

Parishes welcome all for adoration

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

Holy Thursday is one night, in addition to Christmas Eve, that you can find Catholic churches open long after their doors would normally be locked.

This late-night hospitality is due to a tradition of eucharistic adoration following Holy Thursday Mass. According to Joan Workmaster, diocesan director of liturgy, nearly all diocesan parishes offer adoration on Holy Thursday.

The custom has been in place since the mid-1950s when Pope Pius XII, in ordering the restoration of Holy Week, moved Holy Thursday Mass to an evening hour with adoration following. Previously, Mass had been celebrated in the morning, with ado-

ration taking place through the afternoon.

Evening adoration can be viewed as a parallel to Jesus' suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. It also invokes a form of worship that goes back to the early days of the Catholic Church. "It's a really neat tradition, I think — a tradition that ties us to our most ancient past," Workmaster said.

Immediately following Mass, the priest processes to a special place for adoration. He then places the host in a monstrance, and worshipers join in group prayer or pray silently.

Workmaster said most diocesan churches stay open until midnight. At that point, according to church law, adoration must cease because Good Friday has begun.

A key component of Holy Thursday adoration is the group dimension. Many people gather to pray not only at their own parishes, but also at several nearby churches. Workmaster said this custom of visiting churches stems from the Middle Ages, when eucharistic adoration was popularly practiced and people in large cities would move from church to church.

This year the Holy Family Catholic Community youth group has planned to pray at all four churches in its cluster, even though they're located several miles apart. After attending Mass at St. Joseph's Church in Wayland, they will stay for adoration before visiting Sacred Heart, Perkinsville; St. Pius V, Cohocton; and St. Mary's, Dansville. Linda

Mehlenbacher, the cluster's youth minister, said the group will end the night by eating pizza.

Mehlenbacher noted that young parishioners and parent volunteers have conducted Holy Thursday church tours for about 10 years, typically drawing 25 to 35 teens. "There were a couple years where, ugh, the weather was horrible. But we went," she recalled.

At each church the group recites a Hail Mary, an Our Father and a Glory Be, followed by meditation.

"It's a whole different kind of prayer, a different way of making Holy Thursday that little bit extra special," Mehlenbacher said. "It's gotten to be a big thing now. The kids say to each other, 'You *have* to go to this.'"



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