

# AN HOUR WITH JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

*Adapted from the St. Augustine's Prayer Book*

*Background on 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?*

*Alternative and/or additional suggestions to the following materials may be found at the end.*

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## MATTHEW 26: 36-46, THE AGONY OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want." Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

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### 1. 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*

- 1 LORD, you have searched me out and known me; \* you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.
- 2 You trace my journeys and my resting-places \* and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 3 Indeed, there is not a word on my lips, \* but you, O LORD, know it altogether.
- 4 You press upon me behind and before \* and lay your hand upon me.
- 5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; \* it is so high that I cannot attain to it.
- 6 Where can I go then from your Spirit? \* where can I flee from your presence?
- 7 If I climb up to heaven, you are there; \* if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
- 8 If I take the wings of the morning \* and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
- 9 Even there your hand will lead me \* and your right hand hold me fast.
- 10 If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, \* and the light around me turn to night,"
- 11 Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day; \* darkness and light to you are both alike.
- 12 For you yourself created my inmost parts; \* you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- 13 I will thank you because I am marvelously made; \* your works are wonderful, and I know it well.
- 14 My body was not hidden from you, \* while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.
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- 16 Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; \* they were fashioned day by day, when as yet there was none of them.
- 17 How deep I find your thoughts, O God! \* how great is the sum 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 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 thou 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.

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## 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 negligence 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 hell which I deserve. Amen.

Now I spend some time in self examination....and this, dear Jesus, is what I really am; So weak, so disfigured, so soiled, so unclean! 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 ungrateful friend. How many times you have filled me with joy in Holy Communion -- and I? I have gone away from you and satisfied my desires and whims with poisonous 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 forgiven thee." It was you who said to the penitent Magdalene, "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 worshipper, 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, acknowledge my faithlessness 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.

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### 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 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: 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 merciful 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.

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#### **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 wills 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 ....

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## 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 inaccessible 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, everywhere 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.

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## **ALTERNATIVE/ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE HOLY HOUR**

Scripture

Daily Office: Evening Prayer (BCP p. 61/115) or Compline (BCP p. 127)

Psalms (BCP p. 585-808)

Prayers and Thanksgivings (BCP p. 814-841)

The Great Litany (BCP p. 148)

Silent Contemplation/Meditation