

Triumph of the Heart

IN YOUR PRESENCE, O LORD

Family of Mary

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Emmanuel - God with us!

*In our modern world, where there no longer appears
to be room for God, it can be challenging
to believe how lovingly close the Lord really is in our lives.*

*The stories in this issue of Triumph of the Heart
can help us to be once again more conscious and thankfully aware
of God's presence around us and in us.*

*T*he harmony, beauty and diversity of creation alone reflects in a thousand different ways something of God's glory; it speaks to us without words about the creative God whose love surrounds and gives life to his creatures. That is why the great Doctor of the Church St. John of the Cross loved to take his novices out of the monastery and into the hills of the Spanish Sierra Nevada where he would teach them about the Carmelite spirituality. God wants to be present for mankind. Even if a person flees from his presence through sin, God's loving call pursues him: "Adam, where are you?"

God loves his people and reveals his name to them: "I Am who Am", in other words who is there always and everywhere and accompanies his people. In a cloud and a column of fire he led his people through the desert, and he remained in their midst in the holy tent which contained the Ark of the Covenant. Then God promised through the prophet Isaiah the birth of a child through whom he will save his people. His name will be Emmanuel: God with us. The "God with us" came in an unexpected and unimaginable way: he came as a child born of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God in the form of a man, to dwell among us and to reveal the glory of his Father.

At the same time he gives his disciples the promise of his living presence: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

After the Lord had completed his work of Redemption through his suffering, Cross and Resurrection and had returned home to his Father, he promised the disciples on the day of his Ascension, "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." This "with you always" once again takes place in a wonderful, unimaginable way through the gift of the Holy Eucharist. In this Sacrament of Love, God's presence reaches its insurmountable culmination and transforms those who receive his Body and Blood with faith into temples of his living presence—truly Emmanuel, God with us.

*L*ast but not least we encounter God in those who are sick or suffering, even in those who are so disfigured through sin that we have difficulty recognizing God in them. Jesus explains to us with the words, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

Centuries later, the French nun and mystic Yvonne Aimee experienced this as well at the age of 19 when she helped the despised women in Paris' red light district: "The Lord placed an immense pity in my heart for these souls so dirtied by sin. In them I saw the soiled, divine face of Jesus. If I found a broken icon in the gutter, covered in grime from the street and the rain, what would I do? I would carefully clean it and make all the dirty spots disappear. Do I not have to react in the same way with the souls which are filthy from sin, and also see in them the pure face of my beloved?"

For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be!

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

*N*ot very much is known from the life of the French Carmelite Br. Lawrence of the Resurrection. We know that he was born in 1614 in Herimenil, a little village in Lorraine, France, and was baptized with the name Nicolas Herman. It seems that his parents were respectable but rather poor and they could not afford to send their son to school although he was a bright child. The decisive grace of 18-year-old Nicolas' conversion is passed on to us in a conversation on August 3, 1666 with Fr. Beaufort, the vicar of the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal de Noaille. He recounts, *"In the winter I contemplated a tree, how it stood there dry and leafless, and then how it would blossom in spring and bear ripe fruit in the fall. The sight of this made such a deep impression on me as to God's providence and omnipotence that it penetrated me so that I would never forget it. The sight made me completely tear myself away from the world. It inflamed such a love for God in me that I cannot say whether in these 40 years in which I have served him, it even would have been possible to grow in ardor and strength."* Although this experience of grace would change his whole life, the young Nicolas did not decide to start down a religious path immediately; first he became a soldier. When imprisoned by German troops during the Thirty Years War and falsely accused of espionage, his life seemed lost. Nevertheless, the accused was able to prove his innocence, thereby escaping execution. A short time later, the 20-year-old was wounded on the battlefield and, as a result, returned home to his parents.

*W*e do not know what went on in his heart during these years. At any rate, he must have searched intensively for God because he decided to become a hermit. He was not mature

enough though for that lifestyle, and he quickly gave up and made his living as a porter in Paris. This is where he met the Discalced Carmelites who would become his spiritual family. At the age of 26, he followed in the footsteps of St. John of the Cross and received the religious name Lawrence of the Resurrection.

As a lay brother, he had the lowest position in the monastery. He was not allowed to participate in the choir prayers and, because of his work, he was unable to be present at the communal hour of meditation.

For 15 years he served as the cook for the Carmelites, who at times numbered over one hundred. Here, among the pots and pans, he learned to find God and remain in his presence. In his biography it is written, *"Many people were impressed by the calm and collectiveness that his face radiated. At work he was neither hasty nor slow but sought to quietly accomplish everything in due time. 'The time for work,' he said, 'is no different for me than the time for prayer. In the hectic and noise of the kitchen, where different people are doing several things at once, I find God in the same calmness as in sight of the Holy Eucharist.'"*

*A*s a result of his war injury, the kitchen brother was plagued by pain in his hips, and standing for work gradually made his legs stiffer and stiffer. He not only hobbled but the arthritic pain became so great that he had to quit his work in the kitchen and they gave him a "sitting job", making him a cobbler. In addition, he was responsible for the wine in the monastery. This task, which was anything but pleasant for him, brought the Carmelite who was so united with God into contact with many

people: businessmen, craftsmen, beggars at the door and, above all, his own brothers, all of whom soon recognized that they could receive reliable advice from this brother. Unfortunately, very little of what Br. Lawrence said to them has been passed on to us. One of his spiritual sons, Fr. Beaufort, wrote down some memoirs of conversations they had and, additionally, was able to collect 16 letters in which Br. Lawrence answered the questions asked him by a monk, nuns and several lay people.

From these texts we have chosen for you, dear readers, a few “*spiritual pearls*” which might help you live in God’s presence like him, whether you are a mother and housewife, a truck driver or work in an office. In the last years of his life, the pain in his hips, which had bothered him for over 25 years, grew increasingly worse and caused an agonizing ulcer. On top of that, he ultimately contracted pleurisy from which he died a holy death in total peace on February 12, 1691, at the age of 77.

