

From the PA's Desk

Adoration & Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament:

Last week I attended a workshop renewing the policies and procedures of Eucharistic Adoration in the Diocese of Saginaw. Since we at St. Vincent de Paul have been offering Adoration and Exposition once a month on the first Wednesday of every month for six hours, I was eager to be taught if in fact we were in compliance with the Diocesan Guidelines. I learned that we were not. From a pastoral and practical perspective I have been concerned with how we were doing Adoration and Exposition since I arrived in July. The first thing I want to say is that anyone can do Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament whenever they are in church in front of the Tabernacle. For the past few months we have been leaving the church center doors open during the day, from approximately 8 AM until 4 PM. Adoration is done anytime someone is praying in front of the Tabernacle, where Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. Exposition is that part of Adoration where Christ in the Host is placed in the Monstrance for Benediction.

- 1:** The Diocesan Guidelines start that Exposition and Benediction are best done when it follows what has been done after the Eucharist has been celebrated within the Mass. In the Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass), Christ comes to meet his Church in the Eucharist, and Exposition and Benediction best flow from the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass.
- 2:** The ordinary ministers of Exposition and Benediction are either the ordained priest or deacon. Since I am a layperson, I would need to get special permission from the diocese, and based on the number of people who have been attending Exposition and Benediction; this is not something I think should be perused.
- 3:** For there to be extended Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on the Altar, **there always needs to be at least two people present in church at all times.** We have always been sure at least one person is always present in church at a time, but rarely is there two people at a time. This is probably the biggest reason we need to take a break from regular Exposition and Adoration, along with my last point below.
- 4:** I was recently told by the person responsible for organizing and scheduling our monthly Exposition and Benediction service: **"I just don't know how to get numbers up. When I call to invite people to take up their hour, I get an ear full of excuses.** Don't know how long I have been doing this. Probably over 20 years. Adoration for me is a quiet time with the Lord; he blesses me abundantly. That is what keeps me going. So you won't be stepping on my toes if you decide we should stop for a while and regroup or do something different. I wish I could say we have 20 people, but we don't, it's so sad."

In response I reminded her that we can do Adoration anytime we are in front of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle, and since our church is left open during the day, everyone can stop in and spend time with the Lord.

I also responded by saying: "parish programs or prayer opportunities all have their times of waxing and waning, and just because something has been done for many years doesn't mean it's meant to be permanent. Parishes change over time, just as we all do. **I think that if you have to beg people**

to find time, then that is an indication that it's time to take a break. The last thing I would ever want to do is guilt people into spending time with the Lord."

For these various reasons, we will stop our once a month Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, but I encourage everyone to find a time each week to spend some quiet time in Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle. It is one of my New Year's resolutions, so maybe I'll find you in prayer there.

Behind the partition where the Tabernacle is situated, there are two chairs with kneelers in front of them. That is a perfect place to adore and spend time with Jesus.

Liturgical Year A:

A few weeks ago I enjoyed reading Fr. Loren's bulletin article from Sacred Heart, and I wanted to share with you his thoughts on this year's A Cycle of readings:

"Liturgical Year A, which we will be reading this year, spends a great deal of time on Jesus' teachings as articulated by Matthew. Twenty-one of the possible thirty-four Sundays in Ordinary Time, along with the season of Advent, contain teaching material stressing Jesus' role as the authoritative and reliable teacher. What do we learn from the teachings and deeds of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel? As disciples, we are to be true to the fullness and authenticity of our tradition, and not narrow it down or view it with restrictive lenses. In our ministry to all God's people, we are to be ready to bring forth both the best of the old and openness to the new, aware of the challenges and risks while always attuned to God's presence and guidance. God's love is for all, the just and unjust, so let's not restrict God with our closed attitudes and perceptions. Matthew's Gospel states: "be children of your heavenly Father, for He makes His sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust" (Matthew 5:45-46). Jesus was misunderstood and rejected even by those closest to Him. Such also will be the fate of any disciple who follows Jesus. The kingdom of heaven that Jesus came to activate challenges the status quo, our ordinary ways of thinking and acting. It calls for aligning ourselves with God's new ways of thinking and relating. This newness will not be readily accepted and will cause much tension and dissension even among family and friends. Disciples are to be ready and aware of this reality and be ready for it. In light of this reality, Matthew emphasizes the need for forgiveness of those who offend or cause harm to anyone who takes seriously and follows through on Jesus' words and actions. Matthew's Jesus challenges His disciples to be ever ready to forgive those who maltreat them, in the same manner that the Lord has forgiven. In response to Peter's query regarding the frequency of forgiveness, Jesus responds that we are to forgive "not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22). The demands of discipleship run through the entire Gospel. It's important to read Matthew chapters 5-7 which deal with the sermon on the Mount, along with chapter 13 which describes the attributes of the kingdom of heaven, and chapter 18 which focuses on the qualities of the gathered community of Jesus' followers. Key to Matthew is trust in God and in the community of the Church, the assembly of all of Jesus' disciples and not just a select few. Together in Jesus, disciples continue their striving to be true to the mission of God as expressed and shown by Jesus. Matthew, above all, emphasizes that the depth of our relationship with God will be measured by the way we treat one another, most especially the least of our brothers and sisters. In the final judgment scene Jesus says: "whatsoever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). These are the demands of being disciples of Jesus as found in Matthew's Gospel. As the year progresses, we will learn more about how we are to be a faithful disciple of Jesus."