

THE HOLY HOUR

The custom of spending an hour with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament arose from the desire of devout souls to give an affirmative answer to the sorrowful question of the Saviour in Gethsemane, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" The devotion is usually observed on Thursday evenings or Fridays, because it was at this time of the week that our Lord suffered his agony in the Garden and it has become especially identified with the first Friday of the month. No special form of prayer has ever been prescribed for this exercise and the time is spent in quiet colloquy with Jesus, the saying of litanies, hymns, and other acts of devotion. Two schemes of prayer are given here. Either of them is also suited to any time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament or during a watch before the Altar of Repose on Maundy Thursday.

HOLY HOUR i

Read the story of the Agony of Jesus in the Garden.

THEN cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little

farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

I. God's Presence With Me and Before Me

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane."

God is everywhere.

There is no spot in heaven or in earth where he is not present.

From the first moment of my existence to the present moment, I have been in God's presence. Everywhere. At all times.

Often I forget this truth.

Often I go on in the actions of life without a thought of God.

But here today I will remember that I am in the presence of God.

Psalm 139:1-16

O LORD, thou hast searched me out, and known me. ★ Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts long before.

2. Thou art about my path, and about my bed; ★ and art acquainted with all my ways.

3. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue, ★ but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether.

4. Thou hast beset me behind and before, ★ and laid thine hand upon me.

5. Such knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for me; ★ I cannot attain unto it.

6. Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit? ★ or whither shall I go then from thy presence?

7. If I climb up into heaven, thou art there; ★ if I go down to hell, thou art there also.

8. If I take the wings of the morning, ★
and remain in the uttermost parts of the
sea;

9. Even there also shall thy hand lead me,
★ and thy right hand shall hold me.

10. If I say, Peradventure the darkness
shall cover me ★ then shall my night be
turned to day.

11. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with
thee, but the night is as clear as the day; ★
the darkness and light to thee are both alike.

12. For my reins are thine; ★ thou hast
covered me in my mother's womb.

13. I will give thanks unto thee, for I
am fearfully and wonderfully made: ★
marvellous are thy works, and that my soul
knoweth right well.

14. My bones are not hid from thee, ★
though I be made secretly, and fashioned
beneath in the earth.

15. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet
being imperfect; ★ and in thy book were
all my members written;

16. Which day by day were fashioned, ★
when as yet there was none of them.



God is before me here on the altar in a very
definite and special way. God is here under
a visible form.

It is very hard for me to realize God's presence because I cannot see him.

And God longs to have me know his presence, because he loves me.

Once, long ago, God became Man and men could see God with their eyes:

A Baby lying in the manger;

A Lad standing in the Temple;

A Man in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When men saw Jesus, they saw God in the form of Man.

But Jesus has ascended into heaven and I cannot see him as could men of old. Today, however, he comes to the altar in another form—the form of bread. Beneath this common element of bread is hidden all the splendors of the glorified Manhood of Jesus as well as all the glories of his Godhead.

Jesus, all he is today, glorified and enthroned in heaven, is before me here on the altar.

He reigns here before me:

My JESUS, my SAVIOUR, my LORD,
my GOD.

I cannot understand how this can be.

No one can understand this mighty mystery

But I believe:

“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!”

DEAR JESUS, I believe that you are my God

who made me;

who has given me everything;

who loves me as no one else will ever love me;

who alone can understand completely the secrets of my heart.

I BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE HERE

because you love me and could not leave me alone on earth;

because you know my miseries,

and wish me to be able always to find here the Heart of a true Friend, a Heart that will answer the longings of my own heart.

I BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE HERE

to help me attain the happiness of heaven;

to find in your presence the solace of which I stand in need;

to purify me in your Precious Blood;

to nourish me with your life in Holy Communion.

THEREFORE, MY JESUS, I ADORE THEE!

JESUS, my Lord, my God, my all,
How can I love thee as I ought?
And how revere this wondrous gift,
So far surpassing hope or thought?
Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore,
O make me love thee more and more.

Had I but Mary's sinless heart
To love thee with, my dearest King,
O, with what bursts of fervent praise
Thy goodness, Jesus, would I sing!
Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore,
O make me love thee more and more.

O see! within a creature's hand
The vast Creator deigns to be,
Reposing infant-like, as though
On Joseph's arm or Mary's knee.
Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore,
O make me love thee more and more.

Thy Body, Soul, and Godhead, all!
O mystery of love divine!
I cannot compass all I have,
For all thou hast and art are mine.
Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore,
O make me love thee more and more.

Sound, sound his praises higher still,
And come, ye angels, to our aid,
'Tis God! 'tis God! the very God,
Whose power both man and angels made!

Jesus, my Lord, I thee adore,
O make me love thee more and more.

II. My Sins

"Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation."

I look at Jesus prostrate in agony in the moonlit Garden. Why this intensity of suffering? Because he is feeling the weight of human sin. In the Upper Room a few moments ago, he made himself the Victim of sin and offered his life to pay the price of man's sin, saying, "This is my blood . . . which is shed . . . for the remission of sins." Now, in the Garden, he who is absolutely sinless, feels the weight of the sins he has taken upon himself. Sin closes in upon him, every sin ever committed by every man, woman and child; every sin which shall ever be committed to the end of time. All sin is assumed by Jesus, the All-holy. I try to think what that means: Every sin . . . Ever committed . . . By anyone . . . From the beginning of the world until its end . . . All descending upon this one Person who must bear every single sin, great or small. And as I hear him cry out in horror, I realize that my own sins are part of this fearful burden. Jesus is feeling the weight of the sins that I myself have committed. I have a part in

the sin which causes this dreadful agony of Jesus in the Garden!

Jesus knows my sins all too well. Do I know them? All of them? As I watch Jesus here, I begin to realize dimly how dreadful my sins are. I, too, begin to feel something of their weight. So I stop here awhile and look into my heart to discover my sins in order that I may express my sorrow, in order that I may confess them, one by one, to Jesus.

O BLESSED JESUS

who hast given to me the picture of the
true human life,
and who dost reveal to me the ugliness of
human sin:
give me the grace to see
my sins,
my shortcomings,
my negligences
which so burden thee in Gethsemane,
that I may confess them
with that sorrow which I must have
if thy Cross and Passion are to save me
from the hell which I deserve. Amen.

*Now I spend some time in self-examination,
using the questions on p. 126, if I need
to do so.*

... AND THIS, DEAR JESUS, IS
WHAT I REALLY AM:

So weak, so disfigured, so soiled, so un-
clean!

What a plight to be in!

Yet, O My Saviour, it is just because I
see my misery,

just because I see how much I have hurt
you,

just because I see how loathsome these
sins are to you that I am urged onward
by the necessity of remaining in your
presence.

For you are my very life,

Without you, I am surely lost.

Certainly, I have proved myself an ungrate-
ful friend.

How many times you have filled me with
joy in Holy Communion—and I?
I have gone away from you and satis-
fied my desires and whims with poison-
ous fruit.

How many times have you enfolded me in
the arms of love—and I?

I gave you the kiss of Judas.

Still, despite my sins, I feel the need of
being with you.

For, without you, life is nothing but a
heavy burden.

What would life be if I were forced
to wander forever among the lost?

What happiness could I expect from
Satan?

what rest? what comfort? what peace?

I cannot face either life or death apart
from you.

It was your lips which spoke the words,
"Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be for-
given thee."

It was you who said to the penitent Mag-
dalene, "Thy faith hath saved thee, Go
in peace."

So I trust in your love and mercy.

Even though I had committed these sins,
you drew me here to yourself.

You offered me a place here as a wor-
shipper.

So I am here.

I cannot offer you anything to make up
for my sins;

I have nothing of my own with which to
pay for my violations of your love;

But I confess my unworthiness, ac-
knowledge my faithlessnesses with real
sorrow,

Throwing myself upon your love and
mercy.

JESUS, MY JESUS

I am sorry.

I beg your pardon.

I reach out suppliant beggar's hands.

JESUS, MY JESUS

Wash me in your Precious Blood,

Smile upon me again,

That I may be able to go on in life and
face death with confidence.

III. Intercessions

"Thy will be done."

I look again at Jesus prostrated in agony in the moonlight. I have realized that the hideousness of sin is the reason for this suffering. I have tried to face my own part in his agony and to be sorry for my own sins. Now I can go a step further. Jesus suffers because he is feeling the results of sin. Sin always means suffering. As I stay here with Jesus, I can see that the agonies of the world today are the direct results of man's violation of God's holy will. Sin upsets God's plan for man's peace and happiness and brings strife and pain to the innocent as well as to the guilty. So I will turn my energies to the work of praying for others. I will think of each subject and lift it up to God, asking him to accept

Jesus' suffering for sin and to accomplish his will in that situation or concerning that person. Then I know all will be well. So I pray for :

The World and the Peoples of the World.
My Country, its officials, people and institutions.

Christianity throughout the world—Catholic and Protestant.

My own part of the Catholic Church.

My own parish.

Those near and dear to me.

My enemies and those whom I naturally dislike.

The departed.

Now I gather all of my intercessions up into the following :

ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

MOST sweet Jesus, Redeemer of the human race, look down upon me humbly prostrate before thine altar. I am thine, and thine I wish to be; but to be more surely united to thee, behold, I hereby freely consecrate myself today to thy Most Sacred Heart.

MANY indeed have never known thee; many, too, despising thy laws, have rejected thee. Have mercy on them all, most merci-

ful Jesus, and draw them to thy Sacred Heart.

BE thou King, O Lord, not only of the faithful who have never forsaken thee, but also of the prodigal children who have abandoned thee. Grant that they may quickly return to their Father's house lest they die of wretchedness and hunger.

