

Holy Hour

Introduction

Place yourself, oh devout Soul, in the presence your most beloved Savior and bring to mind the night in which Jesus, having instituted the Holy Eucharist to be your food, leaves the Cenacle with His Apostles to go to the Garden of Olives, there to begin that most crude Passion by which He was to save the world. A deathly sadness shows itself on the brow and reveals itself in the words of the afflicted Jesus. A deathly pallor clouds that Face on which but now had shone a Heavenly beauty. Meanwhile the sorrowful Savior rests His gaze upon you, as though He would say to you: "Dear Soul, who are the cause of so much anguish to Me, stay with Me but for an hour, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow" But know that on the night of My agony I sought in vain for one to console Me. "I looked for one who would comfort Me and I found none."

Oh adorable Jesus, can there ever be a creature so ungrateful, and so hard of heart, as to refuse to pass an hour in Your company, remembering those mysteries of supreme pain and supreme love accomplished in the obscurity of the night of Your Passion, in the Garden of Gethsemane? Oh good Jesus, behold me present before You. Deign to reveal to me the greatness of Your pains and the excess of love which caused You to become a victim for my sins and for the sins of all men.

First Quarter: The Sadness of Jesus

"My soul is sorrowful even unto death!" There is truly no greater suffering than that which can be compared to the pains of death. Now our Savior, Who is infallible Truth, to make us understand the excess of suffering which came to oppress Him as He entered Gethsemane, says that His soul is weighed down by a mortal sadness: that the anguish which He endures is so severe as could cause His death.

"My soul is sorrowful, even unto death!" And having said this He enters further into the Garden, till, reaching the place where He was accustomed to pass the night in prayer, He exhorts His faithful Apostles (whom He had brought with Him even into the Garden that they might be witnesses to His sufferings) to watch and pray with Him. Then, withdrawing from them a stone's throw, He knelt down to begin the most painful and at the same time most generous prayer ever made upon earth.

The first motive for the sorrow of Jesus was that horrible accumulation of outrage and opprobrium which in a short time was to rush in upon Him like the furious billows of a tempest-tossed sea. In fact, He had hardly left His beloved Apostles when there appeared before His mind all the frightful scenes of pain and blood of His impending Passion the betrayal by one of his apostles, dishonor, scorn, calumnies ... moreover a scourging so cruel as to lay bare

His very bones. But this is not enough. His Sacred Head must be tormented by a crown of thorns, which is to remain fastened thereon even till death. Furthermore, blows, spittle, mockeries. Still this is not

enough. He must bear the infamy of a legal condemnation, and see Himself abhorred by the great ones of His nation and by His own people. Dying then, because of so much suffering, He must drag Himself to the mount of sacrifice, with the cross on his lacerated shoulders, falling several times half-dead beneath its enormous weight. He must drink the bitter gall. Be stripped in the midst of an insolent multitude. Allow Himself to be nailed hand and foot. Hang for three long hours from those iron nails, and remain there, suspended between Heaven and earth, to expiate by unspeakable pains the iniquities of the human race! Yet this is not enough. To these frightful pangs must be added the most bitter mockery, the most cutting insults and taunts. Then the burning thirst, rendered more tormenting by the vinegar. The abandonment by His Father. The immense grief of His beloved Mother. The terrible and desolate death!

Redeemed Soul, purchased by the cruel pains of Jesus, consider your Savior overwhelmed in an abyss of suffering ... and this for love of you ... to save you ... to bring you with Him to paradise! Oppressed by so much anguish Jesus goes back to the three Apostles whom He had charged to watch and pray; but He finds them sleeping! There is not one word of comfort for Jesus agonizing ... not one sentiment of compassion! In the bitterness of His abandonment, He turns His sorrowful look upon you, oh devout Soul, to see if He can find in your heart a feeling of compassion and gratitude. And you? Have you no word for the good Jesus? What would you have said if you had really found yourself near to Him in the night of His agony? Alas! open your heart and do now that which you would have done then, for equally welcome will it be to Him, since He always accepts with pleasure the expressions of affection which come from the heart of His faithful ones.