Wanting to belong entirely to God

*W*hat distinguished Br. Lawrence from any other cook or cobbler? Why did educated and uneducated people, lay and religious alike seek his advice? He had found a treasure: God’s presence in him. In a letter to a religious sister he wrote, “*Do you want to know how I came to the point of living uninterrupted in God’s presence? I only sought one thing: to belong entirely to God. The desire moved me so much that I dared to offer everything for everything. Out of love for him, I renounced everything that was not him. I began to live as if it were only he and I in the world.*”

One brother asked him to explain more precisely how he could live in the presence of God. Br. Lawrence confided, “*When I started to work, I told God with great trust, ‘Behold, my God, you are with me! Help me, remain with me! All that I do I want to do for you. All my wishes are at your disposal.’ As work continued, I remained in intimate dialog with my Creator. I either asked him for grace or I explicitly dedicated all my work to him. When a job was finished, I examined how I did it. If I found something positive, I thanked God for it. If it turned out otherwise, I asked him for forgiveness. Finally, I reached the point where it was just as difficult for me not to think about God as it had been earlier to accuse myself to his closeness.*”

One should go about his daily duties “*without rushing, without anxiety. It is important to put our trust in God and put all other worries and thoughts aside. Do not be discouraged by the aversion you feel for this practice; it is part of your nature. You have to force yourself. Often, especially in the beginning of this practice, one thinks, ‘It is all in vain!’ Hold fast to the practice, however, and firmly resolve not to do anything, say anything or think anything which could be displeasing to God!*”

*I*t often happens that those who live in the world think that they would be able to find God more easily in a monastery, and those in seclusion, troubled by temptation, think they could serve God better in a life of charity. Br. Lawrence knew these struggles all too well and spoke about it clearly, “*Our holiness does not depend on a change of environment but in that we do according to God’s will what we had normally done for ourselves, without seeking our own benefit. Everything I do, even the most insignificant, I do for love of God.*” And since “*God dwells in us, in the depths of our soul, and we can turn to him there at any moment, it is not even necessary to be continually in a church.*” Br. Lawrence wrote to a nun, “*He is always close to you, he is always with you. Leave him not*

alone. Would you not find it disrespectful to leave a friend alone who had come to visit you? May we do this to God? How could we dare to neglect him? So do not forget him, think about him often, pray to him without ceasing.”

His words call to mind an experience of his spiritual mother Teresa of Avila who, looking back on her life, painfully confessed, *“If I had known earlier that this great King lives in me, I would not have left him alone so often.”*

Determination and courage are required

Br. Lawrence encouraged all those who turned to him to begin anew with determination and to persevere full of trust. He struggled for ten years and *“suffered much interiorly”*; he was even tempted to commit suicide before God finally gave him the grace to experience his continual presence. He wrote about these difficult years, *“In this time, I often fell, but I stood up again. It seemed like everything was against me: the world, my reason, even God.”* In this hardship, he made the firm decision,

“I will always do everything purely out of love for you, O God. When I was considering putting an end to this life of inner torment and lack of peace, something miraculous suddenly happened: a great transformation took place in me. My soul, which had been so restless until that time, was filled with a deep, inner peace. It was as though it had found its center, its place of rest. Since that time I am focused on God in an inconceivably simple way, in humility and love.”

The great treasure

*A*bove all, we may not allow our thoughts to detain us from resolutely seeking the true treasure within. *“Useless thoughts spoil everything. Every evil begins with them.”* He calmed a noble woman who had to fight against distractions, *“You are not telling me anything new. Our thoughts can wander relentlessly here and there. Since our will is the master of all our abilities, however, it has to bring our thoughts back to recollection and guide them to God, the ultimate goal. If our thoughts have accepted the nasty habit of distraction, of roaming around, of course it is difficult to overcome them, especially at first. Since we are lacking a tight control of the soul, our thoughts, even against our will, return as they are accustomed to the things of the earth. I believe there is only one solution: to admit our sins and humble ourselves before God.”*

If you want to live in God’s presence, you obviously have to protect yourself from too many distractions. Too much television, radio and music, newspapers and magazines, Internet, chatting unnecessarily long on the telephone and constant noise make it nearly impossible for the soul to keep its thoughts on God. *Br.* Lawrence therefore recommended, *“One way to collect our thoughts easily at times of prayer and to keep them in peace is to not let them wander too far at the other times either. Hold strong to the presence of God and accustom yourself to thinking about him from time to time. You will then experience that it is easy to bring your thoughts back from distraction to recollection.”*

After Br. Lawrence reached the point of allowing nothing to hamper his belief in God's presence and living for him alone, his only treasure, he reaped the fruits of his efforts: "What joy and what peace I have found because I know and feel what great treasure I carry continually within me! God's treasure compares to the vast ocean and the little wave which comes and goes in a moment but satisfies us. That what this world has to offer,

whether it is suffering or joy, is nothing in comparison to the suffering or joy I have experienced in the spiritual world. The spiritual things that I have witnessed are so great that I no longer even know earthly worries, no fear in the world depresses me anymore. I no longer have any other will but God's will which I seek to accomplish in all things. My only occupation is to remain in his holy presence by paying attention to his closeness and sinking myself into him with total self-offering."

*What joy and what peace I have found
because I know and feel
what great treasure
I carry continually within me!*

God's love in suffering

As long as we are active and have control of our lives, it is not so difficult to set out on this spiritual path. When we are sick, in pain and our life seems senseless, however, an even greater amount of faith is necessary to understand that God is not punishing us, but rather he is giving us participation in his suffering which, for the redemption of mankind and creation, he suffered out of love. Br. Lawrence could also give advice in these situations from his own experience: "If we only knew how much he loves us, we would always be ready to receive from his hands happiness and bitterness with composure and without complaint. The bitterest sufferings seem unbearable only when we see them in the wrong light. If we take them from the hands of God though, we recognize that he is a father who loves us. Then all our sufferings lose their bitterness..."

"No matter how great a suffering is, accept it purely out of love for God. It can be paradise to suffer in him and to be in him. We have to strive not to do anything, nor to say anything, nor to think anything that might be displeasing to him. If our spirit is full of God, then even our suffering will be sweet, a balsam of the spirit..."

These words of Br. Lawrence might seem very strange to us at first. When we look to the lives of holy men and women like Blessed Mother Teresa or Blessed Pope John Paul II, for example, we see that, naturally, they suffered as we do and they also concretely felt the pain of suffering. What sets them apart, however, is that they never lost their inner peace; in their suffering they knew they were carried and loved by God. Even though they did not

always feel it, they believed that God is full of compassion and so he embraces us especially in suffering.

The Divine Redeemer and his coredeeming mother Mary also felt pain and shed tears in their unspeakable suffering. Yet their prayer and their pure love for the Divine Father and for us gave them the strength to carry through.

This goes for us as well: If we try to live from prayer and from the sacraments— in other words entirely from God and for God—then we will be filled with his love. Only his love makes us capable of accepting suffering and offering it up for all those for whom we carry it as coredeemers. The pure love and offering up of suffering is what gives us peace and even fills us with joy.

The Way of a Pilgrim

The Word of God cannot be compared to any other word, because the one who speaks it is the Creator of the universe and the source of all life.

