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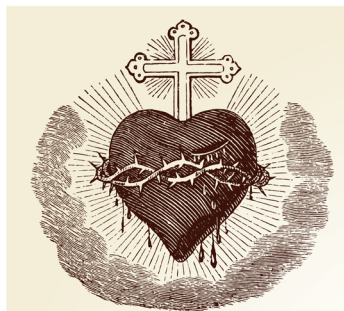
HE IS THERE,  
SHE IS NEAR

# HE IS THERE, SHE IS NEAR

*Eucharistic & Marian  
Devotions*

*by the*

REV. FR. MATTHEW RUSSELL, S.J.



STABAT MATER PRESS

The follow editions of *He is Calling Me: Helps in Visiting the Blessed Sacrament* (1912) and *Behold Your Mother!* (1908) by Father Matthew Russell, S.J. has been compiled, updated, by reason of spelling and grammar alone, and re-published Stabat Mater Press under the title "He is There, She is Near: Eucharistic and Marian Devotions".

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HE IS CALLING  
(HE IS THERE - PART ONE)

**Nihil Obstat**

J.N. STRASSMAIER  
CENSOR DEPUTATUS

**Imprimatur**

EDM. CAN. SURMONT  
VIC. GEN.

WESTMONASTERII

1912

# BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER

(SHE IS NEAR - PART TWO)

**Nihil Obstat**

JOHANNES WATERS

CENSOR DEPUTATUS

**Imprimi Potest**

+GULIELMUS

ARCHIEP. DUBLINEN.,

HIBERNIAE PRIMAS

DUBLINI

1909

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## Editor's Preface

The editor has the unfathomable privilege of presenting these two devotional works by Fr. Matthew Russell, S.J.—*He Is Calling Me* (1912) and *Behold Your Mother!* (1908)—now gathered into a single volume under the title *He Is There, She Is Near*. These texts, once beloved by Catholics of an earlier generation, have fallen into undeserved obscurity. Yet the flame that burns within them still gives off the heat and sheds the light necessary to call to the soul in the quiet of Almighty God, and away from the spectacle of the modern world.

The first part of this book, *He Is There: Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*, offers a treasury of various meditations and prayers written for those kneeling before the Tabernacle and long to remain there. It is both deeply practical and profoundly mystical. In one of the most piercing passages, Fr. Russell reflects:

“Thou art here, my Lord and my God, and I am here. Thou art here always, and I am here so seldom. I will come oftener; make me come oftener, and, when I come, make me feel more love. For one of the things that keep me away is the fear of not employing well the moments spent in this holy place.”  
(*He is There, “Prayers at a Visit”*)

This work is, in a word, the interior life made plain, stripped of the sentimental excess found so often in modern writing, but still containing the traditional filial affection for which so many souls yearn. Fr.

Russell speaks as one's own parish priest might — intimately, humbly, and with genuine hope for the reader's holiness. He knew the distractions and spiritual fatigue that plague even the devout, and thus his words have the ring of an honest and trustworthy friend.

He knew also the grave obligations of Catholics who *can* make time for visits to the Blessed Sacrament. He wrote:

“There are persons in the world so absorbed in the duties and interests of their state, so circumstanced altogether that they are free from blame for acting almost as if they forgot the dogma of the Real Presence... But He expects much more from us, and, alas! have we yet reached that low standard, the least that can be expected?”

(*He is There, “Visiting the Blessed Sacrament”*)

Such sentences carry with them a gentle rebuke and a generous encouragement, very reminiscent of late nineteenth and early twentieth century devotional works. They summon the reader to love Our Lord in the Tabernacle — more than an idea or a doctrine — as a Person who waits with burning charity behind the veil; or, as Father Lasance puts it in his work *The Prisoner of Love*, behind the bars of the Tabernacle, waiting as a prisoner to be visited.

The second part, *She Is Near: Meditations on the Mother of God*, may at first seem a shift in genre, but in truth it deepens the same act of love. Fr. Russell's meditations on Our Lady are theological and imaginative — almost childlike — and draw the reader into the mystery of her motherhood in a way that both consoles and instructs. The book is less a prayer manual than a companion for the soul who longs to know the Blessed Virgin more intimately. And what better place to keep her company than in the presence of her Son?

“Mother and Child! Child and Mother! ‘Whom God hath joined let no man sunder.’ This emphatically is the union between the Immaculate Mother and the Child Divine put forward on the front page of the first



of the Gospels... And where else, we may ask again, where else could we expect to find Him?"

*(She is Near, "The Child and the Mother")*

What Fr. Russell expresses here is something the Church has always known, something saints have lived and popes have preached: wherever Our Lord is, there is Our Lady; wherever the Eucharist is adored, there she stands in silent majesty, praying with us and for us.

This is why these two works belong together. The Blessed Sacrament and the Blessed Mother are seemingly inseparable devotions: the two great gifts of Calvary. As Fr. Russell reminds us:

"There is another way in which our Divine Redeemer has saved us from being orphans; 'I will not leave you orphans.' Jesus made this promise the night before He suffered; and He fulfilled it in the very depth of His sufferings on the morrow – when He said the next day, *Ecce Mater tua*,

'Behold thy Mother.'

