

**Meditation before Holy Mass  
intended for the prayer community:  
The Fathers of the Church,  
the Saints, and the Popes  
teach about the necessity of prayer after Holy Mass.**

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**Meditations led by four people:  
A, M - women; W, P - men,  
where P is a lector who reads the source texts.**

**This translation was published here on 9 Jan 2024.**

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(Duration of meditations with songs: about 31 min.)

## **Introduction**

**W** We undertake a reflection to read the time of sacramental union with the Lord Jesus as a treasure hidden in the “role” of various liturgical acts of Mass and in the prayers after Mass. **(0:19)**

**A** The evangelist Matthew recorded these words of the Lord Jesus (Matt 13:44-46): “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure buried in a field, which a person finds and hides again, and out of joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.<sup>45</sup> Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls.<sup>46</sup> When he finds a pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it.” **(0:46)**

### **1. The move from a treasure in general to the treasure of the time of sacramental union with Jesus Himself.**

**M** The time of the Eucharistic encounter with the Lord Jesus is approaching. For us, the community united in the prayer of the night vigil, the Eucharist can become a time of treasure hunting. The sequence of liturgical words and acts will be the role that hides the treasure. Will we find the treasure hidden in it? Will Jesus – a treasure above other treasures, a pearl without equal – find a place in the heart of each of us? For the time of my encounter with Jesus, will I risk detaching my thoughts from the most absorbing things in my life for Him? Will I focus my attention on Him, God speaking in the word of Scripture and the homily? When I receive the Sacred Host from the hands of the priest, will I do so with the thought that here I am accessing an extraordinary gift – a personal union with Jesus, who is mad with love for me; a union with Him before whose Face the most extraordinary angelic powers tremble? **(1:29)**

**W** Will I not abandon this treasure immediately after the end of the sacred liturgy simply because He is invisible to my eyes, inaudible to my ears, untouchable to my hands, and right next to me are brothers and sisters close to me, whom I have long longed to see, hear, touch? Will I be willing to love Jesus by consciously abiding in a spousal encounter with Him? Will I want to respond to His invitation to consciously be with Him, to be for Him – just for Him, for Him together in the community... for Him together in the space of silence, song, words, love, contemplation, adoration?... What will I do after the Mass is over?... **(1:08)**

## 2. Announcement of two dimensions of meditation on the time of uniting: caution (points 3-6) and encouragement (points 7-11).

**A** In a moment, we will hear in translation the words with which the Church Fathers in the 4th/5th century warned the faithful against neglecting prayer after Holy Communion and after Mass; to neglect prayer at this time is, as we will hear, to disregard Jesus. In the second dimension of their talks, on the other hand, our attention will be directed to the gifts that Jesus, warmly and unhurriedly received, generously bestows. Let us listen to their instruction with love for God, who speaks to us through them today: on the one hand, he warns of punishment, and on the other hand, he reveals the secret of the gifts he can bestow on us... (1:08)

## 3. St. John Chrysostom, *Sermon on Christmas-Day*, 7

**P** St. John Chrysostom, *Sermon on Christmas-Day*, 7: “Approach with fear and trembling, with fasting and prayer, not making an uproar, hustling and jostling one another: consider, O man, what kind of Sacrifice you are about to handle; consider that you, who are dust and ashes, do receive the body and blood of Christ [...] Having cleaned our own conscience before, let us come near to it with the concentration and modesty. We approach now to King of Heaven! **And when we have already received that Holy and Immaculate Sacrificial Food, let us kiss Him with honor and embrace Him with full of love, and let us burn our hearts, so that we accede not to the court and condemnation but to Him, who helps us to achieve the redemption** of the soul, love and virtue, the reconciliation with God and the durable peace, the participation in innumerable goods; so that we may sanctify ourselves and edify our neighbours.” (1:15)

## 4. In light of 1Cor 11:26-34, the reflection on the words “so that we accede not to the court and condemnation but to Him, who helps us to achieve the redemption.”