He revealed to the prophet Isaiah the dynamic power contained in his word, “So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it” (Is 55:11).

The Lord said very openly to his Apostles,

“The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (Jn 6:63).

He who loves God, however, desires not only to hear his word but to understand and live it to its depths.

Then he will infallibly recognize the divine power which dwells in this word.

*This was the case with a Russian man who was searching for God in the world-renowned book *The Way of a Pilgrim*.*

The Holy Scriptures—his precious treasure

*T*his Russian pilgrim was so deeply touched by the words of St. Paul, “*Pray without ceasing*” (1 Thes 5:17) that he could not stop thinking about them day and night. He wandered from place to place looking for somebody with experience in the spiritual life who could explain these words to him. He searched for a long time before God led him to a spiritual father, known as a starets, who along with personal instruction also recommended two books to him: the Bible and the Philokalia,

a collection from holy monks and hermits of teachings and experiences about Jesus’ prayer. Overjoyed, the pilgrim now wandered through lonely regions with Jesus’ prayer uninterrupted on his lips and God’s peace in his heart until one day two street robbers attacked him, beat him unconscious with a club and stole his knapsack. He tells the story himself:

“I got up weeping bitterly, not so much on account of the pain in my head as for the loss of my books, the Bible and *The Philokalia*

which were in the stolen knapsack. Day and night I did not cease to weep and lament. ... Oh unhappy me, to have lost the first and last treasures of my life before having had my fill of them! It would have been better to be killed outright than to live without this spiritual food...And then I had a dream. I was back at the monastery in the cell of my staretz deploring my loss. The old man was trying to comfort me. He said, *'Let this be a lesson to you in detachment from earthly things for your better advance towards heaven. This has been allowed*

to happen to you to save you from falling into the mere enjoyment of spiritual things. God would have Christians absolutely renounce all their desires and delights and attachments and to submit themselves entirely to his divine will. He orders every event for the help and salvation of all people. Take courage then and believe! Soon you will be rejoicing much more than you are now distressed.' At these words I awoke feeling my strength come back to me and my soul full of light and peace. *'God's will be done,'* I said. I crossed myself, got up and went on my way."

The healing power of the divine Word

"The Prayer, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' again began to be active in my heart, as before, and for three days I went along in peace. All at once I came upon a body of convicts with their military escort. When I came up to them I recognized the two men who had robbed me. They were in the outside file, and so I fell at their feet and earnest begged them to tell me what they had done with my books. At first they paid no heed to me, but in the end ... they told me that my books were in the wagons which followed the prisoners among all the other stolen thing they were found with. I hurried to the officer and told him the whole story. ... 'All right,' he added 'I will give you your books back if they are there, but you come with us as far as our halting place for the night; then I need not stop the whole convoy and wagons just for your sake.' ... We reached the house which marked the end of the day's march. He found my books and gave them back to me saying, 'Where are you going, now night has come on? Stay here and sleep in my anteroom.' So I stayed.

"Now that I had my books again, I was so glad that I did not know how to thank God. I clasped the books to my breast and held them there so long that my hands got quite numbed. I shed tears of joy and my heart beat with delight."

When the officer saw the pilgrim like this, he also felt pushed to confide a secret to him, namely a great grace which he received thanks to the Word of God. The officer pulled out a small copy of the Gospels printed in Kiev and bound in silver. He recounted: *"Ever since I was a young man I have been with the army ... I knew my job and my superior officers liked me for a conscientious second lieutenant. Unhappily I took to drink and drunkenness became a regular passion with me. So long as I kept away from drink I was a good officer, but when I gave way to it I was not good for anything for six weeks at a time. They bore with me for a long while, but the end of it was that after being thoroughly rude while drunk to my commanding officer, I was cashiered and transferred to a garrison as a private soldier for three years. I was threatened with a still more severe punishment if I did not give up drinking and mend my ways."*

Even though the officer made a sincere effort not to touch another drop of alcohol, he was not able to do it and was sent as a result to a disciplinary corps. "When I was informed of this I was at my wit's end" he recounted. One day a monk arrived in the barracks begging alms for a church. He sympathized with the troubled officer and allowed him to speak

of his problems. The same thing had happened to his own brother and so the monk encouraged him, “*“My brother’s spiritual father gave him a copy of the Gospels with strict orders to read a chapter without a moment’s delay every time he felt a longing for wine coming over him. If the desire continued he was to read a second chapter, and so on. That is what my brother did and at the end of a very short time his drunkenness came to an end. You do the same and you will see how that will help you. I have a copy of the Gospels which you must let me bring you.”*” I listened to him, and then I said, “*How can your Gospels help me since all efforts of my own and all the medical treatment have failed to stop me drinking?*” “*Don’t say that,*” replied the monk, “*I assure you that it will help.*” “*As a matter of fact, the next day he brought me this very copy. I opened it, took a glance and said, “I cannot accept it. I don’t understand it.”*” But the monk went on to assure me that in the very words of the Gospel there lay a gracious power, for in them was written what God himself had spoken..

“It does not matter very much if at first you do not understand. Go on reading diligently. ... St. John Chrysostom writes that even a room in which a copy of the Gospels is kept holds the spirits of darkness at bay and becomes an unpromising field for their wiles.” I bought his book of the Gospels, put it away in a trunk with my other things and forgot it.

*S*ome while afterwards a bout of drunkenness threatened him. An irresistible desire for a drink drove him hurriedly to open his trunk

to take some money and rush off to the tavern. But the first thing his eyes fell on was the copy of the Gospels, and all that the monk had said came back vividly to his mind. He opened the book and began to read the first chapter of St. Matthew. At the end he had not understood a word. Still he remembered that the monk had said he must read the second chapter. He did so and began to understand a little. ... From that time on, whenever he felt the need of drink, he read a chapter of the Gospels. “*By the time I had finished all four Gospels my drunkenness was absolutely a thing of the past and I felt nothing but disgust for it. It is just 20 years now since I drank a drop of alcohol.*”

After his healing, his commission as officer was restored, and in time he was promoted to major. He married a good wife and as much as they could they helped the poor and gave hospitality to pilgrims. In thanksgiving for being cured of drunkenness he made a vow to read one of the four Gospels every day. “*If I am exceedingly pressed with business and unusually tired, I lie down and get my wife or my son to read the whole of one of the Evangelists to me and so avoid breaking my rule. By way of thanksgiving and for the glory of God I have had that book of the Gospels mounted in pure silver and I always carry it in my breast pocket.*” After our talk we said prayers and the major began to read the Gospel of St. Mark from the beginning ... *At two o’clock in the morning he came to the end of the Gospel, and we parted and went to bed. The next morning ... I went to thank the major for his kindness and to say good-bye. I set off again feeling very happy.*”

The loving presence of God in his word

*T*he story of the Russian pilgrim might sound like a fairy tale, but only to those who do not know the deep soul of the Russian people and the long tradition of making

pilgrimages. Our missionaries in Talmenka, Siberia met a man who passed by their house every day with his ten goats on the way to the next pasture. He would spend the day

watching his goats and nearly the whole time read from a book. Whenever he had the chance, he immediately started speaking about God's love and mercy.

