

## **Forty Hours Devotion Third Evening**

### *The Fruits of Devotion*

The Salesian tradition results from the confluence, collaboration and communion of two saints: Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal.

A commentator told the following story from an account of St. Jane de Chantal's life:

**“It was a maxim with Jane Frances de Chantal that everything of importance should be undertaken with the Sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion, where we receive answers of divine wisdom and truth. On a certain occasion she said: ‘If you could read my soul, you would see that all my pleasure in this life is to remain before the Blessed Sacrament.’”**

For the last Forty Hours people of all shapes and sizes, of all ages and avocation, of every political and social stripe, have come to this sacred space, as Jane de Chantal said, to “remain before the Blessed Sacrament.” Recalling the words of St. Peter, ‘it is indeed good for us to be here.’

But in the Salesian tradition, our participation in Forty Hours Devotion is the easy part. The challenging part is recognizing the opportunities for practicing this Eucharistic devotion in each and every hour of our lives. The easy part is to worship and adore Our Incarnate Lord within the silent and peaceful footprint of this space. The challenging part is to worship and adore Our Incarnate Lord in the hustle and bustle, the ups and downs and the give-and-take that we encounter every day within the jam-packed parameters of our relationships with each other.

Our worship here must lead to fruit – changes of mind, heart, attitude and action – beyond.

With St. Francis as our companion and guide, let us together consider briefly what impact this Forty Hours Devotion must make in our relationship with God, in our relationship with ourselves and in our relationships with one another.

Let us consider how what we do here tonight can transform who we can be and how we will live tomorrow.

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**“We ought to make a thousand adorations each day to this divine Sacrament in thanksgiving for the love with which God dwells among us.”**

We often fail to treat ourselves and others with the same respect that we afford the Christ in the Eucharist (after all, each of us is the Body and Blood of Christ) simply because we forget: we forget our own God-given dignity and destiny. We forget the God-given dignity and destiny of each other. Literally, we lose our minds and act in other-than-God-centered ways. When we remind ourselves of the respect and reverence we owe the Eucharist, we increase the likelihood that we will do what is right and good for others.

- *What steps can I take to remind myself throughout the day of the challenge to adore Christ present in myself and others?*

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**“If through Holy Communion, you become gentle (since that is the virtue proper to this Sacrament, which is the embodiment of all gentleness and honey) you will be drawing from it the fruit which is proper to it, and thus you will be advancing. If on the contrary, you do not become more gentle or more humble, you deserve to be deprived of the bread for which you are not willing to work.”**

Authentic adoration must lead to action. Recall Jesus' own words:  
"It is mercy (generosity) I desire, not sacrifice."

- *How do I – as an individual – adore God in spirit and in truth through my service to others?*
- *How do we – as a parish community of faith – adore God in spirit and in truth by service to the Church and the community at large?*

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**"Our Savior has instituted the most august sacrament of the Eucharist, which contains His Flesh and His Blood in their reality, to the end that he who eats of it shall live forever. Therefore, whoever eats this food with devotion so effectively confirms the health of the soul that it is almost impossible for that person to be poisoned with any kind of evil affection. We cannot be nourished with this flesh of life and at the same time live with affection for death. Thus, just as people living in the earthly paradise might have avoided corporal death by the power of that living fruit which God had planted therein, so, too, they may also avoid spiritual death by virtue of this sacrament of life."**

Our reception and adoration of the Body of Blood of Christ in the Eucharist should permeate every sinew of our souls. It should not only assist us to live free from sin, but also free from affection for sin. This, in turn, should strengthen our efforts to both grow in our affection for what is good as well as to accomplish what is good.

- *In what ways do we need to purify our affections and desires?*
- *In what ways might I still find sin or evil attractive?*
- *How might these affections compromise my efforts to both feel good about what is good and to do what is good?*

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**“Without holy charity for our neighbors we are without virtue. Compare our Lord’s love for us with our love for neighbor. Not only did He die for us but He gave us the Blessed Sacrament. He accepted the kiss of Judas who betrayed him, and I am loathe to put myself out in even the slightest way or to have my wishes or preferences to take a back seat for the needs of my neighbor. Never shall we enter the heavenly Temple but by the sole door of charity, a door that opens on two sides: the love of God and the love of neighbor.”**

*How can we make a return to the Lord for all the good God has done for us, especially as we see, feel, touch and taste this divine goodness in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ? By becoming, by being what we eat and drink; by being Eucharist – by being thanksgiving - in the loves of one another.*

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**“He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, lives continually in me, and I in him. These words were spoken by the One who is the blessed fruit of Mary’s womb. If we are not used to eating this fruit, let us heed our Lord’s warning: You can have no life in yourselves unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood. Death came to our first parents because they ate that which was forbidden; by contrast, death will come to us if we fail to eat what is commanded.”**

*Do you want to live life in a fruitful way? Want to be fruitful in doing good in the lives of others? Continue to avail yourself of the fruit that is the source of all fruitfulness: the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.*

**“Two kinds of persons ought to communicate often: the perfect, because being well disposed they would be mistaken to cease approaching the source and font of perfection, and the imperfect, that they might be able to justify work for perfection; the strong, lest they become feeble, and the feeble, in order that they might become strong; the healthy, in order that they might not become sick, and the sick, that they might become healthy, and that you yourself being imperfect, feeble and sick you need to unite yourself often with Him, who is your perfection, your strength and your physician.”**

In some ways, each of us is strong. In other ways, each of us is feeble. In still another way, each of us is both strong and feeble. How delightful that Eucharist is made offered for us for such a variety of reasons and in such a variety of ways.

Each of us is – all of us are– invited to the banquet of life which is the Eucharist which permeates everything that is. May our Forty Hours of Devotion help us to live a life of devotion: to diligently, frequently and readily worship and adore Christ in the Eucharist by honoring the presence of that same Christ in ourselves and in one another.

Let us pray.

Creating, redeeming and inspiring God, we adore and we bless you. Help us to adore and bless you in our relationships with each other. By our fruits may your divine fruit – the gifts of life and love – be proclaimed and praised!

Now...and forever.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord.