

First U.S. Devotion at St. Philip Neri Church

St. John Neumann introduced the practice of the Forty Hours Devotion at the Fourth Diocesan Synod, April 20-21, 1853. Accompanied by the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the first diocesan program of the Forty Hours Devotion in the United States was opened at the **Church of St. Philip Neri** on the Festival of Corpus Christi, May 26, 1853, in honor of our patron, who initiated the devotion in Rome. At that time, Father Nicholas Cantwell was pastor of our church. St. John himself inaugurated and directed the solemnity at the Church of St. Philip Neri, lending his own monstrance and vestments. He spent most of the three days at our church in prayer.

St. John then introduced the devotion to all parishes in the Philadelphia diocese and obtained special indulgences for the faithful attending them. The Forty Hours Devotion was so successful that other dioceses nationwide adopted it. At the Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866, the Forty Hours Devotion was approved for all dioceses of the United States.



SCHEDULE OF OBSERVANCES

Sunday, May 21 Forty Hours begins

- 11 a.m.** **Mass**
Father Vincent F. Welsh
- after mass –
7 p.m.** **Exposition of the
Blessed Sacrament**
- 7 p.m.** **Eucharistic Service and
Benediction**
Father Vincent F. Welsh, Presider

Monday, May 22

- 7:30 a.m.** **Mass**
Father Vincent F. Welsh
- after mass –
7 p.m.** **Exposition of the
Blessed Sacrament**
- 7 p.m.** **Eucharistic Service and
Benediction**
Father Vincent F. Welsh, Presider

Tuesday, May 23 Forty Hours Closes

- 7:30 a.m.** **Mass**
Father Vincent F. Welsh
- after mass –
7 p.m.** **Exposition of the
Blessed Sacrament**
- 7 p.m.** **Eucharistic Service and
Benediction**
- Outdoor Candlelight Procession**

Forty Hours Devotion 2006 Sunday, May 21 – Tuesday, May 23



**The Church of St. Philip Neri
218 Queen Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19147**

About the Devotion

The Eucharistic Sacrifice — the Mass — is the source and culmination of Christian life. Both private and public devotion to the Eucharist, including devotions outside Mass, are encouraged and welcome parts of that devotion.

The exposition and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is a public Eucharistic devotion, an opportunity for our community to contemplate and adore the mystery of Christ's marvelous presence in the sacrament. During the time when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar in the monstrance, readings of the word of God, hymns, prayers and a period of silent prayer are offered. The devotion usually concludes with a blessing.

The Exposition of the Holy Eucharist invites the faithful to spiritual communion with Christ, culminating in sacramental communion. Our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament outside Mass may be seen as an unfolding and deepening of what we have received at Mass, and as a preparation for our next Mass and Holy Communion.

All churches where the Eucharist is reserved in a tabernacle are encouraged to observe an annual, extended time of solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, such as the Forty Hours Devotion. The period of 40 hours honors the length of time that the Body of Christ is considered to have remained in the tomb. This length of time for the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament need not be continuous; the Eucharist may be placed in the tabernacle, especially overnight.

Origins of the Devotion

The practice of exposing the Blessed Sacrament with solemnity for 40 hours was celebrated in Milan as early as 1527. Brother Buono of Cremona, known as the Hermit, is believed by some to have founded the *Quarant' Ore* at Cremona in 1529. The Milanese chronicler Burigozzo in 1537 clearly describes the custom of exposing the Blessed Sacrament in one church after another as a novelty that began in Milan in May 1537. Less than two years later, **Pope Paul III** issued a formal reply to a petition soliciting indulgences for the practice.

By 1550, our church's patron **St. Philip Neri** (1515-1595) had initiated the Forty Hours Devotion in Rome. His friend St. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) also instituted the Forty Hours Devotion, especially for the reparation of sin. By November 1592, **Pope Clement VIII** (1536-1605) established the practice and its regulation.

Pope Clement XII detailed the proper observance of the Forty Hours Devotion in the 1731 *Instructio Clementina*. Current liturgical laws governing the Exposition of the Holy Eucharist may be found in *De Sacra Communionem et de Cultu Mysterii Eucharistici Extra Missam*. The present ritual in the United States for the exposition is defined in the 1993 *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*.

St. John Neumann

St. John Neumann (1811-60), who was appointed the fourth bishop of Philadelphia on March 28, 1852, was a strong promoter of the Forty Hours Devotion. While the practice had already existed in individual churches throughout Philadelphia (as well as in other places in the country), no organized, cohesive diocesan schedule for it had ever before been attempted.

At this time, a strong anti-Catholic sentiment plagued Philadelphia. During the American Nativist riots of 1844, the Churches of St. Augustine and St. Michael were burned. The Church of St. Philip Neri was also besieged but was saved by the intervention of government troops. Some priests, therefore, advised St. John that the introduction of the Forty Hours Devotion might inflame hostility against Catholics and expose the Blessed Sacrament to desecration.

St. John decided to go forward after a telling incident. One night, as he was working very late and fell asleep at his desk, a candle burned down and charred some papers, but they were still readable. When St. John awoke, he knelt to give thanks to God for His protection that a fire had not ignited, and then heard His voice:

“As the flames are burning here without consuming or injuring the writing, so shall I pour out my grace in the Blessed Sacrament without prejudice to My honor. Fear no profanation, therefore; hesitate no longer to carry out your design for my glory.”



IMAGES (from left)
Pope Paul III
St. Philip Neri
Pope Clement VIII
Pope Clement XII
St. John Neumann