

Forty Hours Closes Tuesday

Parishioners of Annunciation Church thronged to the opening of the Forty Hours Devotion which took place yesterday. Observed every year in every parish of the United States and Canada, the Forty Hours is a devotion honoring Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Solemn ceremonies mark the opening and sermons appropriate to the Eucharist are delivered on three consecutive evenings.

The church is visited during the day for prayer and meditation. It is for Catholics a period of spiritual renewal.

The preacher for the 1967 observance in Shenandoah is the Rev. Maurus Schenck, C.P., a Passionist Father from St. Ann's Shrine, Scranton. Father Maurus is with the Passionist Fathers "Sign" magazine, and is making his first visit to Shenandoah. Previous to taking residence in Scranton, he was active in parish work in Ontario, New Jersey, and Western New York, where he was parish priest at St. Gabriel's Monastery, Toronto; St. Joseph's Church, Union City, and St. Mary's Church, Dunkirk, N.Y. Injured in 1965 when his Dunkirk rectory was struck by lightning, Father Maurus walks with a limp, but this does not impede his work. Because of his busy schedule, his confreres have given him the nickname "The Everywhere Priest."

Celebrant of the Mass opening the Forty Hours was Rev. William Shields, assistant pastor. Father Shields was assisted in the sanctuary by Rev. E. Garrity. Right Rev. Msgr. C. V. O'Brien, pastor, presided.

Choosing as his text the words of the prophet Jeremiah (29:14) "I am thinking thoughts of peace and not of affliction, saith the Lord. You shall call upon Me, and I will hear you; and I will lead you back from all the places of your captivity," Father Maurus recalled how the consequences of sin had fallen on God's Chosen People and how the King and many nobles and inhabitants had been carried into captivity in Babylon. He urged them to see in the comforting words of encouragement a message for themselves and showed them how they could make the days of the Forty Hours a time of spiritual renewal.

"Sin," he told them, "is a captivity because it destroys your freedom. You get fixed into a groove. You feel you have to do what sin tells you. You see clearly what you should do, but you feel helpless, walled in like a man in a deep ravine, high cliffs on every side."

"While you experience this feeling of helplessness," Father Maurus continued, "what is God doing? Does he turn away from you in disgust? Does he prepare to punish you? He is thinking thoughts of peace. He wastes no time in blaming you. He comes to set you free. He is more powerful than the things that hold you captive . . . bad habits, temptations, evil companionships. He is not afraid of any of these things. He can break all captivities, and lead you into the bright, open sunshine."

Father Maurus announced that on Monday and Tuesday evenings he would speak on the Eucharist.

Evening services will continue at 7:00 with Benediction. Confessions will be heard immediately following the services. For the closing procession on Tuesday evening, a delegation of students from Shenandoah Catholic High School and the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus will be present.