Twice he pressed one of our missionaries with the question, "Do you love God?" And before she could answer him, he continued: "I am a great sinner, but God loves me!" Then we understood that the book which he continuously read was the Bible.

*K*nowing that God loves us and being certain of his presence and fatherly care for us are the healing effects in the souls of those who meditate on the Word of God and try to put it into practice in their lives.

Therefore the Blessed Mother encouraged us in Medjugorje on January 25, 1999, "Put Holy Scripture in a visible place in your families, read it, reflect on it and learn how God loves His people."

Go from Jesus to Jesus

In our church's tabernacles and during Holy Communion we encounter God in the Eucharistic Body of Christ.

However, we can also recognize, touch and even serve him in our daily lives in his mystical body, in those who need our help.

*B*lessed Mother Teresa said, "Christ is present 24 hours a day. Go to Jesus, always! He is here: in the Eucharist ... and in our suffering brother." During her lifetime, this expert of charity gave Jesus 594 "new tabernacles"—as she called the foundation of each new house. Fr. Leo Maasburg recounts the following event in his book "Mother Teresa: The Wonderful Stories": "During my first visit to Calcutta, I sat in a favorable corner of the chapel next to Mother Teresa just so that I could hear how she prays. She seemed totally absorbed as she sat kneeling on the mat ... with her eyes closed, deep in contemplation. A short time later I discovered that before the chapel door a photographer was nervously pacing back and forth. He obviously wanted to speak to Mother Teresa, but he did not dare to go and bother her. Suddenly a sister approached him and indicated to him that he should go ahead and speak with her. He took off his shoes, entered the chapel but hesitated to kneel down next to Mother Teresa. Now he is going to bother

her, I thought, curious about how she would react. She must have heard or felt when he knelt down on the floor next to her because she looked up and welcomed him with a radiant smile. She now gave the photographer her full attention. He briefly told her his concerns. She gave him an answer. He stood up, left the chapel and before he was outside, Mother Teresa was again fully and completely immersed in prayer. Only later did I understand that Jesus was so present for Mother Teresa in the people she met that—coming from prayer, from the living conversation with Jesus—she simply changed from Jesus to Jesus."

*T*he beautiful vocation to "go from Jesus to Jesus" was also slowly discovered by the Swiss founder of the "Eucharistein" community, Fr. Nicolas Buttet (born 1961), through drastic experiences which shaped his life: "After I graduated from high school, I studied law, and before I was even 23 years old, I was a representative in the Valais Cantonal Parliament.

“Although I never doubted God’s existence, at that time I had distanced myself from the Faith and occupied my time with sports, music and all night parties. I was living together with my girlfriend and that is where Jesus came to pick me up, in that he let me recognize that I did not really know how to love. I said ‘I love you’ to my girlfriend, but in reality I only loved myself. This painful realization led me back to Confession. After two hours of tears, stretched out on the floor of the Capuchin church in Freiburg, I could no longer resist the inner force pushing me to find a confessor. The subsequent purification

gave me the shattering experience that God is the one who loved me even though I did not care for myself. He was the one who visited me when I was weak, who waited for me in my sinfulness to free me and who gave me a joy I had never known!”

*C*onfronted daily at his law firm with family drama, divorce, violence, disputes over money and estates, Nicolas had to admit that here too the problem was a lack of love. “In this state of mind, I drove to Turin during Christmas break to a friend who had been working with the severely handicapped in the ‘Piccola Casa’— ‘Little House’ of St. Joseph Cottolengo for ten years. I left the Swiss parliament and arrived there in a very different world. Already the first night my friend said to me, ‘Come, let’s see if the 20 handicapped patients are sleeping well.’

“In the dormitory on the second floor a terrible smell overcame us. As the result of a laxative, 18 patients were in dire need of changing. ‘We have to wash them, Nicolas,’ I heard my friend say. ‘You start on the left and I will start on the right; when we meet, we are finished.’ I held

my breath and thought, ‘I’ll never make it,’ but sent myself in there anyway. The further I progressed over the next two hours, the happier I became. Jesus’s words continually crossed my mind, ‘What you did for the least of my brothers, you did for me.’ When we were finished, I cried tears of joy for the first time in my life.

“It was nearly midnight when we went downstairs to the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is exposed night and day on the altar. At that moment, I received the second shock of the evening. After I, the weakling, had just experienced how Jesus gave me the strength to do something humanly impossible, now in view of the white Host I was overcome with an undeniable conviction that has never left me since: ‘That is the real Jesus, he the one before me! And the same Christ, present here under the appearance of bread, lies on the second floor in the patients’ beds.’ I then understood: my future life would be to ‘go from Jesus to Jesus’, from Jesus in my suffering brothers to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.”

Six months later, Nicolas Buttet received a call from the Vatican. “*It was the beginning of a tremendous four year adventure in the service of the Church. I traveled around the world on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, prepared conferences and worked in poor neighborhoods. When it was time to renew my contract for five more years, I knew, ‘This is too little.’ And since I knew the power of prayer and how it could bring me close to those whom I had met in the slums of Manila, Caracas and Calcutta, the numerous personalities I had encountered with important political and economic positions and the many sick and handicapped that I had seen, I left everything behind and followed the inner call, ‘God alone is enough!’”*

The hermitage

With the permission of the Church, the 30-year-old withdrew in 1992 as hermit to the small, abandoned hermitage Our Lady of Scex above St. Moritz, Switzerland.

"I climbed up the 482 stairs to live for a year, but it turned into five years. I prayed in the silence many hours a day, and I often spent the whole night in adoration. A beautiful relationship with the Lord developed in me—not in feelings, however, but living trust: 'God is lovingly close to me. He cares for me.' How concretely I experienced the Lord's loving nearness and providence. I knew, for example, that I should never buy anything to eat. Once, though, when I had been out of bread for several weeks, I prayed on a Saturday morning with a smirk, 'Jesus, if by chance I would get a bit of bread again, I would not be opposed to eating it.' At a quarter past twelve, there was a heavy rap on the door. A lady was standing outside and she said to me, 'Look, I hurried to bring you some bread because when I was down in the church this morning lighting a candle I felt pushed interiorly, 'Go and take bread to the hermit!' I thought, 'Bread alone, that can't be right!' But since only the bakery was open at that time, I just brought you some bread.' When I told the good woman what had happened that morning, she was moved to the point of tears over the kindness God had shown in using an instrument to say that he loves me."