BE thou King of those who are deceived by erroneous opinions or whom discord keeps away from thy Church and call them back to the harbour of truth and unity of faith, so that soon there may be but one flock and one Shepherd.

BE thou King of all those who, throughout the world, are still worshippers of any sort of idols and refuse not to draw them all into the light and kingdom of God.

GRANT, O Lord, to thy Church assurance of freedom and immunity from harm; give peace and order to all nations, and make the whole earth resound from pole to pole with one glad cry: Praise to the Sacred Heart that wrought our salvation, to that Heart be glory and honour, for ever and ever. Amen.

IV. For Myself

"He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee."

Jesus graciously invites men to be with

him in his Agony in order that he may bless them. He has invited me to be with him. What blessings would I seek from him for myself?

First I ask him for my spiritual needs:
For light and grace to live faithfully
in accordance with the will of my
heavenly Father;
to develop in his love and in his service;
to grow more and more like him;
to meet the temptations and difficulties
of life;
to persevere in the Christian life to the
end;
And for the grace to die a good and happy
death.

Then I ask him for any earthly gifts which I may desire. Here I must be willing to go without any of these things if God does not want me to have it, because I trust the wisdom and the love of my heavenly Father. All through my petitions for myself and for others must run that thread of submission to the Father's will expressed by Jesus in the Garden in the words, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Yet, as a child brings his requests to an earthly Father, so I now bring my requests to Jesus.

V. Closing Devotions

"Arise, let us be going."

My watch with Jesus draws to a close. I have spent this time with him in the work of adoration, penitence, intercession and petition. Now I must go back into my daily life again. The world into which I go will be the same as when I came here an hour ago. I shall have the same problems to face, the same circumstances in which to live. But I, who live in these circumstances and face these problems, am not the same. For I have been here with Jesus. I have opened my heart to him. I have placed my problems at his feet in the Garden. I am taking out into the world a new strength, a new power. Jesus goes out into the world with me, in my heart.

And before I go, I stop a moment and consider. In what particular thing is my life going to be different because I have been here in the Garden with Jesus? Just where am I going to act differently in regard to my particular circumstances in the world? I will make one special, very definite, resolution about my life before I go.

Now I once more bow in adoration.

DEAR SAVIOUR, I have now only a few moments of my watch left.

Here before you in your sacred presence in the Blessed Sacrament,

I humble myself,

I bow low in adoration.

O Jesus, you are God.

And I? What am I?

Without you I am nothing;

yes, less than nothing

because I have so often hurt you by my sins.

Yet with you I am greater than an angel, for the Blessed Sacrament was not instituted for angels;

they can neither eat your Flesh nor drink your Blood.

Wherefore, dear Saviour, miserable as I am, I bow low before you,

Profoundly I adore you,

All my greatness comes from you,

And I prostrate myself before you.

My Jesus, I am but a handful of dust

Yet you have made me a mighty thing.

You have made me able to worship at your throne

both here and in eternity.

To adore you is the mightiest act a creature can perform

and I adore you.

I adore you who are holiness itself
 You are the Source of all holiness,
 Without you there is nothing in life
 but emptiness, pain, fear, hopeless
 weariness.

I adore you because you are the mighty
 Lord of all things,
 the Sovereign Master of the universe;
 all creatures in heaven and on earth are
 dependent upon you.

I adore you because you dwell in inac-
 cessible heights
 yet you come in so humble a form
 that I may look upon the veils of your
 presence here
 unafraid, with confidence, in intimate
 love.

You are God. Eternal, Infinite. Every-
 where present. All-knowing. Almighty.
 All-wise. Holiness itself. Infinitely good.
 Most faithful. The perfection of bliss.
 Life itself. Eternal love.

Yet despite all this, you have humbled
 yourself
 to the littleness,
 the frailty,
 the silence
 of the Sacred Host.

Is there a place or a position of lowliness
in the whole universe that you have not
already taken?

Though it is impossible for me to abase
myself as much as you,
Yet I can at least wish to humble myself
in imitation of you,
I can at least try to forget myself and be
willing to bear my cross daily
And I beg you, dear Jesus, help me to do
these things.

So, dear Saviour, I must go,
leaving your sacred sacramental presence;
but I pray you, enter into my heart,
so that, going, I leave you not behind,
so that, going back into the world, you
may go with me.

And one final prayer I make, My Jesus:
When I must face my last agony and
enter death,
When I must stand before your dreadful
judgment seat,
When I must see you as you really are,
All the glories of your Godhead and
Manhood revealed in glistening light:
I beg that you will remember then, O
Jesus,
that I knelt here today in adoration of
you, hidden beneath this outward sign;

that I watched with you in your human
Agony;

that, although I could not see you with
my outward eyes, still I did not deny
your presence,

but rather hailed thee present here in
the Sacred Host.

And, in that dread hour of my agony and
death, dear Jesus,

Remembering all this,

Take me to yourself,

For ever and ever. Amen.

