

Overview of the Forty Hours Devotion as part of the Parish Year of the Eucharistic Revival in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

➤ What is the Forty Hours Devotion?

The practice of forty hours of continuous prayer before the Blessed Sacrament originated several centuries ago, and it was introduced in the United States by St. John Neumann, the fourth bishop of Philadelphia. While the Church's current liturgical books do not specifically reference "Forty Hours," it is effectively what is envisioned in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, no. 86:

"In churches where the Eucharist is regularly reserved it is recommended that solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for an extended period of time should take place once a year, even though this period is not strictly continuous. In this way the local community may reflect more profoundly upon this mystery and adore Christ in the Sacrament."

The devotion therefore need not last exactly forty hours, so long as it is spread over multiple days with opportunities for both silent reflection and communal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

➤ How should this be implemented in Fort Wayne-South Bend?

The Parish Year of the Eucharistic Revival begins with the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) on June 11, 2023, and ends with Corpus Christi 2024.

The Forty Hours Devotion should take place in the main parish church. It is envisioned as beginning at the end of the final parish Mass on Sunday morning, and it would extend until a closing liturgy on Tuesday evening. (By now, most or all parishes ought to have scheduled the exact dates of their Forty Hours Devotion in consultation with other parishes in the vicariate.)

The schedule is akin to a parish mission format. In this case, Eucharistic preaching ought to be a particular emphasis each evening. And communal liturgies can be scheduled every evening as well – especially for the closing of the Forty Hours (see more on communal liturgy options below).

At other times during the ongoing solemn exposition, there should of course be lengthy stretches of silent adoration, along with interludes of prayer and music as deemed appropriate.

During solemn exposition in a monstrance, four to six candles should be lit, and incense used (*Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, no. 85).

As always, at least two adorers must be scheduled at all times during Eucharistic exposition. Exposition may continue overnight in the parish so long as it is practical and two adorers remain present. Otherwise, it is fine to repose the Blessed Sacrament overnight and resume in the morning. (If feasible and advisable for security purposes, the Forty Hours can also be moved to a smaller chapel overnight in order to continue the devotion without interruption.)

Benediction during Forty Hours may occur either **a.)** at the conclusion of one of the official communal liturgies listed below, as prescribed in the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, or **b.)** when an especially lengthy period of reposition (such as overnight) is about to commence, in which case it is appropriate to offer benediction before reposition. Benediction should not occur outside these contexts, even if a sizable number of adorers happen to be gathered.

Exposition cannot take place concurrently with the celebration of Mass in the church. The suspension of exposition for the celebration of Mass during Forty Hours should be done with a simple reposition (without benediction). At the conclusion of Mass, exposition is resumed – ideally with a newly consecrated host from that Mass. (See *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, no. 117).

➤ **Ritual Book for Solemn Exposition**

The ritual book, *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, is a very helpful resource for implementing Forty Hours, as it includes the following:

- Instructions for starting the period of solemn exposition with an opening Mass
- Liturgy of the Hours for use during the period of exposition, specifically:
 - Evening Prayer I, Morning Prayer, and Evening Prayer II for Corpus Christi
- Two Eucharistic prayer services (Liturgies of the Word)
- Instructions for pausing and restarting solemn exposition around the celebration of Mass during the Forty Hours
- Instructions for concluding the entire period of solemn exposition, whether with the celebration of Mass or outside of Mass
- Numerous scripture reading suggestions, litanies, prayers, and music

The *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* comes in two versions, both published by Liturgical Press:

- [Hardcover Presider's Edition](#): \$79.95
- [Paperback People's Edition](#): \$16.95

Either edition can be ordered for a **20% discount through Good Shepherd Books & Gifts** (260-399-1442). The paperback has fairly small type, but it includes the same texts as the presider's edition and so would be perfectly adequate for reference purposes.