*(She is Near, "Mater Dei, Mater Mea")*

To kneel before the Tabernacle is to stand at the foot of the Cross. And to stand there rightly is to stand beside Our Lady, who is always near. These meditations make this mystical fact more palpable. They invite the reader to take up the posture of St. John: to draw near to Our Lord through intimacy with His Mother, and to draw near to His Mother through adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Thanks be to God, these works are not modern in their phrasing. Moreover, they are ever relevant, ever eternal. They are traditional not in style alone, but in substance. They lead the soul toward reverence, toward filial confidence, toward a holy familiarity with both the Son and His Mother. And for that reason, they deserve once again to be placed in the hands of the faithful.

The editor believes that every Catholic household would benefit from such a book — kept near the home altar or on one's bedside table,

but certainly to be carried to Adoration. May it stir many to visit Him more often. May it make His Mother better known and better loved.

Editor, Stabat Mater Press  
Feast of St. Henry of Germany

# He Is There

Visit to the Blessed Sacrament

## “He Is Calling Me”

“He is calling me.” This phrase maybe made to bear many meanings, and to remind us of many things. Let us use it as a help to rise from trivial and human things to things divine.

“He is calling me.” This may first remind me of the long-past time when a little child would hear his name called by a well-known voice, a father’s or more often a mother’s – calling me – for I may suppose myself to be the little child of those long-past days – calling me to give me food, or to bid me run some little errand, or perhaps only to make sure that I was within call, not straying too far from their side, but safe, out of harm’s way. Or perhaps the beloved parent was a prisoner in a sick room, and I heard the voice calling for me to ask from me some help or comfort, were it only my company for a little while. In all these cases no good child would delay a moment before answering, before running eagerly to find out what was his father’s or mother’s wish or need. It would be wicked to turn a deaf ear to the summons, to hide, or to take precautions against being disturbed in some pastime or business of our own.

All these supposed circumstances could be applied with a certain amount of pathetic significance to our relations with Him who is before my mind in giving to this book the title, “He is Calling Me.” But we must reach that supreme subject more slowly after another round of illustrations – this time from the Sacred Scriptures.

“He is calling me.” Young Samuel said this to himself when he imagined that Heli had called him. He ran to the old man and said: “Here I

am, for thou hast called me.” Not till the third time did he know that it was God Himself who was calling him, and Heli taught him the right answer to make: “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” So ought we to answer when God calls us – calls us with a loud voice or with a gentle whisper – to a great sacrifice, or to some easy little duty. Be eager to catch His faintest whisper. “Today, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” How dreadful it would be to pretend not to hear! O my good God, grant that I may always listen with eager docility to Thy voice, answering at once, “Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.”

This calling of the faithful Samuel is a vivid symbol of what goes on in many a young heart – nay, in one form or another, in every heart, although, indeed, stern outward circumstances determine beforehand for very many their calling in life, as it is termed, and the very term links it naturally with our present subject. When the human creature, the child of God, has been brought through the various perils of childhood, the youth or the maiden is to a certain extent left free to determine the state or calling to which inclinations, aptitudes, and circumstances point as the one in which God wishes them to do the work of life. For some happy souls this summons is the comprehensive grace which we call a religious vocation; and here again the word itself fits in very aptly with our present train of thought. *Vocat te*. “Then Heli understood that the Lord called the child” (1 Kings 3:9). At this moment a similar crisis is going on in many a heart. God’s voice is trying to make itself heard in the awful silence and solitude of the soul. “He is calling me.” May those whom God honours with such a call have the grace to answer eagerly, like young Samuel: “Here I am, Lord, for Thou hast called me.”

For those whose lot is fixed this interior voice is often heard in rebuke or exhortation. “He is calling me” – calling me back from the brink of the abyss, calling me to give some special proof of my love, calling me to closer union with His Heart, calling me by my name in order that I may remember that He is near to me, nearer than my own soul, and that in Him I live and move and am. For, as old Walter Hylton wrote in *The Ladder of Perfection*, “He calleth thee oft with His sweet secret

voice and stirreth thine heart full stillly, that thou shouldst leave all other jangling of all other vanities in thy soul, and only take heed of Him to hear Him speak.”

“He calleth thee.” That is what they said to Mary Magdalen when she sat in her grief after her brother’s death. “The Master is come and calleth for thee.” *Magister adest et vocat te* (John 11:28). She said in her heart, “He is calling me,” and she rose in haste and went to Him. He called her in order to console her, to go beyond all her hopes and prayers, to make her love Him more than ever. And so will He do for us when He calls us. Blessed shall we be if we follow every indication of His will, if we obey every inspiration of His grace.

“He is calling me.” Shall I use this as one of my last spiritual mnemonics, one of my last aspirations on my death-bed? Shall I think of this catchword or watchword of the soul when the last sickness seizes upon me – not one of “Death’s runaway knocks,” but really the sickness that is to end in death; when I begin to realise my state and to ask,

Is this Thy summons, my good God, at last?  
Oh! make me ready, and forgive the past.

God grant that I may have a right to obey that summons with courage and hope and even with joy. *In hora mortis meae voca me*: “In the hour of my death call me.”

