

**Meditations before the Holy Mass  
intended for the prayer community:  
Let us adore Jesus received in Holy Communion  
as St. Charbel did after Holy Mass.**

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**(Duration of meditations with songs: about 39 min.)**

Preparing to meet the Lord Jesus in the Holy Mass, which will be celebrated soon, we will first consider Tobit's meeting with an angel, God's messenger, described in the Book of Tobit. In the second part of our meditation, we will meet St. Charbel, a hermit from Lebanon, after whose death God gave a miraculous sign to show that this saint is an example of how to receive the Lord Jesus, who comes to us in Holy Communion. (0:44)

### **1. Consideration of passages from the Book of Tobit.**

The entire Book of Tobit shows God's intervention toward the righteous, God-fearing Tobit and his family. God sent the angel Raphael to his aid. The angel took the form of a young man, came to Tobit, and then set out with his son on a long journey to retrieve a considerable sum of money deposited in a faraway land. The expedition ended happily, and its fruit was not only the recovery of the deposit but also the acquisition of an effective cure for Tobit's blindness; moreover, Tobit's son married his kinswoman Sarah there, freed from the demon by the angel (cf. Tob 8:3), and came with his spouse to live with her in the house of his now aged parents. (1:11)

Tobit's gratitude towards God's messenger had no limits; he wanted to bestow lavishly on him, not knowing that he was not human. Let us listen to what happened before Raphael's departure to heaven; in doing so, let us note how he describes his unusual role in the heavenly chambers: (0:31)

**Tob 12:6-21** Raphael called the two men aside privately and said to them: **“Thank God! Give him the praise and the glory. Before all the living, acknowledge the many good things he has done for you, by blessing and extolling his name in song. Before all men, honor and proclaim God's deeds, and do not be slack in praising him.**”<sup>7</sup> ...<sup>11</sup> **“I will now tell you the whole truth; I will conceal nothing at all from you. ... ‘A king's secret it is prudent to keep, but the works of God are to be made known with due honor.’**<sup>12</sup> **I can now tell you that when you, Tobit, and Sarah prayed, it was I who presented and read the record of your prayer before the Glory of the Lord;** and I did the same thing when you used to bury the dead.<sup>13</sup> **When you did not hesitate to get up and leave your dinner in order to go and bury the dead,**<sup>14</sup> **I was sent to put you to the test. At the same time, however, God commissioned me to heal you and your daughter-in-law Sarah.**<sup>15</sup> **I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who enter and serve before the Glory of the Lord.”**<sup>16</sup> **Stricken with fear, the two men fell to the ground.**<sup>17</sup> **But Raphael said to them: “No need to fear; you are safe. Thank God now and forever.**<sup>18</sup> **As for me, when I came to you it was not out of any favor on my part, but because it was God's will. So continue to thank him every day; praise him with song.**<sup>19</sup> **Even though you watched me eat and drink. I did not really do so; what you were seeing was a vision.**<sup>20</sup> **So now get up from the ground and praise God.** Behold, I am about to ascend to him who sent me; write down all these things that have happened to you.”<sup>21</sup> **When Raphael ascended they rose to their feet and could no longer see him.**<sup>22</sup> **They kept thanking God and singing his praises; and they continued to acknowledge these marvelous deeds which he had done when the angel of God appeared to them.** (2:58)

In the passage from the Book of Tobit, which we just heard, the angel Raphael mentioned that he is one of the seven highest-ranking angels, those who enter before God's face, bringing petitions from earth to God. It is worth remembering from this text that God does not allow every angel to be so close to Himself. We, during adoration, and even more so during the Eucharist, and most of all in Holy Communion and the time that follows its reception – are indeed admitted to such closeness to God to which not even these angels have access. (1:00)

Song: *At Your Door* – 1-16 stanza (5:20)

Let us pay attention to the words of the eleventh stanza: “None of the angelic hosts shall ever receive that which a man accesses when he receives Body and Blood.” (0:17)

Let us return to Tobit: when Tobit learned that his guest and helper was not a man but an angel, he reacted immediately: with fear, he fell on his face before him. **We receive God Himself in Holy Communion, but our consciousness is often dormant.** It is worth taking the example of Tobit: just as he bowed to the angel with great fear, so let us, in front of Jesus hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, and even more so when He comes to us in Holy Communion, love Him with a heart filled with reverence towards His Great Majesty, with silence, words of prayers and songs. (1:04)

Let us listen for a moment to an excerpt from the hymn that Tobit sings after the angel's departure, full of gratitude to God, who willed to send him his messenger from heaven – an angel coming as a guest to him: (0:23)

**Tob 13:1–18** Then Tobit composed this joyful prayer: Blessed be God who lives forever, because his kingdom lasts for all ages. <sup>4</sup> ... Exalt him before every living being, because he is the Lord our God, our Father and God forever. ... <sup>6</sup> ... So now consider what he has done for you, and praise him with full voice. Bless the Lord of righteousness, and exalt the King of the ages. In the land of my exile I praise him, and show his power and majesty to a sinful nation. ... <sup>7</sup> “As for me, I exalt my God, and my spirit rejoices in the King of heaven. <sup>8</sup> Let all men speak of his majesty, and sing his praises in Jerusalem.” ... <sup>10</sup> Praise the Lord for his goodness, and bless the King of the ages, so that his tent may be rebuilt in you with joy. ... <sup>18</sup> The gates of Jerusalem shall sing hymns of gladness, and all her houses shall cry out, “Alleluia! Blessed be God who has raised you up! may he be blessed for all ages!” For in you they shall praise his holy name forever. ...

## 2. Meditation on the life of St. Charbel of Lebanon.

St. Charbel was a hermit in Lebanon. He is an important model for us Christians because he, with reverence due to God, always received the Lord Jesus coming to him in Holy Communion. (0:16)

St. Charbel was born near Beirut, Lebanon, in 1828. As a young man, he read the call to a unique intimacy with God – he became a monk, and a special feature of his spirituality was his love for the Lord Jesus in Holy Communion. He used to prepare for the Holy Mass for a long time, while he lasted two hours in thanksgiving after the Holy Mass: (0:38)

“Father Charbel's cell was only 6 square meters ... **The center of his life was the Eucharist. Every day he celebrated Mass in the chapel of the hermitage; he prepared for it for a long time, and after it was over, he stood in thanksgiving for two hours.** His most favorite prayer was adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; he also meditated on texts of Scripture, prayed and worked constantly. In this way, Father Charbel placed himself completely at God's disposal, so that the Creator would purify his heart, to free him from all evil inclinations and selfishness – that is, to make him holy, that is, as the Lord Jesus wanted him to become. His religious brothers already considered him a saint during his lifetime, because they saw that he followed Christ in a heroic way.”<sup>1</sup> (1:20)

When the saint's body was buried after his death, the wonders soon began to happen at his tomb. The characteristic feature of it was the supernatural phenomenon of some mysterious liquid with healing properties flowing out of his tomb. (0:26)

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<sup>1</sup> This text and the next few are translations of excerpts from an article about St. Charbel from the now-defunct “Miłujcie się” magazine website.

“Father Charbel died on Christmas Eve, 1898, during an overnight adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. His fellow monks found him on the floor of the chapel in the morning; they saw a strange light radiating from the tabernacle, surrounding the body... (0:29)

**Since a mysterious liquid began to leak profusely from this tomb in 1950**, the patriarch of the Maronite Church ordered the tomb to be opened and the corpse exhumed. This was done in the presence of a medical commission, representatives of the Church, and civil authorities. To the eyes of those gathered, an amazing sight appeared: the body of the holy hermit looked as it did at the time of death – it was preserved in perfect condition. **The mysterious liquid constantly emitting from the body had completely corroded the metal coffin and perforated the marble of the tomb.** ... On 7 August 1952, another exhumation took place. ... The body of the saintly eremite was intact but **submerged in a mysterious fluid that was constantly draining from it.** ... **By various means, attempts were made to stop the discharge of the fluid from the corpse**, including the removal of the stomach and intestines, but all these treatments proved ineffective. **Human actions could not stop God’s power, doing the miracle in the body of the holy eremite.** ... (1:46)

Father Charbel was beatified in 1965. He was canonized on 9 October 1977 in St. Peter’s Square in Rome by Pope Paul VI.” (0:17)

The phenomenon of some mysterious liquid with healing properties flowing out of the tomb of St. Charbel should be read as a sign from God to us. Let us first recall the words of the Lord Jesus, relevant to the interpretation of this phenomenon: (0:26)

**John 7:37–39:** On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and exclaimed, “Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: **‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him.’**” <sup>39</sup> **He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive. There was, of course, no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.** (0:44)

In the phenomenon of the outflow of miraculous liquid, one should see a sign from God: St. Charbel was filled with the Holy Spirit; he was overflowing with the Holy Spirit, according to the words of the Lord Jesus: **“‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him.’ He said this in reference to the Spirit that those who came to believe in him were to receive.”** **Since St. Charbel did not have a custom to meet with Jesus in Holy Communion only for a while (which is unfortunately what almost all believers of our time do), but abided long by Him with the love due to such an extraordinary Guest, it was through this that he glorified Jesus in the right way. Therefore, God continually granted him the Holy Spirit during his lifetime in response to such a magnificent attitude. However, God unveiled the magnificence of Charbel’s love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament only after his death by the extraordinary sign of the mysterious healing fluid flowing from within him.** (1:32)

The connection between an extraordinary infilling by the Holy Spirit of St. Charbel and his constant practice of a long prayer after Communion is confirmed by St. Paul’s teaching in the First Letter to the Corinthians, chapters 11-14: (0:27)

- In Chapter 11, the Apostle described the Eucharist in the context of its institution by Jesus on the night before His atoning Passion and Death on Golgotha (0:18)
- In chapters 12-14, St. Paul showed the abundance of supernatural gifts given to the Church gathered in prayer after she finished the celebration of the official rite of the Eucharist. (0:19)

It is worth noting that in the 11th chapter, the Apostle warns the faithful against the kind of unworthy consumption of the Body and Blood of the Lord, for which there is the threat of severe judgment, which Jesus exercises precisely at the time of this consumption (cf. 11:27–34). In pastoral practice, this case is interpreted as taking Communion in a state of grave sin; attention is also drawn to the sin of not giving food to the impoverished brethren during the Eucharist (in the original rite of the Eucharist, the ordinary meal was after the readings and before the consecration and Communion; quite soon this point of the rite was replaced by another form: the universal prayer). A careful analysis of the Greek text, however, reveals a deeper reason for the harsh judgment: **such a harsh judgment will be given to anyone who partakes of the holy feast without being fully aware that he is not eating ordinary bread or wine, but the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus.** (1:35)

### 3. Meditation on the “full consciousness” with which to receive Holy Communion.

It is worth considering what it means to have the “full consciousness.”

1. First, it must be understood that this eating is not merely eating but the union with the Lord, **the union carried out under the cover of the act of eating**. It is, therefore, a total, profound personal union – the union so great that the union of spouses can scarcely be compared to it because this eating is an encounter in love with the God-Man himself, Jesus Christ. (0:40)

2. At the same time, it must be understood that union with God himself requires approaching it in a state of grace, i.e., without grave sin, but is not limited to such an elementary requirement! (0:22)

3. The believer, therefore, should understand that it is not enough for him to be in a state of grace, nor is it enough for him to believe that he is not consuming in Holy Communion ordinary bread and wine but the Body and Blood of the Lord – it is necessary for his consciousness to be focused on this fundamental truth at the time of partaking of Holy Communion, that here he is accessing an extraordinary gift – a loving encounter with Almighty God! (0:44)

4. Consequently, a believer should adopt an attitude of deep faith manifested in deeds: If a person truly believes he is not eating ordinary food but Supernatural Food, he remains in prayerful conversation with this Supernatural Food! (0:30)

It is because a man truly believes if he is aware at the time of Holy Communion that the Food he consumes is the Lord Jesus Himself – the Living One, who is truly really and substantially coming in His human body and blood, the Incarnate God, capable of a real dialogue of love; the Divine Person who is thirsting for a real personal encounter with man, meeting in an atmosphere full of human love, flowing from reliable faith, in an atmosphere of joy, flowing from holy amazement and awe at the Gift that the man as the weak creature accesses from the Almighty Creator of all things, or as the mortal being from the Eternal Source of Life! (1:04)

The lack of this amazement and the associated begrudging of time to abide in a loving dialogue with Jesus is a sign of a weak faith, perhaps even an apparent, inconsistent, illogical faith – and it deserves harsh judgment, carried out for the good of man by the Lord Jesus at the time of each Holy Communion, according to the explanation given by St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (11:27-34). It should be noted, however, that such a judgment does not mean an immediate condemnation! Loving us all, Jesus gives a chance to each person until the end of his life to mature in the gradual development of love for Him to the fullness of reciprocating love to Him and to realize how illogical he used to act whenever having received the Body and Blood of the Lord he did not stay on the calm, long dialogue of love with Him – the Bridegroom. Is the time of loving Jesus a waste of time? (1:35)

Changing thinking – personally moving from a sense of “wasting time” to a sense of bestowing time in the most intense encounter in love with Jesus as the Bridegroom – demands a change in deeds. John Paul II taught about it this way: “A word ... is not truly received until it passes into action, until it is put into practice. **Faith is a decision involving one’s whole existence. It is an encounter, a dialogue, a communion of love and of life between the believer and Jesus Christ**, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (cf. John 14:6). It entails an act of trusting abandonment to Christ, which enables us to live as he lived (cf. Gal 2:20), in profound love of God and of our brothers and sisters.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, the transformation of thinking must be accompanied by a transformation of the believer’s deeds: one is to go from the habit of hastily leaving the church almost immediately after the end of Mass and to go to the practice of abiding each time after Holy Mass in a prayer of loving union with Jesus received in Holy Communion. (1:45)

Receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord may be morally good when crowned with an unhurried union prayer with the Lord. However, it may also be sinful – if a person is aware that God himself comes to him, and at the same time, this person usually tells God through his actions (omission of dialogue of love) in such a situation: “I do not have time for you now, we will talk later!”, which mean “We will never talk!” (0:42)

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<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, No. 88.

By constantly neglecting to properly plan the time for Holy Mass and the subsequent encounter of the union of love with Jesus, the believer may live in the constant illusion that he sufficiently loves Jesus present both in the Blessed Sacrament and in the brothers whom he goes to serve immediately after the Eucharist. At the same time, spending time on prayer after the prayer (i.e., Holy Mass) would be, according to him, a waste of time. Moreover, such a person uses such a practice as a principle (criterion) for assessing the actions – his own and those of others: in his eyes, his behavior is “**justified**” by the need to meet everyday duties; in turn, anyone who prays longer than he does is, in his eyes, someone who is acting wrongly, who, instead of going to the needy, remains uselessly in prayer after prayer (which is the Holy Mass<sup>3</sup>). (1:33)

To this situation – such a common situation of moral confusion, inconsistent with the practice of the Apostles and the first centuries of Christianity, contrary to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, Popes, and saints – it is worth applying the words of the teaching of Pope John Paul II: (0:29)

“In this context, appropriate allowance is made both for **God’s mercy** towards the sinner who converts and for **the understanding of human weakness**. Such understanding never means compromising and falsifying the standard of good and evil in order to adapt it to particular circumstances. It is quite human for the sinner to acknowledge his weakness and to ask mercy for his failings; **what is unacceptable is the attitude of one who makes his own weakness the criterion of the truth about the good**, so that he can feel self-justified, without even the need to have recourse to God and his mercy. ... Instead, we should take to heart the message of the Gospel parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (cf. Luke 18:9-14). The tax collector might possibly have had some justification for the sins he committed, such as to diminish his responsibility. But his prayer does not dwell on such justifications, but rather on his own unworthiness before God’s infinite holiness: ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ (Luke 18:13). The Pharisee, on the other hand, is self-justified, **finding some excuse for each of his failings**. Here we encounter two different attitudes of the moral conscience of man in every age. The tax collector represents a ‘repentant’ conscience, fully aware of the frailty of its own nature and seeing in its own failings, whatever their subjective justifications, a confirmation of its need for redemption. The Pharisee represents a ‘self-satisfied’ conscience, under the illusion that it is able to observe the law without the help of grace and convinced that it does not need mercy.”<sup>4</sup> (2:58)

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<sup>3</sup> Pope Pius XII severely rebuked this view in his Encyclical *Mediator Dei* of 20.11.1947 on the Sacred Liturgy, No. 123: “**Hence they have departed from the straight way of truth, who, adhering to the letter rather than the sense, assert and teach that, when Mass has ended, no such thanksgiving should be added**, not only because the Mass is itself a thanksgiving, but also because this pertains to a private and personal act of piety and not to the good of the community.” Pope John Paul II just as harshly rebuked the disapproval of many contemporary people according to the contemplative forms of consecrated life. In the eyes of those rebuked, these forms are “a waste of time,” cf. Adhortation *Vita consecrata*, No. 104 a-b, d-e. Of particular importance here is the statement: “What in people’s eyes can seem a waste is, for the individuals captivated in the depths of their heart by the beauty and goodness of the Lord, an obvious response of love, **a joyful expression of gratitude for having been admitted in a unique way to the knowledge of the Son and to a sharing in his divine mission in the world.**”

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, No. 104.