Unfortunately, this book is a USCCB compilation that only exists in English. Although there is no Spanish equivalent, the Evening Prayers of course could be drawn from the Spanish breviary.

➤ **Communal Celebrations during Solemn Exposition**

Options for liturgical celebrations with the gathered parish community during Forty Hours include the Liturgy of the Hours or the Liturgy of the Word prayer services provided in the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*.

As noted above, Masses may be celebrated during Forty Hours; but that may be considered less ideal for special evening gatherings because the Blessed Sacrament cannot remain exposed during Mass, whereas exposition can continue during Evening Prayer and Eucharistic prayer services.

Liturgy of the Hours:

Bishop Rhoades especially recommends celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours communally during the Forty Hours. The three sets of hours provided in the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* are those assigned for Corpus Christi, which can be employed as votive offices.

Please note that such votive offices can be used any day “except on solemnities, the Sundays of the seasons of Advent, Lent, and Easter, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, the octave of Easter, and 2 November” (*General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, no. 245).

As a part of the Church’s official liturgy concerned with the sanctification of time and a meditative contemplation of scripture, the Liturgy of the Hours is well worth introducing to the public life of the parish.

Preaching:

Eucharistic preaching is an important element of the diocesan Forty Hours initiative. Priests, as well as deacons with preaching faculties, can be invited to preach during Forty Hours. There are also designated National Eucharistic Revival preachers who can be scheduled through the diocese (eucharistic.revivalfwsb@diocesefwsb.org). It is highly encouraged to have a preacher each evening.

The ideal preaching context would be a homily within either Liturgy of the Hours, one of the official Eucharistic prayer services, or Mass. However, preaching is also permissible while the Blessed Sacrament is simply exposed during Forty Hours.

Please also keep in mind that the use of screens or projectors are not permitted in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (see our diocesan [Norms on the Use of Digital Screens and Projection Devices in Churches](#), no. 1). Any presentations utilizing multimedia visual elements would have to take place outside the context of solemn exposition.

Closing Liturgy:

The final evening and closing of the Forty Hours Devotion in the parish may take the form of:

1. One of the Evening Prayers of Corpus Christi
2. The Closing Celebration Outside Mass (also a Liturgy of the Word prayer service) provided in the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*
3. A closing Mass – ideally the Votive Mass of the Holy Eucharist (if a votive Mass is permitted on that day)

Please invite all the priests in the vicariate (or in the geographical area) to each parish's closing liturgy. And as Bishop Rhoades has noted, he will also be trying to preside at a number of these closing liturgies.

A particularly beautiful approach would be to celebrate solemn (sung) Evening Prayer. A potential printable template for Evening Prayer II of Corpus Christi, complete with all the texts and with simple psalm tones, can be made available upon request, courtesy of the [Saint Hildegard Project](#).

➤ **Other Notes and Ideas**

- Although not included in the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist* as part of benediction, it is sensible to include the customary “You have given them bread from heaven” / “Having all sweetness within it,” as well as the Divine Praises.
- In addition to the Litany of the Most Holy Eucharist, which is found in the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, it would also be fitting to employ the [Litany of the Sacred Heart](#) and the [Litany of the Most Precious Blood](#) during solemn exposition.
- Gatherings with children (such as the parish school) could be particularly fruitful elements of the Forty Hours. A number of parishes have developed successful templates for Children's Adoration, which could be very useful in this context.
- Holding a reception after the closing celebration of the Forty Hours (or even after each evening, if possible) could be a good incentive to attract attendees from the parish.
- Along the same lines, offering child care during the evening gatherings might make attending more practical for some families (although children of all ages are welcome at the Forty Hours itself, of course!).
- Consider making parts of the Forty Hours intentionally low on technology, especially when it comes to artificial lighting. A candlelit church after dusk makes for an intimately prayerful ambience that may well attract additional individuals and families. Just also be certain to provide for the safety and maneuverability of worshipers who cannot see as well in the dark.