But there is another summons even later still – the summons to the judgment seat: “Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.” And yet another – when the omnipotent mercy of my Redeemer has prevailed, and when after a merciful judgment the last and long purification of my soul has been accomplished – then the cry of my heart will still be, “He is calling me”: calling me to take my place – no matter how low, how far away, it will be too good for me, too near, too high – calling me (grant it, O merciful God!), calling me to take my place among the blessed. *Voca me cum benedictis*.

A little pious ingenuity will enable us sometimes to stir our feelings and excite our fervour by applying to the Blessed Eucharist some of the meanings and associations that we have here linked with the words “He is calling me.” The happy inmates especially of religious houses, who enjoy the transcendent privilege of making a new home for our Eucharistic Lord in the tabernacle of their oratory or domestic chapel, might well have recourse occasionally to such devices. Some at least will draw profit from these aids to devotion, though they may seem childish and fanciful to more prosaic souls with less tender feelings and less vivid imaginations. We cannot take too much pains to overcome the *vis inertiae* of our sluggish, earthly natures, and (if we might say so) to coax ourselves by every means in our power to correspond duly with the ineffable yearnings of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to procure for Him His strange delight of being with the children of men, and earnestly and constantly to gratify His strange desire to be always remembered by us, never to be forgotten.

That was His object from the first – to hinder us from forgetting Him, to make it impossible for us to forget Him. “Do this in memory of Me.” See how He loves us! And, thanks be to God, He has succeeded: He is not forgotten. Cathedrals, churches, convent chapels, altars, tabernacles, chalices, chasubles, copes – Benediction, Exposition, the never-ceasing Mass, the myriads of Communions every morning (and it is always morning somewhere on this beautiful earth of ours), First Communions, Last Communions, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, prayers, aspirations, acts of faith and hope and charity and contrition and resignation, humble petitions and earnest thanksgivings before countless altars all the world over: all this goes on for ever from the rising to the setting of the sun. Blot all this out, and how dark and blank and dumb and lonely earth would be! Yet of all this heresy, heartless and brainless, would fain deprive Him who said, “This is My Body, this is My Blood,” and who gave the omnipotent command, “Do this in memory of Me.” We obey. We do it, Lord, and we remember Thee.

Once, during the short three years of our Lord's public ministry, His Blessed Mother wanted to speak to Him, but could not get near Him through the crowd that was listening to His preaching. Some one who saw what she wanted forced his way to the great Prophet, and told Him that His Mother was outside, seeking Him. Father Lancicius bids us be grateful to this good man who took so much trouble for Our Blessed Lady. And our Lord drew from the incident an important lesson. Stretching forth His hand towards His disciples. He said: "Behold My mother and My brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in Heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50). In this way also the Blessed Virgin earned beyond all others in a transcendent degree the title of mother. But mark the ascending climax – brother, sister, mother. Fatherhood is not included. The Divine paternity is the one infinite source of all. *Pater noster!* Have we shown the true love of a brother, which expresses itself by deeds rather than by looks or words? Have we shown the more tender and more unselfish devotedness of a sister? Have we endured for our Lord's sake anything approaching to the patient, lifelong martyrdom of a mother's love?

But it is lawful for us to turn our Lord's words against Himself, for He, too, is for us brother and sister and mother – He cherishes towards us in infinite measure the love of all these. And therefore we may sometimes make ourselves children again, and hasten to public church or domestic chapel as if the tenderest of mothers was waiting for us there, ready to comfort us and to be comforted by us. *Vocat me.* We may sometimes vary the blessed monotony of prayer, and keep our minds and hearts on the alert by letting a pious fancy devise in our devotions some counterpart for the trivial occasions that we imagined at the beginning.

Yet were those occasions trivial? Nothing is trivial that regards the longsuffering love of a mother's heart; and amongst those variations that we attempted upon the *vocat te* that roused the sister of Lazarus from the stupor of her grief, we sought a parallel for the attitude of the soul listening to the appeals of grace, and we ventured to find it in a



child that hears its mother calling for it in the various little emergencies of domestic life. Some will be able, now and then, to lend an additional zest to their devotions before the altar by having recourse to parables of this sort, especially in their visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

I have come to You, my dear Lord, as if I were a little child running in to tell its mother something that had happened to it – something very unimportant, yet interesting to the mother because it concerned her child. And You, my good God, deign to be interested in everything that concerns me, Your poor creature; for You love me. O mystery of mysteries that overpowers and overwhelms us more and more utterly every time we think of it: we, who can barely tolerate ourselves, are the objects of the divine predilection. God loves us and yearns for our love, and He says to each of us at this moment, “Child, give Me thy heart.” O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I give Thee my heart. Jesus, my God, I adore Thee here present in the Sacrament of Thy love. O Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, have mercy on me. I implore and entreat Thee to remember me in Thy kingdom, and to make me remember Thee here in Thy prison-house of love. Amid all the duties and distractions of life day by day, make me feel Thy Heart loving me and hear Thy voice calling me. As I pass from duty to duty, may the secret chorus of my heart be this: “He is calling me. He is calling me.” And as each fresh opportunity presents itself of doing something for Thee, my good God, or for Thy sake for one of Thy poor creatures, may I greet it with the cheerful cry, “Here I am, O Lord, for Thou hast called me.”

