

## FORTY HOURS' DEVOTION.

Sermon by His Grace the Archbishop.

The following instructive sermon was preached by his Grace Archbishop Walsh at the opening of the "Forty Hours' Devotion" in St. Michael's Cathedral, a full report of which we promised in this issue. His Grace said:

I will read for you the following verses from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, in connection with the Forty Hours' devotion which is to begin immediately at the end of Mass. "This is the bread which cometh down from Heaven: that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living bread, which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves saying how can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then, Jesus said to them: 'amen, amen, I say unto you: except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath everlasting life: and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed: he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so that he that eateth me the same also shall live by me. This is the bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live forever.'"

As has been announced to you already the Forty Hours' devotion will begin to-day in this Cathedral and for this parish. This devotion consists in the solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament for forty hours for the adoration of our people together with certain masses and prayers prescribed for the occasion by the Holy Liturgy. A seven years indulgence may be gained by the faithful in making a visit once a day to the Church during the devotion, and a plenary indulgence may be gained by the faithful in visiting the Church each day during the devotion, in a prayerful manner, and by the proper reception of the sacraments of penance and the Blessed Eucharist. These days dearest brethren are intended by the Church to be days rich in blessings and graces for each individual and for the families of this parish. The Blessed Eucharist is the greatest treasure that even God could confer on man, the richest gift that Heaven could confer on earth—for it is Jesus himself personally present under Sacramental veils. St. John the Evangelist, speaking of the institution of this sacrament made use of these words: "When Jesus loved those who were in the world he loved them until the end," and the holy fathers say that the meaning of these words is this—that Jesus loved those who were in the world, not only to the end of this mortal life, but to the end and the limit of his omnipotence. That in instituting and giving to mankind this great sacrament of His love, He loved man unto the limits of His omnipotence, unto the boundaries of His boundless love. Though God is omnipotent, He could give His children nothing better than this—though He is infinitely good, He could give them nothing more precious than this—though He is infinitely wise, He could devise no means more powerful to enable man to attain to his immortal destiny, than by the means of the Blessed Eucharist. Many a gift has Jesus conferred upon the Church, His spouse, but this is the greatest gift of all. Many are the graces which Jesus has bestowed upon His people, but in this sacrament the hand of God is ever uplifted in blessings over them. The other sacraments are given to

prepare us for Heaven; in this sacrament heaven seems to have come down upon earth, because heaven contains nothing more precious than the sacred humanity united with the uncreated divinity of the Son of God in the Sacrament of the Altar. Yes, dearest brethren, what the sun is to the solar system, the Blessed Eucharist is to the Kingdom of God on earth. As all the satellites of the solar system revolve around the sun, borrow light and heat from it, so to the kingdom of God on earth, the Holy Catholic Church, the Blessed Eucharist is the centre around which all the great sacramental institutions revolve, and towards which they tend, because whilst the other sacraments have for their end, the uniting of us with God, the Blessed Eucharist is the perfection and the consummation of the union of the soul with God its Creator and Redeemer.

The Blessed Eucharist, dearest brethren, is the life of each individual, it is the life of the world, it is the life of the Church on earth. Each individual, each one of us, dearest brethren, is a compound being. Man consists of soul and body united in one person. The body being drawn from the earth must derive its sustenance and food from the earth, but it is not on bread alone that man liveth, the soul must have food, and as the soul was created immediately by God, so the soul must draw its sustenance from above, from heaven. But what food is rich enough for this immortal being that animates each of us? What food can adequately support the immortal soul made to the image of God, whose thoughts range through infinite space, whose aspirations reach unto heaven and to God? What food is sufficient for this magnificent and thus sublime creation and image of God? I answer, God Himself. God is the food of the soul—God under sacramental veils here below—God in His unclouded glory in the heavens above. Nothing created can satisfy the hunger of the soul; no created good can satisfy the cravings of the heart; no created good can satisfy the love of the soul for what is beautiful, and for what is good, the soul can be satisfied only by the Supreme Truth, by the Supreme Good that is made for the life, for the love of the human heart, and the Supreme Good, the Supreme Truth is God. Yes, dearest Brethren, the meanest man that God ever created, the man whose soul is enslaved by passions and bound in the chains in the servitude of Satan, that man's soul still is yearning for what is good, for what is true, for what is beautiful. He may seek it amongst rubbish, he may seek it, as the prodigal son sought it, amid the husks of swine, but nevertheless he must seek what is good and what is beautiful and what is just because God made the human soul for Himself—hence the soul is satisfied with nothing but God. Just as the eye is made for the light, so the heart and soul of man are made for God, and hence the exclamation of the Royal Prophet, "As the stag panteth after the fountains of water so panteth my soul after Thee O God. When shall I come and appear before the face of my Lord." "What is there in heaven," says the same prophet, "what is there to desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart and the God that is my portion forever." These fervent expressions of the burning desire of the prophet to be united with God are but the expressions of the human heart and the human soul to be united to the sovereign truth, and the supreme good. How then is the soul to feed on God, how can the soul imprisoned within the walls of the body attempt to reach the God of Heaven, the God that is infinitely pure, and infinitely good? Our Lord Jesus Christ has solved that question by the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Hear what he says, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth

in Me and I in him:" so through the veils of the Blessed Sacrament, the soul breaks into the invisible world and joins his God. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life and I will raise him up on the last day." Here the soul feeds as it were on God under sacramental veils in the Sacrament of His love, and hereafter on God in His unclouded glory in His everlasting Kingdom. What a destiny! Oh what a sublime purpose God had in the work of our creation, and the Son of God in the scheme of our redemption, when not satisfied with dying on the cross, He would still dwell with His children here on earth, veiling not alone the splendor of His majesty, but the very dignity of His manhood, veiling and hiding them under the form of the Blessed Eucharist on the altars of the Catholic Church. If we but knew the gifts of God as our Lord said to the Samaritan woman "If thou didst know the gift of God and who it is that asketh thee to drink thou perhaps wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water." If we but knew the gifts of God that we hold in the Blessed Eucharist in the Catholic Church. Oh! would not our hearts burn with love! Jesus stays with us on the road of this world, he stays with us and speaks to us through the sacrament of love and should not our hearts burn with love of Him who has loved us unto the end, to the limits of His omnipotence to the boundaries of His love. Dearest Brethren, the remarkable words of the holy fathers, one would think exaggerated when they called the early Christians "Christ Bearers," carriers of Christ because they eat of the Blessed Eucharist; they also called the body of the communicant "concorporal" having one body with Jesus Christ. They might well say also that we have the same life as Jesus Christ because our Lord makes use of these extraordinary words: "As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father so he that eateth Me the same also shall live by Me." That is as, I the Eternal Son, as God, live by consubstantial unity with the Godhead of the Father, so he that eateth me shall live by consubstantial union with my Humanity. What is the meaning of this? Theology tells us that the eternal Son of God is generated from all eternity from the Father, that the life of the Father flows into the Son, so that in the same way as the Son of God derives His life from the Godhead, the Fountain of all life, so we who receive Him in the Holy Communion receive the life of Jesus into our souls, the supreme, the eternal life, the spiritual life, flowing from the Fountain of all Grace. We are assumed into the divine life of Jesus Christ by the proper reception of the Blessed Eucharist. It gives us eternal, immortal, imperishable life, this is the living Bread. If any man eat of this Bread, "says our Saviour," he shall live forever, he that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life and I will raise him up on the last day." Yes, dearest brethren, it is true that the bodies of worthy communicants will die like the bodies of sinners; that they will be buried in the solitary grave, that they will sleep away the Sabbath of the Tomb unheeded and long forgotten but on the day of the resurrection, the souls and the bodies vivified by the food of immortality will rise and shake off the dust and odor of the tomb, will rise in splendor and majesty and glory like the body of the risen Christ on the Resurrection morning. By the substance of Jesus communicated to us we become of His flesh and of His bone as the Apostle hath it, and have thereby in us the pledge of a resurrection in the substance of the body to eternal life. And yet Dearest Brethren we hold this treasure in

the Holy Church, and how many of us appreciate it as we ought? How many of us approach it as frequently as we ought? How many of us value this divine gift, as wayfaring men and women, who have any care of their immortal souls or any desire for the kingdom of God? Might it not be said of some of us what the Lord Jesus Christ said to the men and women, who listened to Him preaching His divine words, that saw the light of the divinity beaming out through His eyes, and who believed not, "Amen, amen, I say to you it will be better for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for you." Is it not so with many Catholics? I am afraid it is too true that on the Day of Judgment it will be worse for them than for the men and women who have not been blessed by the faith of Jesus Christ because they have sinned against the light, they have turned their backs on the Divine Treasure God has given them and they live as if they did not believe. The Blessed Eucharist is the life of the world. Bear well in mind, dearest brethren, that when God was angered and offended by the fall of our first parents, he cursed the very material creation. It was cursed in the fall of our first parents, and when God came in anger, when all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth and God came down in anger and saw the work of His creation, He grieved at the guilt of man; and repented that He had made man, and in His omnipotent justice He let loose the cataracts of heaven and broke up the waters of the great deep and in the flood of many waters, His anger rushed in desolation and ruin over the whole earth—there was no Saviour on earth to stay His anger or His outstretched arms. Again, He came down upon the earth to visit two guilty cities, and He spoke to Lot and told him that if he could find ten just men He would spare the cities. No ten just men were to be found, and so God rained down fire and brimstone on these guilty cities and burned them off the face of the earth, made their very name a by word and reproach. But again God was angry with His people becoming idolaters at the foot of Mt. Sinai and said He was determined to blot them off the face of the earth, but when Moses besought Him to save his brethren, and because Moses pleaded and called to the mind of God the memory of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God spared and pardoned His people because the patriarchs were types of Jesus Christ. And so the guilty earth was blessed by the presence of Jesus Christ; and He shed His blood to save it, and that blood ran up to the very gates of Paradise and redeemed the children of men, and saved the world from the wrath of God, saved millions and millions of the race from the wrath of God. Now, dearest brethren, in this 19th century the world is as guilty as ever, sin and unbelief abound, men reject Christianity, millions and millions of the human race reject Christianity. Yes, men and women raised in Christian households now reject Christianity as a worn-out superstition, and some Catholic men and women live as if they did not believe in the living truths of the Gospel, and in the living presence of Jesus Christ in the world. What is to prevent the wrath of God from punishing this guilty world? The Blessed Eucharist, because God the Father loves Jesus the Son of God, because He listens to the pleadings of the Precious Blood in the Catholic Tabernacle and spares the guilty world. So, my dear brethren, no wonder the Blessed Eucharist is the life of the world, as our Lord said, "The bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world." It is the life of the Catholic Church, the Catholic Church would not be the Church of God without it. The Blessed Eucharist is what gives shape and