**M** On the 13th of September, the Church celebrates the memory of St. John Chrysostom or *golden-mouthed* (Greek Χρυσόστομος), also known as the Eucharistic Doctor – he so wonderfully introduced the faithful to the mystery above mysteries – the Eucharist. In the passage we just heard, St. John Chrysostom encourages us thus: “**And when we have already received that Holy and Immaculate Sacrificial Food, let us kiss Him with honor and embrace Him with full of love, and let us burn our hearts.**” However, he does not stop at encouragement but also warns: let us do “**so that we accede not to the court and condemnation.**” It is worth realizing that the warning against judgment and condemnation is not some form of Eastern exaggeration, a rhetorical “ploy” to awaken the curiosity of the listeners or a way to color the homily. No, Bishop John is referring here to St. Paul’s teaching, which the Apostle included in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the earliest (i.e., written before the Gospels!) record of the words of consecration and the complete explanation of the Mass. In the 11th chapter, St. Paul wrote of the judgment involved in eating the Body and Blood of the Lord thus: (1:55)

**P** **1Cor 11:26–30:** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. <sup>27</sup> Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. <sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. <sup>30</sup> That is why many among you are ill and infirm, and a considerable number are dying. (0:52)

**W** Here, the Apostle points out the need for each believer to conduct a judgment on himself, i.e., to examine/question himself: At the time of Holy Communion, am I fully aware of Whom I am receiving? Moreover, if I know Whom I receive, do I receive Him worthily? (0:30)

**A** In the following sentences of this letter, St. Paul indicates that Jesus helps each believer in the “self-examination.” Jesus, on the other hand, for any shortcomings – who does not have them? – admonishes and cleanses His disciples. The apostle wrote about it this way: (0:22)

**P** **1Cor 11:31–32:** <sup>31</sup> If we discerned ourselves, we would not be under judgment; <sup>32</sup> but since we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (0:18)

**M** Remembering St. Paul's warning, let us return to St. John Chrysostom's homily. One notices in it a reference to the Apostle's words: (0:15)

**P** "And when we have already received that Holy and Immaculate Sacrificial Food, let us kiss Him with honour and embrace Him with full of love, and let us burn our hearts, so that we accede not to the court and condemnation but to Him, who helps us to achieve the redemption of the soul." (0:24)

**W** We can see that this judgment of which both St. Paul and St. John Chrysostom speak is precisely defined: it is a question concerning the love for Jesus coming in Holy Communion. Let us listen again, listen attentively, to the words of St. John Chrysostom: (0:27)

**P** "And when we have already received that Holy and Immaculate Sacrificial Food, let us kiss Him with honour and embrace Him with full of love, and let us burn our hearts, so that we accede not to the court and condemnation but to Him, who helps us to achieve the redemption of the soul." (0:24)

**A** Now, we will listen to the second homily of St. John Chrysostom, known as the *Homily on Epiphany*. Let us be moved to the depths by the eloquence of the paternal instruction. (0:17)

### 5. St. John Chrysostom, *The Homily on Epiphany*.<sup>1</sup>

**P** "If you want, I can show you whose footsteps follow those who leave before the end of the Holy Banquet and do not pray **thanksgivings** after it. I must say something that may be unpleasant for you to hear, but I have to do so because of the negligence arising in the behavior of many of you. **Judas** walked away and went out just after participating in the Last Supper that night when all of them were still seated at the table. **He is imitated by those who go out before the last thanksgiving.** If he had not gone out, he would not have committed treason; if he had not left table companions, he would not have been killed; if he had not found himself outside the sheep-fold, the wolf would not devour him; if he had not gone away from the Shepherd, he would not have become the prey of wild beasts. **Judas** went to the Jews earlier, whereas apostles, together with the Lord, left after singing the psalms. **You see, it is what happened then that happens every time here during the last prayer after the Holy Sacrifice.**" (1:40)

**P** Now, let us think about this; let us consider this for fear of punishment. **Christ gives you His own Body, but you do not want to express Him your gratitude with any words? Don't you thank Him for what you have received?** When you have eaten the usual food, you pray thanksgiving, having got up from the table. However, when the spiritual food is given to you, which much surpasses all visible and invisible creations, though you are a man who is a poor creature, **you do not want to express Him your gratitude with any words and act? It deserves a heavy penalty.** (0:53)

### 6. Reflection on *The Homily on Epiphany* and introduction to the second part: encouragement.

**M** Let us think together: the time of my meeting with the Lord Jesus in Holy Communion is near. The time of this meeting is both a time of grace, that is, the gifts of His love for me, and a time of trial, that is, a time of judgment on the quality of my devotion to Jesus, my love for Jesus through the gift of prayer time of union with Him. (0:36)

**W** The teaching of the Fathers of the Church about the importance, necessity, and blessedness of the practice of prayer after the Holy Mass has been rediscovered in our time as a great source of wisdom for the life of the faithful and officially confirmed by the Holy See in a number of documents. We will now listen to excerpts from several of them. The first will be the item entitled **Private Prayer After Communion** from the instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites **Eucharisticum mysterium. On Eucharistic Worship** from 25 May 1967 ."(0:57)

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<sup>1</sup> This text is also called *On the Baptism of Christ* or *De baptismo Christi* (PG 49, 363-372). See on the Internet: [https://www.adoracja.bielsko.opoka.org.pl/Texts\\_of\\_Church\\_Fathers.html#spp5](https://www.adoracja.bielsko.opoka.org.pl/Texts_of_Church_Fathers.html#spp5). The Greek text is here → on the Internet. For the English translation of the following first paragraph, see here → on the Internet. For the German translation of the following second paragraph, see here → on the Internet.

