

Forty Hours Devotion

Second Evening

We begin tonight by revisiting the observation of St. Francis de Sales with which we concluded last night.

“Experience has made me realize in my twenty-five years of saving souls the all-powerful virtue of this Divine Sacrament...

- *to strengthen hearts in good;*
- *to preserve hearts from evil;*
- *to console and encourage hearts with divine grace;*
- *and, in a word, to make hearts God-like in this world if it be frequented with faith, purity and devotion.”*
- **Faith** – “As long as the spirit of faith live in us we are very well off. You see, Our Lord will give us his peace when we resolve ourselves to live humbly and gently in a state of war. Courage, keep your heart firm. Our Lord will help us and we shall belong to him and love him well.”
- **Purity** – “To do little actions with great purity of intention and a strong will to please God is to do them excellently, and then they greatly sanctify us.”
- **Devotion** – “Living devotion is nothing other than the love of God, and hence it is nothing else than the love of God. Inasmuch as divine love adorns the soul, it is called grace. Inasmuch as it gives us strength to do good, it is called charity. When it not only helps us to do good but to do it diligently, frequently and readily, it is called devotion.”

With St. Francis as our companion and guide, together we will consider briefly what this Forty Hours Devotion tells us about what it means to be divine in an earthly manner. Together, we will consider how this Forty Hours Devotion challenges us to be human in a heavenly way.

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“To what extent did the greatness of God lower itself for each of us, and to what extent does God wish to exalt us: to unite us so perfectly with himself so as to make us one with him. Our Lord did this to teach us that we are all loved with the same love by which God embraces us all in this Most Holy Sacrament, so God wishes us all to love one another with that same love...”

God stoops down only to raise up. This is the essence of love: God IS love.

- *Do we really believe that God really loves us?*
- *Do we really love and respect ourselves?*
- *Do we really love and respect one another?*

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“O God, what an example of surpassing union is this! God was united to our human nature by grace, like a vine to an elm, to enable it in some way to participate in his fruits. But when God saw this union undone by Adam’s sin, God made a closer and more pressing union in the Incarnation and by it human nature remains forever joined in a personal unity with the divine. To the end that not only human nature but each and every person might be intimately united with God’s goodness, God instituted the sacrament of the holy Eucharist.”

To be divine is to be all about union: it is about living for and with others. It is about striving for intimacy. It is about being fully present.

- *How much union do we experience within the complexities of our own minds and hearts?*
- *How well do we keep it together in the various demands, responsibilities and challenges of every day life?*
- *How do we pursue and promote union and unity with others?*
- *How faithful are we in our attempts to be truly and really present to others?*

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“In his first miracle Jesus changed water into wine; and in the last one which he performed before his death he instituted the Eucharist, the Sacrament of his true presence. We believe this truth and this mystery which, along with the Incarnation, is the greatest and most hidden of all...”

Water becomes wine. Bread becomes Christ's Body; wine becomes Christ's Blood. To be divine is to use ordinary, everyday things to reveal the deepest of mysteries: God's love for, in and with us.

- *Do we recognize the seeds of divinity planted in our humanity and the humanity of others?*
- *Do we seize ordinary, everyday and down-to-earth ways to express and share everlasting things and values with others?*

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“Such is infinite happiness (that is, the Beatific Vision) and it has been promised to us, but we have a pledge of this promise in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, the perpetual feast of divine grace...”

To be divine means to keep promises. God never reneges on a promise. God is all about fidelity.

- *How do we pledge to show our confidence in God and our gratitude to God through the pledges we make for ourselves?*
- *How do we pledge to show our confidence in God and our gratitude to God through the pledges we make to each other?*
- *How faithful are we in following through on our promises to ourselves and to others?*

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“The Eucharist is the real bread from heaven, by which we spiritually digest Jesus Christ. As those who have a good bodily digestion experience a strengthening all through their body, similarly, those who enjoy a good spiritual digestion, feel Jesus Christ, who is their food, spreading and penetrating to all parts of the body and soul. They have Jesus Christ in their brain, their heart, their breast, their eyes, tongue ears and feet.”

The divine cannot be pigeon-holed. The divine cannot be corralled. The divine cannot be compartmentalized. God wants to permeate everything and everyone that is.

- *Are we a convincing sign of the One whose Body and Blood we both consume and adore?*
- *Do we allow the one we consume and adore to transform our thoughts, feelings, attitudes and actions?*

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“In imitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary great contentment may be attained by those who have received Holy Communion and with certain faith feel that which “neither flesh nor blood” but the heavenly Father has revealed to them. They know that their Savior in body and soul is present with a most real presence in their body and their and their soul in this most adorable sacrament...”

The divine expresses itself in bread and wine, in body and blood. But the divine goes much deeper than mere external appearances. There’s much more to God than meets the eye.

- *How do we look at ourselves and upon one another?*
- *Do we judge by mere appearances?*
- *Does our love for ourselves and one another go beyond the surface?*

Let us pray...

Loving God, strengthen us in our resolve to do good. Help us in our efforts to turn away from evil. Console us, encourage us. Help us to live a God-like life in a down-to-earth way.

Above all, deepen our awareness and acceptance of your love for us. Challenge and support us in our efforts to love our neighbor as ourselves...we ask this through Christ Our Lord.