

Historical development of the rite of ostension

† *Abbé Christian-Philippe Chanut*¹

"Such worship, which is therefore addressed to the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, accompanies and permeates above all the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy. But it must also fill our sanctuaries, even outside of Mass times. Since the Eucharistic mystery was instituted out of love and makes Christ sacramentally present, it is truly worthy of thanksgiving and worship." (John Paul II: *Letter on the Mystery and Worship of the Holy Eucharist* - No. 3).

As everyone knows, the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is an act of devotion that consists of displaying the consecrated host on the altar, which is honoured with songs, prayers and liturgical gestures; at the end of the exposition, the priest blesses the faithful with the consecrated host before returning it to the tabernacle.

Because this liturgy of Eucharistic exposition is relatively recent, it is naturally a subject of controversy for those who cherish the chimerical undertaking of restoring Christian worship to its primitive purity. It should be noted in passing that these lovers of primitive purity do not hesitate to invent new rites and gestures that were completely unknown to ancient Christianity (handshakes, open hands raised to mid-height, applause, waving of cloths, etc.). In truth, behind this supposed concern to reconnect with the customs of the apostolic age lies a serious challenge to the Eucharistic faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated by John Paul II on 11 October 1992, dismissed these claims, which sought to abolish Eucharistic worship outside of Mass. Echoing Paul VI's summary, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "The Catholic Church has rendered and continues to render the worship due to the sacrament of the Eucharist, not only during Mass, but also outside of its celebration: by preserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, by presenting them to the faithful for solemn veneration, and by carrying them in procession.² This presentation on Eucharistic exposition will be purely historical, interspersed with pastoral reflections, and will deal successively with the adoration of the real and substantial presence of the Lord in the celebration of Mass, the Eucharistic reserve and the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

¹ Lecture given at the 2nd C.I.E.L. colloquium, October 1996.

² Paul VI: *Mysterium fidei* (3 September 1965).

1. Adoration of the real and substantial presence of the Lord in the Eucharist

The adoration of the real and substantial presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, whatever official texts may prescribe, is today commonly reduced to almost nothing, or even non-existent, since the attitudes and gestures of adoration are rejected as anachronistic improprieties. However, adoration predates its preservation in the tabernacle. Thus, Origen³, who proclaimed the mystery of the Eucharist as adorable, invited the faithful to humble themselves before the Lord who is hidden there under his veils; Saint Cyril of Jerusalem⁴ commanded that one should bow down when approaching the chalice "as a sign of adoration and veneration"; Saint Ambrose⁵ professed that "we still worship the flesh of our Redemption today, and we worship it in the mysteries He instituted and which are celebrated every day on our altars"; Saint Augustine commanded that "no one should eat the flesh of Jesus Christ without first adoring it; and far from sinning by adoring it, it would be a sin not to adore it."⁶

Gradually, if I may say so, the faithful of the early communities spontaneously manifested their interior adoration of the Lord's real presence in the Eucharist through gestures which, as experience teaches us, produce what they signify in the hearts of those who perform them. While it is likely that the early Christians, during the celebration of Mass, were content to stand perfectly upright, after them, without it being either general or obligatory, we see the appearance first of the inclination, then of the genuflection mentioned by St. Epiphanius⁷, St. Jerome⁸, the *Apostolic Constitutions*⁹ and all kinds of patristic writings.

No doubt we will have occasion to discuss this elsewhere, but the question that arises today is whether gestures of worship, particularly kneeling, better support the faithful's belief in the Real Presence. Given that the opposite practice has been imposed for thirty years, has belief in the Real Presence been strengthened? Unfortunately, it seems not, since Eucharistic heresies have become commonplace, and the rising tide of adoration has come to an abrupt halt, even if, as we can see here and there, it is fortunately resurging with vigour, without however becoming widespread. This old habit of wanting, at any cost, to return to the practices of early Christianity, disregarding the

³ Origen (185-254): *Homily XIII on Exodus; Homily V on Isaiah*.

⁴ Saint Cyril of Jerusalem: *Mystagogical Catecheses* (V 22).

⁵ Saint Ambrose: *De Spiritu Sancto*, III 12.

⁶ Saint Augustine: *Commentary on Psalm XCXVIII* 9.

⁷ Saint Epiphanius: *Expositio fidei*, XXIV.

⁸ Saint Jerome: *Commentary on Isaiah XIII* 45

⁹ *Apostolic Constitutions*, VIII 9.

pious contributions of the centuries, is completely contrary to the Tradition of the Church and, far from being a progression, is a regression of both piety and faith, since one is the expression of the other. If we force someone who is accustomed to kneeling on both knees to bow his head instead, we are, in his eyes, devaluing the mystery in favour of our own elevation and, in doing so, far from familiarising him with the Real Presence, we are removing the natural vehicle of his devotion. Incidentally, the same applies to the manner of receiving Communion and the transport of the Eucharist. It must be understood that these three practices are closely linked, and favouring one at the expense of the others creates an imbalance in devotion. I have been in certain religious communities where people prostrate themselves on the ground at the consecration and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, but where they approach and return from Communion without the slightest apparent gesture of piety; little attention is paid to the purification of the ciboria, and the sacred species are carried as if they were ordinary objects. These holy women firmly believe in the Real Presence, which they adore daily, but their behaviour unbalances Eucharistic piety, as if the Lord were less adorable at Communion than at the elevation, in the monstrance than in the tabernacle. Our fathers were wise men when they developed the gestures of Eucharistic adoration, which show faith more surely than words, however rigorous they may be.

