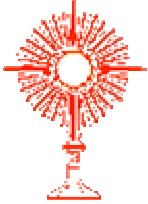


## BREAD OF LIFE

### *A real hour of power*



*Give the Lord 60 minutes and*

*He'll give you an eternity.*

*A busy believer's guide to paying a visit.*

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By Regis Flaherty

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In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus experienced bitter pain and anguish as He prepared for His passion and death. Many spiritual writers suggest that a part of that pain and anguish arose because Jesus was able to see all of those who would reject His love and salvation. He also could see the many sins and offenses that would be committed by His followers despite the grace He was to make available to them.

Jesus had taken His closest friends with Him to this place of prayer. He had asked them to keep watch and pray. But when Jesus saw them sleeping, He said: "Are you asleep? Could you not watch for one hour?" (Mk 14:37).

Certainly we are busy. There are many demands on our time. However, Our Lord remains faithfully present in the Eucharist that is reserved in the tabernacles of the churches. He, a willing "prisoner of love," awaits us. He sees the sins of the world and offers forgiveness, grace and life. He waits. Can we not wait with Him for one hour?

Churches throughout the world have established programs of Perpetual Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. People volunteer for one hour per week to be with Jesus, who is truly present in the tabernacle. Many of these programs are in need of additional people to take one hour a week to spend with Our Lord.

Why spend a Holy Hour before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? There is only one answer, and it is simple. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, is present. As St. Thomas Aquinas said: "He cares for us and is there."

If this is a once-a-week devotion for you (it can be more often!), it is valuable to establish a specific day and time. Treat it as an appointment you have made with your friend, Jesus. You would not want to "stand up" your friend.

How to spend that hour in prayer? There is no set formula. You can use a prayer book or the Bible to help you. The Rosary can be a part of the hour of prayer. You can meditate or just sit and enjoy the peace that comes from resting in the presence of God. One man described to St. John Vianney his time of prayer before the tabernacle as: "I look at Him whom I love, and He looks at me."

Whatever your approach — and it probably will help to try different ones in the beginning — it's important to not become discouraged. We are among the most over stimulated generations in the world's history. Silence, contemplation, inviting Christ to enter our hearts and minds can seem alien to us, foolish and difficult. Almost all will experience wandering thoughts, even temptations! Don't worry; they don't matter. All that matters is that you are there with good intent.

We have forgotten as Christians how much God loves a pure heart, or even an impure heart that we have only begun to ask Him to purify. God is not terribly impressed by our success (since He is the author of all success), but He loves it when we try. In the end, if we make a distracted, worried or sleepy Holy Hour, we do much better than if we not make any at all.

#### **Parcel it out**

One approach is to divide the hour into 15-minute segments. Take the first 15 minutes to meditate upon He who is present in the holy Eucharist. Consider the marvel of this reality: Christ the God-Man is truly present in His divinity as well as in His sacred humanity. He is present body and soul. Try to realize how this unique presence of Jesus in the tabernacle is different from the presence of God in the world, or from His presence in us by grace, or from His presence in the Church or in Scripture.

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is unique — it is different from His presence anywhere else.

For the second 15 minutes, turn to prayers of thanksgiving. Give thanks to God for His presence in the Eucharist. Thank Our Lord for the Mass, the sacraments, the Church and the priesthood. Use the “Magnificat” or “the Cantic of Zachary” as helps in your thanksgiving. Recall His blessings to you: family, vocation, the gift of life, opportunity to be in His presence, friends, benefactors, etc. Thank Him for the help He provides in struggles and temptations.

Dedicate the third segment of the Holy Hour to prayers of petition. Pray first that God’s will be done in your life and in the lives of those closest to you. Remember the needs of family and friends, and bring forth the needs of the Church, both local and universal. Pray for your pastor, the bishop and the pope.

You may also pray for conversions and for the return to the faith of those who have wandered. Include prayer for the sick, the lonely, the discouraged, young people, the unborn, government officials, co-workers. Pray that you may know God’s will and may be a channel of His grace to others. Pray for peace.

Let the final quarter of your time be set aside for atonement. Consider your own sins, and the insults, blasphemies and defiance of men and women of our world in the face of the love of God. How often is love of neighbor ignored and ridiculed by abortion, hate and immorality! Express your thoughts of sorrow to God. Say an Act of Contrition, one of the many litanies or the Prayer to St. Michael.

### **Time well spent**

A Holy Hour spent before Our Lord in the tabernacle is time well spent. However, a Holy Hour can be observed at home. Sometimes family situations make it impossible to observe the hour at Church. It may be too difficult for smaller children. At home, the prayer can be structured to include the children in singing of hymns and recitation of the family Rosary. Unite your prayer to Jesus, who resides in the Church tabernacle closest to your home — perhaps even facing in the direction of the Church as you pray.

The aged, sick and handicapped are often unable to spend a Holy Hour at church. However, their prayer from home when united with the offering of their infirmities can be a powerful instrument for the work of God’s grace. Many souls have been saved through the faithful prayer of those who are homebound.

Some may ask: What is the effect of a regular Holy Hour and the practice of other Eucharistic devotions? Isn’t it somewhat a waste of time to spend an hour in Church when it could be used for more active “work”?

Our efforts in the work of God are important, but unless Jesus is present and directing our action, there will be no results. As we spend time in the presence of Jesus, miracles can happen. As we spend time before the tabernacle, we will grow in love of the Eucharist, and love for souls will be given us. Our hearts will be caught up in the work, life and love of God. q

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