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Bishop of Rapid City**

**Homily for the First Sunday of Lent  
*Eucharistic Adoration*  
Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

March 8 & 9, 2014

I have a dream! I have a deep desire that every Catholic in the Diocese of Rapid City grows deeply in love with the Lord; that every Catholic will become holy so that we, as the Body of Christ, may transform our families, transform our culture and transform our society into what the Lord truly desires for us. Lent is a great time and season to begin the journey anew. Isn't this a great season to fall in love with Jesus?

Fr. Pedro Arrupe, **"Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, falling in love with God in a quite absolute way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you will do with your evenings, how you will spend your weekends, what you read, who you know (who you hang around with), what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love. Stay in love. And it will decide everything."**

Isn't this what a life of a Christian, the life of a disciple all about – to fall in love with God, our Father who has given us everything; with Jesus, our Savior; with the Holy Spirit the Consoler and Healer? Yet, I wonder how many here today are **deeply** in love with the Lord. I KNOW that He is deeply in love with each of you. He loves you more than you can possibly imagine – an unbelievable love. He is inviting each of us to receive Him – His love – in a new way.

Jean Corbon, in *The Wellspring of Worship*, says, *"The most fruitful activity of the human person is to be able to receive God."*

That is what this Eucharist is about – the deep love of God in Christ Jesus. It is here and beyond that He is offering us this abundant life. Jesus said, *"I came so that you might have life and have it more abundantly."* He didn't say, "I came so that you may cope with life."

How many of us are really living this abundant life in Jesus Christ vs. how many of us are just coping with life as it comes to us? I believe more people live this way of coping with life as it comes than living in the abundant life that Jesus offers to us. Jesus wants so much more for us.

And this is what this Eucharist is all about – the abundant life and the deep love of God in Christ Jesus. He is made present here in this Eucharist, on this altar, under these simple appearances of bread and wine, blessed, broken and given to you. This Mass, this Eucharist is an intimate, personal, deep encounter with Love, Love Incarnate in Jesus – here given to you and to me.

But I think this is the best kept Catholic secret. At least it is what I have learned as I have gone around the diocese for Confirmation and have asked students if they know that every sacrament, every sacramental moment, each time we receive a sacrament, it is a personal, intimate encounter with Jesus Christ himself in faith. Most of our young people do not know this... and I would suspect many adults do not know it either. So often the sacraments of the Church are seen as events. "I am going to Mass. I am going to confession. I am going to a wedding." Rarely ever seen as, "I am going for a beautiful encounter of the Lord's love." It is all in our approach and mindset as we come here. Events don't change us – personal encounters do! One is a passive participation, the other active.

But how many are aware that an encounter with Jesus is happening here? How many come prepared for this encounter with Him? How many of you came this morning/evening expecting this personal, intimate encounter with Love and are present to this encounter, heart, mind and spirit?

If we truly believe this – that Jesus is here, now in this Eucharist and wants to share His deep love with us, then we must be prepared for it. And it will change our lives forever!! I know, because it did mine. That is what love is about.

Love given and received changes people. It changes hearts and minds and spirits. We are not the same any more. But we have to be present to the encounter. This is how two people fall in love – through a series of encounters where the couple are present to each other, and it changes everything. They are not the same any more.

Communication takes place throughout the whole Mass. God communicates through word, signs and symbols, and through the gestures of the priest. We communicate in this encounter through our participation – mind, heart, and voice – beginning with the opening song to the very end of the closing song.

All of it prepares us for this union with Jesus – this comm-union – this union with Jesus. Through this encounter week after week or day after day, if we are present to these encounters with Jesus, interiorly our hearts are changed, little by little with each encounter. Then we grow in love and give our lives away to Him (just like a couple in marriage). Isn't this beautiful? Have you heard this before?

But friends, the encounter goes beyond this one liturgical moment. Whenever Jesus is present in his Body and Blood, [and He is in the tabernacle] then He is present to us – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – His whole person. This is why we can continue to grow in our relationship with Him outside of Mass [and it is important that we do so] – by spending quiet time in prayer, in this relationship, before the Blessed Sacrament. Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament continues to form this relationship of love. The Lord continues to form our hearts.