## On Visiting the Blessed Sacrament

*Sacramentum altaris est amor amorum.* This phrase of Saint Bernard means, no doubt, that the Sacrament of the Altar is the supreme proof of God's love for man. But the Sacrament of the Altar is also the supreme incentive to love the most tender and most ardent that man can have for God. We have all of us good right to be frightened when we think of the return that we have made to Our Lord for this marvel of His love.

In nothing else do we fail more sadly than in all that regards our visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Whatever was done by the Faithful in past centuries, whatever may be done at present by persons in other ranks of life, in other circumstances of occupation, residence, etc. – it is certain that he who writes these words and many of those who will read them are so circumstanced in every respect that they have no valid excuse for the manner in which they have neglected and, perhaps, continue to neglect the sources of grace that are open to them through that exercise of faith and piety which we call “a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.” There are persons in the world so absorbed in the duties and interests of their state, so circumstanced altogether that they are free from blame for acting almost as if they forgot the dogma of the Real Presence except during one hour of the day out of the whole week. Many of them, indeed, could by a generous effort do something more for their faith; but God in His mercy will take all things into account, and will not expect much from such as these. But He expects much more from *us*,

and, alas! have we yet reached that low standard, the least that can be expected?

The first thing that we shall do to set ourselves right in this matter will be to consider seriously whether we are doing enough to show our faith in this prodigy of God's love, to help to make atonement for the miserable return that He receives from so many for this lavish expenditure of mercy and love. Mass and Communion! For God who reads, and who alone can read, the hearts of His creatures, what a difference there must be between Mass and Mass following each other at the same altar, between Communion and Communion received by two kneeling side by side at the altar-rails!

But the special proof of our gratitude for the Blessed Eucharist that is now before our minds is the number and the nature of our visits to the Blessed Sacrament. Do we use our opportunities to come often enough before the Tabernacle? Do we pray fervently enough when we come?

Father Croiset, a French Jesuit of the time of Blessed Margaret Mary, begins his treatment of this subject by remarking that friendship is maintained and increased among men by frequent visits and conversations, and it is by the same means that we shall come to love our Lord Jesus Christ more and more ardently. Even amongst men such as they actually are, this argument, or parallel, holds good, though the first statement needs a good many qualifications. Does frequency of intercourse always draw closer the ties of friendship? This supposes in both the parties concerned qualities that are not always found in them. Thomas à Kempis came nearer to the truth when he said (Book I, 8): "We think sometimes to please others by being with them, and we begin rather to displease them by the impropriety of conduct which they notice in us." This aspect of human friendship suggests certain shrewd cautions concerning the expediency of making ourselves scarce, the desirableness of being able to live alone and to enjoy one's own company, not depending too much on others in the business and the relations of life. But, nevertheless, with all these deductions, in spite of all the weaknesses and imperfections that frequent and familiar

intercourse forces poor human creatures to detect in one another, it remains true that friendship must be kept up by constant reminders of some kind, letter or visit – otherwise “out of sight, out of mind.” Impressions fade, feelings are blunted, the persons and things beside us engross our attention – absence does not (as the old song pretends) “make the heart grow fonder,” unless it is constantly bewailed in the spirit of La Fontaine’s pathetic fable of the “Two Pigeons”:

*L’absence est le plus grand des maux,  
Non pas pour vous, cruelle!*

The saddest of sorrows is thus to part –  
Not for you, O cruel heart!

There is no need of these cautions, however, when we rise from human friendships to the friendship between God and man – between the human soul and the Heart of Jesus. Jesus dwells amongst us for this reason perhaps most of all, in the special manner that He has chosen for His Sacramental Presence, in order that He may be visited; in order that where He is we also may be. And certainly our love for Him will be maintained and increased by the frequent visits that faith and love will prompt.

In the intercourse of society (to quote Father Croiset again) there are two sorts of visits to be paid – there are visits of civility, and there are visits of pure friendship. It would be a fault to fail in the former; but it is at the latter that special favours are usually conferred. Great feast-days, the time of Mass and of the Divine Office (when it is recited in choir) – these are, with regard to Jesus Christ, what visits of duty and politeness are with regard to the great ones of the world: one would be remarked, one might even be punished, if on these occasions one were absent from the crowd. But the visits which are paid at certain hours of the day, when Jesus is almost left without a visitor, when most people forget Him – these are the visits of friends. It is then, more than at any other time, that Jesus converses more familiarly with His favourites, that He enters into more intimate and confidential communications with them, that

He opens His Heart to them, and pours out on them all the treasury of His graces, setting them on fire with His love. Whether it is that the indifference of those who forget Him at such times enhances the fidelity of those who visit Him, devout souls have experienced that there is no surer means of speedily obtaining a great love for our Lord than to visit Him in His churches, especially at times when He is little honoured and rarely visited. If we make these visits like people who believe that it is Jesus Christ whom they visit, they are an infallible means of obtaining in a short time a tender love for our Blessed Lord.