2. From the Eucharistic reserve

Although we can only speculate about the period before Constantine's peace, it is likely that the faithful sometimes took some of the holy elements home with them, either to give communion to the sick or to receive communion themselves. St. Basil reports that "in the city of Alexandria and in the rest of Egypt, the faithful keep communion at home and take what they have received in church from the hands of the officiant on various occasions.¹⁰ It is not uncommon to find references to this domestic use of the Eucharist, most often to urge the faithful to respect and prudence¹¹ : thus, Hippolytus of Rome, in the *Apostolic Tradition*, Tertullian, in *Ad Uxorem* and *De Oratione*, Novatian in *De Spectaculis*, Saint Cyprian in *De Lapsiis*. Although the preservation of the Eucharist in private homes did not disappear entirely – St Jerome, St Paulinus of Nola and St Augustine attest to this – it is certain that after the peace of Constantine, the rule of permanently preserving the Blessed Sacrament in the *pastophoria* of churches was established, as evidenced at the end of the 4thSt John Chrysostom urged the faithful to come and worship the real presence of the Lord: "The

¹⁰ Epistle *Ad Cæsaream*.

¹¹ A.G. Martimort: *The Church in Prayer, Introduction to the Liturgy*, Desclée & Compagnie, publishers, Tournai, 1965.

Magi came from the far reaches of Persia to worship the Child in the stable; and we, who do not need to expose ourselves to the dangers and fatigue of a long journey to worship him in our churches and tabernacles, we who only have to leave our homes, would we refuse to do so? Is this not the most culpable of negligence and even the blackest, most monstrous ingratitude? At that time, the Eucharist was not kept in the choir of churches, but in a special place, often close to the sacristy, the *conditorium* mentioned in the first *Ordo Romanus*, or the *secretarium* mentioned in Bérold's *Ordo Ambrosianus*¹². In case one might be tempted to believe that the Eucharist was simply kept in a cupboard in the sacristy, one need only refer to St. Paulinus' (353-431) description of the Basilica of St. Felix of Nola to Sulpicius Severus¹³ to be convinced otherwise; the main apse was flanked by two subsidiary apses, the *secretaria*, of which the *secretarium* on the right, the *diaconicon*, housed the Eucharist and the sacred vessels: "This is where the holy reserve is kept and where the sacred objects that make up the splendour of worship are drawn from"; the *secretarium* on the left, the *prothesis*, contained the holy books: "If anyone is seized by the holy desire to meditate on the law, they may consult the holy books while residing here." The *prothesis* was therefore surrounded by respect and, to emphasise its majesty, the care of the real presence was reserved for priests; the Council of Laodicea (around 360), the First Council of Vaison (452), and the Council of Agde (506) excluded subdeacons from it; and St. Isidore of Seville's (died in 636) *De ecclesiasticis Officiis* gave custody of it to the Levites. The author of the *Life of St. Didier of Cahors* (died in 655) praises the holy bishop for ensuring that the sacred vessels were shiny, the *sacrarium* clean, and the lamps lit¹⁴. In the 6th century, a synod in Verdun ordered that the Blessed Sacrament be kept in "a prominent and honourable place, and, if the church's resources allow, there should always be a lamp lit in front of it"¹⁵. Do not think that these various texts, even if they were conciliar or synodal decisions, instituted new provisions; on the contrary, they extended to the churches under their authority customs that had arisen from the piety of pastors and which the faithful had found to be beneficial.

Wherever the Eucharist was kept, the Church taught that "Christ must be worshipped because He is the Word of God incarnate and He must be worshipped in the same way as His own flesh."¹⁶ While it may be risky to assume that perpetual adoration was already in use at the

¹² *Beroldus sive Ecclesiae mediolanensis kalendarium et ordines*, Editions Magistretti, Milan, Giavanola, 1894.

¹³ Saint Paulinus of Nola: *Epistle XXXII*.

¹⁴ *Vita sancti Desiderii cadurcensis*, chapter XII.

¹⁵ C. Chardon: *Histoire des sacrements* (History of the Sacraments), Paris, 1745.

¹⁶ Ninth canon of the Second Council of Constantinople (553).

prestigious monastery of Agaune in 522, it is certain that the fourth canon of the Council of Tours, held in 567, ordered that the doors of the sanctuary remain open to allow the faithful to come at any time to pray before the altar.

