

God's Honor Guard

Every minute of every day there is an honor guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in VA. The guard has a very definite routine. He walks 21 paces in front of the tomb. Why 21? Because this refers to the 21-gun salute that is bestowed upon a fallen soldier, the highest honor given to a military person. After walking 21 paces he pauses 21 seconds before making an about face. Then he places the rifle on his other shoulder and returns on the same path. The guard uses wet gloves so that the rifle will not slip from his grip. The tomb has been patrolled continuously, 24/7, since 1930. Honor guards are changed every thirty minutes no matter what the weather conditions. And they even walk during tropical storms.

We are proud of our men and women who serve in the military in many part of the world. And for those who have fallen in combat, we honor their heroic lives and their sacrificial deaths. But think for a moment. All this time and energy is spent to honor fallen soldiers, a worthy cause. Yet in our church we have a monument to our ever-present God in the tabernacle. Jesus is truly present under the form of consecrated bread. If our God is here to be adored and loved, why aren't there more soldiers of Christ to form an honor guard every day? Are we too busy? Are we lazy? Have some lost faith in the Eucharistic presence of Jesus? Something is wrong with this picture.

In our churches the choirs of angels quietly patrol 24/7, rain or shine, a heavenly expression of perpetual adoration. You and I are invited to join them in silent adoration with humility and self-surrender. We come in response to Psalm 46: "Be still and know that I am God." It is a privilege to be so close to the living God.

In recent years both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have encouraged perpetual adoration in all the Churches of the world. In the city of Rome, four such churches are available to serve the people. In the Pittsburgh Diocese, many churches now offer adoration on a regular monthly or weekly basis. If possible we should take our turn worshipping our risen Lord before the Blessed Sacrament, or stopping in to church at a convenient time.

In the second Book of Chronicles 7:14 we read, "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their land." Our faith stands on the promises of God that we find in the Bible. Our country and our world are in need of much forgiveness and healing from the loving hand of God. As a local church you and I should come before God to seek his blessings upon the entire human family. There is no better place to do this than before our risen Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

*Let the angels be astounded, and let everyone come
together like sheep to the presence of this God
who is concealed beneath the species of the Sacrament.*
St. Thomas of Villanova