshment in the midst of his many labors in India, for he employed his days toiling for souls and his nights in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament. St. John Francis Regis did the same thing: and sometimes finding the church closed, he endeavored to satisfy his longings by remaining on his knees outside the door, exposed to the rain or cold, that at least at a distance he might attend upon his Comforter concealed under the sacramental species.

Good King Wenceslaus

St. Francis of Assisi used to go to communicate all his labors and undertakings to Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament. But tender indeed was the devotion to the Most

Blessed Sacrament of St. Wenceslaus, Duke of Bohemia. This holy king was so enamored of Jesus there present that he not only gathered wheat and grapes and made the hosts and wine with his own hands and then gave them to be used in the Holy Sacrifice, but even during the winter he used to go at night to visit the church in which the Blessed Sacrament was kept. These visits enkindled in his beautiful soul such flames of divine love that their ardor imparted itself even to his body and took from the snow on which he walked its wonted cold; for it is related that the servant who accompanied him in these nightly excursions, having to walk through the snow, suffered much from the cold. The holy King, on perceiving this, was moved to compassion and commanded him to follow him and only to step in his footmarks; he did so, and never afterwards felt the cold.

Your Most Profitable Time Spent

In the Visits you will read other examples of the tender affection with which souls inflamed with the love of God loved to dwell in the presence of the Most Holy Sacrament. But you will find that all the Saints were enamored of this most sweet devotion

since, indeed, it is impossible to find on earth a more precious gem or a treasure more worthy of all our love than Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament.

Certainly, among all devotions after that of receiving the Sacraments, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament holds first place, is the most pleasing to God and the most useful to ourselves. Do not then, O devout soul, refuse to begin this devotion; and forsaking the conversation of men, dwell each day, from this time forward, for at least a half or quarter of an hour in some church in the presence of Jesus Christ under the sacramental species. *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.* (Ps. 33:9). Only try this devotion, and by experience you will see the great benefit that you will derive from it. Be assured that the time you will thus spend with devotion before this most divine Sacrament will be the most profitable to you in life and the source of your greatest consolation in death and in eternity.

You must also be aware that in a quarter of an hour's prayer spent in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, you will perhaps gain more than in all the other spiritual exercises of the day. It is true that

in every place God graciously hears the petitions of those who pray to Him, having promised to do so: *Ask, and you shall receive* (*John 16:24*); yet the disciple tells us that Jesus dispenses His graces in greater abundance to those who visit Him in the Most Holy Sacrament.

St. Alphonsus' Own Testimony

Blessed Henry of Suso also used to say that Jesus Christ hears the prayers of the faithful more graciously in the Sacrament of the Altar than elsewhere. And where, indeed, did holy souls make their most beautiful resolutions but prostrate before the Most Holy Sacrament? Who knows but that you also may one day, in the presence of the Tabernacle, make the resolution to give yourself entirely to God? In this little book I feel bound, at least out of gratitude to my Jesus in the Holy Sacrament, to declare that through the means of this devotion of visiting the Most Blessed Sacrament, which I practiced, though with so much tepidity and in so imperfect a manner, I abandoned the world, in which, unfortunately, I lived until I was six-and-twenty years of age. Fortunate indeed will you be if you can detach yourself from it at an

earlier period and give yourself without reserve to that Lord who has given Himself without reserve to you.

“Taste and See”

I repeat that indeed you will be blessed, not only in eternity, but even in this life. Believe me, all is folly: feasts, theaters, parties of pleasure, amusements—these are the goods of this world, but goods which are filled with the bitterness of gall and with sharp thorns. Believe me, who have experienced this and now weep over it. Be also assured that Jesus Christ finds means to console a soul that remains with a recollected spirit before the Most Blessed Sacrament, far beyond what the world can do with all its feasts and pastimes.

Oh, how sweet a joy it is to remain with faith and tender devotion before an altar and converse familiarly with Jesus Christ, who is there for the express purpose of listening to and graciously hearing those who pray to Him; to ask His pardon for the displeasure which we have caused Him; to represent our wants to Him, as a friend does to a friend in whom he places all his confidence; to ask Him for His graces, for His love and for His kingdom; but above all—oh, what a heaven

it is to remain there making acts of love toward that Lord who is on the very altar praying to the Eternal Father for us and is there burning with love for us! Indeed, that love it is which detains Him there, thus hidden and unknown, and when He is even despised by ungrateful souls! But why should we say more? "Taste and see."

On Spiritual Communion

AS in all the following Visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament a Spiritual Communion is recommended, it will be well to explain what it is and the great advantages which result from its practice. A Spiritual Communion, according to St. Thomas, consists in an ardent desire to receive Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament and in lovingly embracing Him as if we had actually received Him. How pleasing these Spiritual Communions are to God and the many graces which He bestows through their means was manifested by Our Lord Himself to Sister Paula Maresca, the foundress of the convent of St. Catherine of Siena in Naples, when (as it is related in her Life) He showed her two precious vessels, the one of gold, the other of silver;

He then told her that in the gold vessel He preserved her sacramental Communions, and in the silver one her Spiritual Communions. He also told Blessed Jane of the Cross that each time she communicated spiritually she received a grace of the same kind as the one that she received when she really communicated. Above all, it will suffice for us to know that the holy Council of Trent greatly praises Spiritual Communions and encourages the faithful to practice them. (Sess. 13, c. 8).