During the Carolingian period, recluses appeared who, from their cells adjoining the church, could see the tabernacle through the hagioscope; the oldest rule for recluses, that of Grimlaïc, written at the end of the ninth century, prescribed that they should delight in the spectacle of the presence¹⁷. This institution was a reaction against the symbolism of Ratramme, which was opposed by the realism of Paschase Radbert, who affirmed the identity of the Eucharistic Christ with the historical Christ¹⁸. The faithful gave the greatest marks of honour to the real presence of the tabernacle, *the adorable host of the Son of God*, to use the words of the Anglo-Saxons of the time, who loved to pray before the altar, even when the church was empty. Thus, their king Alfred (871-901), who attended Mass every day and recited the various hours, would secretly go to church at night to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. The first confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, whose members sought to honour Jesus present in the Eucharist, was founded in the ninth century at Saint-Remi de Laon. Hagiographers tell us that the holy bishop Wulstan of Worcester (died 1095) made frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament at night, as did King Wenceslas of Bohemia (died 935). King Robert II the Pious (died in 1031) had a cart precede him carrying the Blessed Sacrament, which he worshipped in a tent set up during stops along the way. Saint Louis (died in 1270) did the same, even on the ship during the Crusades, and the popes retained this privilege until Benedict XIII.

As time is short, please forgive me for not telling you anything about the vessels and furniture in which the Eucharist was kept. It should be noted, however, that the custom of keeping the Eucharist on the high altar originated around the eighth century in Carolingian lands; in the middle of the following century, Leo IV¹⁹ recommended this practice to the Roman clergy. However, the tabernacle remained mobile for a long time, and it was not until the Italian Renaissance and the Tridentine reform that it became commonly attached to the altar; St. Charles Borromeo had this practice decreed by the Council of Milan (1565). "The holy reserve (tabernacle)," concludes the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "was first intended to keep the Eucharist in a dignified manner so that it could be brought to the sick and those absent from Mass. Through a deepening of faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church became

¹⁷ Grimlaïc: *Regula solitariorum*.

¹⁸ Paschase Radbert: *De Corpore et sanguine Domini*.

¹⁹ Leo IV died in 855.

aware of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present under the Eucharistic species. This is why the tabernacle must be placed in a particularly dignified location in the church; it must be constructed in such a way that it emphasises and manifests the truth of Christ's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament.²⁰

3. Eucharistic exposition

Now, during the Middle Ages, in order to worship better by fixing their gaze on it, the faithful wanted to see, in the absence of the Holy Host, the sacred vessel that contained it; to this end, Eucharistic cabinets were built, a kind of tabernacle with openwork doors or openings in the walls, so that the sacred vessel could be seen; To enable the faithful to see it better, it was mounted on a stand, and it became the ciborium that we know today. Eucharistic *oculi* were sometimes pierced into the walls of churches so that at night, from outside, one could see, if not the ciborium or the tabernacle, at least the light that testified to the real presence of the Lord.

The first Eucharistic ostension, in the sense in which we understand it today, that is, the elevation of the consecration, was instituted in response to the symbolist heresy of Berengar (died 1088), who denied transubstantiation and perhaps even, later, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Like any other dogmatic error, Berengar's heresy, which followed that of the Manicheans of Orléans (1022) and Arras (1035), provoked a twofold reaction: on the one hand, the scholarly reaction of theologians (Lanfranc, Guitmond of Aversa, Alger of Liège, Hugh of Saint Victor) who deepened the doctrine in order to refute the objections; on the other hand, the pious and pragmatic reaction of the people, who demonstrated their faith through appropriate devotional practices. Lanfranc (died 1089), who was Archbishop of Canterbury, instituted a procession of the Blessed Sacrament on Palm Sunday, before which all had to kneel²¹.

In fact, Bérenger's errors do not seem to be the source of the institution of the rite of elevation after consecration; however, indirectly, they contributed greatly to drawing the attention, and consequently the interest, of the faithful to the consecrated host. *The Acren Riwle* required recluses to rise, directing their thoughts to the Holy Eucharist kept at the high altar, and, turning towards it, to adore it on their knees, saying: "Hail! Principle of our creation! Hail, ransom of our redemption! Hail, viaticum of our pilgrimage! Hail, expected and desired reward!²²".

This trend of adoration, in which medieval piety flourished, prompted the faithful who could

²⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1379.

²¹ *Decreta pro ordine S. Benedicti*.

²² *Rule of the Recluses* (translation by G. Meunier) Tours, 1928.

not receive sacramental communion to ask to see the Holy Host. In the *Sentences* of Anselm of Laon, written at the beginning of the 12th century, we read that this communion is very real, even though it is only spiritual. At the end of the 12th century, this request was strong enough to give rise to the rite of elevation during Mass. It was in response to this almost universal demand that Eudes de Sully, Bishop of Paris from 1196 to 1208, issued a decree prescribing that, after the words of consecration, the priest should elevate the host "so that it can be seen by all"²³, the contemplation of the holy host constituting, in his opinion, "a beautiful tribute of faith and adoration, most beneficial to the faithful." Guillaume d'Auxerre (1150-1232), professor at the University of Paris, declared that "the priest raises the body of Christ so that all the faithful may look upon it and ask for what is useful for their salvation."²⁴ The bishops who, following Eudes de Sully, prescribed the same practice, showed the same concern for piety; thus, the Council of Exeter (1287) states: "Let the host be raised so that it may be seen by all those around the altar: this will increase the piety of the faithful and the merits of their faith."²⁵ By the beginning of the 13th century, the elevation was widespread enough that Pope Honorius III (1216-1227) sanctioned the custom by asking the people to bow respectfully (1219). At the elevation of the Mass, the faithful took to greeting Christ of the sacrifice with acclamations or short devotional formulas, an example of which can be found in the *Queste du Saint-Graal* (composed around 1220) where King Mordrain exclaims: "*Ave salus mundi Verbum Patris, hostia vera!*" In the 14th century, this prayer was still being offered for the elevation in a Chartres missal.

