

**“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,
declares the Lord.”**

Is 55:8

Our Eucharistic Congress, long in the planning, arduous in the preparation, was drawn to a successful close last Sunday with an inspiring Blessed Sacrament procession through the streets of our town during which the rosary was prayed and faithful Catholics knelt on the pavement in Adoration of Our Lord’s presence in the short service of Benediction in Lady Lane, the site of the Mediæval shrine of Our Lady of Ipswich.

Hundreds of Catholics gathered together for Mass, gave homage to our Lord and God, and contemplated His sacramental presence amongst us in the Most Holy Eucharist. To those who had worked so hard throughout the twelve months and more of planning and preparation, a sigh of relief came readily when all was done. And those who came on pilgrimage went home with a lighter heart, filled with love of Our Lord and His Beloved Mother.

But now that the long-awaited Congress is over, what happens next? Are we simply to consign the whole event to memories of yesterday? Are we merely to look back and think, that was lovely, and leave it at that? Is it to be assigned a place in the archives of our parish and remain just a page in the book of local history?

Throughout the weeks and months before the Congress opened, we prayed – privately and collectively – that our belief in Christ’s presence in the Holy Eucharist might be deepened and our devotion to Him rekindled, and that there may be raised up in our parish a renewed spirit of faith and fervour so that our hearts might burn with the fire of God’s love,

and our lives show forth the beauty of His holiness. If that is what we asked for ahead of the Congress, then it behoves us to do something about it now that the Congress is concluded.

So what do we do? Two initiatives to begin with.

First, the launch of the *Our Lady of Grace Eucharistic League*. There have been Eucharistic Leagues in many places throughout the church for a couple of centuries or more, and the very idea of a Eucharistic League is enjoying a healthy revival in several places around the world today. The idea is that members will be formally enrolled by the parish priest, and that they will undertake to spend at least one whole continuous hour before the Blessed Sacrament, either exposed upon the altar or reserved in the tabernacle, each month. Members will then record their time of Adoration in the diary at the back of the church at the end of each Holy Hour. In this way, there will build up over time in our parish a great watching before the Lord, a watching of prayer and devotion, of adoration and reparation.

As has just been said, these hours of Adoration may be spent either before the tabernacle or during Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, but to help – and this is the second initiative – the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed on our altar for a full hour before Mass on every first Thursday of the month beginning in October.

Many people are not used to spending a whole hour in prayer at any one time, but the Holy Hour has long been a popular devotion as Catholics have taken Our Lord's words in the Garden of Gethsemane to heart, when He asked His Apostles, 'Could you not watch one hour with me?' (Mt 26:40). This is why we refer to these periods of prayer as 'watching,' and why we are sometimes asked to sign a Watching List.

To help, home-made leaflets of prayers will be made available, but there are innumerable little books that you can buy online that set out prayers for Holy Hours. Have a look, get hold of a book that will suit you, and get yourself enrolled as a member of the *Our Lady of Grace Eucharistic League*. Even if you cannot be here in the middle of the day on

Thursdays, the church is open, as you know, from approximately 7am to 7pm every single day of the year.

The line from today's First Reading reminds us why we might spend time before the Blessed Sacrament in prayer. In terms of being constructive or productive, an hour spent in prayer is a waste of time. But that's the whole point. We should, whenever we can, waste time in the presence of Our Lord, not intending to have anything to show for it afterwards but simply because we delight to be in His company. The way spiritual growth works has very little to do with how the rest of our busy society works. The ways of heaven and the ways of this world are strikingly different from each other, and it is time we started to move into the realm of God's Kingdom instead of staying put in the kingdoms of this world. For, 'my thoughts are not your thoughts,' declares the Lord, 'and your ways are not my ways.'