## 7. The Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*.

**P** “On those who receive the Body and Blood of Christ, the gift of the Spirit is poured out abundantly like living water (cf. John 7:37–39), provided that this Body and Blood have been received sacramentally and spiritually, namely, by that faith which operates through charity. But union with Christ, to which the sacrament itself is directed, is not to be limited to the duration of the celebration of the Eucharist; it is to be prolonged into the entire Christian life, in such a way that the Christian faithful, contemplating unceasingly the gift they have received, may make their life a continual thanksgiving under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and may produce fruits of greater charity. (1:06)

**P** In order to remain more easily in this thanksgiving which is offered to God in an eminent way in the Mass, **those who have been nourished by holy Communion should be encouraged to remain for a while in prayer.** (Cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* – AAS 39 (1947), p. 566.)<sup>2</sup> (0:29)

## 8. Reflection on the Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*.

**A** The Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium* of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, which was read, was promulgated in 1967 in response to doubts among some Catholics who asked whether Pope Pius XII’s teaching on the necessity of prayer after Mass, which that Pope presented in 1947 in his Encyclical *Mediator Dei. On the Sacred Liturgy*, was still valid. Let us listen to a longer excerpt from this Encyclical in order – in obedience to the Holy See – to establish our belief that Jesus, God Incarnate, values our prayerful ceasing with Him, received in Holy Communion. (1:02)

## 9. Encyclical *Mediator Dei* by Pope Pius XII.

**P** Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Mediator Dei*, an item entitled A fervent encouragement to give thanks after Holy Communion and after Mass. (0:15)

**P** “123. When the Mass, which is subject to special rules of the liturgy, is over, the person who has received holy communion is not thereby freed from his duty of **thanksgiving**; rather, it is most becoming that, when the Mass is finished, the person who has received the Eucharist should recollect himself, and in intimate union with the Divine Master hold loving and fruitful converse with Him. **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. (1:23)

**P** 124. But, on the contrary, the very nature of the sacrament demands that its reception should produce rich fruits of Christian sanctity. Admittedly the congregation has been officially dismissed, but each individual, since he is united with Christ, should not interrupt the hymn of praise in his own soul, ‘always **returning thanks** for all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.’ [Eph. 5:20.] The sacred liturgy of the Mass also exhorts us to do this when it bids us pray in these words, ‘Grant, we beseech thee, that we may always continue to offer thanks [Roman Missal, *Postcommunion for Sunday within the Octave of Ascension*.]... and may never cease from praising thee.’ [Roman Missal, *Postcommunion for First Sunday after Pentecost*.] Wherefore, if there is no time when we must not offer God **thanks**, and if we must never cease from praising Him, who would dare to reprehend or find fault with the Church, because she advises her priests [*Code of Canon Law*, can. 810.] and faithful **to converse with the Divine Redeemer for at least a short while after holy communion ...?** (1:28)

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<sup>2</sup> See the text on the Internet: <https://adoremus.org/1967/05/eucharisticum-mysterium/>.

**P** 126. Why then, Venerable Brethren, should we not approve of those who, **when they receive holy communion, remain on in closest familiarity with their Divine Redeemer even after the congregation has been officially dismissed**, and that not only for the consolation of conversing with Him, but also **to render Him due thanks** and praise and especially to ask help to defend their souls against anything that may lessen the efficacy of the sacrament and to do everything in their power to cooperate with the action of Christ who is so intimately present. **We exhort them to do so in a special manner** ... The author of that golden book *The Imitation of Christ* certainly speaks in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the liturgy, when he gives the following advice to the person who approaches the altar, **'Remain on in secret and take delight in your God; for He is yours whom the whole world cannot take away from you.'** [Book IV, c. 12.] (1:36)

**P** 127. Therefore, let us all enter into closest union with Christ and strive to lose ourselves, as it were, in His most holy soul and so be united to Him that we may have a share in those acts with which He adores the Blessed Trinity with a homage that is most acceptable, and by which ... we offer and immolate ourselves as a victim, saying, "make of us thy eternal offering." [Roman Missal, *Secret for Mass of the Most Blessed Trinity*.] (0:46)

