

Father François-Xavier Durrwell

France 1912-2005



Father Durrwell, a Redemptorist, was a professor at the Centre for Religious Education at the University of Metz (France) and author of numerous works, including on the Eucharist. François-Xavier Durrwell was born in Soultz-Haut-Rhin in 1912 and died in 2005. He studied at the Gregorian University in Rome, then at the Biblical Institute from 1937 to 1940. He then taught New Testament exegesis at the Redemptorist scholasticate. From 1952 to 1961, he served as provincial superior of the Redemptorist Province of Strasbourg.

This Redemptorist priest played a decisive role in Catholic theology in the mid-20th century by emphasising the centrality of Christ's Passover. In this context, he also published books on the Eucharist.

His main publication is: *The Resurrection of Christ, Mystery of Salvation* (Xavier Mappus, 1950), a book on biblical theology that has become a classic and has been reprinted and translated many times.



Praying before the face of Christ

original in French

When the faithful come to kneel before the Real Presence, it is called a "visit to the Blessed Sacrament". In reality, it is not he who is going to visit his Lord; it is Christ who from the Father's house, who at the end of history and without leaving him, makes himself present to his earthly community. The Church welcomes the visitor.

The faithful do not come so much to converse with their Lord as to listen to the one who, without words, communicates himself in an inexhaustible radiance. The attitude of the believer is one of welcome, the bread is to be eaten, the sacrament is celebrated in communion. The Eucharist, the center of Christian prayer, testifies that to pray is to receive and to receive communion.

When the Church prays before the face of Christ, she does not feel obliged to inform her Saviour of her needs and those of the world, for He is there because of these needs. She lists them, however, but better to open herself to the answer. She does not believe that she must bend the Saviour to goodness in order to obtain his intervention, for the Real Presence is already the all-powerful intervention. If prayer is instantaneous, it is because it must create through supplication the space large enough to receive the superabundant gift. She therefore offers herself, and the world, to the fulfilling presence. She submits to the gaze placed on her, as the hand had been placed on the leper, allows herself to be Christianized by the creative gaze, embraced by the Real Presence. As a woman accepts the husband's name, she accepts the irradiation of that face. It celebrates its own "exposition in the Blessed Sacrament": "And all of us, with our faces uncovered, behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, and are transfigured into the same image from glory to glory by the Lord who is spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

The Christian would not need to invent beautiful prayers, or to read them in books. Prayer pre-exists, subsisting: Christ becomes, in death and glorification, the total acceptance of God and the fullness of God, man's absolute communion with God. *He is, in person, the prayer of the world, at the summit of supplication and in the moment of answering. The faithful enter into this prayer, answered by entering it.*

When praying before the Real Presence, it is possible to think this objection: "Is it not an artificial thing to pray in dialogue with the host, with the tabernacle?" But the relationship is not established with that which locates the Real Presence and makes it visible; conversation is not exchanged at a distance: the meeting is personal. The gaze that

seeks the Lord is that of the heart; it does not fix itself on a point of space, but descends to the inner centre where man is encountered: "Christ lives *in me*" (Gal 2:20). The word in prayer is interiorized to the point of turning into listening: a dialogue where words do not intersect, but merge. Every Eucharistic prayer is a communion, a response to the invitation: "Take and eat". It eats the Real Presence. The praying Church is a loving Church.

selection and title by the editors, extract from:
L'eucharistie, sacrement pascal. Paris, Cerf, 1985³, p. 124-126.

Questions that can help

1. What inspiration do I find in this text?
2. Do I feel a reservation about any of the remarks? Which one?
3. What would you like to add eventually?

