
HOLY HOUR BEFORE THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The devotion of making a Holy Hour, consisting of spending an hour in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, is becoming more and more widespread among Catholics. The primary goal of this devotion is to adore Jesus Christ truly present in the Sacred Host and at the same time to contemplate his unconditional love for us so magnificently manifested in this Bread of Life. Before actually making a Holy Hour, it is good to have a certain plan on how best to use this time in a most fruitful way. Time spent before the Lord could involve the following: opening our hearts to express our inner sentiments and struggles, meditating on a passage from Sacred Scripture perhaps with the aid of a spiritual book and bringing petitions and requests to the Lord's attention. The Holy Hour can include in some manner prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and contrition.

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins....

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe

the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 Jn 4:7–10, 14–16)

Preparation

Before beginning a Holy Hour we can prepare ourselves by acknowledging the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and asking him to make our time of prayer fruitful. It is also good to ask for the intercession of Our Lady, who will bring us into a closer relationship with her Son.

ACTS OF FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY

Act of Faith, Act of Hope, and Act of Charity, p. 62.

PRAYER BEFORE HOLY HOUR

My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence; I ask your pardon for my sins and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My immaculate Mother, Saint Joseph my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

Some other useful prayers are:

- Prayer of St. Ambrose (p. 85)
- Morning Offering (p. 62)
- John 6 (recommend reading and meditating on the whole chapter):

Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias.

And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased. Jesus went up on the mountain, and there sat down with his disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. Lifting up his

eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten. When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!" Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the sea, got into a boat, and started across the sea to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The sea rose because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and drawing near to the boat. They were frightened, but he said to them, "It is I; do not be afraid." Then they were glad to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land to which they were going. On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

However, boats from Tiberias came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal." Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world." They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

"But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." The Jews then murmured at him, be-

cause he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven."

They said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?" Jesus answered them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever." This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum. Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense

at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. "But there are some of you that do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him. And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.

Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (Jn 6:1-69)

THE MEANING OF THE EUCCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

Adoration, thanksgiving, propitiation, and petition have traditionally been called "the four ends of Mass." Simply put, they are the four types of prayer that we offer during the Mass and indeed, in our own personal prayer life.

- The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is first and foremost an offering of our *worship and adoration* to our Heavenly Father. Think of the command of the priest after the altar has been prepared: "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father."
- Within this context of adoration and worship, we recognize that the Mass is a Sacrifice of *thanksgiving* as well. Everything we have, even our very life and existence, come from God, and so that is all that we have to offer back to Him.

- The Mass is a Sacrifice of *propitiation* because Christ whom we offer on the altar in the form of bread and wine is the same Christ who atoned for our sins on the Cross. The effects are, therefore, the same: the remission of sins and the satisfaction of punishments due to us for our sins (or for the sins of the dead for whom we may offer the Mass). A single drop of Our Lord's Blood would have been sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world, yet He gave all of His Blood in order to show us the abundance and depth of His love.
- Finally, we offer the Holy Mass as a Sacrifice of supplication or *petition*, asking God to grant us the graces we need to live a holy life or for any need for which it is worthy to ask God.

Adoration

Adoration is worship and veneration given to God because of his eternal and infinite goodness. It recognizes God as the source of all goodness, who enjoys infinite transcendence above every creature. An excellent prayer and a well-known litany of adoration are:

- I Devoutly Adore You (*Adoro Te Devote*) (p.286)
- Litany of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (p.341)

Thanksgiving

Prayers of thanksgiving show our gratitude to God for his infinite love and for filling our lives with every good thing, both material and spiritual. Some excellent prayers of thanksgiving are:

- The *Te Deum* (p.313)
- *Placeat* (p.246)

Petition

Prayers of petition request favor and blessings from God for ourselves and for others. It is assured God will honor our requests by either granting what is asked for or giving something even more beneficial, if it will benefit our souls. Some prayers of petition could include:

- The Universal Prayer (p. 255)
- Prayer for the Pope (p. 65)

Atonement

In prayers of atonement, we ask God to grant us his mercy and forgiveness. Some examples of prayers of atonement include:

- Prayer to Jesus Christ Crucified (p. 253)
- I Confess (*Confiteor*) (p. 70)
- Act of Contrition (p. 74)
- Acceptance of Death (p. 74)

A Holy Hour is also an excellent opportunity to pray the Holy Rosary (p. 411), meditating on the mysteries of the life of Christ, and the Stations of the Cross (p. 343), meditating on the Passion and Death of Our Lord.

Finally, it is fitting to finish the Holy Hour with a prayer thanking God for all the blessing he has bestowed on us in this time of prayer as well as the short prayer "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph" (p. 74).

PRAYER AFTER HOLY HOUR

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations that you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My immaculate Mother, Saint Joseph my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

ACT OF LOVE

My Lord and my God:
into your hands I abandon
the past and the present and the future,
what is small and what is great,
what amounts to a little
and what amounts to a lot,
things temporal and things eternal.

O Lord, my God, from this moment on I accept with
a good will, as something coming from your hand,
whatever kind of death you want to send me, with
all its anguish, pain and sorrow.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
I give you my heart and my soul.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
Assist me in my last agony.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph.
May my soul sleep and take my rest
in peace with you.