**P** 128. The Divine Redeemer is ever repeating His pressing invitation, **"Abide in Me."** [John, 15:4.] Now by the sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ remains in us and we in Him, and just as Christ, remaining in us, lives and works, so should we remain in Christ and live and work through Him. (0:33)

#### **10. Reflection on the encyclical *Mediator Dei* and an introduction to the teaching of the saints of the Church.**

**M** It is worth perceiving in this magnificent Encyclical two dimensions of meditation on the time of the Eucharistic union – on the one hand, a warning against the errors of theologians and, on the other, an encouragement to follow in the footsteps of St. Thomas à Kempis. (0:24)

**W** The Pope's words warning against the erroneous teachings of theologians from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries are particularly strong. Unfortunately, it was a teaching that has shaped the hearts of many priests and laypeople until this day! Those theologians announced that since the Holy Mass is called the Eucharist, and the word *eucharist* in Greek (εὐχαριστία) means *thanksgiving*, there is no point in adding "a new thanksgiving - a new Eucharist" after the Mass being "the Eucharist-thanksgiving." In response to this, Pope Pius XII wrote with force and severity about these views: **"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." (1:23)

**A** The Pope commands that in the time after Mass, one should follow not those theologians who have gone off the path of truth but Thomas à Kempis, author of the booklet *On the Imitation of Christ*. (0:20)

**M** Like Thomas à Kempis, many saints valued the time of prayer after Holy Communion in their daily practice. The practice of about an hour/hour and a half of such prayer of St. Padre Pio is well known. Next, St. Charbel of Lebanon used to pray about two hours after the Mass. Moreover, St. Sister Faustina, close to us, who herself was always focused on thanksgiving, notes in her Diary the complaints of Jesus, painfully wounded by the frigidity of many receiving Him in Holy Communion. (0:50)

## 11. St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori.

**W** Now, let us listen to the testimony of a few more saints. St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, in the book *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, pointed out the value of prayer after the Eucharist, citing the testimony of as many as three saints who stressed the extraordinary value of the time after receiving Holy Communion. The saint wrote thus:<sup>3</sup> (0:40)

**P** “To reap also more abundant fruit from Communion, we should make a fervent thanksgiving. **Father John of Avila** said that the time after Communion is ‘a time to gain treasures of graces.’ **St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi** used to say that no time can be more calculated to inflame us with Divine love than the time immediately after our Communion. And **St. Teresa** says: ‘After Communion let us be careful not to lose so good an opportunity of negotiating with God. His Divine majesty is not accustomed to pay badly for His lodging, if He meets with a good reception.’ [*Way of Perfection*, ch. 35.]” (0:56)

## 12. St. Eugeniusz de Mazenod.

**A** St. Eugene de Mazenod, the founder of the Oblates, who are very active in evangelization, spoke similarly. He declared so emphatically:<sup>4</sup> (0:18)

**P** “I will never be persuaded that service to the neighbor can take the place of daily reflection or preparation for the Holy Mass, thanksgiving after the Holy Mass, or a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. (0:22)

## Summary and announcement of the next stage of the vigil.

**M** It is coming to an end the time for our meditation on the time of union with Jesus in His mystery of salvation, made present in the Holy Mass, and continued in the time of prayer of union with Him after the Mass is over. Let us abide in love toward Jesus, let us abide as a community of persons, on the night of..... of the year by Him invited through the priest ..... to enter a time more than two thousand years ago (!) – invited to the time of the Last Supper, celebrated by Jesus on the last night before the Passion of Good Friday. (0:56)

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<sup>3</sup> St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, Ch. IV, part 4. Frequent Communion [in:] St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *The Holy Eucharist. The Sacrifice, the Sacrament, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Practice of Love of Jesus Christ. Novena to the Holy Ghost*. (series: Eugene Grimm, ed., *The Complete Ascetical Works of Saint Alphonsus De Liguori*, Vol. 14) (New York, Cincinnati, and St. Louis: Benziger Brothers, 1887), 349. See on the Internet: <https://archive.org/details/alphonsusworks06alfouoft/page/n5/mode/2up?view=theater>

<sup>4</sup> Robrecht Boudens, Józef Katzer, *Eugeniusz de Mazenod. Miał serce wielkie jak świat* [*Eugene de Mazenod. He had a Heart as Big as the World*] (Poznań: Misjonarze Oblaci Maryi Niepokalanej, 1995), 164.