*"Our communal worship at Mass must go together with our personal worship of Jesus in Eucharistic adoration in order that our love may be complete." (John Paul II)*

Are not your deepest friendships, the deepest relationships, with those whom you speak to frequently? Are not your deepest friendships, your deepest relationships, with those you **SEE** face to face frequently?

Jesus desires this with each one of us. He desires to see each one of us face to face. He desires to share His love, His joy, His mercy, His healing, all that He is, with us face to face in this quiet prayer before Him.

*"How great is the value of conversation with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, for there is nothing more consoling on earth, nothing more efficacious for advancing along the road of holiness!"* (Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*)

The Church draws her very life from the Eucharist. We as members of the Body of Christ draw our very life from the Eucharist, both at the Eucharist table and in the time we spend with Jesus before the Blessed Sacrament.

*"...Prayer in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us."* St. Teresa of Avila

Since I have arrived here in Rapid City, I have longed for a parish whereby we could, as a faith community, have Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration so that people would always have a place that would be open for this type of prayer. I know from personal experience and believe how valuable it is for the life of every Catholic and every Catholic community. This union with Jesus that takes place at Mass continues as we adore and worship Him in the Blessed Sacrament in our personal prayer. It is a part of my spiritual life every day – at least an hour every day. If it is important, then we will make time for it.

Jesus says to each of us, ***"Come to Me all of you who are weary and find life burdensome and I will refresh you..."*** ***"Cast all of your anxieties upon the One who cares for you..."***

The Lord wants you; He is inviting you into a deeper friendship; As He said to his disciples, He says to all of us: ***"Could you not watch one hour with Me?"*** (Mt 26:40)

***"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be..."*** (Mt 6:21)

My dream has not yet come true. But my desire has been satisfied. We will be starting Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration here at the Cathedral after Easter, 24/7, but during the season of Lent, it will be made available like it was during Advent. I would especially encourage you individually or as a family to sign up for an hour slot. In doing so, it commits oneself to showing up at a particular time.

Sometime people just want to come when they are free and want the flexibility to show up whenever. I can almost guarantee that that person will not show up much at all.

The Evil One, the most cunning of all, we heard in the reading from Genesis, is very tricky and will always put obstacles in our way to keep us from acting upon that flexibility. Flexibility often times means optional. Optional often times means, not at all. Don't let the Evil One convince you otherwise.

A firm commitment by signing up for a particular time will not only ensure that a timeslot is filled during the day, but it also SPEAKS VOLUMES about one's desire, one's sacrifice, and one's commitment to this relationship with the Lord. It will bear far greater fruit for the one who commits daily or weekly to this hour encounter with Jesus before the Blessed Sacrament.

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta once remarked, *"It was not until 1973, when we began our daily Holy Hour that our community started to grow and blossom."*

I guarantee that if this type of prayer becomes a part of your life and you commit yourself to it, these things will happen:

1. You will fall in love, grow in love, and stay in love with Jesus in a new way.
2. Your life will change dramatically – you will experience that life in abundance.
3. You will grow in freedom in your heart. It will be expanded by God for great things.
4. You will come to see yourself in a new way, God in a new way, and the world in a new way.
5. You will hunger and thirst more for holiness – and God will satisfy this thirst.
6. This will positively impact all the relationships around you – spouse, children, family, friends
7. Your life will never be the same.
  - Happier than you have ever been.
  - More peaceful than you have ever been.
  - Receive deep healing in your heart as you share your heart with the Lord.
8. And the Diocese will grow in holiness;
  - God will bless you individually, your family, your parish community, our diocesan community.

**GUARANTEED!**     *The Lord wants you; He is inviting you'*

**Jesus says to us:** *Whoever remains in Me and I in Him shall bear much fruit because without Me, you can do nothing.*" (Jn 15:5)

**Each moment you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament brings joy, pleasure, and delight to His Sacred Heart!**

He says, "My joy, my pleasure, my delight is to be with you." (Prov 8:31)

How could any of us say, "No" to this!     God bless you all.