

January 23, 2022

Dear Friends,

This week we begin our annual Forty Hours Devotion. We are still in Covid-19 mode and so we will be providing a scaled down version of Forty Hours. The focus will be personal devotion rather than communal hearing of the preached word. Come out during the day and spend some time in prayer before Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament. Instead of beginning on Sunday after the last Mass and flowing through Monday and Tuesday we are making a change this year.

We will be having three full days of adoration time but on Wednesday the 26th, Thursday the 27th and Friday the 28th. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will begin each morning at 9AM and will continue until 7PM. At that time, we will celebrate Evening Prayer, have a short homily and conclude with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Each year in this week the Church celebrates what is known as the Church Unity Octave—eight days when the focus of our prayer is on unity. This is especially true within the Catholic believing community (and I believe we are all aware that this is an aspect of our faith lives that could actually be improved with some extra prayer and a mini-overhaul by Our Lord.

But the Church Unity Octave is also intended to pray for the restoration of unity in the Church (something which Jesus himself prayed for at the Last Supper— “Father that they all may be one.”) and a healing of the breaches that have sundered the Catholic Church in her history. In 1054, there was a terrible split within the Catholic Church. There was a strong cultural dimension to this split--between Rome and Constantinople. There was Church structure and power in both of these major metropolitan and power centers. One Latin speaking and one Greek speaking. There had been a number of issues that created tensions between East and West over the centuries. There were ancient centers of Christianity whose leaders were known as Patriarchs—Rome, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople. Finally, in 1054 the delegation from the Pope came to Constantinople in an effort to heal the divisions. Instead the divisions sharpened and the Patriarch of Constantinople was excommunicated by the Cardinal heading the delegation from the Pope. That Patriarch in turn excommunicated the Pope. That was about a thousand years ago. Those claiming an adherence to the fundamental truthful teaching of the Church called themselves Orthodox Christians. That Split spread to every country. Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics; Russian Orthodox and Russian Catholics. And so forth. The split still exists although many of the recent popes have tried to reconnect with many of the various Patriarchs.

The next of the great divisions occurred in Europe in the sixteenth century. There was corruption and power struggles going on in the political world and within the Church too. There were Reformers who wanted to restore the Church to her original innocence. But divisions hardened and became very political—much like today. And so there were Lutheran Christians and Catholic Christians. There were Calvinists and followers of Zwingli, there was the declaration by King Henry VIII proclaiming himself as the head of the Church in England. This was the Protestant Revolution. This split still exist five hundred years later although there have been efforts in the past fifty years to mend fences and establish real ecumenical dialogue.

I trust you see the need for a healing in those who believe in Jesus Christ. Please make this one of your intentions when you come out for devotion this week.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry