

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

This popular devotion began in the thirteenth century. It is an extension of that very brief section of the Mass when just before the Communion, the special devotion is addressed to Jesus present on the altar under the outward signs of bread and wine. The Mass, however, is addressed primarily to God the Father and it would overturn the nature of the Eucharistic action to give the Mass over to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The love of devout hearts felt the need of expressing their faith in our Lord's sacramental presence and their adoration of him who comes to be with us in this lowly form. And out of this need grew the custom of taking the Sacred Host from the tabernacle at some time when Mass was not being offered, and holding a little service of adoration. A very old Christian tradition dictated that any people who might be in the church when the Blessed Sacrament was being reposed in the tabernacle, be blessed with the Sacrament, and this usual blessing naturally became part of the service of adoration.

Thus Benediction supplies a need of souls who have entered into the meaning of our Lord's real, objective presence in the Blessed Sacrament and, at the same time, guards against the danger of making devotion to the Blessed Sacrament a substitute for the Eucharistic action of offering to the Father.

St. Augustine's Prayer Book
(New York: Holy Cross Publications, 1967)