

LEARN TO ADORE SO AS NOT TO EXCLUDE ANYONE

Some years ago I was captivated by a phrase that Eloi Leclerc placed on the lips of Francis of Assisi: "If we knew how to adore, our lives would flow along tranquilly like great rivers"(I am quoting from memory). The phrase, above all the use of the conditional expressing a secret previously experienced, seemed to me to be a complete programme for life. There is an experience of adoration which, when we have learned it with hours of silence and patience, brings with it an aura of serenity and goodness, when our heart is converted and we become transfigured from the inside out, the way we look is refreshed and our lives which we fuss over so much are changed.

But in this world of exclusion and increasing marginalisation, isn't the practice of adoration a luxury? Wouldn't our time be put to much better use by welcoming people, attending to their health and education, including everyone in universal friendship? I sincerely believe that it would not. We do not lose time when we adore, because we learn to adore in order not to exclude. That is the point expressed in these pages.

Only by a regular and constant practice of adoration can we prepare ourselves to exclude no one from our hearts and from our home. Because we allow our intimate selves to be widened by the one God who lives totally within us.

"If we knew how to adore...!" The phrase is something more than a vague desire, it is a challenge: the process of slowly learning to widen our interior being, opening up a greater space in that hidden place where so many voices meet together, where so many thoughts and desires are mingled. To make an interior space as a spiritual practice is nothing new. We all experience the attraction, and also the resistances, towards this active and living centre where we have our being, often without being aware of it. But to join adoration to a prayer experience of allowing ourselves to be in an attitude of passive receptivity, of allowing God to remake our hearts, this, I think, is worthy of our acceptance and our practice.

To adore is to undertake a certain practice of intimacy, it is to take part in the widening of our interior tent, the place where God lives. And so it is the intensifying of a relationship, it is to shelter the desire and to alert it at the same time, so that a presence which is little recognized may enlighten us. It is to keep bringing to the light the hidden presence of Love, which always disorientates us, this giving entrance to the Other and to many others, in our personal and private space. And then our hearts are enlarged because we find room for others in it: their lives, their sufferings, their loves, and we give them place in the mysterious meeting with the Lord of life.

To adore is to make a practice of inclusion. Because if we dare to look at the eyes of those who look at us, we find that their glance is reflected in and moves us towards those of our brothers and sisters. That is to say, if we adore well we include them in our heart, where they become rooted, or can become rooted, and they will grow like the seed and give fruit thirty, sixty or a hundred-fold. And, an unexpected miracle, those who are excluded from our society and from our selfish hearts strive to find a place within us, so that adoration becomes an attitude of fighting against exclusion by means of a dynamic hitherto unknown to us.

Then we understand what adoration is, in this way, fighting against exclusion and social marginalisation, because it creates a greater space where availability becomes the fruit of constant unselfishness and rejection of privileges.

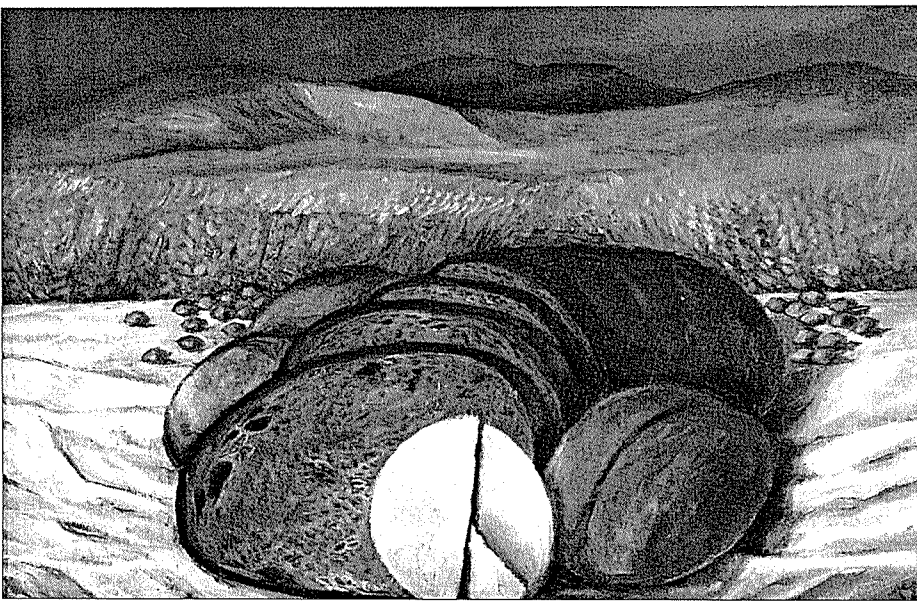
It is not possible to adore "in Spirit and in truth" without drawing near and breaking down the barriers which separate us from those whose lives are threatened, whose hearts are devastated, and who will not enter into our hearts unless they are changed, unless we receive them as a gift, the fruit of a process of purification and rehabilitation of desire.