In the 13th century, "the thought and worship of the Eucharist became, in almost the entire Church, a constant and immediate object of concern"²⁶ for both the faithful and theologians. This marked the beginning of regular visits to the Blessed Sacrament, for which St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) composed the Act of Adoration²⁷. St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), like his master St. Dominic, spent long periods of time before the tabernacle, as did Marie d'Oignies (died 1213)²⁸. Contemplation of the host is considered a spiritual communion where, according to Peter Lombard

²³ *Statuta Ecclesiae parisiensis*, Paris, 1777.

²⁴ Guillaume d'Auxerre: *Summa aurea* (Besançon Municipal Library, manuscript XLI).

²⁵ Maskell: *Ancient Liturgy of England*, Oxford, 1882.

²⁶ R.P. Herbert Thurston: "The Eucharist and the Holy Grail" in *Revue du clergé français*, Paris, 1908.

²⁷ "We adore you, O Most Holy Lord Jesus Christ, here, as in all the churches throughout the world, and we bless you because you have redeemed the world by your holy Cross!"

²⁸ Jacques de Vitry: *Vita de Marie d'Oignies*.

(died in 1164), "those who eat spiritually are said to receive the truth of flesh and blood"²⁹ . Guillaume d'Auxerre (1150-1232) writes that it "provokes a greater love of God"³⁰ Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament were established³¹ .

This trend towards contemplation continued to the point of exaggeration, so much so that the popes of the sixteenth century attempted to bring it under control. We remember that the Lord revealed to Saint Gertrude (1255-1303) "that although those who receive Communion truly receive great benefits for their salvation, nevertheless, those who, out of a duty of obedience and holy discretion, refrain from receiving this august sacrament physically and who, being inflamed with the desire and love of God, receive Communion spiritually, receive much more abundant fruits before God."³² At the end of the 14th century, Saint Dorothy of Danzig (died 1394), who could only receive Communion a few times a year, organised her life as a mother so that she could go every day to contemplate the Holy Host, convinced that she would receive many graces there³³ . In the absence of receiving Viaticum, contemplation of the consecrated host was equivalent to communion. Thus, Saint Juliana of Mont-Cornillon (1193-1258), the initiator of Corpus Christi, who herself could not receive communion on her deathbed, "died gazing intently at the host."³⁴ This belief was emphasised in the 15th century in Nicolas de Blony's *Tractatus sacerdotalis* and in the Reims ritual; During the 16th century, this spiritual communion with viaticum was recommended in numerous rituals, such as those of Strasbourg (1500), Rodez (1514), Schwerin (1521), Mainz (1551) and Paris (1574). Maximilian I of Habsburg (1459-1519), when he fell into a precipice in

²⁹ Peter Lombard: *Sentences* (IV, 9).

³⁰ Guillaume d'Auxerre: *La Somme d'or*.

³¹ It is said that there was a brotherhood of the Blessed Sacrament at Saint-Remi de Laon as early as the 9th century; that of Saint-Godard de Rouen dates from 1120. It seems that the brotherhood of Avignon dates back to 1226; those of Troyes (1264) and Saint-Martin de Liège are also mentioned for this period.

³² Saint Gertrude: *Revelations*, XXXIX.

³³ A. Molien: "Le culte rendu à l'hostie" (The Worship of the Host), in *Eucharistia*, Paris, 1941.

³⁴ Adhemar d'Ales: *Eucharist*, Paris, 1930.

Tyrol and realised that he could not receive Viaticum, asked that the consecrated host be shown to him so that he could adore it³⁵.

Finally, we must turn to Saint Juliana of Mont-Cornillon and the institution of Corpus Christi by Urban IV (1261-1264)³⁶. Two years after taking her vows, Sister Juliana had a vision one night of the moon shining brightly but with a dark line across its diameter; Not understanding this vision, she asked some virtuous nuns for an explanation. They advised her not to delve deeper into this mystery, but they could not help gossiping about it, to the point that visitors came to bother her. Sister Sapience, prioress of the convent, knowing Julienne's devotion to the Eucharist and her taste for solitude, had an oratory built for her where she could retreat to pray. No one having explained her vision to her, she resolved to ask the Lord to reveal this mystery to her, and while she was asleep in 1210, a voice said to her: "The militant Church is represented by the globe of the moon; the spot that veils part of it signifies that a feast is missing, which God wishes to institute; it is the feast of the most august and most holy sacrament of the altar. Holy Thursday is indeed designated for this purpose, but the various other ceremonies of that day prevent its solemnity; another must be established, which will be honoured and observed throughout Christendom. This is for three reasons: 1. so that faith in the mysteries of religion, which is diminishing and will continue to diminish if no remedy is found, may be strengthened and confirmed in its entirety; 2. so that men who love and seek the truth may be fully instructed in it and draw from this source of life the strength to advance on the path of virtue; 3. so that the daily irreverence and impiety committed

³⁵ While hunting chamois near Innsbruck, he slipped and fell into a crevice in a steep rock face (Martinswand), from which it was, humanly speaking, absolutely impossible to escape. Maximilian realised the gravity of his situation. Resigned to death, he painstakingly wrote these few words on a piece of parchment that he fortunately had with him and dropped it into the valley below, where a crowd of people had already gathered: "Since I cannot receive Holy Viaticum, go and fetch a priest, that he may bring the Blessed Sacrament and bless me from afar, and I shall die consoled." His wish was granted: the parish priest from the village at the foot of the rock came, surrounded by his parishioners, bringing the monstrance to bless the unfortunate prince. The prince still found a way, in the crevice of the rock, to kneel down and worship his Saviour, when suddenly a young man dressed in Tyrolean costume appeared at his side, held out his hand and said: "The God you have worshipped has sent me to deliver you. Follow me." ' And, miraculously, supported by the hand of this heavenly guide, the Archduke slowly descended the steep rock, to the amazement of the witnesses to this memorable scene. Everyone wanted to know who the liberator was, but he had disappeared from view. This monstrance has been carefully preserved at Frazenburg Castle, near Laxenburg.

³⁶ Two residents of the village of Rétine, near Liège, died in 1197, leaving behind two orphaned daughters: Agnes (born in 1191) and Julienne (born in 1192). The two girls were placed in the convent of the Augustinian Hospitallers of Mont-Cornillon, a new foundation where the nuns, very faithful to their vow of poverty, cared for lepers and the sick. Located on the outskirts of Liège, the monastery of Mont-Cornillon comprised a male community and a female community; the latter had a prioress, but the prior of the male community was her superior. Under the authority of Sister Sapience, who taught them Christian doctrine and told them about the lives of the saints, Agnes and Juliana lived in a farmstead belonging to the convent. Juliana, enthusiastic about religious life, even though she had a great attraction to solitude, learned the psalter by heart and devoted herself to such great austerities that Sister Sapience had to bring her back to moderation, teaching her that in the eyes of the Lord, the practice of obedience is better than sacrifice. Julienne, having received the habit of the nuns of Mont-Cornillon at the age of fourteen (1207), learned Latin in order to better understand the truths of religion and became familiar with the writings of the Fathers, particularly St. Augustine and St. Bernard.

against the majesty of this sacrament may be repaired and atoned for by profound and sincere adoration." From then on, Juliana devoted herself solely to the thought of God, who blessed her with an extraordinary mystical life, the gift of prophecy and the knowledge of hearts.

In 1222, when Sister Sapience died, Juliana was elected prioress of Mont-Cornillon. She had not yet disclosed the revelation she had received, and as she asked the Lord to release her from this mission, she received, on the contrary, the order to act without delay. Not knowing how to proceed, she decided to reveal her mission to Eve, a recluse whom she had once encouraged and whom she saw once a year, and to Isabelle, a nun from Huy. They approached John of Lausanne, a pious and learned canon of St Martin's Church, near where Eve the recluse lived. The canon consulted Jacques Pantaléon, Archdeacon of Liège, Hugh of Saint-Cher, Provincial of the Dominicans, Guy of Laon (future Bishop of Cambrai), the chancellor of the University of Paris, and two Dominicans, Fathers Jean and Gérard, all doctors of the University, who authorised Julienne to have the Office of Corpus Christi composed by Jean, a monk from Mont-Cornillon. As the clergy of Liège were divided on the usefulness of this feast, Juliana, who did not want to rush into anything, went on pilgrimage to Cologne, Tongeren and Maastricht. A favourable movement arose in Liège, but the new superior of Mont-Cornillon, Roger, stirred up the nuns against their prioress, who, with four of her sisters and thanks to the support of Jean de Lausanne, was able to take refuge near the church of Saint Martin. Three months later, the Bishop of Liège deposed Roger, gave the position to Jean (the author of the office) and Julienne resumed her place as prioress. The Bishop of Liège, Robert de Thourotte, was still hesitant to establish the feast when, on his way to the Council of Lyon, God made his will known to him. Upon his return to Liège, he instituted Corpus Christi in his diocese (synod of 1246). Robert de Thourotte died without having been able to celebrate Corpus Christi (16 October 1246), which was done by the canons of Saint Martin in 1247. Under Robert de Thourotte's successor, Henri de Gueldre, who reinstated Roger, the persecutions against Julienne resumed; accompanied by three faithful followers (Agnès, Ozilie and Isabelle de Huy), she had to retreat first to Robermont, in the Val Notre-Dame, then to Namur near the church of Saint-Aubin. Her companions, however, feared for her health, which was failing. "Fear not," she told them, "I will keep you faithful company until death, and I will even outlive you." Indeed, two of them (Agnès and Ozilie) died shortly afterwards in Namur. Juliana then retired to the Cistercian abbey of Salsines. However, Hugh of Saint-Cher, who had become Cardinal of Santa Sabina and papal legate to the Holy Roman Empire, approved the establishment of the feast, which he celebrated in 1252 and extended to all the dioceses of his legation. Soon, Julienne lost her remaining faithful companion in Salsines; another nun from Mont-Cornillon, Ermentrude, was sent to assist her until

her death. Persecution struck the nuns of Salsines and Julienne had to retreat to Fosses, between the Sambre and Meuse rivers. There, struck by a serious illness, she sent for Canon Jean de Lausanne, who did not believe he should come, and found herself in a state of supreme abandonment, which she had predicted. The illness worsened during Lent. On Easter Day, despite her exhaustion, she wanted to go to church, attended Matins and Lauds, received Communion and remained in the church until the end of the day. In the evening, she returned to her cell and asked for Extreme Unction, which she received with tears of joy and admirable presence of mind. On the Wednesday after Easter, she felt worse: Himana, the abbess of Salsines, rushed to her side when she heard of the danger and wanted to spend the night with her, but Juliana invited her to rest, assuring her that she would not die that day. On Thursday, she asked Ermentrude to recite her office so that she could at least follow it in spirit and heart. On Friday, Himana came to visit her again with some nuns, and they all realised that the end was near. Julienne fell asleep in the Lord (5 April 1258).