(Meditate in silence)

OFFERING: Holy Father, Who has so loved the world as even to sacrifice Your Incarnate Son for it, in the name of all the redeemed I thank You for this act of Your infinite charity, offering You in return the most perfect holiness and merits of the same Only Begotten Son.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Holy Father, Who to deliver us from eternal perdition has placed upon the adorable humanity of Your Only Begotten Son the burden of all our iniquities. I offer You the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, beseeching You to grant me the grace to enjoy in eternity the fruits of His unspeakable torments.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Holy Father, Who to reconcile guilty humanity with Your offended Majesty, hast subjected Your most innocent Son to the rigors of inexorable justice, on Whom were laid the pains merited by our sins, I offer You the most lovable submission of Jesus in Gethsemane, beseeching You to grant the conversion and salvation of all sinners.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Second Quarter: Jesus Anguishes Beneath the Weight of Human Iniquity

Already a long hour of anguish has passed for Jesus amid the darkness of the night and in the abandonment by His beloved disciples. The vivid apprehension of the cruel outrages awaiting Him has spread terror and fear into His blessed soul. He now feels far more keenly the enormous weight of His mission as Savior of the world. He sees that the time of His immolation has come ... Heaven, earth and hell are already armed against Him. He must sustain a great battle, in which all blows will be hurled against Him alone.

What does Jesus do? Pallid, trembling, He turns to His Father and humbly exclaims: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." What response will the humble prayer of the Son of God receive? Heaven is shut...there is no answer! He wishes to endure even this pain to obtain for us humble perseverance in prayer, and constant patience although Heaven seems closed to our supplications. Ah, good Jesus! there is no suffering which You have not undergone for our comfort and example.

But follow your Jesus, O my soul, Who, urged by love, proceeds further and further on the way of sorrow. The frightful procession of all the sins, of all the crimes of the sons of Adam present themselves to His mind and lacerate His Heart. Yet He sees that He must take on Himself this loathsome burden, and appear before the most pure eyes of His Father, covered with the filthiness of sin. It is impossible for the human mind to understand or even to imagine the horrible torture which the blessed and most innocent soul of Jesus now suffered! Already He had piteously complained, saying by the mouth of the prophet: "The wicked have wrought upon My back!" Oh, how greatly oppressed is the dear Savior under the weight of so many sins!"

But surely the Divine Lamb Who is about to immolate Himself to Divine Justice so often offended by men, after having satisfied for human iniquity in sacrificing His precious life upon a gibbet to take away the sins of the world, can He not at least hope that men acknowledging so great a benefit, will banish sin forever and remain always faithful to Him Who suffered so much to save them from eternal death?

Ah, poor Jesus, would that it were thus! But instead ... a picture more horrible than the preceding opens before His mind. He sees that even after having redeemed mankind by so much suffering and having washed the earth with His Blood: even after having infused the Divine Spirit into His faithful, and made the earth a Paradise of Grace through the Eucharist: ah! even after so many excesses of charity, He still sees sin holding sway in the world. He sees His holy law trampled underfoot, His Church and ministers persecuted, His grace neglected, His love despised ... and weepingly He says: "What profit is there in My Blood? Why pour out all My Blood? Why die amid the agonies of a gibbet, if men, ungrateful for so many benefits, will afterwards give themselves over to the power of the demon and to eternal perdition? When will the sway of sin end in the world?"

And the good Jesus casting His glance upon all the ages to come, beholds sin in all the centuries to follow, in each succeeding year, every day, and at each moment! And the weight of these sins heavily oppress Him, and make Him repeat: "The wicked have wrought upon my back; they have lengthened their iniquity!" My soul, will you still be among those who lengthening this chain of sin and, repeatedly

putting off their promised conversion, wrench from the Heart of Jesus that cry so full of righteous sorrow? Oh, how horrible is sin after a God has shed His Blood to destroy it! Oh how horrible is sin in a soul already cleansed by that divine Blood!in souls united to the Heart of Jesus by Holy Communion! Oh most afflicted Savior, with great reason do You lament and weep! But if Jesus with great reason weeps for the sins of the redeemed in general, what does He not suffer at foreseeing the sins of His intimate friends, of the souls consecrated to Him? "Oh beloved souls," He exclaims, "souls of My peace, who are the intimate friends of my Heart, who live in My house, eat of My bread and nourish yourselves at My table, why do you pierce My Heart by sin? People of My Heart, what have I ever done to you? In what have I grieved you? I have slaked your thirst with the Heavenly waters of My grace, and you have given Me gall! I have satiated you with the precious manna of My Flesh and you have struck Me with blows and scourgings! Oh My people, what have I done to you? In what have I grieved you? I have prepared you a throne in Heaven and you have presented Me a gibbet! Dear Soul of my vineyard, beloved of My Heart, what more could I have done for you that I have not done? What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard that I have not done to it? And for so much love you return Me brambles and thorns!"

