

## Being Present

Some people say that they don't need to go to church to be a good Christian. Others say that they can pray at home—so why do they need to do it in a certain building? Still others say that having the Blessed Sacrament present does not really make much difference.

And yet, many people find something happens when they come into a church — and will say that there is something special about being in a Catholic church. They may not be able to name what the specialness is but it is likely to be the fact that Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament. It may look like a piece of bread—but it is the sacramental sign of something— someone—so much more powerful.

When we come into a Catholic church for a time with the Lord, we are acknowledging his Presence — the eternal God present in our time and our space. We are also offering him our presence. There are many other things we could be doing — lots of places we could be — and taking time out just to sit quietly in a church will look to many like a waste of time! But offering our presence before the Lord's presence is a very beautiful — and mutual gift. To adapt the famous quote given by St John Vianney — 'God is here for me... and I am here for God.'

And one result of this time of mutual presence-offering is that we do not leave it behind in the church. We find that we take the Presence with us — and bring it into the many places and situations in which we find ourselves—being present to God — ourselves —and to others.

## Jesus and Being Present

The fact that Jesus was born is probably the most obvious way in which God shows the importance of his being truly present in the world. As a baby, Jesus was fully present to his parents — to shepherds — to wise men — and to the wider family. And, as we read the Gospels, we get a sense of Jesus being fully present to each moment — and to the people in it. He sits by a well and spend 'quality time' with a Samaritan woman. He spends time listening to his disciples and answering their questions.

Some times, his presence was obvious — at meal- times or on boats or on the cross. Some times — and especially after his resurrection — his presence was there but not always recognised at first. When Mary Magdalene was weeping outside the tomb, she did not at first realise the gardener was not actually a gardener but Jesus. The two disciples listening to Jesus on the road to Emmaus only recognised him at the breaking of bread — and then he was gone. In each case — and in the others recorded in scripture and Church tradition — it took people time to realise that it really was Jesus with them.

Jesus can be present to us in all sorts of ways—but his Eucharistic presence is a great gift —assuring us that he is indeed with us always—to the end of the age.

## Acknowledgements

*Time before the Blessed Sacrament* is a series of leaflets produced by the Spirituality Committee in preparation for *Adoremus*. It is intended for individual reflection as part of a time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament or Exposition. It could also be used with small groups.

Text from *The Psalms, a new translation* © 1963 The Grail (England) administered by HarperCollins.

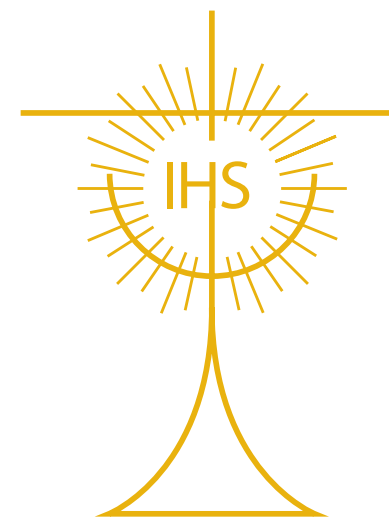
*Christ and the Samaritan Woman* sketch by Bertel Thorvaldsen. Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen

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# Time before the Blessed Sacrament

## Being Present

Be still and know  
that I am God.



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## Looking at Scripture

Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.  
I say to the Lord: "You are my God.  
My happiness lies in you alone."

He has put into my heart a marvellous love  
for the faithful ones who dwell in his land.  
Those who choose other gods  
increase their sorrows.  
Never will I offer their offerings of blood.  
Never will I take their name upon my lips.

O Lord, it is you who are my portion  
and cup;  
it is you yourself who are my prize.  
The lot marked out for me is my delight:  
welcome indeed the heritage  
that falls to me!

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,  
who even at night directs my heart.  
I keep the Lord ever in my sight:  
since he is at my right hand,  
I shall stand firm.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;  
even my body shall rest in safety.  
For you will not leave my soul  
among the dead,  
nor let your beloved know decay.

You will show me the path of life,  
the fullness of joy in your presence,  
at your right hand happiness for ever.

Psalm 15 (16)



## Reflection

How good am I at being present—to other people? To God? Even to myself?

When or where have I sensed God's presence?

Do I find being in Christ's presence comforting — or challenging — or boring — or... ?

What might being in God's presence forever be like?

## Prayer

Pray each of these lines from Psalm slowly...

Repeat each of them silently as if hearing Jesus saying them to you in the depths of your heart. Do this for each line as often as feels helpful. It can also be helpful to time them to your breath — breathing in the presence of Christ— breathing out your presence before him.

Be still and know that I am God...

Be still and know...

Be still...

Be...