Three years later, on 29 August 1261, the former Archdeacon of Liège, Jacques Pantaléon, who had been Bishop of Verdun (1253) and then Patriarch of Jerusalem (1255), was elected Pope (29 August 1261), even though he was not a cardinal. Eve, the recluse of the collegiate church of Saint Martin in Liège, wrote to him asking him to establish the feast for the universal Church. Urban IV, undoubtedly after the Eucharistic miracle of Bolsena³⁷, published the bull *Transiturus* on 11 August 1264 in Orvieto: "We have deemed it appropriate to decree that, in addition to the daily commemoration of such a great sacrament in the Church, there should also be an annual commemoration that is more special and more solemn, assigning a specific day for this purpose, which we wish to be the Thursday after the octave of Pentecost. Corpus Christi was not accepted in all Latin churches until the time of Clement V, during the Ecumenical Council of Vienne (1311), when he renewed the constitution of Urban IV.

It does not appear that the liturgy of Corpus Christi, when it was instituted, included an exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, but the Christian people, who had a great desire for it, took advantage of every possible opportunity to see the host. Among these occasions were the Eucharistic miracles that were multiplying at the time, either to protect believers or to respond to

³⁷ Peter of Prague, celebrating Mass at the tomb of Saint Christine, was tormented by doubts about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. At the moment of breaking the host, he no longer saw a white host but something reddish, like living flesh, from which drops of blood escaped onto the corporal without staining his hands. Distraught, he placed the host in the chalice, covered it with a veil, and took it to the sacristy. Urban IV, who was then residing in Orvieto, sent Bishop James Maltraga and some theologians, possibly including St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, to Bolsena.

doubts or sacrileges³⁸. Thus, ten years before Corpus Christi was solemnly inaugurated by Urban IV, Thomas of Cantimpré³⁹ witnessed an exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in Douai, where a Eucharistic miracle had taken place on Easter Day 1254⁴⁰. "Informed of this event by the rumours that soon spread," writes Thomas de Cantimpré, "I went to Douai. Arriving at the home of the dean of Saint-Arné, whom I knew very well, I asked him to show me the miracle. He agreed and gave orders to satisfy my request. The box was opened; the people rushed in, and shortly after the box was opened, they all cried out: 'There he is, I see him; there he is, I see my Saviour.' I stood there, struck with astonishment: I saw only the shape of a very white loaf of bread, and yet my conscience did not reproach me for any fault that might prevent me from seeing this sacred body as the others did. No sooner had I entertained these thoughts than I saw the face of Jesus Christ in the fullness of age. On his head was a crown of thorns, and two drops of blood ran down from his forehead onto his face, on either side of his nose. At that moment I fell to my knees and, weeping, I worshipped him. I rose: there was no longer a crown or blood on his head, but I saw the face of a man, venerable beyond anything imaginable. It was turned to the right, so that the right eye was barely visible. The nose was very long and very straight, the eyebrows arched, the eyes very gentle and downcast; long hair fell down to his shoulders. The beard, untouched by iron, curled under the chin and, near the charming mouth, it thinned out, leaving two small patches on either side of the chin, as happens to young men who have let their beards grow since childhood. His forehead was broad, his cheeks thin, and his head, like his rather long neck, was slightly bowed. Such was the portrait, such was the beauty of that very gentle face. Within the space of an hour, the Saviour was usually seen in different forms. Some saw him stretched out on the cross, others coming to judge men; many, and this was the majority, saw him in the form of a child.

It is likely that the Eucharistic ostension was performed with the ciborium, above which the host was raised for a moment to show it to the people, as we have just seen in Douai. However, as

³⁸ The host turned into bloody flesh in Ferrara (1171), Alatri (1228), Bolsena (1244), Darica (1239), Santarém (1247), Offida (1273), Paris (1290), Saint-Daniel and San Cugas del Vallès, near Girona (1297); the wine in the chalice was real blood at Saint Ambrose's in Florence (1230).

³⁹ Thomas of Cantimpré, born in Lewes, near Brussels, in 1201, died around 1270. After beginning his studies in Liège, he joined the Augustinians at Cantimpré Abbey, near Cambrai (1217), then moved to the Dominicans (1232), who sent him to study in Cologne and Paris. Thomas of Cantimpré, who taught theology at Louvain and was a famous preacher in Germany, Switzerland and France, wrote several *Lives* of the Saints, some Latin poetry and a highly imaginative work on morality, based on sacred stories and observations of nature (*Bonum universale de apibus*).

⁴⁰ "Douai," writes Thomas de Cantimpré, "is a large and spacious city, located on the right side of the road that connects the noble cities of Arras and Cambrai. In this city, in the church of the canons of Saint-Amé, at Easter time, a priest who had given communion to the people saw with horror that a host was lying on the ground. He knelt down and tried to pick up the body of Jesus Christ, but soon the host rose into the air of its own accord and settled on the cloth used by priests to purify their consecrated fingers. The priest cried out and called to the canons, who rushed to him and saw on the cloth a living body in the form of a charming child. Soon the people were summoned and allowed to contemplate the miracle, and all those present, without distinction, enjoyed this heavenly vision.

the faithful wanted to contemplate the holy species for longer, a new sacred vessel was designed to display the Blessed Sacrament, which was first called *a monstrance* and then *a monstrance*. The Church of Saint-Quentin in Hasselt (Belgium) has preserved a monstrance that was donated in 1286 by Edwige, prioress of Herckenrode, to her abbey⁴¹. At the beginning of the 14th century, the exposition of the Eucharist was so widespread that John XXII (1316-1334) ordered a procession of the Blessed Sacrament for Corpus Christi, the first of which took place that year from Avignon Cathedral (1318). Before John XXII's decision, in addition to the procession that Lanfranc had prescribed for Palm Sunday nearly two and a half centuries earlier, solemn processions of the Blessed Sacrament had already been seen, notably in Cologne (1279) and Worms (1315). The implementation of John XXII's decree was slow, but the procession is mentioned at the Council of Sens (1320), the Council of Tournai (1323), in a manuscript from Chartres (1330) and, undoubtedly at that time, in an *Ordinary* of Rouen. Reims should probably also be mentioned, since the archbishop, Robert de Courtenay (died in 1324), bequeathed a monstrance for the procession of the Blessed Sacrament⁴². In most other countries, it was not until the 15th century that popular pressure became so great that Martin V granted special indulgences for attending the Corpus Christi procession.

The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for contemplation, despite some clerical resistance, spread quickly enough to respond to pressure from the faithful. In 1328, in the Church of Saint Fortunatus in Todi, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed daily⁴³; at the same time, among the Teutonic Knights of Danzig, the Blessed Dorothea of Montau (died 1394) went several times a day to adore the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the monstrance⁴⁴; in Munich, a bourgeois offered a transparent crystal monstrance for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (1395). In the following century, expositions of the Blessed Sacrament were so common in Passau, Schwerin, Breslau and Cologne that the ecclesiastical authorities, notably Nicolas of Cusa⁴⁵, fearing that habit would drive out piety, tried to limit them to Corpus Christi and its octaves. Nothing worked, and at the urgent request of the faithful, whose spiritual progress was clearly noted by the priests, the exhibitions spread beyond Corpus Christi and its octaves.

⁴¹ The chamfer of this monstrance bears the inscription: ANNO DOMINI MCCLXXXVI FECIT ISTUD VAS FIERI DOMINA HEILEWIGIS DE DIEST PRIORISSA IN HERKENRODE, CUJUS COMMEMORACIO IN PERPETUUM CUM FIDELIBUS HABEATUR.

⁴² Adhemar d'Ales: *Eucharist*, Paris, 1930.

⁴³ Adhemar d'Ales: *Eucharist*, Paris, 1930.

⁴⁴ Jean de Marienwerder: the *Septililium*.

⁴⁵ Decree of Cologne (1452).

As the cult of the Eucharist developed outside of Mass, a particular form of public evening prayer centred on the *Salve Regina* became established. This antiphon, whose composer is unknown, was introduced into some offices of the Blessed Virgin by the Bishop of Le Puy, Adhémar de Monteil (1079-1098), and spread quite rapidly in popular piety during the preaching of the crusade, of which Adhémar de Monteil was the first legate. Around 1221, when some Dominicans at the convent in Bologna were victims of demonic possession, their prior, in order to deliver them, had the *Salve Regina* sung every evening at the end of Compline. The effect was so beneficial that the practice spread to other Dominican houses and, from the middle of the 13th century, even to parishes, where it gave rise to a kind of popular office. We know that King Saint Louis (who died in 1270) attended such a service every evening with his family and his people, and it spread widely in France, England, the Netherlands and Italy. The time was convenient for everyone and the performance easy for all, to the point that this evening prayer became one of the centres of Christian life. Great figures such as Count Thibaud V of Champagne then established foundations so that canons or regulars could sing the *Salve Regina* after Compline. New brotherhoods were established to bring the faithful together in the evening before the altar of the Blessed Virgin to sing and pray (London Bridge in 1334, Bruges and Ypres in 1365, and throughout France and Italy until the 16th century).

As the two religious practices developed simultaneously, it was not long before people wanted to combine them, which was achieved in the 16th century in a specific way, and in the early 17th century in a more general way. It then became customary to bless the faithful with the monstrance, which later became the ostensory. It should be noted, however, that the first description of the blessing and salutation of the Blessed Sacrament as we know it today dates from Hildesheim in 1493, and it was undoubtedly already widespread, as similar descriptions can be found for Amiens Cathedral in 1499. The Council of Cologne (1452) already provided a text on the salute. It goes without saying that this was the practice without the word, which would not appear until the 1660s.

The Council of Trent demanded that "the most holy sacrament be honoured with the worship due to the true God⁴⁶"; In this spirit, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament developed: in addition to private visits and liturgical salutations, there were forty hours, perpetual adoration and night-time

⁴⁶ Session XIII, Chapter III.

adoration organised by confraternities founded for this purpose⁴⁷. Religious orders and congregations were founded or reformed for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament⁴⁸. The worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass flourished during the classical period, when salutations of the Blessed Sacrament became commonplace beyond major feasts and were definitively regulated in France in 1682, in accordance with the provisions of the *Roman Ceremonial* of 1600⁴⁹. In 1644, all Parisian parishes exposed the Blessed Sacrament and gave a solemn salute on the first Thursday of each month⁵⁰; M. Olier increased the number in the parish of Saint-Sulpice⁵¹. This was the era when the worldly devotee described by La Bruyère himself kept his place for the salute⁵². In the chapel of the Palace of Versailles, according to the indispensable Duke of Saint-Simon, one could see "all the galleries lined with ladies in winter for the salute, on Thursdays and Sundays, which the King rarely failed to attend. This devotion continued and grew throughout the 18th century, and in many places, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament became a daily occurrence. After the French Revolution, it resumed with force at the beginning of the 19th century until it became widespread, before being condemned in the 1960s under the pretext of protecting the Mass. The Second Vatican Council is part of this tradition, although many, undoubtedly having only expurgated texts at their disposal, used it as a pretext to abolish the worship of the Blessed Sacrament. *Presbyterorum ordinis* tells priests that "in order to fulfil their ministry faithfully, they must be committed to conversing daily with Christ the Lord in the visitation and personal worship of the Holy Eucharist."⁵³ Paul VI asked "that during the day, the faithful should not neglect to visit the Blessed Sacrament, which must be kept in the church in a very dignified place, with the greatest possible honour, according to liturgical law. For the visit is, towards Christ our Lord present in this place, a sign of

⁴⁷ For example, the brotherhood of Langres from 1547 or the famous Company of the Blessed Sacrament founded in 1630. The *Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament* was founded in Rome by a bull of Paul III (bull *Dominus noster Jesus Christus*, 30 November 1539) and confirmed by Paul V (brief of 3 November 1606): it is sufficient for a confraternity to be canonically established to share in all the advantages of the Roman Archconfraternity.

⁴⁸ An unsuccessful attempt was made by Bishop Sébastien Zamet in Langres (1626), but a wonderful achievement was accomplished by the Benedictines of the Blessed Sacrament, founded in Paris (1652) by Anne of Austria and Mother Mechtilde of the Blessed Sacrament. Many founders of that period placed the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the forefront of devotion, such as the Franciscan Tertiaries of Picpus (Paris, 1594), the Missionaries of the Clergy (Avignon, 1632), the Dominican Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (Lagnes, 1636), the Poor Daughters of the Blessed Sacrament (Rome, 1650), the Religious of Corpus Domini (Macerata, 1683), the Congregation of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (Romans, 1715), the Religious of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (Mâcon, 1733), the Congregation of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (Autun, 1748), the Order of the Religious Sisters of Saint Norbert (Chur, 1767), the Priests of the Blessed Sacrament (Mileto, 1780).

⁴⁹ *Roman Ceremonial* of Clement VIII: *De Adoratione augustissimi sacramenti*, Book III, Chapter IV.

⁵⁰ *Advice to the Gentlemen of Paris for the worship of the Most Holy Sacrament in parishes* (1644).

⁵¹ Abbé E.-M. Faillon: *Vie de M. Olier*, Paris, 1873.

⁵² La Bruyère: *The Characters* (On Fashion, No. 21).

⁵³ *Presbyterorum ordinis* no. 18.

gratitude, a pledge of love and a tribute of the adoration due to him.⁵⁴ John Paul II teaches: "The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse to take the time to meet Him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith and open to repairing the serious faults and crimes of the world. May our adoration never cease."⁵⁵

For our times, it is interesting to note that the regulation of Eucharistic worship outside of Mass is governed by *the Ordo de sacra communione et de cultu Eucharistici extra missam*, published in Rome on 21 June 1973, approved and confirmed by the French-speaking bishops on 5 January 1978, and finally published in French on 2 February 1983. Although it is not universally observed, it is worth recalling that canon 942 of the new canon law (applicable since November 1983) recommends "that there be a solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament every year⁵⁶, for a suitable period of time, even if not continuously, so that the local community may meditate more deeply on the Eucharistic mystery and adore it. In this regard, it should be noted that this new code of canon law requires that a "special lamp" shine constantly before the tabernacle of the holy reserve "to indicate and honour the presence of Christ" (canon 940). Finally, wherever possible, canon 944 calls for a procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of the locality to be organised, at the discretion of the diocesan bishop, as a "public testimony of veneration of the Holy Eucharist", especially on the feast of Corpus Christi.

⁵⁴ Paul VI, Encyclical *Mysterium fidei*, 3 September 1965.

⁵⁵ Paul VI, Encyclical *Mysterium fidei*, 3 September 1965.

⁵⁶ No. 86 of the decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, 12 September 1983.