Numerous visitors soon found their way to the hermitage. *"One day a girl climbed the stairs. She was very sad, and so I invited her sit down and talk with me a little. 'I don't believe in God,' was one of the few things she told me. I found out later that she had already tried to commit suicide five times and on this day she had actually hiked up here to jump off the 450 foot cliff.*

"I said to her, 'Listen, you seem distraught. There is only one thing that can cheer you up—let Jesus look at you!'"

"She answered, 'But I told you that I don't believe!' "That doesn't matter. It's God who believes in you, and that's enough. You can let him look at you," I continued.

"What does that mean, let him look at me?" she asked.

"Then I explained to her, 'You know, sometimes I spend the whole night in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament—a small, round, white Host. That is Jesus, he is there! And if you want, you may also spend such a night here!' She came and spent the night from ten in the evening until six in the morning, her gaze fixed on the Blessed Sacrament, without budging the whole night.

This went on for nine consecutive nights. Afterwards she said, 'You know, I had fallen so deep, so deep! And yet when I was completely down, I found Jesus. He bounced me up, back into the light, like on a trampoline. I considered myself ugly and thought I was nothing. But now I know: it doesn't matter what I think of myself or what the others think, but what God thinks of me! I have understood that Jesus loves me and that I am valuable in his eyes. Imagine, this little Host, which is wholly God, transformed me!"

In the silence of his hermitage Nicolas Buttet had an unexpected and intensive *"novitiate: taking in like Jesus and exposing to his presence,"* those who were marred from abuse, drugs, hopelessness, overload, depression or lack of love. And when burnt out politicians or upper-level managers came seeking advice and help he recalled what Mother Teresa had explained to him in Calcutta about the spiritual poverty of the West being much more tragic than any material misery.

“At the same time, an increasing number of teenagers came to visit this quiet place in order to nurture their faith. It started with five but quickly grew to one hundred. Drawn by their enthusiasm, non-believers or friends with drug problems also came out of curiosity.” The young people formed a prayer group and encouraged Nicolas more and more to found a community offering refuge for people in need.

Nevertheless, it was not until 1997 when the Bishop said, *“Your place is with them. Come down from your mountain! God is calling you here, and nowhere else,”* that Nicolas left his hermitage with a heavy heart.

“I left everything there when I departed, even the food, because I said to myself, ‘Someday you’ll be back!’” Nothing ever became of that thought though.

*I*nstead, the “Eucharistein” fraternity formed, a name coming from the Greek word “εὐχαριστεῖν”, “eucharistein”, “thanksgiving” and indicating that the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Mass and adoration from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. form the heart of their community. For their founder Nicolas Buttet, however, who was ordained to the priesthood in 2003, his favorite prayer time remains the night hours. *“I have to be in continual contact with him and be, so to say, face to face with him because with him, before the Blessed Sacrament,*

I am constantly given the ability to do what I could never do of my own accord: to love as he loves. So many things overwhelm us every day; so many problems are not resolvable and we have no influence in many situations. In the chapel, though, many people have experienced a radical change.

“A very impressive example for me was a young man who had taken heroin for years. One day he said, ‘Listen up, Nicolas, I can’t take it anymore! I’m leaving tonight and I’m going to find some heroin.’

“I could only respond, ‘Look, I can’t hold you back, lock you up or handcuff you, but one thing I can do with you, if you want, I will go with you to the chapel, the two of us alone, and we will stay there as long as you want.’ “We spent practically the whole night in the chapel. He knelt, his fingers clutching the altar, just a few inches away from the exposed Blessed Sacrament while I pleaded with Jesus further back. The young man cried, moaned and stretched out toward the Lord. He held out! After this night, he overcame his heroin addiction and started a new life.

*“*When such radical changes and conversions take place and the ones involved say, ‘It was the Holy Eucharist, Jesus, that healed me,’ it is my greatest joy because I then tell myself, ‘Our community is not everywhere, but the source of their healing and perseverance can be found in every tabernacle.’”

*The source of their healing and perseverance
can be found in every tabernacle.*

God Lives in Me!

*T*en-year-old Elizabeth Catez (1880-1906) from Dijon, France, who was as spirited as she was strong-willed and yet sensitive and warm-hearted, received a grace at her First Holy Communion which shaped the rest of her life. *“On this day, Jesus opened his dwelling place in me. He took possession of my heart, so much so, that from the hour of this mysterious encounter on, I desired only to give my life to him.”* Mrs. Catez, a widow, at first denied the wish of her 17-year-old daughter to enter the Carmel. Nevertheless in August 1901, after her 21st birthday, Elizabeth decidedly passed through the door of the Carmel in her hometown, where she would remain until her death just five years later. Sr. Elizabeth was happy and often repeated, *“It seems to me I have found my heaven on earth, since heaven is God and God is in my soul. The day I understood that, everything became clear to me, and I wish I could whisper this secret to those I love in order that they also might cling closely to God through everything.”* She wrote to her friend Françoise: *“Build a little cell within like I do, and think how God is there and enter into it from time to time. When your nerves are on edge or something upsets you, quietly take refuge there and tell the Lord all about it. ... A soul is happy, living in close union with God ... when it knows how to find him in its inmost depths,*

then it is never lonely again, and it feels the need of solitude in order to enjoy the presence of the guest it adores. You must give him his rightful place in your heart!”

*D*uring the last two years of her life she suffered from tormenting insomnia due to a serious illness. She had always loved to contemplate the stars and the universe because they spoke to her of God’s glory and infiniteness, and so wrote her mother and sister, *“All of nature seems to me to be full of God. ... I wish I were a painter so that I could sketch out for you the clear, starry heavens. ... Everything is so quiet and calm. ... As I could not sleep, I settled myself at the window and remained alone there until nearly midnight. ... I am God’s little hermit ... and the Lord lets me know that he rejoices over my nightly praises.”*

Sr. Elizabeth of the Holy Trinity went to her eternal rest in 1906 on the Feast of the Dedication of St. John Lateran at the age of only 26; *“I am going to Light, to Life, to Love!”* she whispered with her last strength. The beautiful legacy she gave to her friend Antoinette she imparts on each one of us, *“I leave you my faith in the presence of God, a God all-loving, abiding in our souls.”*

*The inner fellowship with him
has been the radiant sun giving light to my life,
making it already an anticipated heaven.*

Nightly Encounters

Brother Kostka (1868-1946), a modest Divine Word Missionary from Grevenbroich, Germany, secretly saw over the course of four decades Christ's Passion during every Holy Mass. For almost 40 years, just as hidden, he adored the Blessed Sacrament night by night.

Joseph Wasel, a shepherd's son, worked as a stable boy for a farmer after finishing school. The impressive homilies of two Divine Word missionaries in his parish church awoke the desire in the quiet young man to become a missionary himself. Joseph entered the Divine Word Missionaries in the town of Steyl, Holland as a brother at the age of 28 and was named Br. Kostka after the Jesuit saint Stanislaus Kostka. He repeatedly asked the founder of the order, Arnold Janssen, to send him to the distant missions. He just smiled though and said, "Your ship isn't ready yet," and sent Br. Kostka to help build the mission house St. Wendel in Saarland, Germany. He worked there untiringly for 43 years in the kitchen, the monastery shop and taking care of pilgrims.

What nobody knew, however, was that the Lord drew the inconspicuous man of prayer ever more close to himself and made his mission an interior one. Looking back Br. Kostka said:

"Still in the world, my favorite time was spent before the Blessed Sacrament, but in the monastery the drive to pray became even stronger. Everything drew me to Our Savior; an inner fire compelled me to rise during the night and prove my love to my good Master. I am personally convinced that the nighttime prayers were the result of daily Holy Communion because the attraction ... this fire within me ... came from the Blessed Sacrament, from Our Savior, who is present in the tabernacle with his divinity and humanity. With the permission of Father Rector ... I was allowed to rise at night even though he thought it ... was only a fleeting fancy.

"At 12:30 a.m. I climbed out of my bed. I didn't

need an alarm clock because I always woke up at the same time and I often thought that it was my guardian angel who awoke me so punctually. I then knelt before the Blessed Sacrament until 2 a.m. While still working on the farm, I prayed on the straw floor because the church doors were locked. In the mission house ... I did my hours of adoration behind the high altar, a place that I loved more each day.

"Considering that Moses was told to remove his sandals because he was on holy ground, I too wanted to appear before God in the Sacrament of Love without shoes. Therefore, I left my shoes before the door of the church. I was always faithful to this practice of spending my time before the Blessed Sacrament without my shoes or coat, even in the harsh winter cold...

"It was not until I was 68 years old that I was first offered a coat from brother tailor. I needed to appear before the Savior poor and bare; without shoes, just in my socks, I also woke my brothers in the morning. One can never treasure poverty enough.

When I reached the altar, I first prayed for faith, hope and love. Then I called to mind my poverty and my sinfulness. I prayed a first Our Father in remembrance and admission of my sins, failures and weaknesses. Then a second one followed ... to express my trust in God's immeasurable mercy—recalling that God is a good Father and gladly forgives sins when we humbly ask him. By the third Our Father I was usually already inflamed.

I'd rise, climb up the stairs of the altar on my knees and knock gently on the tabernacle door

and pray with real trust, 'My Savior, I am here again.' Then I stayed a good hour in innermost unity with Our Lady; I wanted to be led by her motherly hand. I always had an limitless trust in our Heavenly Mother; since then I live in the lovely memory that Mary, the first adorer of the incarnate God, wanted the nightly adoration.

I held firm to the practice of night adoration from 12:30 to 2:00 a.m. until I was 60. Then I changed the pious ritual to rising at 3:00 and saying my prayers behind the high altar so that they were finished when the others in the house started to appear in the morning (at 5:00 a.m.). In the meantime (1937), more than 30 years have passed since I began adoration at night before the Blessed Sacrament. The only hours I missed were those when I was prevented by fever or the flu. But even then, I often still dragged myself to the church to satisfy the yearnings in my heart.

"I prayed for the pope, cardinals, bishops and priests. I commended to the Sacred Heart the intentions which were entrusted to me or to our brothers. ... The highest guiding principle for my prayer ... in this trusted midnight hour was, 'Lord, your will be done in everything and in everyone—Lord, save souls!'"

"I never prayed for purely material needs. ... I almost always prayed contemplating the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary and it took an entire hour. I didn't speak any words in the Holy Hour; my prayer came and went from heart to heart without moving my lips. The entire time, I knelt in stillness in the pew or on the first step of the altar. The inner flame ... held me upright; ... tiredness did not overcome me in the least. In this time, two loving hearts met which could not separate themselves from one another and who told one another about their love. How blessed were these hours. They were a foretaste of heavenly delight."

The last rendezvous

*I*n 1941, after being driven away from St. Wendel by the Nazis, the elderly Br. Kostka was moved from one house to another until he finally settled in 1945 in the mission house St. Arnold close to Munster, Germany. There too, for the last two years of his life, he maintained his nightly adoration. Throughout his life, the missionary brother never took a break during the day, despite the strenuous work in the steamy kitchen. Although he often had severe headaches from decades of little sleep and fasting on top of that, he never lost his healthy appearance or his joyful, friendly manner. Even when he was old, Br. Kostka retained his loving way of doing little jobs throughout the day. It is indicative that he died on December 1, 1946, at the age of 78, just minutes before his usual nightly rendezvous with the Lord.

He found his final resting place in the monastery cemetery. Today, the "Brother Kostka Community" is working on the mystic's beatification whose own healing played an important role in the canonization of his order's founder Arnold Janssen in 2003. The 60-year-old Br. Kostka had a bad infection in his right leg which would not heal. Sitting in an arm chair in front of a picture of their founder, he prayed, "Father, you conned me so often (because Arnold Janssen never sent him to the missions but always gave him some other responsibility), now you could at least heal my leg. It's no problem for you!" Then Br. Kostka heard a voice behind him saying, "Your leg is healed ... and it won't become infected again!" When they removed the bandages his wounds were completely healed

*The attraction ... this fire in me ... came from
the Blessed Sacrament, from Our Savior,
who is present in the tabernacle
with his divinity and his humanity.*

Brother Kostka

The Greatest Discovery of my Life

*Peter Hribek, a reputable Czech physicist and mathematician,
has worked since 2005 at the Academy for Biology in the former castle
of the Buquoy Family close to our mission station in the Czech Republic.*

*His extraordinary knowledge in his area of expertise,
laser technology and optics, made him known in the time of Communism
among scientists even in the Western world.*

*Fr. Andrej from our Monastery of Divine Mercy
asked him to tell us something about his life.*

I learned about the Catholic Faith as a child, especially from my grandmother because my parents were teachers and were not allowed to practice their Faith during Communism. I did receive First Communion, but after that I stopped going to church for decades. Since my wife came from a completely atheistic family, there was no place for God in our marriage either.

