

New Brighton, Sunday 11th February 2024

Quinquagesima

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

On Wednesday, we will be starting our penitential journey of forty days towards Easter. As a preparation for that, the Church, and we will offer you this opportunity here at the Dome, invites all her children to come and adore the Blessed Sacrament during the three days before Ash Wednesday. It is called the 40 hours. 40 hours preparation for 40 days of penance.

40 hours to spend with the Lord, to watch with him a little while. 40 hours to live with the word of Jesus in the garden of olive: “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak¹.”

To support our prayer, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in churches for a longer time than usual. The Sacrament of the presence of the Lord is left visible in the monstrance, not veiled anymore behind the door of the tabernacle, but still veiled under the sacred species of the bread.

This Blessed Sacrament is presented to our public adoration, to begin our Lenten penances with the unique source of the grace of the Lord, his Divine Charity. Charity is one of the three theological virtues. It is living in us since our Baptism. And its constant practice is making us each time a little bit nearer to the Lord.

To remind us about this, the Church offered us this morning the famous hymn to Charity, written by St Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians. The apostle of the Gentiles gives us a litany of all the wonders of Charity:

“Charity is patient, is kind; charity does not envy, is not pretentious, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, is not self-seeking, is not provoked; thinks no evil, does not rejoice over wickedness, but rejoices with the truth; bears with all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Charity never fails².”

We will find all these wonders in Jesus Christ, present in the Blessed Sacrament with his Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

“This virtue, which comprises the love both of God and of our neighbour, is the light of our souls. Without charity we are in darkness, and all our works are profitless. The very power of working miracles cannot give hope of salvation, unless he who does them have charity. Unless we are in charity, the most heroic acts of other virtues are but one snare more for our souls. Let us beseech our Lord to give us this light³.”

¹ Mt, XXVI, 41.

² I Cor., XII, 4-8

³ Dom Guéranger, *Liturgical Year*, Quinquagesima Sunday.

We may sometimes be wondering what to do and say to the Lord, while we are here in front of Him, exposed in the Church. St Paul reminds us today what we could admire in Him, and beg Him to pour in our weak souls.

Charity is this move which makes us come back to Our Lord, as He is attracting us with His Sacred Heart. Nourished with the Truth that we know by Faith, our soul desire to possess Him, and to never be separated from Him.

“When we have a living faith, this reverence is so deep that it makes us fall at the feet of this God-Man to adore Him. *Tu es Christus, Filius Dei vivi*⁴: “Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God”; *et proci dens adoravit eum*⁵.

Adoration is the first impulse of the soul drawn to Christ by faith: Love is the second⁶.”

Jesus desires more than anything that we come to Him and spend some time with Him. As a priest use to tell us when I was a teenager: you should learn how to waste some time with Him. From all the time we are given on Earth to so many things, God is asking us, not the main part, although He could, but a little part. Our worldly and proud mind will always find excuses to not give Him this time He has the divine right to claim. But instead of claiming it, he kindly invites us to come and discover in silence the treasures of His immense love. How could we resist such sweet and pressing invitation? This bond that God would like to maintain with us will fill us with joy, and this joy shall not be taken of us.

“Joy is the sentiment that is born in a soul, conscious of the good it possesses. The good of our intelligence is truth; the more this truth is abundant and luminous, the deeper is our inward joy⁷.”

Come and adore the Lord. Come and prepare yourselves to advance towards Easter, to merit the place already prepared for you in Heaven.

“O Christ Jesus, our God and our Redeemer, Revelation of the Father, our Elder Brother and our Friend, grant that we may know You! Purify the eyes of our heart so that we may contemplate You with joy; silence the noise of creatures that we may follow You unimpeded. Reveal Yourself to our soul as You did to the disciples of Emmaus, while expounding to them the sacred pages which spoke of Your mysteries, and we shall feel “our hearts burn within us⁸” with the longing to love and attach ourselves to You⁹!”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

⁴ Mt, XVI, 16.

⁵ Jn., IX, 38.

⁶ Dom Marmion, *Christ in His Mysteries*, II, 3.

⁷ Dom Marmion, *Christ in His Mysteries*, I, 3.

⁸ Lk., XXIV, 32.

⁹ Dom Marmion, *Christ in His Mysteries*, I, 3.