(Meditate in silence)

OFFERING: Oh my afflicted Savior, I offer You my heart and the hearts of all those men who burn with the fire of perfect love, to repay somewhat Your own infinite love. Grieving for my coldness and that of others, I offer You, oh good Jesus, that holy ardor with which the ancient patriarchs sighed for Your coming, and that holy zeal by which Your Apostles spread Your Name throughout the whole world.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Oh my suffering Redeemer, I offer You that perfect and most tender compassion which Your Immaculate Mother, pierced in her soul by the sword of sorrow, offered You at the sight of Your sufferings; and that most perfect gratitude with which, for the whole human race, she thanked You, praised You and blessed You in acknowledging the infinite benefits of Your Redemption.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

My agonizing Jesus, I, a wretched creature, not being able to give You that comfort which I would, offer You the joy given to the Trinity and the Angels of Heaven, when You did fulfill, with such pain and with such love, the great work of Redemption; at the same time beseeching You that all the redeemed may be made to understand well this mystery of infinite love.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Third Quarter: The Great Fiat

Contemplate, Oh redeemed Soul, how your Savior, His Heart transpierced by man's ingratitude, falls prostrate in agony upon the ground. He is alone, abandoned, with no one to aid Him, Who has not refused to extend His hand to the weak and the afflicted, and even to make a resting place of His Breast for His Apostle, who, tired, laid his head upon it! Rise up, faithful soul, the moment has come in which to make Jesus suffering a return of love. What would you have done if on the night of the Passion you had found yourself in Gethsemane close to the agonizing Jesus? My dearest Lord, I wish to raise You up from the earth ... to offer You my heart, upon which to rest Your drooping Head and then to say a word which will console You. My most sweet Savior, I love You, I love You, I love You! I wish to see love for You, to obtain love for You, to have all love You. I wish to consume life itself to have You loved, loved greatly, loved always, loved by all Your redeemed.

My sweet Jesus, I have said that I would spend even life itself to have You loved; to make sacrifice for this, no matter how great; yet when I meet some slight contradiction, some small humiliation, a refusal, a reproof an unkindness ... do I bear it? Do I really love sacrifice? ... do I rejoice in being able to offer You the mortification of passion? ... Good Jesus, I am ashamed to answer ... But here close to You; here at the school of suffering and love, I wish to learn, my sweet Master, to mortify and sacrifice myself in all things and for love of You.

Meanwhile the hours of His mortal agony pass slowly for Jesus ... He, the God of Heaven and earth, languishes prostrate upon the ground, and no one is mindful of Him. But what are the disciples doing? They sleep!...Ah, Jesus on the night of His Passion had to undergo even this pain of desertion of His dear ones; and He felt in His Heart the whole bitterness of it! That sorrow He then accepted, even desired it; but now He does not wish it any longer; rather He wants His redeemed to hold vigil around Him, meditating on His Passion. But instead the greater part sleep the sleep of the ungrateful, which consists in the forgetfulness of Him Who loves and benefits us. Oh, what an excess of ingratitude and hard-heartedness! Oh good Jesus, You are not known; for if we but knew You, we would always think of You, and our hearts would not beat except for You.

While Jesus is grieving alone and prostrate upon the ground, behold an Angel of Heaven comes to comfort Him. With the humility of an obedient son, Jesus receives His Father's messenger, ready to submit to His Commands. The Angel has come to strengthen Him, but not to console Him, nor to lighten His pains, nor to take from His hands the bitter chalice. Indeed He encourages Jesus to bear up under the battle He is to wage, and to receive bravely the blows which Heaven, the world, and hell will hurl at Him; Heaven because the eternal Justice of the Father was about to punish in Him all the iniquity of men; the world, which unable to endure the holiness of the Son of God, was preparing a Cross for Him; and hell, which through hatred of the Saint of Saints, excites the enemies of Jesus Christ to greater cruelty, and more spiteful outrage. Wherefore the Angel exhorts Him to drink to the very dregs the abominable chalice of human iniquity, to become, as it were, cursed for us, to bear the whole weight of Divine Vengeance. Meanwhile Justice and Mercy await the fiat of Jesus, in which they will be reconciled forever. Heaven awaits it, that it might be peopled by holy men; the earth awaits it, yearning to see the malediction merited by its first sin blotted out by the Precious Blood of the Divine Redeemer; the just

imprisoned in the bosom of Abraham, await it, that they might again become the children of God and see the gates of Heaven reopened to them.

