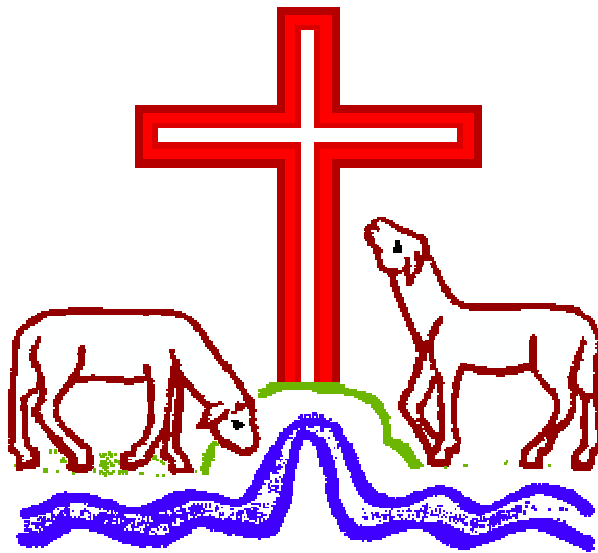


HOLY HOUR of Eucharistic Adoration



Why a HOLY HOUR before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament?

PERHAPS MANY still ask that question. To it there is basically only one answer: Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is present....

He is present in that special Eucharistic manner of transubstantiation in which the very substance of the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

St. Thomas taught that the Eucharist is the greatest of miracles ever worked by Christ, to perpetuate his Passion and Sacrifice with us and to be specially present to each individual.

Christ is present there for us, to manifest his great love for us. St. Thomas says, "He cares for us and is there." If we care for him, we would also be there for a Holy Hour or some other form of Eucharistic adoration. Christ had asked this of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque as he had asked the apostles in the Garden of Olives: "Can you not watch one hour with me?"

Vatican II insists that the Christian life is incomplete if it is not Eucharistic. In the Decree on Priests (No. 5) the Council wrote: "Every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate are linked with the Holy Eucharist and are directed to it." Of course, this refers primarily to the Eucharistic sacrifice and the Council said so in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (No. 11): "Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the apex and fount of the whole Christian life, the faithful offer the Divine Victim to God and offer themselves with it."

However, it is in the Eucharist that Christians will find unity in Christ: "In the Sacrament of the Eucharistic Bread, the unity of all believers, who form one body in Christ (1 Cor. 10,17) is both expressed and brought about." (Consti. on the Church No. 3)

To stress that this did not refer only to the Eucharistic Sacrifice and the reception of Holy Communion but also to Eucharistic adoration, Pope John XXIII, who called the Council, arranged for the canonization of Blessed Julian Eymard, the apostle of Eucharistic adoration, for the solemnities of the closing of the first session of the Council, that he was to be an example and model of true Catholic renewal.

This leaflet attempts to offer some aids to making a Holy Hour.

I

The first suggestion is: divide the Holy Hour into four 15 minute periods. It is essential to take sufficient time to really visualize the purpose in each period. Do not proceed till you have made that particular purpose clear and definite.

The second suggestion is for that first 15 minute period: dedicate it to a realization of who is present in the Holy Eucharist. Of course you know the answer to that, but think of it until there is in your soul a response of wonder ("is it possible?" "how can that be?" and yet "it is true") and admiration (how wonderful: Jesus is really, truly present here!).

Think of the marvel of this great reality: Christ, the God-Man, is truly present in his divinity as well as his humanity, body and soul. Even:

substantially present—the substance of the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ.

Try to realize also how different this presence of Christ is from the presence of God in the whole world, or in us by grace, or in the Church, or in the words of the Holy Scriptures. This is a unique substance, substantially special and different from his presence anywhere else. It is the mystery of his total presence in the great mystery of his love: the incarnation now transubstantiated. This is not just the presence of God but the presence of God as the God-Man via the substance of bread and wine changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Consider who he is as God: the Creator; as God-Man: our Redeemer, our Savior-Brother, our Lord and King.

Push your thoughts to search out the meaning of these truths and let your soul rest in the wonder of his loving presence here—for you. Be quiet and listen, too, because God wants to speak to your heart.

If perhaps words of admiration and wonder do not come to you, use the words of some familiar prayers and songs of adoration and praise that you can usually find in any missalette available in most churches. For example: "Down in Adoration Falling," "Holy God, We Praise Thy Name," the "Holy, Holy, Holy" of the Mass, "Now Praise We All Our God," or any Benediction hymn. However, rely on yourself—do not move too quickly to these texts.

These words should be read slowly, with great, deep understanding and always in relation to Christ present before you in the tabernacle: you directing your praise to him who is truly present there! Do not hurry, thinking that you have to finish all or any of these hymns and prayers. Remember that Christ himself said, "Do not prattle on . . . in sheer multiplication of words . . ." (Mt. 6, 8). Make sure that they express the thoughts and desires in your own heart.

II

A suggestion for the second 15 minutes: devote the time to thoughts and prayers of thanksgiving to God as you grasp the wonder of who is present Really: God is with us! the Emmanuel of Christmas.

Momentarily give some fresh thought to the fact: God is with us in this special, most remarkable way. Now let words of thanksgiving rise up in your soul, or just simply give thanks to God for his presence here in such a remarkable way. Thank God for the great Sacrament of the Priesthood and for vocations by which he perpetuates his presence in the Holy Eucharist.

In a parallel situation think of our Blessed Mother's joy when she realized that Christ, the great Messiah, was present within her, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. Make her words of the Magnificat your own as you realize that Jesus is equally present here. There hidden in a human body; here hidden under the form of bread. Or with Simeon break out in that beautiful exclamation of delight and contentment when he realized whom he was holding in his arms: "Now, Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace . . ." or read the words of the joy of Zachary when he could again speak to proclaim the wonder of the presence of the one who would prepare the way of the Lord. Or use the text of Ps. 148.

You might also take some time to recall and thank God for other special blessings and wonders of God: your family, vocation, gift life, opportunity to be in his Presence, special friends, etc. Thank him for his love for you, for his unfailing help in trials and difficulties. Do you really believe that? Think about it till you can really say that in sincerity and heartfelt conviction: that God does love you!

III

A suggestion for the next 15 minutes. Dedicate this to petition. First of all, ask Jesus here present in the Holy Eucharist for the grace that is dearest to him, the grace he wants most for you: the great blessing of redemption and eternal salvation. Just think, for some time what that means . . . for you, for each member of your family, your friends, people of your neighborhood and parish, for all mankind. Think of how marvelous that would be if all would be so blessed: to be in heaven for all eternity! Pray for that! Beg for it: the fulfillment of Christ's greatest intention, the fulfillment of his greatest hope and desire and the main reason for his coming, for which he is present here. "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." For this he was in agony.

Pray for conversions. Pray for particular people, those who are away from the Church and the Sacraments. Pray for the sick and lonely, the discouraged, our youth, the unborn, our country, its leaders. Pray for our Holy Father, and for all priests and religious that they may be so influenced by grace that they will be effective instruments doing the work of God. Pray for vocations to complete the work of Christ. Pray for the grace to know the will of God always in your own life. Pray for peace, God's peace in the hearts of all.

IV

Dedicate the last 15 minutes of the Holy Hour to atonement. Why atonement? A look into one's own conscience and the conscience of the world gives the answer. A mere glance at headlines and you see insults, blasphemies, defiance thrown by man into the face of God. These will make you shudder unless your heart is cold and uncaring. The injuries of man to man when Christ commanded: "Love one another." The ignoring and deliberate pushing aside (for sophisticated, selfish reasons) God's commandments of respect for life. Think of the sins of injustice that cry to heaven for vengeance, the sins of the modern Sodom and Gomorrah that defy the wrath of God. There are also the slurs and insults against the virginity and Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Mother. There is much need for atonement for the sins of disregard, of refusal to recognize and obey the Holy Father, Christ's own spokesman and Vicar on earth. Think and you will know many, many more reasons for atonement and for begging God's pardon and mercy.

You might wish to express your thoughts of sorrow for all these evils ("sins" expresses it more accurately) by any traditional act of contrition or in the liturgical words of the "Lord, have mercy," the "Lamb of God" or the hymn "O Lord, I am not worthy." In the Litany of the Sacred Heart and the Litany of the Holy Name we find powerful and inspirational motives for praying for pardon and mercy in a great spirit of atonement. The Litany of our Blessed Mother is very appropriate, asking her under all her titles of honor and power to "pray for all of us." The Litany of the Saints and the Prayer to St. Michael could be expressive of the hopes in your heart.

A slow, thoughtful saying of the Rosary would be very helpful during any phase of a Holy Hour. With our Blessed Mother and with Christ present there before you in the Holy Eucharist, recall and consider those events in his life. Ponder all those things in your heart as you ask our Blessed Mother to pray for us.

Other Suggestions for Holy Hours

Holy Hours can also be made at home, either alone or with one's family. Unite yourself with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the nearest tabernacle or in all the tabernacles of the world. Keep in mind that perspective of being in the presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist—perhaps even in some Communist country. Pray for the special problems or topics described above or others you are concerned about. You will find much motivation and inspiration for prayer. Feel free to break from any of these suggestions, ("structures") though at times you will find them helpful. Perhaps even your own inability or reluctance to pray can be a reason for prayer.

The aged, sick and handicapped are urged to make such a Holy Hour of prayer right there in their bed, chair, or home or hospital or wherever. They should unite their sufferings with Jesus crucified and with him atone for the sins of the world. So much suffering could be converted into blessings by such prayer.

Questions Frequently Asked Concerning Eucharistic Adoration

1. What kinds of Eucharistic Adoration are there?
 - a) A simple, devout, very brief visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.
 - b) A private or public (group) Holy Hour either in church or in the home
 - c) A traditional Thirteen or Forty Hours of Adoration in a parish
 - d) A 3 or 4 or 5 hour Eucharistic Vigil, usually by a larger group with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, perhaps with procession and other devotions.

- e) The all-night Eucharistic Vigil (watch) by a similar group, starting in the evening (8 or 9 p.m.) and ending with Mass in the morning (6 or 7 a.m.).
 - f) Perpetual adoration. Some parishes have an organized program of continual adoration with one or several present in church each hour, day and night. Individuals would take the same hour each month, each week, or more frequently.
 - g) Partial adoration. Same method as in "f" except that it would be only one day a week or month or perhaps only from morning (7 or 8 a.m.) to evening (6 or 7 p.m.).
2. What is Eucharistic Adoration?

Eucharistic adoration is the recognition of and honoring this special presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

3. How Can a Eucharistic Adoration program be started in a parish?
- a) Discuss this idea with your pastor, seek his advice, permission and support.
 - b) Try to find support and help from other interested people.
 - c) Arrange for pulpit and bulletin explanations and announcements; make mimeographed explanations available at the door or send them to the homes via the school children, with the support of the faculty.
 - d) Publicize each Eucharistic Adoration that is going to be held, inviting others to come.
 - e) Make it easy for individuals to sign up for particular hours for adoration if you are having any kind of a perpetual or partial adoration.
 - f) Obtain capable and reliable speakers if a homily or meditation is on your program.

This "little aid" has been written to show you that a **Holy Hour** is not so difficult. Further explanations can be had by writing to:

Franciscan Friars of Marytown
Eucharistic Adoration Department
8000 - 39th Ave.
Kenosha, WI 53140