

14th Sunday (B)

5th July 2015

'Quarant' Ore'

Ezek 2: *they shall know there is a prophet among them.*

Ps 122: *like the eyes of slaves on the hand of their lords ...*

2Cor 12: *'My grace is enough for you: my power is at its best in weakness.'*

Mk 6:1-6: *they would not accept Him.*

Our Forty Hours' Adoration this weekend is a beautiful practice of prayer that once a year we keep, along with many parishes. Traditionally, '40 Hours' would go right through the night too, but here I find it better to have the Adoration for three long day-time periods. I thank those of you who have already committed to coming for an extra while to pray: there are many graces which come from adoring Jesus, present in the Blessed Sacrament. And it's a true sign of a praying parish when Adoration is well attended. There remain a number of hours, still, of the Forty Hours, and I do hope that you will make use of them. Benediction follows at the end of (each) day, at 8.45pm, with Night Prayer.

The reason I time the Forty Hours at this point in the year is so it can coincide with the follow-on from First Holy Communion. After the 11.15am Mass we will have the Eucharistic Procession, along with all the First Holy

Communion children. It's a lovely expression of their new relationship with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament that they take part in the parish's Procession and Benediction at the garden grotto. Our Lord has left us this memorial of His Passion, Death and Resurrection in the Eucharist ... It's so important for us, as Catholics, to appreciate what a gift we have in this Sacrament: though many of us may have started to receive Our Lord in Holy Communion many years ago, we should not lose sight of the sacredness of what we are doing. The Eucharist *is* our beloved Lord Jesus, Son of God, and we should desire with all our hearts to be with Him, often. To adore Jesus on the altar is a key part of this attitude of thanksgiving and devotion to the one and only Saviour.

I have been trying to find out a bit about the history of the 'Forty Hours' Adoration, and whilst its origins are not entirely clear, it certainly seems to have been a practice that was promoted a lot by St Philip Neri, in Rome, in the late 1500s. In fact, in Rome at that time, they tried to have 'Forty Hours' in sequence across the churches so that at all

times, somewhere in the diocese, there was Adoration going on: a constant ‘sacrifice of praise’ rising up as prayer. Such a picture is a profound one: that we offer, from earth to heaven, a perpetual devotion to God from man. I do urge, you, then, even outside this weekend of ‘Forty Hours’ to make use of the fact that our church is open every single day of the year, and for most of the day. Don’t walk past the church door without popping in for a prayer; don’t park your car in the car park for the shops without making a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; and if you are passing with your children, show them also that this practice of coming into church — ‘out of hours,’ so to speak — is always a holy thing to do. None of us could ever say that we pray enough ... and the discipline of popping in to church as we pass is a very wholesome way of giving the Lord that little bit extra, which He deserves.

We heard in the Gospel that Our Lord returned to His home town, Nazareth, and He was not really accepted. The very place that He would have hoped to have been at home, turned out to be a place that turned against Him. We

should learn from this, and always be ready to make for Jesus a home in our hearts. When Jesus comes to us, in the humble forms of the Mass, do we welcome Him delightfully and with open hearts? Do we seek His company and His grace, often, and worthily? ... or do we sometimes turn against Him, missing Sunday Mass with no compunction, and no repentance? In many ways, ‘Forty Hours’ is the antidote to such neglect of Jesus. We can give that simple, humble, gift of our time to Jesus, looking for no reward other than the sheer delight of being with the Most Holy Son of God. Let’s examine our lives with regard to our prayer, our welcome to Jesus, and make sure that we are not amongst those who — as Catholics — should be the greatest of those who love Him and yet do not.