These remarks, which keep pretty close to the old French Jesuit, regard chiefly the ordinary Faithful, who have to leave their homes to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Many do so, but not nearly as many as might be expected, and these not nearly as often and as eagerly as might seem to be imperatively demanded by the nature of this dogma of Catholic Faith. All this, however, must be emphasised a hundredfold for those who have the happiness to dwell in the same house with our Eucharistic Lord, who are independent of all seasons and all states of the weather, who have only a corridor or two to traverse, a staircase or two to mount or to descend, and there they are, kneeling in His Sacramental Presence! What a happiness to possess Jesus Christ thus and to be able to go and pay Him a visit! At how great a price we should be willing to purchase this grace if we had it not, and if our right to the privilege of reserving the Blessed Sacrament in our domestic chapel were disputed, what exertions should we not make to have it decided in our favour! We pity those who have to live in certain parts of Canada and Australia, and other countries very many miles away from the nearest Catholic Church, cut off almost completely from the sacramental consolations of religion. But, God forgive us, do we use to the full the better opportunities that we enjoy?

It might well be a help to us sometimes to shake off our spiritual sloth if we could recall vividly the hardships that those who have gone before us must have undergone in order to hand down to us the treasures of the Faith which heresy strove to wrest from them. What associations

cling round the Mass Rock that is shown in many parts of Ireland in secret, secluded spots, where Mass was offered up during the cruel Penal Times, and where our Catholic forefathers gathered from all sides at the peril of their lives.

In our dear land what perils they  
Who held fierce Heresy at bay  
Braved but to hear one holy Mass!  
The boon is just as great, alas!  
That God doth here this morn impart –  
How cold my faith, how hard my heart!

“The wicked necessity of rhyme” has pushed that *alas!* a little out of its proper place; but the contrast between those times and our times might well move us to pity ourselves and to blame ourselves for being so unworthy of the glorious traditions that we inherit through the heroism of those whose blood flows in our veins.

But in Ireland in the worst days of persecution the faithful children of the Church clung together in their thousands and encouraged each other to be true till death; in England, on the contrary, the Church was almost annihilated, and the heroic souls that held true were in many places left in sad isolation. Glory be to God for the bravery with which they clung to the Faith in their loneliness and obscurity, and made possible the present glorious revival! Various records have come down to us from those dark ages, such as “Father John Gerard’s Narrative,” which allows us to see how the Catholics of those times would assemble from near and far when the message went cautiously round, “There will be Mass next Sunday at Mrs. Stapleton’s, or Squire Towneley’s.” With what eagerness, in spite of the risks they ran, faithful Catholics hastened to avail themselves of the privilege of assisting at the Holy Mysteries! Alas, how differently we in our easier times feel and act!

Thinking over this subject, it is hardly possible to refrain from quoting Thomas à Kempis, who has urged the point better than any one else in the first chapter of that holiest portion of the holiest of human

compositions, the Fourth Book of *The Imitation of Christ*. “Oh! the blindness and the hardness of the heart of man that doth not consider so unspeakable a gift, and from a daily use of it falls into a disregard of it. For if this most holy Sacrament were only celebrated in one place, and consecrated by only one priest in the world, how great a desire would men have to go to that place and to such a priest of God, that they might see the divine mysteries celebrated! But now there are made many priests, and Christ is offered up in many places, that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater, by how much the more this sacred Communion is spread throughout the world.”

Yes, if our Divine Redeemer had conferred on none but Saint Peter and his successors in the See of Rome the power of offering up the Holy Sacrifice, how we should envy those who lived near enough to assist thereat or who could make the pilgrimage *ad limina Apostolorum*! But now that every poor priest, independently even of virtue or personal merit, can perform these awful rites; now that churches and chapels are so multiplied, and in almost every one our Eucharistic Lord abides continually, it would be a dreadful thing if here, too, should be verified the old saying, which in so solemn a context must be softened down to the statement that familiarity too often produces carelessness or disregard.

Almost all the Faithful dwelling in towns and villages enjoy these facilities of visiting the Blessed Sacrament; but if reproaches can be addressed to them for their neglect of such opportunities, what shall be thought (as I was saying a moment ago) of those who dwell under the same roof with our Divine Lord? Pious worldlings leave their homes and come to the church in all weathers to hear Mass on dark and dreary mornings; and we, with so little trouble, without changing our dress or going into the open air, can visit our Divine Guest – and we neglect so clear and so sweet a duty, or discharge it carelessly. God forgive us!

The saints knew much better how to appreciate these benefits. Saint Francis Borgia spent before the Blessed Sacrament all the time that he was free to dispose of at his pleasure; and it was he who, as General of the

Society of Jesus, ordered that in all their houses there should be tribunes opening into the church, where the members of the community could conveniently adore the Divine Tenant of the Tabernacle. Saint Francis Xavier often remained all night in the church, and the little repose that he was obliged to take was taken on these occasions on the very steps of the altar. Saint John Francis Regis, arriving by night at a town during one of his missionary tours in the wild mountain districts, would sleep or kneel till morning before the door of the church. The first Fathers of the Society were not particular about the rooms they occupied, but the chamber most sought after was a little cell under the stairs, because it was nearest to the church. Father De Ponte remained till extreme old age in an infirmary high up in the house. He counted as nothing the trouble of going up and down so many steps, because in this room there was only a thin wall separating him from the church. Similar proofs of devotion to our Lord's Sacramental Presence might be cited from the lives of the saints and holy men of other Orders; as, for instance, the numberless examples gathered into one chapter of Mother Raphael Drane's *Spirit of the Dominican Order Illustrated in the Lives of Its Saints*.

To pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament with profit to our souls we must first recollect ourselves as perfectly as we can, enter in spirit into the Tabernacle with Jesus Christ, and there, after having adored Him and thanked Him – for all prayer ought to begin with praise and thanksgiving and a cry for mercy and pardon – we must treat of the affairs that have led us to the altar. There will usually be no special necessity impelling us, but only our general wants, the obvious dictates of our faith, which will urge us to make acts of that faith itself and acts of hope, love, and contrition, and to implore all the graces we need for the sanctification of our souls. These interests press on us at all times, and there are hardly ever wanting special objects which interest us particularly at the moment. When two real friends meet, two who really love one another and trust in one another's love – when they meet, especially after a considerable interval of separation, they



eagerly communicate to one another the most important things that have happened – each of them rejoices at any piece of good news the other has to tell, and sympathises and grieves at any sorrow the other has had to bear; and they take counsel as to any difficulty that may be before either of them. 1 his is what fills up a visit between two good friends; and something corresponding to all these things may very fruitfully occupy us during some of our visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

Our visits may be adapted to the hour of the day, to the time of the year, to the actual state of our soul, and to our present circumstances.

*To the hour of the day.* In the morning let us thank our Lord for having preserved us during the night, and let us ask the grace to employ the coming day in a holy manner. In the course of the day many useful subjects to lay before our Lord will be suggested by some duty that we have gone through, or in preparation for some other duty that is just coming on – walk, dinner, recreation, study, etc. After recreation, &c., we may beg to be strengthened against sloth, dissipation of mind – *ab incursu et daemonio meridiano* (Psalm 90:6). Our last visit for the day will suggest to us to pray for a good and holy night's rest and a happy death at the end of all. *Noctem quietam et finem perfectum concedat nobis Dominus omnipotens* – “May the Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.”

*To the time of the year.* During Advent, for instance, we adore the Incarnate Word renewing in the Blessed Eucharist the humiliations of His abode in the womb of His Immaculate Mother. After Christmas we can visit Him like the shepherds or the kings. Then on till Lent we adore Him in the obscure state and humble toils of the Holy Childhood. During Lent we bear Him company in the Desert. In Passiontide we accompany Him through the various places where He suffered insults and torments. The Blessed Eucharist is here a representation of His death. *Recolitur memoria passionis ejus*. “The memory of His Passion is cherished anew.” After Easter we go to visit His sepulchre as an image of the solitude, interior and exterior, of the tomb from which we shall one day issue glorious with Him: “Ye are dead, and your life is hidden

with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then you also shall appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:3 and 4).

During the rest of the year, which reminds us of no particular mysteries of our Lord's life, or at any time of the year, let us think of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament as He is in heaven, praying unceasingly to His Father, and, as Saint Paul says, addressing Him perpetually about our various needs – *semper vivens ad interpellandum pro nobis*, "Always living to make intercession for us" (Hebrews 7:25). Or else, as the Incarnate Word, surrounded by the heavenly hosts, who, out of reverence, veil themselves with their wings and sing: "Holy, holy, holy!" *Cum quibus et nostras voces, ut admitti jubeas deprecamur*. "With whom, we beseech Thee, bid that our voices also be admitted."

At all seasons consult your devotion and the promptings of nature and grace. At one visit imagine you are the angel sent to comfort our Lord after His agony in Gethsemane, though, indeed, too often you have resembled rather the Apostles who slept instead of watching with Him. At another visit, imagine that He sits on the brink of Jacob's well and that you come from Samaria with your pitcher, and that He converses quietly with you and reproaches you with your hidden guilt, and He converts you and fills you with zeal to convert others. Or imagine that you sit at His feet, like Magdalen, or stand beside the Cross, like Magdalen again, or like the other Mary, Mary Immaculate, and Saint John. Or, going back to an earlier day, imagine that the Blessed Virgin at Nazareth allows you to approach near the cradle where the Divine Babe sleeps and to kiss the little Hand that holds the universe – *mundum pugillo continens*. If your head is racked with pain, imagine you hear the words, "Behold the Man!" and you look up and through your tears you see the thorn-crowned Head and the forehead streaked with blood and the eyes heavy. If in desolation, listen to the mysterious cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If you enter the chapel in some innocent gaiety of heart which you cannot sober down at once, do not be afraid – Jesus was at the marriage-feast of Cana, and did not cast gloom over the company. They must have been merry, especially as

they were poor; and they must have been poor, else the wine would not have run short.

In fine, our circumstances, the present state of our souls, will tell us how our visits are to be made. Sometimes, like the poor woman who was denounced to our Lord by worse sinners than herself, we shall blush for shame and weep over our sins, and we shall try to have love enough to hear the comforting word, "Many sins are forgiven you because you have loved much." Sometimes, like the leper, like the one that was palsied, like the blind man who sat by the wayside begging – wearied out with our various wants and troubles, we shall go to the altar and beg to be healed. "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." "Lord, that I may see!" "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

Another time we shall go to ask advice in our perplexities and doubts. "Lord, what shall I do that I may possess eternal life?" "Master, tell us is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" (Matthew 22:17) Or, again, some other time we shall come in order to be consoled in our troubles and temptations. "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me" (Matthew 26:39). Our Heavenly Father will send an angel to comfort us, or else Jesus will come Himself, and we shall hear Him say, "Weep not, fear not: it is I." "Have confidence: I have overcome the world."

It is the common experience of devout and simple souls that in any perplexity or disturbance, instead of complaining to our fellow-workers, or even consulting them, it is best to enter the chapel and kneel quietly for a time before the tabernacle, and we shall be enlightened and consoled. Happy they whose child-like, vivid faith enables them to realise in their visits to the Blessed Sacrament this aspect of this most consoling dogma of our Faith!

If we are humble enough, simple enough, earnest enough, to try and put into practice some of the foregoing suggestions, which represent the experience of many who have long been in heaven; if we make use of one hint at one time and of another at another, according as it chances to chime in with the actual circumstances of our souls, our visits to the

Blessed Sacrament will be more fruitful and less wearisome, nay, more delightful, than through our own fault they have too often been in the past.

## The First Visit for The Day

There is very little tenderness, very little poetry, in our hearts if we are never moved by a keener thrill of adoring love when we first in the morning come before the tabernacle where our Sacramental Lord has remained during the night with no human adorers around Him but only His angels. He has remained there because this continual presence follows necessarily from the doctrine of the Real Presence, when the Blessed Sacrament is not consumed during the sacrifice of the Mass but “reserved,” placed in a ciborium, pyx, or lunette, and then laid within a tabernacle; and He continues to be thus present, the sacramental Species are thus reserved, not only during the day but through the night, in order that our Eucharistic Lord may be ready to be brought at any hour as viaticum to any poor soul that seems about to make the journey into eternity. In other ways, also, He works during the night for those who cannot come near Him; for the thought of His abiding Presence and of His loneliness will touch the heart of some one who perhaps is far away; and these lonely night-watches of the Blessed Sacrament enable Our Lord to receive the homage of our first waking hour, perhaps our morning prayer, our morning oblation. When, then, we first present ourselves before the altar after our night’s repose, we ought not to be cold and dull and dumb; we ought to be able to feel much and even to say much – it is certain that we have a great deal to thank God for, a great deal to ask of Him. The night that is past and the day that is before us ought each to inspire many thoughts and many prayers. Those who are denied the blessing of healthful sleep will

reproach themselves for having hitherto taken that priceless boon of sleep as a mere matter of course, night after night, for years. Let us try to feel and express the proper gratitude for this and every other natural blessing. And, then, looking forward through the coming day, let us beg our good Lord to bless every moment of it, that we may use every moment well. When we think of time and eternity, and all their solemn responsibilities; when we think of God and His poor human creatures, of all that He has done for us and all that He wishes to do for us in life and throughout our unending eternity; when we think of the memories of the past, the duties of the present, the possibilities of the future – it should not seem hard to converse earnestly with Our Lord in our first morning visit.

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O Lord Jesus Christ, my God, my Redeemer, my merciful Judge, I adore Thee present here in this tabernacle, where Thou abidest night and day to be near us and to receive our prayers. In the beautiful alternation of day and night, of work and rest, of waking and sleeping, I have come, dear Lord, to offer up to Thee a new day of my life, which I hope to spend exactly according to Thy will. I have many things to ask for; but, cold as my heart is, I feel intensely the urgency of that counsel which Thy great servant, Saint Paul, has given to us: “With thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6). Thanks come first. Our first impulse, our first duty, is to adore Thee and praise Thee and thank Thee.

We thank Thee, Lord, that Thou art God,  
That Thou art what Thou art.

“We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory.” And then through Thee, the sole necessary self-existent Being, I exist. “Creator, thanks! I was not, and I am.” Through Thee alone I live, and at every breath that I draw

I am dependent for my life, O my God, on Thy merciful and almighty providence. I thank Thee, then, for keeping me safe through the night that is over and through all my past life, and I implore the continuance of Thy goodness and mercy through the coming day and any days that may follow before the sun rises the last time for me. How often it has risen for me! How often I have said my morning prayers and made my morning offering, hoping, as I do now, that every thought and word and deed of this day may be such that I may offer it up to Thee, my good Jesus, my Lord, my Redeemer, my merciful Judge. I will not say with Saint Jerome Emiliani, "O sweetest Jesus, be not to me a Judge but a Saviour." I will say more plainly what that loving Saint intended those words to mean: O Jesus my God, forgive me my sins again and again, sustain me by Thy grace today and every day of my life, that I may spend this day and every day as if it were the last day of my life, that so my last day may find me ready to breathe forth my soul in peace and in Thy grace. Thus shall it be well with me for ever. Amen, dear Lord, amen!

## A Morning Question

There is a new day of life before me – though many a one has said so, at the beginning of some day, who in reality had not a full day still to live, but only half a day or a few hours. Yet, though I know that this is possible for me also, I cannot help feeling practically certain that God will give me this coming day to live. May He give me the grace, and may I use the grace that He gives me, to spend this day exactly as He wishes me to spend it. Was there anything wrong yesterday? I will not think of grievous sin as possible, for *that* is madness and horror; but was there anything for which I blamed myself much, which I wished greatly had been otherwise, when examining my conscience last night? Is there any duty of the same sort before me today? How am I going to do it? If I do not alter now what I regretted last night, is there not a good deal of insincerity, feebleness, and cowardice in such a way of acting? Is that an honest way of dealing with God and my soul?



## Visit in the Afternoon of a Communion Day

Dear Lord, once on earth Thou didst show how hurt Thou wast at the ingratitude of some on whom Thou hadst bestowed a great benefit. “Were not ten made clean, and where are the nine? Has no one returned to give thanks but this stranger?” I rejoice to think that this is not true of those who knelt with me before this altar this morning, to receive Thee into their hearts. I am, thank God, not the only one who has come back to bless Thee. Many, besides, are kept away by duties which they are discharging for Thy sake. In their place, I give Thee now, dear Lord, the thanks which they would wish to come themselves and give.

But the reproach contained in those Gospel words has often fallen upon me. I have not the excuse to offer which will be admitted from many. Many, I hope, have come back, and others will come back before the church doors are closed; and there are many from whom, in Thy merciful and loving considerateness, Thou dost not expect this little return. Thou dost wish them, if the worry of life will let them – and it would if they but thought of it – only to send a little prayer from their hearts now and then, an aspiration, a wish that they had time to come here again to adore and thank Thee.

But *I* have time to come, and by Thy grace I have come. “Here I am, Lord, for Thou hast called me.” I thank Thee for the great grace of this morning and for the graces which those few precious moments of sacramental union have spread over the hours that have since elapsed. I trust that the prayer contained in the hymn of *Terce* has been, at least, partly fulfilled for me in the meanwhile. *Os, lingua, mens, sensus, vigor,*

*confessionem personent.* Have my mouth and tongue and mind, all my senses and all my strength of mind and body – have the words of my mouth, the thoughts of my mind, the feelings of my heart, the senses of my body, been regulated in their different ways in such a manner as to express the creature's submission to the will of the Creator, his offering of praise and homage and adoration? Have my lips uttered a word or used a tone unworthy of lips that the Body of the Lord has touched? Has my heart harboured a thought or feeling unworthy of one to whom Jesus has united Himself more closely than He did to Saint John when He allowed him to lean his head against the divine breast? Has the day that I have spent since my Communion this morning been such as almost to prove the truth of our faith in Thy sacramental Presence, O my Jesus? Let me be afraid of exciting the wonder and indignation of the blessed spirits that may be allowed to know my earthly state and to take an interest in my soul's sanctification. Have those blessed ones – whether angels of God, or the blessed who were once poor, human creatures like myself, perhaps very near and dear to me – have those blessed ones been allowed to see into the recesses of my heart, and have they been amazed and pained – to use human words, as if pain could ruffle their unchangeable beatitude – astounded and distressed at the unworthy return that God receives for so much goodness? Wildly as this question is expressed, the self-reproach that is implied in it is too well founded, O my good and patient Lord! Thou hast come unto Thy own – those whom Thou dost deign to treat as Thy very own, Thy special friends, Thy dearest – and too often Thy own receive Thee not, or receive Thee coldly, carelessly. O my Jesus, have mercy still, in spite of all my coldness, all my relapses, all my cowardice, all my meanness! Ah, Lord, soften my heart, purify my heart, inflame my heart! Make my heart more worthy to receive Thee when Thou wilt come again!

## A Visit After Making a Meditation on the Blessed Sacrament

Lord, I have tried to think earnestly and devoutly on the infinite love Thou hast shown us by instituting the Holy Eucharist. All that I have meditated upon is here realised. Here is the great Mystery that has inspired the transports of the saints, the glorious hymns of Saint Thomas, the magnificent churches and tabernacles and chalices, the copes and chasubles, and all other tributes that human ingenuity, at the behest of faith, has paid to the Eucharistic Presence. Happy they who are able to show their love for Thee, O Lord, in Thy sacramental disguise, by costly gifts devoted to Thy service, perhaps, for centuries, like the ancient chalices still in use! Happy especially are they whose position and circumstances enable them to help in the erection of a new home or a new shrine where, day after day for years and years, Thy poor human creatures can gather around the altar of their Hidden God – *Deus absconditus, Deus Salvator*.

But from me, O Lord, Thou dost want only the love of my heart. Love presupposes faith and sorrow. I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee – and I grieve that my faith is so weak, my hope so dull, my love so cold. I know that Thou art worthy of all the love our hearts can feel; and I wonder at myself for being so insensible, forgetting Thee so completely through most of the day. Even when I do think of Thee, I feel so little, say so little, do so little, to show my faith and love. Yes, I wonder at myself. I am astonished, ashamed, that the human creature of such a Creator, with the heart and mind that Thou hast given me, can receive such favours with so unfeeling a heart – with sentiments