But how greatly does this fiat cost Jesus. He, the most innocent, He, the Holy and Immaculate One - must put on the loathsome garb of the sinner, of the wicked: He must appear as the guilty one, and make our iniquities His own. Immeasurable is the anguish this causes Him, and makes Him repeat: "Let this Chalice pass from Me!" But at the same time He sees that we are lost if He does not take the guilt of our offenses upon Himself, if He does not consent to the scourges of the punisher, and wash away our iniquities in His Blood ... Therefore with a most generous burst of heroic love, Jesus pronounces His sublime fiat.

He says fiat -- "Thy will be done" -- and thus He consents to shoulder all our misdeeds, and as if guilty of them, accepts, and even calls upon Himself these horrible chastisements; wherefore He says fiat to the thorns to expiate for our evil thoughts; fiat to the scourging to punish in Himself our sins of sensuality; fiat to the insults, the spittle and the blows to atone for our pride; fiat to the vinegar and gall, in satisfaction for our numberless sins of speech and gluttony; fiat to the cross and nails, to repair for our disobedience; fiat to those three hours of tearful agony on the cross to heal all our wounds, to remedy all our evils; fiat to His death to give us eternal life! Oh precious fiat which rejoices Heaven, saves the world, and overthrows hell! Fiat that breaks so many chains, dries so many tears! Thanks be to You, Oh good Jesus; thanks for so generous a fiat. I bless You and thank You in the name of all men.

(Meditate in silence)

OFFERING: Holy Father, Who in reparation for our rebellions and disobediences did wish to be honored by the generous fiat of Jesus in Gethsemane, I offer You that same fiat in expiation for all the offenses which Your adorable Majesty has received from my rebellious and stubborn Will, beseeching You to grant me perfect docility and submission through the merits of the same fiat.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Holy Father, through the glory which the generous fiat of Jesus in Gethsemane procured for You, I beseech You to pardon me every fault of rebellion and disobedience, and to grant me the grace henceforth to love fully submissive to Your holy will and to the will of my superiors for love of You.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Holy Father, through the generous effort and the anguish which the fiat uttered in Gethsemane cost Jesus, I beg You to grant to me, to all the souls consecrated to You, and to all Christians, the spirit of holy fortitude and constancy, united to a generosity which will count as light every sacrifice for Your glory.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Last Quarter: The Blood of Jesus and Its Fruits

My Jesus has now uttered His great fiat! But the effort causes Him to fall again upon the earth, crushed beneath the enormous weight with which He had burdened Himself. Oppressed on the one hand by the divine Justice, which considers Him as universal victim upon whom are to be united all sin and its punishment; and on the other hand by His infinite desire to fulfill His divine mission as Redeemer of the world, which latter is preparing for Him that baptism of blood so greatly desired by Him.

Ah! in truth, the good Jesus can now be considered as choice wheat ground between two millstones, and as sweet grapes trodden in the wine-press! Indeed, such is the intense agony which oppresses His Heart that He begins to sweat Blood from all His members; and this so copiously, that it trickles down to the ground! Oh, how much has that great fiat cost Jesus! Oh, how much He has had to suffer in order to become debtor for our sins! And what shame for me who refuse to make even the least sacrifice, while I see my God freely become victim for love of me. "He was offered because it was His own will."

But why, sweet Jesus, why torture Yourself thus with infinite pain, You Who with one sole prayer, with one sigh, with one beat of Your Heart, could have saved the world? But a prophet had already said that the redemption of Jesus would be a copious redemption. And truly it is a copious redemption which He has wrought, for by it we are moreover restored to the honor enjoyed by the innocent, the just and the saints!

Only a God could have accomplished so great a work! But Jesus is not yet satisfied; in His incomprehensible love He wishes that by means of His sufferings there be placed in our hands as some thing absolutely ours, the rich treasures of His merits, that by them we might obtain every good from the most High. What more could be desired? Yet there are gifts so great that man could not have dared to ask for them, nor even thought of being able to acquire them. But the infinite charity of our Blessed Savior thinks of them, and with the voice of His Blood, and the sighs of His afflicted Heart He obtains for us from His Father the supreme grace of being raised up even to the Embrace of the Divinity, by means of the Eucharist which He had that same night instituted. And as if this is not enough to satisfy a charity which knows no limits, He wishes that His Spirit, the Divine Paraclete, be infused and remain permanently in our souls. "I shall ask the Father," He had said that same night to His Apostles, "I shall ask the Father, and He shall send you the Holy Spirit." And now here in Gethsemane, suffering and dripping Blood, He fulfills such a promise meriting for us the infusion of the Divine Paraclete, and thus elevating man to the highest degree of happiness, grace and glory.

Jesus can now do no more for us; yet there remains to Him one more desire. He remembers that His Father has said to Him: "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations as Your inheritance;" and raising His bloodstained Face to Heaven, He asks that among those nations promised to Him as His inheritance, He might have chosen bands of espoused souls who will be the beloved of His Heart, faithful disciples following His example, and upon whom He can pour forth the abundance of those graces merited by Him with so much pain. "Give Me souls, give Me souls, oh Father, and all else will I give You, even My life which will be consummated on the cross for them. Give Me souls."

And among all these souls Jesus also chooses yours; desires it, wants it, asks it of His Father with tears, and for it in particular renews the offering of Himself and all His boundless sufferings. My soul, my soul, how greatly are you loved by that God, Who sweating blood, chose you, desired you, embraced you as spouse! And even as in a little while Jesus, from the height of the cross, will say to His Mother, "Behold your son," and in the person of John will consign to her all the redeemed, so in Gethsemane He turns to His Father and says: "Behold Your children. I, Your Son by nature, hold the place of sinful man, that the sinner might take My place and become Your child by grace. For Me, O Father, sufferings; for sinners, pardon and peace; for Me death, for him life; for Me, abandonment, for him a perfect, blessed and eternal union with Thee ... Behold, behold Your children ... embrace them. My Blood renders them pure, beautiful, and worthy of You. Father, I wish (Jesus had never before said "I wish," but now He says it). I wish that the souls which You have given to Me, may be one with Us, united to Us, as I with You. Remember, oh Father, that I have abased Myself to become man, that man might be raised up even to God reigning in Your own glory for all eternity."

Behold the incomprehensible mysteries of love which operate in the Heart of a God Who sweats blood for men! Behold the admirable fruits of the Blood of Jesus! Silence, admiration and generous love; these, oh redeemed Soul, Soul espoused to a God become man, is the only return you can make to the Great, and Holy, and Infinite Love, Who immolates Himself for you!

(Meditate in silence)

OFFERING: Holy Father, with a heart penetrated with the most vivid gratitude, I thank You in the name of all men, for giving us a Redeemer so good and so generous, through Whom, with infinite advantage, we have recovered the blessings lost by original sin. I offer You for the salvation of all the redeemed, the Blood which He shed, beseeching You to grant that the fruits of the redemption be as copious as the redemption itself and that the good Jesus be known, loved and blessed by all the children of Adam for all eternity.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Holy Father, I offer the Precious Blood of Jesus to obtain from Your mercy the exaltation and increase of the Catholic Church, the conversion of all infidels, heretics, and sinners, the perseverance of the just, and the liberation of the souls in Purgatory. I offer It to You for the greater good of my superiors and all my dear ones. Moreover, I offer It to You for the sanctification of my soul and to obtain...

(Here one petitions for all the graces desired)

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Holy Father, Who has so loved the world as even to sacrifice Your only begotten Son amid great torment for it, grant that the world will now exceedingly love Jesus, show whole-hearted gratitude to Him, bless and exalt Him; and that the souls may be many who are perfectly united and constantly faithful to Him,

and that among that number may also be found my own poor soul. Holy Father, I offer You the sighs, the prayers, and the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, together with the Blood He shed, that You may reawaken most vividly in the hearts of all Christians devotion to the admirable mysteries of the Redemption; and with it that true and generous spirit of sacrifice, which makes the soul so like to Jesus.

(Pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one Glory Be)

Conclusion

One more glance at your Jesus, oh my Soul, oh Soul of His love and pain. The long hours of the Agony in Gethsemane have already passed to give place to a day of outrage and to the final three hours of torture on the cross. Behold Judas comes to betray Him ... and Jesus like a meek lamb, goes to meet him! Ah, my Jesus, am I to see You in the arms of a traitor? Ah, no! rather come to my embrace; even into my heart, oh good Jesus, for I no longer wish to offend You, but always to love You.

Fruits to be Reaped from Holy Hour

- 1) To stamp upon one's heart the sufferings of Jesus and to often meditate upon them.
- 2) To excite oneself to a generous love for Jesus and to refuse Him no sacrifice.
- 3) To reflect that Jesus is no longer suffering upon earth, and no longer having need of loving services, has left us the afflicted in His place; wherefore He wishes that we give to our neighbor that sympathy and aid which He (to suffer the more) renounced during His Passion, being certain that He will consider as done to Himself that which we do to our brethren, "for whatever you do to others, you do to me." That this reflection will make charity increase within us.

This text was written by Blessed Elena Guerra, foundress of the Oblate Sisters of the Holy Spirit in Lucca, Italy (the Zistine Sisters). It was used by St. Gemma Galgani when she made her Holy Hour devotions.