

A HOLY HOUR

Prayers and Meditations to be used for the Vigil with the Blessed Sacrament.

Simply begin at the beginning and read through the sections of this Holy Hour. There are some opening prayers, and then five sections: Adoration, Penitence, Intercession, Petition, and Closing Prayers. Simply pray or meditate on a section at a time, perhaps leaving a few minutes of contemplative silence between each part.

Included at the end is the Litany of the Blessed Sacrament. You may wish to pray it in addition to the Holy Hour meditations. You and your vigil partners may choose to use the Litany together. One of you would say the line, and the others respond with the parts in italics.

This is your time with our holy Lord, as He is truly present with us in the Blessed Sacrament.

PREPARATORY PRAYERS

- O adorable Savior, present in the most Holy Sacrament, look down with tender compassion from thy throne in heaven upon us kneeling here to do thee honor and to spend one hour in thy holy company.
- O Angel of the Agony, who didst strengthen the Lord in the Garden, strengthen me, that I may fulfill God's holy will on earth.
- Come to my aid, ye saints of God, and thou, O Virgin Mother, help me to adore and worship Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.
- Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.
- Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.
- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. But, behold, the hand of him that will betray me is with me on the table.” —St. Luke 22:19-21.

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” And with him he took Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. He said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here and watch.” And going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, “Abba, Father all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.” And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” And again he went away and prayed. And again he found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know how to answer him. And again he came a third time, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed to the hands of sinners.”

I. GOD'S PRESENCE: ADORATION

God is everywhere. There is no place in heaven or on earth from which God is excluded. 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 about my life with no thought of God's nearness, but here in this place, in these minutes, I will remember that I am in the presence of God.

Psalm 139

Domine, probasti

Lord, you have searched me out and known me; *
you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

You trace my journeys and my resting-places *
and are acquainted with all my ways.

Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, *
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.

You press upon me behind and before *
and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; *
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.

Where can I go then from your Spirit? *
where can I flee from your presence?

If I climb up to heaven, you are there; *
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.

If I take the wings of the morning *
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

Even there your hand will lead me *
and your right hand hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, *
and the light around me turn to night,"

Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day; *
darkness and light to you are both alike.

For you yourself created my inmost parts; *
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I will thank you because I am marvelously made; *
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

God is before me here on the altar in a very definite and special way under outward and visible signs. The divine presence is not a thing among things, a spectacle to attract our attention or a display forcing itself into our consciousness.

Yet God longs to be known; creation reflects God's creative generosity. The call of Israel and the prophets' words reveal God's purposes. The dignity of human nature and the imagination that pulls our minds toward eternity and holiness reflect something of God's own being.

And still God acts once more to be known. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we have beheld his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son."

The eternal word takes flesh and the God we cannot see is:

- An infant in Mary's arms,
- A young boy standing in the temple,

- A teacher gathering those who would hear,
- A healer reaching toward those shunned and in pain,
- A man walking with his friends into the garden under a full moon.

And now Jesus has completed his work on earth and is in the Father's presence. The Church and its mission of prayer and service continue Jesus' work and stand with him before God. In the sacraments, the grace and healing Jesus offers are still present and active in the world.

In the Eucharist, under the forms of bread and wine, Jesus gives himself to be seen, to be touched, and to be received. As a sign of the sacrifice of his incarnate life and his passion and death, and as a sign of his risen presence, Jesus is here in this bread and wine.

I cannot explain how this can be, but I am not asked to explain.
I am asked to believe that here I encounter the One who seeks me.
Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.

Dear Jesus, I believe that you are the eternal Word, that by you all things were made, you have made me and given me everything. I believe that you love me and that you know and understand me better than I can know myself. Amen.

I believe that you are here,
Because you love me and would not leave me alone;
Because you know my sorrows and feelings and
 would not leave me in isolation;
To strengthen me so that I can serve you in those around me.

I believe that you are here, so that I can find solace in your presence;
so that I can acknowledge my guilt and find forgiveness;
to help me on the path that leads to eternal joys.
Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief. Amen.

II. FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS: PENITENCE

Knowing the presence of God, and standing close to Jesus, I come to know myself more clearly as well. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus faces what will come. Just moments before, he interpreted his coming death and offered himself for the healing of the world—"This is my blood, which I shed for the forgiveness of sins."

In some way, the final effect of every sin is the death Jesus is about to endure. Jesus accepts this burden. And now, I acknowledge that my sins are part of that burden.

I am responsible, in some part, for the agony Jesus suffers.

*As you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me. **Matthew 25***

*I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. **Acts 9***

*God made Christ, who knew no sin, to become sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God. **2 Corinthians 5***

Too often I am unwilling or afraid to admit that I have hurt or burdened others; now in the presence of the One who bears all our burdens, I will try to be honest and clear sighted.

Too often I struggle to justify my own existence; here in the presence of the One who knows and loves me, I can find the courage to put aside excuses and explanations.

Now, in the presence of Jesus, I will, as I am able, admit and confess my sins, asking forgiveness and seeking a new and better life.

Now in the presence of Jesus, I can lay down the burden of guilt and shame and find forgiveness for what is past and hope for what is to come.

O Blessed Jesus, in your presence I know the full glory of human life and the distortions and destruction caused by sin; give me grace to see my sins, the things done and things left undone; give me grace to know how my words have been dishonest or hurtful, how my habits have disfigured my soul, and how I have failed in the face of temptations great and small. Let me confess them honestly and with genuine sorrow that I have added to the burden of the world's suffering that falls on you.

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, and we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. **[Pause to name the particular sins and omissions you want to confess...]** But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults, restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto humanity in Christ Jesus our Lord; and Grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy Holy Name. Amen.

And this, dear Jesus, is what I am: weak, disfigured, brokenhearted, and guilty. But where else can I go? For you have the words of eternal life.

You promise that there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents;
You insist that you come to call sinners, not the righteous;
You say to the woman weeping at your feet, “Your sins are forgiven you;”
And to the thief hanging on the cross next to yours, “This day you will be with me in paradise.”

Psalm 51

Miserere mei, Deus

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.

And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.

Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother’s womb.

For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

And now, knowing myself in light of your great mercy, I must make one more confession. I come with resentments and grudges against others.

In some, I am responding to real offenses, and in some I am guilty of prejudice, envy, or a lack of charity.

You teach us to pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” Just as I ask your forgiveness, I ask your grace that I may forgive those who have done wrong toward me and that my heart might be emptied of false judgments and petty resentments.

So now, I name those I need to forgive and those toward whom my heart must change...

[Take time to name those here.]

*Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other;
just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **Colossians 3***

III. INTERCESSIONS

I watch Jesus in agony in the garden, aware that though he prays alone, he is sharing the sufferings of an untold multitude. Fear and uncertainty in the face of the future, suffering inflicted by others, false judgements, abandonment, the last, slow breaths of death—in his passion, Jesus reaches into the real experience of countless mortals.

As he's willing to share our humanity, so he asks us to bear one another's burdens. And so, in these moments, I will hold in mind the needs of the world and those closest to me.

In some small but real way, my prayer joins with Jesus' as he bears the world's sufferings in his heart before the Father.

*Jerusalem, how often have I desired to gather your children together. **Luke 13***

*Weep not for me, but for yourselves and your children. **Luke 23***

Holding each person or situation before God, asking that God's will be done, I trust that in ways I cannot trace or see, God's Spirit can work healing and restoration.

Trusting that God's will is for peace and well-being, I pray...

For an end to violence between peoples and nations,
And an end to oppression and injustice;
For the right use of the riches of creation and an end to poverty and hunger;
For this nation, its peoples and leaders;
For the church throughout the world, its unity, witness and service;
For my own parish, and those who encourage me in faith, service, and prayer;
For those who are ill, those who grieve, those troubled in mind or spirit.
For the particular needs of those closest to me that I name now...
For the departed, remembering those dear to me, and those for whom no one prays.

Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer.

IV. FOR MYSELF, PETITION

Jesus taught and healed, traveling through the villages and cities, always accompanied by disciples and followers. Even now, when in the last moments before his arrest and death, he has gathered at the table with his friends, and he takes those closest to him with him into the garden.

Now he invites me to come and be with him and he's ready to hear my prayers.

*Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. **Matthew 11***

*Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving,
let your requests be made known to God. **Philippians 4***

First I ask for my spiritual needs:

For light and grace to know and do what is good;
For faith to believe and to trust in God;

To grow in love and to be strong in service;
To develop virtues and to know the fruits of the spirit;
To continue in the Christian faith and life, and finally to die a good and holy death.

I also bring the needs of my daily life—yearnings and hopes, restorations and fears—not because he does not know them, but because he asks me to come honestly and openly to him.

Even the petty and the silly can be spoken here. They *must* be spoken here; to hide them or pretend would cut me off from Jesus. The deepest longing of my heart can only be known when I am willing to honestly face all of those longings. These requests and needs I bring, knowing that in the end, all prayers lead to Jesus' great act of renunciation—“Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

So, here I name my needs and admit my desires, asking that God will shape my desires toward what is good and holy and life-giving.

Name your desires now...

Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Thanks be to Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for me; for all the many blessings thou hast won for me. O holy Jesus, most merciful redeemer, friend, and brother, may I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, day by day. —*Richard of Chichester, 1253*

V. CLOSING DEVOTIONS, RESOLUTION

I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you offer yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Romans 12

Come follow me. John 1

My watch with Jesus comes to a close. I've spent this time with him in the work of adoration, penitence, intercession, and petition. Now I must go back into my daily life. 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 into the world with me, in my heart.

And before I go, I stop and consider. How will my life be different after spending this time with Jesus? How will I act differently toward others? Before I leave, I will make one or two particular resolutions about my life and the days ahead.

Now, with this resolution and in confidence, I stay these last few moments in adoration.

Jesus, I turn to you as Savior,
I trust your grace and love,
I promise to follow and obey you as Lord.

Without you, I am nothing. Indeed, without you, *nothing exists*. In your grace, I am called to know and follow you here and to live in your presence through eternity. I am but a handful of dust, but you have made me a child of God.

I adore you, the eternal Word of the Father, the source of life and Light from Light. You are wisdom and peace, truth, and light—and in you, all humanity finds hope and peace.

And here in the Sacrament, you are present, to be my sustenance, my confidence, and my guide.

Open my eyes to all the ways you come toward me in grace. Strengthen my feet to follow you where you lead and my hands to serve as you have served.

As you stand before the Father,
Pray for me and teach me to pray:
Our Father... Amen.

And now, I leave with one final prayer.

When I must face my last agony and enter death, when I stand before your judgment, when I finally see you as you really are, all the glories of your Godhead and the perfection of your humanity revealed in light, I ask you to remember

then, O Jesus, that I knelt here in adoration of you, hidden beneath this outward sign; that I waited with you in your agony, and although I could not see you with my outward eyes, I did not deny your presence here. And in that dreaded hour of my agony and death, dear Jesus, remembering all of this, take me to yourself, forever and ever. Amen.

LITANY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

O Christ, *hear us.*

O Christ, *graciously hear us.*

God the Father, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, *have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, one God, *have mercy on us.*

Blessed Jesus, Word of God Incarnate, *I worship you.*

Blessed Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, *I worship you.*

Jesus, whom the heavens cannot contain, yet present on the Altar, *I worship you.*

Jesus, adored by the heavenly hosts, yet ready to hear our prayers, *I worship you.*

Jesus, veiling your glory that we may come close to you, *I worship you.*

Jesus, both Priest and Sacrifice, *I worship you.*

Living Bread, that whoever eats will live forever, *evermore give us this bread.*

Jesus, manna in the wilderness, *evermore give us this bread.*

Jesus, broken bread that feeds the multitude, *evermore give us this bread.*

Jesus, bread that comes down from heaven, *evermore give us this bread.*

Jesus, bread that gives life to the world, *evermore give us this bread.*

Jesus, Good Shepherd, who laid down your life for your sheep, *evermore give us this bread.*

Jesus, giving your own Body and Blood to be our food, *evermore give us this bread.*

Jesus, revealed in the breaking of the bread, *evermore give us this bread.*

From measuring your omnipotence and grace by our weak understanding, *save us and help us.*

From doubts, distractions, and irreverence, *save us and help us.*

From unworthy and unfruitful receiving, *save us and help us.*

From hardness of heart and ingratitude, *save us and help us.*

From all lack of charity and refusing to welcome others as you have welcomed us, *save us and help us.*

Hear us, Lord, and grant that we may know your presence, *hear us, Lord.*

That we may acknowledge our dependence on you, *hear us, Lord.*

That we may seek to know and do your will, *hear us, Lord.*

That we may recognize and give thanks for every blessing you give us, *hear us, Lord.*

That we may come to you in repentance for the wrongs we have done, *hear us, Lord.*

That we may approach this ineffable mystery in perfect charity with all, *hear us, Lord.*

That we may be made ready to lead a new life, *hear us, Lord.*

That we may walk in the way of your commandments, *hear us, Lord.*

That receiving this great gift we may grow in gratitude and trust, *hear us, Lord.*

That the wounded may find healing, the despondent, hope, and the fearful, courage, *hear us, Lord.*

That we may see your image in one another, *hear us, Lord.*

That as we adore you here, we may hereafter be ready to stand in your presence, *hear us, Lord.*

Jesus, Lamb of God, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Bearer of our sins, *have mercy on us.*

Jesus, Redeemer of the world, *Grant us your peace.*

Let us pray.

Oh God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of the bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*