

**HOLY HOUR**  
**FOR PRIESTS AND PRIESTLY VOCATIONS**

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April 2, 2007

Dear Brother Priests and Seminarians:

Of all the means to strengthen our presbyterate, the Eucharist and common prayer are the most important and most effective. Particularly when each day we pray before the Blessed Sacrament and remember one another's intentions, we strengthen our presbyteral bonds and share with one another the joys and burdens of our ministry. I would like to offer a suggestion for our common prayer.

At a Bishops' Meeting several years ago, we celebrated a Holy Hour together for priests and priestly vocations, and I was deeply moved by the experience. I decided to adapt the format we used that evening and offer it to you. This little booklet is an invitation to common prayer. Of course, we already pray the Liturgy of the Hours as our first commitment of prayer along with the Eucharist. However, our private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is crucial to our ministry and our desire to grow in holiness. I am pleased to offer this Holy Hour, and I would like to suggest that occasionally you pray this prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for the intentions of our presbyterate and our seminarians. I think it could be a helpful way for us to pray in common even though we are separated by many miles throughout the diocese; it is also a way for us to remember our priestly vocation and the many graces it encompasses.

It is my pleasure to pray for you several times each day! I value our fraternity in the Diocese of Joliet more than I can express in words.

Sincerely in Christ,

J. Peter Sartain  
Bishop of Joliet

## **OPENING PRAYER**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
In the Most Holy Sacrament of your Body and Blood,  
you join us in the saving sacrifice of your Cross.  
Be with us throughout this Hour of Grace,  
and hear our prayers for laborers in the vineyard of your Church,  
that all might be led to the heavenly kingdom,  
where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **FIRST READING**

*Strengthened by the food, he walked to the mountain of God.*

From the first Book of Kings

Elijah went a day's journey into the desert, until he came to a broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death saying: "This is enough, O LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers." He lay down and fell asleep under the broom tree, but then an angel touched him and ordered him to get up and eat. Elijah looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and ordered, "Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you." He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

## **SILENT REFLECTION**

Blessed be His most Sacred Heart.  
Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.  
Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.  
Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the paraclete.  
Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.  
Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.  
Blessed be her glorious Assumption.  
Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.  
Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.  
Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints.

## **GOSPEL**

From the Holy Gospel according to Luke

When the hour came, Jesus took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you that from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

## **OTHER SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Isaiah 61: 1-3  
Jeremiah 1: 4-9  
Ephesians 4: 1-7, 11-13  
1 Peter 5: 1-4  
Matthew 9: 35-38  
Luke 22: 14-20, 24-30  
John 10: 11-16  
John 12: 24-26  
John 15: 9-17

## **SILENT REFLECTION**

## **INTERCESSIONS**

*Adapted from the Rite of Ordination*

That we may resolve, as a sign of our interior dedication to Christ, to remain celibate for the sake of the Kingdom and in lifelong service to God and mankind; We pray to the Lord:

**LORD, KEEP US CHASTE!**

That we may resolve to maintain and deepen a spirit of prayer and to celebrate faithfully the Liturgy of the Hours for the Church and for the whole world; We pray to the Lord:

**LORD, KEEP US PRAYERFUL!**

That we may resolve to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously as the Church has handed them down to us, for the glory of God and the sanctification of Christ's people; We pray to the Lord:

**LORD, KEEP US HOLY!**

That we may resolve to exercise the ministry of the Word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith; We pray to the Lord:

**LORD, KEEP US FAITHFUL!**

"..How many now, say, 'I, would wish to see his form, his shape, his clothes, his shoes?'" Lo! You do see him, you touch him, you eat him. And you indeed desire to see his clothes, but he gives himself to you, not to see only, but also to touch and eat and receive within you.." St. John Chrysostom

*My Lord and my God!*

"...Sight, touch, taste are each three deceived; hearing alone safely is believed..." St. Thomas Aquinas

*My Lord and my God!*

## **PRAYER**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you gave us the Eucharist  
as the memorial of your suffering and death.  
May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood  
help us to experience the salvation you won for us  
and the peace of the kingdom  
where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## **THE DIVINE PRAISES**

Blessed be God.  
Blessed be His Holy Name.  
Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.  
Blessed be the name of Jesus.

