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Corpus Christi "Comes Home"

A young priest in Wales tells how he was able to bring the Blessed Sacrament to the homes of families despite the restrictions of the coronavirus lockdown.

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“To waste time – if I may say it – before the Lord, before the mystery of Jesus Christ. To adore, there in the silence, in the silence of adoration. He is the Lord, and I adore Him.”

How we've missed this adoration of the Lord in the Eucharist over the last few months! These words of Pope Francis back in 2016 remind us what a great joy it is for us as Catholics to come before the Lord and simply spend time with Him in the Blessed Sacrament. As that humble but wise man once described it to St Jean-Marie Vianney, "I look at Him, and He looks back at me".

The recent feast of Corpus Christi was a moment to reflect on our hunger to be in communion with Jesus and with one other in the Eucharist, and also to be able to be next to Him in the tabernacle once more. As we approached the feast day, I felt a great sadness that we wouldn't be able to receive the Lord together and then take Him in procession around the streets of the town.

I'm currently covering the parish of Tenby, a beautiful seaside town in west Wales which, if it weren't for the lockdown, would be thronged with tourists at this time of year – so it would have been a wonderful missionary moment. The Lord had another idea though, which came to me during my prayer: taking advantage of an easing in the Welsh travel restrictions, I offered families the opportunity of a time of adoration and benediction in their gardens instead! I wasn't sure what the take-up would be like – in the end though, so many families asked for the Lord to visit them that I had to extend the visits into the days following the feast, which would traditionally have fallen within the Corpus Christi Octave. In total 36 different households took part.

It was moving for me as a priest to see how people had prepared their homes with such love and care for

the arrival of Jesus Christ in the monstrance. I had asked each family to prepare an outdoor table with a white cloth and candles – the candles didn't withstand the wind in most visits! – and to think of a favourite family hymn. I led each family in a time of meditation with the Lord before then giving benediction, about ten to fifteen minutes in total.

Since I'm still able to celebrate Mass each day, receive Jesus in Holy Communion, and make regular visits to Him in the tabernacle, I had forgotten just how much longing there is among His flock to draw near to Him again. One man cried as he told me how excited he'd been to welcome Jesus to his home; an elderly couple knelt on their street as I left them at the end of the visit; one lady had placed photos of her loved ones along the base of the altar to be "near" Jesus when he arrived.

People were so grateful for the Lord's visit – and for me, it was a privilege to accompany Him to so many homes. It felt like the days of the early Church, when prayer and fellowship – and the Mass, too – would have been held in people's homes, their "*domus ecclesiae*". One lady invited her non-Catholic neighbour to come to join us for adoration.

This has been an extraordinary but precious opportunity. Who knows what graces the Lord has bestowed through it, and how he has wanted to call souls to deeper holiness in those silent moments?

Fr Matthew Roche-Saunders

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