Hence all devout souls are accustomed often to practice this holy exercise of Spiritual Communion. Blessed Agatha of the Cross did so 200 times a day. And Father Peter Faber, the first companion of St. Ignatius, used to say that it was of the highest usefulness to make Spiritual Communions in order to receive sacramental Communion well.

All those who desire to advance in the love of Jesus Christ are exhorted to make a Spiritual Communion at least once in every visit that they pay to the Most Blessed Sacrament, and at every Mass that they hear; and it would even be better on these occasions to repeat the Communions three times, that is to say, at the beginning,

in the middle and at the end. This devotion is far more profitable than some suppose, and at the same time nothing can be easier in practice. The above-named Blessed Jane of the Cross used to say that a Spiritual Communion can be made without anyone noticing it, without being fasting, without the permission of our director, and that we can make it at any time we please: an act of love does all.

An Act Of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that Thou art present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love Thee above all things, and I desire to receive Thee into my soul. Since I cannot now receive Thee sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace Thee as if Thou wert already come, and unite myself wholly to Thee. Never permit me to be separated from Thee. Amen.

A Shorter Act

O Jesus, I believe that Thou art in the Most Blessed Sacrament! Come into my heart. I embrace Thee; oh, never leave me!

“May the burning and most sweet power of Thy love, O Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech Thee, absorb my mind, that I may die through love of Thy love, Who was graciously pleased to die through love of my love.”—*St. Francis of Assisi*

“O love not loved! O love not known!”—*St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi*

“O my Spouse, when wilt Thou take me to Thyself?”—*St. Peter of Alcantara*

Jesus, my Good, my sweetest Love,
Strike and inflame this heart of mine,
Make it all fire for love of Thee!

Hail to the love of Jesus, our life and our all! Hail to Mary, our hope! Amen.

After the Spiritual Communion, you will then make a visit to some image of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Visit To The Blessed Virgin

AND now as to the visits to the Most Blessed Virgin, the opinion of St. Bernard is well known and generally

believed: it is that God dispenses no graces otherwise than through the hands of Mary: "God wills that we should receive nothing that does not pass through Mary's hands." (*In Vig. Nat. Dom.*, s. 3). Hence Father Suarez declares that it is now the sentiment of the universal Church that "the intercession of Mary is not only useful, but even necessary to obtain graces." (*De Inc.*, p. 2, p. 37, a. 4, d. 23). And we may remark that the Church gives us strong grounds for this belief by applying the words of the Sacred Scripture to Mary and making her say: *In me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire me . . .* (*Ecclus.* 24:25). Let all come to me; for I am the hope of all that you can desire. Hence she then adds: *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors.* (*Prov.* 8:34). Blessed is he who is diligent in coming every day to the door of my powerful intercession; for by finding me he will find life and eternal salvation: *He that shall find me, shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord.* (*Prov.* 8:35). Hence it is not without reason that the Holy Church wills that we should call her our common hope by saluting her, saying, "Hail, our hope!"

“Let us then,” says St. Bernard (who went so far as to call Mary “the whole ground of his hope”), “seek for graces, and seek them through Mary.” (*De Aquaed.*). Otherwise, says St. Antonius, if we ask for graces without her intercession, we shall be making an effort to fly without wings, and we shall obtain nothing. “He who asks without her as his guide attempts to fly without wings.” (P. 4, tit. 15, c. 22).

Graces Obtained through Visits to The Blessed Virgin Mary

In Father Auriemma’s little book, *Affetti Scambievoli* (p. 2, c. 3), we read of innumerable favors granted by the Mother of God to those who practiced this most profitable devotion of often visiting her in her churches or before some image. We read of the graces which she granted in these visits to Blessed Albert the Great, to the Abbot Rupert, to Father Suarez—especially when she obtained for them the gift of understanding, by which they afterward became so renowned throughout the Church for their great learning. We read of the graces which she granted to the Venerable [now St.] John Berchmans of the Society of Jesus, who was in the daily habit of visiting Mary

in a chapel of the Roman College; he declared that he renounced all earthly love, to love no other after God than the Most Blessed Virgin, and he had written at the foot of an image of his beloved Lady: "I will never rest until I shall have obtained a tender love for my Mother." We read also of the graces which she granted to St. Bernadine of Siena, who in his youth also went every day to visit her in a chapel near the city gate and declared that that Lady had ravished his heart. Hence he called her his beloved and said that he could not do less than visit her often; and by her means he afterward obtained the grace to renounce the world and to become what he afterward was, a great Saint and the apostle of Italy.

Do you, then, be also careful always to join to your daily visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament a visit to the most holy Virgin Mary in some church, or at least before a devout image of her in your own house. If you do this with tender affection and confidence, you may hope to receive great things from this most gracious Lady, who, as St. Andrew of Crete says, always bestows great gifts on those who offer her even the least act of homage. (*In Dorm. B. V.*, s. 3).

Mary, Queen of sweetest hope,
Who can e'er forget thee?
By thy mercy, by thy love,
Have pity, Queen, on me!