“...Take this, all of you, and eat it: This is my Body which will be given up for you...This is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting Covenant...”

*My Lord and my God!*

“The cup of blessing that we bless – Is it not the sharing of the Blood of Christ? And the bread that we break – Is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?...” 1 Corinthians 10:16

*My Lord and my God!*

“...We do not receive these as ordinary food or ordinary drink; but as by the Word of God, Jesus our Savior. He was made flesh and had both flesh and blood for our salvation. (This Eucharist) has been blessed by the word of prayer instituted by Him, and from it our flesh and blood by assimilation are nourished. This, we are taught, is both the flesh and blood of Jesus Incarnate.” Saint Justin, Martyr

*My Lord and my God!*

“...The seeming bread is not bread, though sensible to taste, but the Body of Christ; and the seeming wine is not wine, though the taste would have it so, but the Blood of Christ.” Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

*My Lord and my God!*

That we may resolve to consecrate our lives to God for the salvation of His people, and to unite ourselves more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a perfect sacrifice; We pray to the Lord:

LORD, KEEP US CLOSE TO YOU!

MAY GOD WHO HAS BEGUN THIS GOOD WORK IN US,  
BRING IT TO FULFILLMENT.

### **SILENT REFLECTION**

### **LITANY FOR VOCATIONS**

Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.*  
Christ, have mercy. *Christ, have mercy.*  
Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.*

Heavenly Father, hear our prayer.

As you called Abram to be the father of many nations;  
*Inspire young people to answer your call.*

As you called Moses, tending the flocks of Jethro;  
*Provide worthy pastors to your flock in our day.*

As you called Aaron to serve your temple;  
*Call men to serve your Church in the image of Christ.*

As you spoke to awaken Samuel with your call,  
*Open the ears of your chosen ones.*

As every High Priest was taken from among men,  
*So call men to offer the holy and living sacrifice.*

As Elisha was anointed by the prophet Elijah;  
*Give them strength to follow you without looking back.*

As you purified the lips of the Prophet Isaiah;  
*Purify those preparing for priesthood and religious life.*

As you called Jeremiah from the womb;  
*Send forth young people to proclaim your word*

As you gave Saint Paul the gift of courage;  
*So fill the hearts of all sisters with the love of Christ.*

As you called the Apostles to be ambassadors for Christ;  
*So send us fervent preachers to strengthen our spirits.*

By the blessed example of Saints Peter and Paul;  
*May seminarians attain perfect maturity in you.*

*After a period of silent prayer:*

From the Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (No. 24-25).

The gift of Christ and his Spirit which we receive in Eucharistic communion superabundantly fulfills the yearning for fraternal unity deeply rooted in the human heart; at the same time it elevates the experience of fraternity already present in our common sharing at

the same Eucharistic table to a degree which far surpasses that of the simple human experience of sharing a meal. Through her communion with the body of Christ the Church comes to be ever more profoundly “in Christ in the nature of a sacrament, that is, a sign and instrument of intimate unity with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”

The seeds of disunity, which daily experience shows to be so deeply rooted in humanity as a result of sin, are countered by the unifying power of the body of Christ. The Eucharist, precisely by building up the Church, creates human community.

The Worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass is of inestimable value for the life of the Church...It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple (cf. Jn 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. If in our time Christians must be distinguished above all by the “art of prayer,” how can we not feel a renewed need to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament? How often, dear brothers and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!

*After a period of silent prayer:*

### **LITANY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST**

“...The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world...My flesh is food indeed and my Blood is drink indeed...”  
Jn 6:52-56

*My Lord and my God!*