This widening of the heart by adoration is experienced as a gift, to the extent that it does not produce a miserly streak in our little worlds of desire, in the closed garden of our hearts. If we learn to adore, we also learn not to exclude anyone from the sacred space where we find ourselves sharing Christ's Body and his Word with someone who almost without our

realizing it has become the Guardian of our most intimate self.

However, it must not be thought that this is as simple as it may seem, or that it can be brought about in a moment. It requires a habit of adoration, hours of silence before the mystery of Love giving itself, patience and generosity of heart. It is necessary to enter a progressive and slow process where the first stage would require the initiation of the practice of self-stripping. We judge our lives by competing for holding on to things that we want to dispose of. Things and people. From our birth we are needy creatures seeking to grab hold of life, anchor ourselves in living, to the breast which nourishes us or the arm which holds us up, protects us and caresses us. And we believe in the same dynamic of appropriation of vital or material means, in the belief that to live is to lay up treasure, to master the world and those who are dear to us, to accumulate goods of whatever kind: things or people. 'That's life!', we say.

But things are not like this. If we are not weaned we do not grow because we deprive ourselves of solid food. And if we wish to keep in our lungs the air we think we need to breathe, we become purple in the face and suffocate. We need to learn to become free, to let go, to detach ourselves also from what nourishes us. Learn to be stripped of ourselves, and to surrender what we are. Letting go is the other side of the movement of life. Generous self-giving, a pouring out, a sign of health, of life. And to adore with calmness lightens our heart, liberates the free flow of our life.



Sieger Köder
«Ich bin das
Brot» (Joh 6)
Brotlandschaft.



If we do not do this we soon find ourselves wanting to appropriate other people and to convert them into objects at our personal service, taking away from them their real status of being beloved, blessed sons and daughters of God and of life. We place ourselves at the centre and make of them a lesser category, with a peripheral identity. We marginalize them by making them an object of our whims or desires. Or perhaps rivals with whom we have to fight for the central place in the hearts of others. The most terrible thing is that by putting ourselves first, by claiming the centre stage of life, we end up by also excluding God from our hearts. He too seems to be a rival for our covetous hearts. That is why St. Paul says that covetousness is idolatry.

So adoration is of prime importance. It is the antidote to check our unbridled career towards selfishness and solitude. Our society excludes those excluded from our hearts. Adoration means allowing the long process of detachment from self, to remove myself by degrees from the

centre of things. In adoration we place our God the Lord of life in his place, and from there he puts everything in order and places each one in his proper place. That is why he is truly the Lord!

“If we knew how to truly adore...!” We would exclude no one, because we would allow our hearts to be gradually widened, we would feel comfortable including other people and would not think that our personal private property is being invaded. We would see those people as guests, our brothers and sisters, gift of our Father, a gift of shared life.

Exclusion is always a lack of the practice of adoration. Because our hearts and the world around us look at each other and reflect each other far more than we realize. To learn to adore is to learn to exclude no one from the heart of the world, because we know that all people, including ourselves, are included in the maternal heart of God our Father.

Xavier Quinza Lleo, SJ