In this difficult situation, Jesus found his own way to draw me to himself. It happened in 1986, before the fall of the Iron Curtain, when the British Council invited me for an internship in Rutherford, England. The Communist government permitted my visit to the West since it had to do with a cultural, scientific event. Far away from my family, in an unfamiliar envi-

ronment, I started thinking about God. I was also greatly interested with the question about what happens after death.

*S*o I went to Holy Mass in a Catholic church and even received Holy Communion. Yet after going to Communion, I realized I had done something which was not right. Touched by grace, I searched for a church when I returned to Prague where I stood in the back during the service and watched because not only the words of Holy Scripture but also the liturgy had made me curious and raised many questions. There I met a priest who, with great sensitivity, led me to Holy Confession and adoration and, after two years of preparation, allowed me to receive Holy Communion again.

It was beautiful! Max Plank, who founded the theory of quantum physics and won the Nobel Prize, found his way to God through science. He was the author of the famous phrase, “*For the believer, God is at the beginning of their thoughts, for the physicist, at the end.*” The Lord called me to himself in a different way, and he is still doing it. In the Church of St. Wenzel, my spiritual homeland back then, there was the possibility of night adoration. I loved those hours before the Blessed Sacrament, even in winter when the temperature in the church was sometimes below zero and not very comfortable. For me, though, it was a type of Gethsemane, an offered time of watching and praying with Jesus in the Garden of Olives. In his presence, time seemed to fly by, and when I walked home I was often so warm that I did not feel the cold at all!

*S*uch an experience was not easy for me as a scientist. I tried to explain it with the laws of physics which, naturally, was not possible be-

cause it was the presence of the supernatural love of the Holy Spirit manifested in this way. It seemed even more difficult for me to believe that the Almighty God, my Lord and Creator, made himself present in the little Host. At first I thought it was only symbolic, but then God gave me a wonderful experience to strengthen my faith in his true presence. During a Holy Mass in the little St. Nikolaus Chapel in Prague, I was pondering this question on my way forward to Holy Communion. Then, as I held the Host in my hand, it began to radiate like the sun. I was shocked at first, but then I understood: he is truly present! That was the greatest discovery of my life! And for this discovery I would give up any title, any career and any professorship.

*F*rom then on, I spent more time with my God present in the Host. I discuss all the inclinations of my heart with him, because I have seen that he is the light that enlightens my intellect and my heart with the truth.

Blessed are those who do not see and still believe

It is a challenge for all of us to livingly believe in the personal presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist because we only see him in the form of a little piece of bread.

How is it then for those who, because of a physical blindness, see nothing at all?

The great Italian apostle of charity Don Luigi Orione (1872 – 1940), who was beatified in 2004, founded the institute of the Blind Sisters, Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament.

Nearly 80 years after the foundation of a community of deaf sisters by St. Joseph Cottolengo in Turin, Italy, Don Orione founded the first, and until now only, community of blind nuns in the Catholic Church.

*T*he director of a Roman establishment for the blind strengthened Don Orione in his inspiration to found such an institute as

an offshoot of the already formed congregation Little Missionary Sisters of Charity. The saint recognized the needs of young blind women

who felt the call to consecrated life, but because of their impairment had not been accepted in other convents. Don Luigi Orione, on the other hand, was of the opinion, *“There is a place for everybody!”* He did not see the blindness of those being called as an obstacle but rather as a great advantage for giving themselves to God in a unique way, a charisma that would enrich the Church: *“Their cheerful radiance is a constant apostolate. Even with closed ears and eyes one can love God very much, make of themselves an offering for him and be his bride.”* The center of the Blind Sacramentines’ life is, of course, prayer, especially perpetual adoration and contemplation. Imagine, they spend many hours a day meditating with pure faith, only with the eyes of their spirit, the Eucharistic-hidden Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, the center and source of their consecrated life. They offer their blindness in prayer to God for their apostolically active priests and sisters who have no impairment and for the whole Church. They live in hiddenness— as it is written in their statutes—*“like Mary, completely in the heart of the Church. Their special mission is adoration, thanksgiving, expiation, intercessory prayer in union with Jesus, the Mediator and sacrifice.”* In this way, they consciously offer their lives for the Holy Father, for priests, for those who suffer, doubt and are far away from God. They *“represent in the Church the form of the praying Christ,”* as Don Orione fittingly described their vocation.

*A*lthough the blind adoration sisters live withdrawn in the cloister, they are nevertheless open for those seeking consolation and advice from them. It is precisely their handicap and their intensive prayer life close to God that lends them an extraordinary awareness and a wise, compassionate heart for people’s needs. And so the motherhouse in the northern Italian city of Tortona became an oasis of hope, peace and loving attention for numerous visitors and prayer groups. Special computers for the blind make it possible for the sisters to assist people looking for help around the world

via e-mail. During the rest of their time, the Blind Sacramentines, aided by a few of their sisters with sight from the Little Missionaries, take care of the household chores or do simple crafts.

In the houses outside of Italy as well, like Argentina, Spain, Brazil, Chile and Kenya, their mission remains first and foremost at the foot of the tabernacle. The first Mother Superior of the community, Mother Maria Tarcisia, understood so well, *“From her kneeler, the adorer can reach every corner of the world.”*

*F*or those who are called, the path to the community of the Blind Sacramentines sometimes entails suffering. Sr. Maria Rosa of the Holy Spirit from Italy, for example, had to fight for seven weary years against the resistance of her parents in order to follow God’s call which she had felt when she was 19. Ultimately, she decided to take a drastic step: *“One day I finally had the courage ... to run away from home.”* She prayed, *“Lord, when others who are in love run away in order to live together, why can’t I, who love you, do the same?”* She joyfully made her perpetual vows with the Sacramentines eight years later in the presence of her family.

*T*he Argentinian Sr. Maria Fe of the Blessed Sacrament was touched by grace in a very special way as an 11-year-old girl. She describes, *“Once, when I was waiting for the bus, I saw a group of joyful girls in white garments pass by me accompanied by a nun who was just as joyful. She looked in my direction and smiled at me.”*

The smile of this sister awoke in her the desire to become just like her. Yet four years later she went blind as the result of an eye infection, and therefore she attended a school for the blind in Buenos Aires. There were sisters working there and she asked to join their order. The superior, however, told her about the community from Don Orione. The blind girl waited seven years for the community to come to Argentina where she was able to join them at the age of 21.

