



Forty Hours Devotion

On the weekend of Dec. 30, I wrote about the connection between the messages of Our Lady of Fatima and the feast of the Immaculate Conception. I emphasized the dual devotions advocated by Our Lady of the consecration to her Immaculate Heart and Hours of Eucharistic Adoration in reparation for our sins and praying for the conversion of sinners. It was there that I introduced the idea of 40 Hours. Some more background first.

The Second Vatican Council taught that the Holy Eucharist is “the source and summit of the Christian life” (*Lumen Gentium*, 11). While the Mass is the central act of worship for Catholics—an act which perpetuates the one and only sacrifice of our Lord—as it re-presents his passion, death and resurrection, Vatican Council II upheld and encouraged the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass. Such devotion derives from the sacrifice of the Mass and moves the faithful to both sacramental and spiritual communion with our Lord (© *Mysterium*, No. 50). As Pope Pius XII taught in *Mediator Dei*, “This practice of adoration has a valid and firm foundation.” Our late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, had repeatedly “highly recommended” public and private devotion of the Blessed Sacrament, including processions on the feast of Corpus Christi and the 40 Hours Devotion (cf. *Dominicae Cenerae*, 3; *Inaestimabile Donum*, 20-22; and *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 25).

[see: <http://catholicstraightanswers.com/what-is-the-40-hours-devotion/>]

Though it is not as popular locally today as it once was, the 40 Hours devotion is something with which many people who grew up in the early and middle part of the 20th century are very familiar. This devotion dates back nearly 500 years. It was developed in 16th century Italy amidst the many trials of the Church in that age. Its roots were in a devotion in which the faithful would observe the period of Christ’s time in the tomb (approximately 40 hours) during Holy Week. After spreading throughout Italy, it reached France and was seen as an arm of the Catholic Church’s Counter-Reformation—a response to the great Exodus from the Church by the Protestants. Thus, we can see how it corresponds with the what Our Lady asked for at Fatima; the modern Exodus needs a modern counter-reformation.

At Fatima, Our Lady warned of persecutions of the Church. So much of the news today is about the acrimony within our national politics, but the news media so often ignores the persecution of the Church (in China, in India and other parts of Asia, not to mention Africa). I believe the persecution Mary spoke of are not only of the physical type (imprisonment, torture and other sufferings) but also spiritual, that is, that there would be those who would fail to teach the faith or try to undermine the Church from within. Who can discount the great erosion of faith that has caused so many to walk away from the Church? The decline in attendance at Sunday Mass, though enhanced by the tragic and distressing news of the abuse scandal, began at least a decade before that news came to our attention. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life began to decline even before the decline in attendance.

The full effects of this subtle persecution are seen in a recent poll taken by (Gallup?) a survey showed that only about 1/3 of all Catholics believed in the Real Presence of the Eucharist. The percentage of those who do believe is much higher for those who go to Sunday Mass regularly, but the question remains, why is it not 100% as it should be? And so we return to the Fatima call. With the churches in Europe, largely supported by the state, so often empty; with the churches in the US emptying out, and with the “faithful” so often not believing in the faith handed down through the centuries, we are in a worldwide crisis that I am convinced was forecast by Our Lady of Fatima.

Now that we have already consecrated our parish and many have consecrated ourselves to her Immaculate Heart, let us heed the second part of her call and spend hours of reparation for the sake of calling back the lost sheep to the flock and to make reparation for the sins of the Church and her members. Sign-up sheets are at the entryways of the churches.

God bless you all, Fr. Mickey