

A few weeks ago, I mentioned in these pastor's notes the upcoming "Forty Hours Devotion" at the Basilica. I likened it to our Protestant brothers and sisters' "tent revival", as its purpose is to strengthen and enliven the faith of the parishioners who celebrate it. The forty hours are preceding our patronal feast day on June 29th and culminating with the Mass of Confirmation with Bishop Stika presiding. The event will kick off with a celebration on Thursday evening at 6pm, where we will have Solemn Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, a procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the Church, followed by the enthronement of the Blessed Sacrament on our altar, and the praying of litanies and other prayers to begin our solemn vigil before the Lord.

After this opening, we will have over forty individual hours of Adoration continuing throughout the day and night until the Confirmation Mass on Saturday at 5:30pm (interrupted only by our 7am and noon Masses on Friday). These hours of Adoration are the heart of the Forty Hours Devotion. It involves each parishioner committing to some time of prayer, both as individuals and as members of one or more groups. It is my intention that every group or ministry associated with the parish would claim one of the hours as their own, and commit to providing at least two, and preferably more, adorers of the Blessed Sacrament, for each of these hours. Now, just because a certain group has an hour, it doesn't mean that hour is exclusive to them. Anyone may come at any time during these hours to pray.

The groups or individuals who sign up for each holy hour will pray certain prayers before the Blessed Sacrament at the beginning and end of their time. These prayers will be found in an official pamphlet. They will include traditional prayers before the Blessed Sacrament, the Litany of the Most Holy Eucharist, the Divine Praises, and the hymn, "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name". Optional in each hour will be the praying of the Rosary, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, and the reciting or singing of hymns. Even though not everyone has the talent of singing, all can appreciate the poetry of our hymns, especially those associated with our worship of the Blessed Sacrament. An essential element of each hour will be space for silent Adoration: a place to sit in quiet with our Eucharistic Lord and listen to the voice of our Shepherd, who speaks by His Sacramental Presence.

In addition to the individual hours, we will also have events that take place during the course of this devotion. On Friday at 7am and 12 noon, we will have our regularly scheduled Masses, but the noon Mass will be a sung Mass with incense and all the due reverence for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In addition, we have a guest priest coming, Fr. Jeff Kirby, whose books you may have seen in our bookstore. He will be leading us in devotions centered around the Sacred Heart as well as our patronal Saints Peter and Paul. On Friday from 1pm to 3pm, he will be offering confessions, along with Fr. Blatchford and me, and perhaps some other priests in the area. On Friday evening, Fr. Kirby will give us another spiritual talk before the Blessed Sacrament and we will have some social time afterwards in Varallo Parish Hall. Saturday morning we are planning Rosaries.

On Friday nights in the summer, the City of Chattanooga hosts a series of concerts in Miller Plaza called "Nightfall". Hundreds, if not thousands, of people will be walking past the doors of our church, and it presents to us a most excellent opportunity to invite people in and pray. If you are interested in being a "fisher of men" to invite people in just for a moment of prayer and perhaps to answer questions they may have, please let us know at the parish office. Wouldn't it be wonderful if one of the fruits of our Forty Hours Devotion would be to fill the nets of our RCIA class this fall, or perhaps bring back a fallen away Catholic? Perhaps that "someone" who has never been invited to experience and encounter our Eucharistic Lord might be inspired by your invitation.

A special note about our Hispanic Community: They are accustomed to all-night Adoration. You may or may not be aware that every First Friday and every Friday during Lent, our Hispanic Community commits to nocturnal Adoration from 9pm until 7am. There is not a single hour in that span that has fewer than ten people, and it usually is much more than that. Our Hispanic Community has offered to commit to the Friday night Adoration as usual. Of course, this doesn't mean that English speaking groups can't also come and make use of those times for prayer. However, I would like to put out the special request and charge that the English speaking community do our best to cover the night hours between Thursday evening and Friday morning. Remember, this is a time for our parish to be on "retreat," and it is meant to be a "revival." Sometimes this means going out of our comfort zones and breaking our regular habits for the purpose of spiritual growth. I might also note that the church is not as hot in the middle of the night. :-)

I recently heard a thought-provoking saying: "Those who are dancing appear to be crazy to those who can't hear the music." Eucharistic Adoration is sometimes hard to explain to non-Catholics. However, it is the central Mystery of our Catholic Christian faith. Just as the Exodus event, the sacrifice and eating of the unblemished lamb for the Angel of Death to "pass over", is central to Jewish worship, so, too, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass – which is the Christian "Passover" event from the Last Supper through the crucifixion until the Resurrection – is the central event of our faith. Through Eucharistic Adoration, we extend our celebration and honor towards the saving work of our God, made present in the Eucharist.

Pope St. John Paul II said: "I urge priests, religious, and lay people to continue and redouble their efforts to teach the younger generations the meaning and value of Eucharistic adoration and devotion. How will young people be able to know the Lord if they are not introduced to the mystery of His presence?"

St. Therese of Calcutta said: "When you look at the crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you **then**. When you look at the Sacred Host [in Adoration], you understand how much Jesus loves you **now**."



Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, Pastor and Rector