

## Love: What better reason is there?

John Robbins | March 27, 2018

My name is John Robbins and I appreciate this opportunity to give witness to the impact that Jesus, fully present in the Eucharist, has on my life. I encounter Jesus (and his love) through prayer, scripture and gathering with other believers. In a particularly sublime and intimate way, I encounter him through receiving him at Mass and during weekly Eucharistic Adoration but also through serving as an extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, and discerning a call to the permanent diaconate.

The reason for any of us to do of these things—attend Mass, make time for Jesus in our lives, serve as a Eucharistic Minister, and discern a vocation—is *love*. Love for God and one another.

I've heard it said that sacrifice without love cannot endure, and love without sacrifice is an empty word. From his perfect love, Jesus (who *is* love) gives of himself to bring about the deepest possible union *with* us and *among* us. This love and desire for unity is the reason he became one of us; to reconcile humanity to the Father and lift us up and save us. It is why he suffered his passion and endured the cross, but first instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper.

Jesus says the following in Chapter 17 of John's Gospel, within the Last Supper Discourses,

*"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, ... that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me."*

Jesus speaks of a union/unity that flows forth from divine love. This is why I participate in Holy Mass with my wife Sadie and our three young children. Here, we gather together with you, in worship and praise to receive the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus. His love for us—present in his eternal gift of self—strengthens me so that I may be *his love* upon walking out the door after Mass. I don't know of another way to be the disciple that I am called to be than by communally worshiping the one who *is* love and receiving him so as to share him with others.

This is why I am also an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. This faith community blesses my life and encourages me in many ways. As a Eucharistic Minister, I see the smiles on the faces, or gazes of longing and love, in the eyes of those who are receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. I think it's a blessing shared by all eucharistic ministers.

I remember being young and hearing my mother tell the story of how her long-time hairdresser had entered the Church through RCIA. She loved to talk about her experience of encountering Jesus in the Eucharist. I think that may have been the first Eucharistic witness story that I heard. I think that's why this memory remains vivid in my consciousness. I was old enough to have already received First Communion and here was the personal testimony of someone, outside my family, who was validating what we knew to be true in our household.

I am also nourished by spending time with Jesus present in the tabernacle. I recall having a grace-filled moment in front of the Blessed Sacrament while serving on a retreat team during my senior year of high school. I was alone for a few moments with Jesus, in front of a tabernacle and simply knew with complete confidence that he was with me in a profound way. I don't remember doubting the real presence as a teenager but I remember this experience felt like a moment of clarity.

Now, years later, I find my once-weekly hour of Eucharistic Adoration to be uplifting. We understand that communication is a necessary part of our relationships. In adoration, I grow closer to Jesus from the one-on-one time that I choose to give him. I talk to him. He responds. On more than one occasion I have felt Jesus speak to my heart during or after adoration; responding to my prayerful desires to know and love him more. I've also had my calling to the permanent diaconate strengthened during adoration. I've spoken to Jesus when I was unsure about continuing in formation and I've felt him responding to my concerns and encouraging me as I now confidently continue in the program.

Why do my wife and I bring our children to Mass every week? Why do we visit Jesus in adoration? Why do I choose to be a Eucharistic Minister? Why have I responded to God's call to certain vocations; first and foremost my marriage and now the permanent diaconate? The answer is *love*. Encountering Jesus' love with a community of believers, and receiving him in—allowing him to change me—helps me to be an instrument of his divine, transforming love for others. It helps me live my call to discipleship.

I am a sinner who is thankful and joyful for Divine Mercy. Having acknowledged that, I don't like to think about who I might become if I denied myself the divine invitation to receive Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. His perfect love and perpetual self-gift allows me to enter into a deeper communion with him. Jesus, fully present in the Eucharist, strengthens me in ways that I very much need.

Jesus, I love you.