Whoever Remains in Me

*One of the youngest sisters of our community,
Sr. Marietta Hammerle, from Mils bei Imst, Austria,
and her brother, who is three years younger than her,
recount something moving from their family which they only recently discovered.
It shows how essential it is for every family to have God at the center.*

Armin: When our grandparents Maria and Alois Gastl, from our mother's side of the family, were still alive, they always gave us grandchildren a good Christian example and their love. We always felt good around them and liked to go visit. Even after their death, though, Grandma and Grandpa have left us an invaluable gift—their hidden prayer and silent sacrifice for our vocations. We had no idea how much they did for us.

Sr. Marietta: We were oblivious to the fact that for 20 years in their parish, Grandma and Grandpa went to Eucharistic adoration for religious vocations every month in the night from the first Friday to Saturday—and they had the time slot from two to three in the morning. They never said a thing about it, not even in their hour of death, nor did they try to talk us into a vocation to consecrated life.

Armin: It's true! I wanted to become a forest ranger and studied at a ranger school in Styria, Austria. Even when I entrusted to my grandpa once in the last months of his life that I was discerning a vocation to the priesthood, he did not seem overly impressed. He simply said to me, *"We will pray and then the right thing will happen."*

Sr. Marietta: Grandma too, who contracted a serious and incurable illness in 1998 and died as a result after four painful years, never expressed the desire to see somebody in the family choose religious life even though, as I found out later, it was truly her wish. Her natural authority through her loving, silent and self-sacrificing lifestyle spoke much louder than her

words. When I was a 13-year-old schoolgirl and Grandma was ill, I loved spending hours sitting on her bed, and when she died, I had, interestingly, the distinct impression, *"Her illness was for me!"*

Armin: It has only been a year since Grandpa passed away. Somehow God prepared me for this after my conversion. I had been a lukewarm Christian until I made the resolution at a youth camp in Tyrol, Austria in 2009 to go my way with God. I had the impression that Grandpa would not be with us much longer. In December 2010, as we were praying together at home by the Advent wreath, I felt pushed to tell him openly that I had finally decided to become a priest. When Grandpa heard this, he beamed and said with profound joy, *"That I lived to see this day!"* Then he looked at me deeply and added, *"If you ever need anything, just come to me."* Those were Grandpa's last words to me, like a last will and testament. Nobody could have known that he would have a bad fall the next morning and end up in a coma.

Sr. Marietta: It happened on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Grandpa laid unconscious in the Intensive Care Unit for ten days and I visited him every day with my mom. In this difficult time, it was only prayer that gave us the strength to see this much-loved man suffering so helplessly. It was consoling that Grandpa received Last Rites and a drop of the Precious Blood which Fr. Maximilian brought him assisted by two deacons. There we were standing around Grandpa's deathbed, and we were very moved when our mom

told us now for the first time that her father had prayed for over 20 years for religious vocations.

Armin: Grandpa died on December 18, the Feast of Our Lady in Expectation, and we can look back only with amazement and thankfulness. We realized only recently that both of our

vocations were being prayed for even before I was born and while my sister was perhaps just on the way. Whether one sees the fruits of this prayer like Grandpa did, or if it is only visible after death as in Grandma's case, the words of Jesus always hold true: *"Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit."*

I Felt that Jesus is Here

*A*fter the novitiate and our solemn promise we five apostolic sisters in St. Polten, Austria started studying either elderly healthcare or Catholic education. We live in a nearby town called Hurm, and we are happy to help with the pastoral work here as much as our studies allow.

At the dedication of the sisters' chapel, the diocesan bishop, Klaus Kung said, *"I desire so much that a great fire spreads from your chapel and brings a love for the Holy Eucharist to the hearts of children and teenagers, and that it spreads throughout the parish and the diocese."* We were delighted and it strengthened us in that which we had already begun a few years earlier. Namely, when the local children made their First Communion in 2008, we asked ourselves concretely, *"What can we do so that the First Communicants remain faithful to the grace they received and deepen their friendship with Jesus?"* Since we remembered that during the First Communion classes the children especially liked the word *"tabernacle"* we sisters decided, after speaking about it with the pastor Fr. Franz-Xaver Hell, to found a so-called *"tabernacle hour"*. In the course of these much loved hours, the girls and boys learn more about Jesus through a short catechism, and then they encounter him directly for a quarter of an hour before the Blessed Sacrament after which they have fun playing games.

*I*n our small town apostolate, it is also important for us to continue to accompany the children spiritually as they become teenagers. We know from our own experience how difficult it can be during puberty to preserve a living faith and not to lose our relationship with Jesus and Mary. They are really the two columns which should become a source of strength for young peoples' daily life. Therefore we sisters gladly accompany a group of girls aged 10 to 14, who call themselves, *"Cool Faith"*. The group was founded in 2006 by a friend and great support in the parish, Birgit Zeilinger, with the motto, *"Even in the world of today, we can, as believing girls, be cool and modern."* As much as the teenagers need our friendship and as much as they love the afternoon when we do sports together, most of the time 15 girls of the girls also like to meet with us in the sisters' chapel for *"Cool-Faith-Night"*, an evening and night adoration with one another. Each of them signs up with one of the sisters for a nightly meeting with Jesus. Some of them even make the sacrifice of waking up twice during the night and going from the makeshift dormitory to the chapel. They are drawn by the very special atmosphere, even though sometimes during adoration their tired eyes fall shut. After Holy Mass in the morning with Fr. Franz-Xaver, everybody is excited for breakfast, wheret he joy really bubbles over

*L*ast July, three of the girls even volunteered on their own to take over an hour of the Thursday adoration in the parish. What a joy it was for us! In the meantime, some of their young mothers also come to adoration, and they too have had beautiful experiences in prayer.

Christine Gleis, for example, recently told us, “For the first hour of adoration, I brought a stack of books with me to somehow fill up the 60

minutes because I asked myself, ‘What should I do there for an hour?’ Now I always look forward to my next chance to be completely alone with Jesus. There I tell him everything; the stress disappears, I become very calm and back home I am much more balanced.” When we asked Christine’s 8-year-old daughter once why she likes coming to adoration so much, she answered spontaneously, “Because I see Jesus! I tell him that I really love him and that with Mom I already prayed a whole Rosary.”

*Say to him: “Jesus, you know me
and you love me. I place my trust in you
and I put my whole life
into your hands.*

*I want you
to be the power that strengthens me
and the joy which never leaves me”.*

Pope Benedict XVI at World Youth Day in Madrid, August 2011