



Renewing our Love of the Eucharist this Advent

“Nothing But You, Lord”

Advent Reflection for Sunday, December 18

By Rev. Msgr. Joseph Reilly

Most of us associate Saint Thomas Aquinas with 13th Century Scholastic Philosophy and Theology, and rightly so! His great work, the *Summa theologiae*, is by far his most significant contribution to the discipline of Theology, even to the present day. He is often referred to as the “Angelic Doctor.”

What many are not aware of is that Saint Thomas Aquinas is also referred to as the “Doctor of the Eucharist” for his theological, spiritual, and liturgical reflections on the meaning and significance of the Most Holy Eucharist in the life of the Church and of every believer. The Eucharistic hymns that we use today are almost exclusively composed by Saint Thomas Aquinas, including “Panis Angelicus,” “Pange Lingua,” “O Salutaris Hostia,” and “Tantum Ergo.”

He also wrote an exquisite seven-verse Latin poem called the “Adore Te Devote” which to this day every time I hear it sung brings me to tears. The melody and the words (English translation by the 19th century Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins) are piercing:

*Godhead here in hiding, whom I adore,
Masked by these bare shadows, shape and nothing more,
See, Lord, at Thy service low lies here a heart
Lost, all lost in wonder at the God thou art.*

His works, one person writes, “betray a heart on fire with love for Christ.”

Near the end of his life, after completing his treatise on the Eucharist, Saint Thomas was seen praying before the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel at the Dominican Friary in Naples. His confreres saw him praying and at that moment, a voice came from the crucifix above the altar saying, “Thomas, you have written well of me. What do you desire?” Saint Thomas replied, “Nothing but you, Lord.”

As we move now into the second part of Advent, and look more purposefully at the Incarnation, perhaps we could turn within our own hearts, and ask if they are on fire with love for Christ? How much do we desire Jesus to be at the center of our lives? What needs to be moved or removed so this can take place? May we take advantage of these remaining days and devote ourselves to prayer and to the sacraments so that we, too, may be ready when He comes.