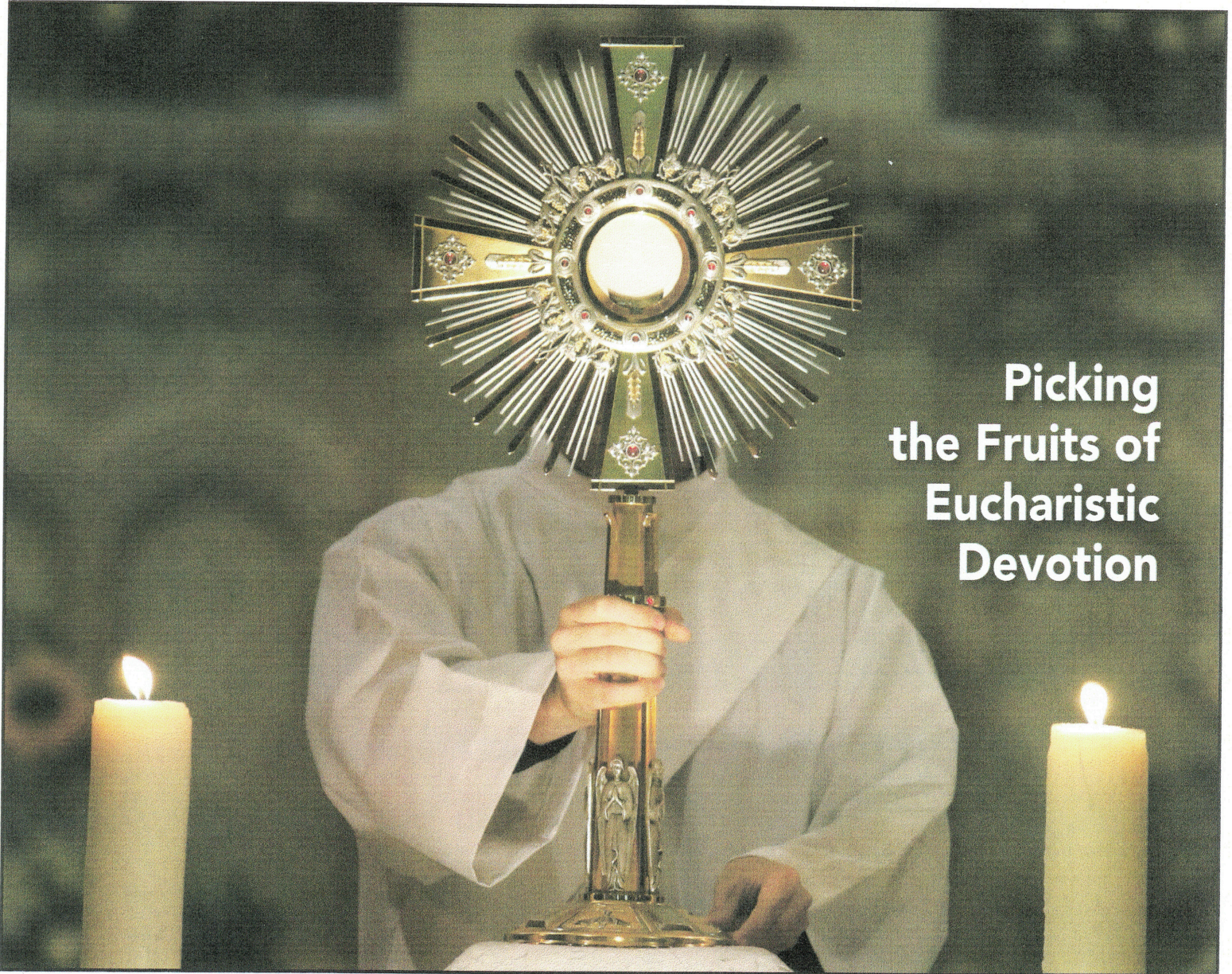


# The Deacon



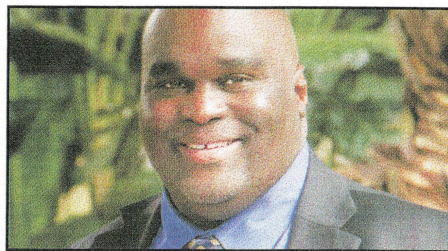
**Picking  
the Fruits of  
Eucharistic  
Devotion**



Deacons serving deacons –  
as they serve the Church

**NADD**

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF DIACONATE DIRECTORS



By Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

# Picking the Fruits

## *of Eucharistic Devotion*

The reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is at the core of what it means to be Catholic, and the foundation of diaconal life. The Eucharist is the principal source of strength and nourishment for our souls precisely because it is Christ himself whom we receive. The power of the Eucharistic Christ – present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in Adoration – gives deacons the grace to exercise their ministry with the strength that comes from God.

The relationship between the deacon and the Eucharist traces its origins back to the tradition of *fermentum*, which was first practiced as early as 120 A.D. It was customary that part of the Eucharist consecrated by the bishop of one diocese was carried by a deacon to the bishop of another diocese. The receiving bishop would then consume the host at his next celebration of the Eucharist as a sign of the communion between the churches. It was called a *fermentum* because the Eucharist symbolized the leaven of unity which permeated and transformed Christian life.

No one denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist until Berengarius (999-1088), archdeacon of Angers in France, publicly denied that Christ was truly and substantially present under the species of bread and wine. The matter became so serious that Pope Gregory VII ordered Berengarius to sign a credo. With this profession of faith, a Eucharistic Renaissance was born. From the 11th century on, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament became more and more prevalent in the Catholic world.

The fruits of Eucharistic devotion can have profound effects on the life and ministry of the deacon. The adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist leads to greater reverence at Mass, a deeper desire for personal holiness, and a stronger sense of union within both the parish and the universal Church. In addition, since the early centuries of Christianity, the Church has linked Eucharistic devo-

tion to service of the poor. The theological meaning of Acts 6 illustrates the Church's earliest attempt to express what Catholic social teaching would later articulate: the dignity of the human person, the preferential option for the poor, and the inseparability of worship and justice. The diaconate, from its inception, safeguarded the truth that Eucharistic communion must flow outward into so-

cial solidarity. For deacons, "the problem of the poor leads to the very heart of our faith. [T]he Church's love for the poor, 'is essential for her and a part of her constant tradition' [...] For Christians, the poor are not a sociological category, but the very 'flesh' of Christ." (*Dilexi Te*, no.110)

As the icon of Christ the Servant in the hierarchy of Holy Orders, the deacon has the privilege of leading Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The rubrics for the role of the deacon in Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside

Mass state that "the ordinary minister for exposition of the Eucharist is a priest or deacon. At the end of the period of adoration, before the reposition, he blesses the people with the sacrament." (no. 90) This close relationship with the Eucharist in Adoration should lead to a deeper relationship with Jesus himself. Thus the "ministerial and hierarchical priesthood, the priesthood of the bishops and the priests, and, at their side, the ministry of the deacons – ministries which normally begin with the proclamation of the Gospel – are in the closest relationship with the Eucharist." (*Dominicae Canae*, no.2)

Let us always choose to follow the Eucharistic Jesus who, through the fire of his love, will lead us from sorrow to joy, from despair to hope, from death to everlasting life. **TD**



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