

How to Pray a Holy Hour

Adapted from The Gregorian Institute of Benedictine College, Kansas

To pray a holy hour, all you need is a tabernacle with a lit sanctuary lamp, a Bible, and perhaps a Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (available online).

Three Rules:

1. Be Silent. Don't rattle prayers or silently review stresses. Be still exteriorly and interiorly.
2. Be Attentive. It's not simply a reading hour —reading should be an entry-point to prayer.
3. Be Alert. Sit, stand, or kneel respectfully.

Quick tip: If you get sleepy, stand up!

Minute-by-Minute

There is no one way to pray a holy hour. The following might help if you get lost in the hour, but feel free to reconfigure it to suit your needs.

:00-:05—Begin First 5 Minutes: Ask the Holy Spirit to help you, then make acts of faith, hope and charity. Tell God how you believe, trust and love him. Ask for more faith, hope and love.

Quick tip: There are great prayers to the Holy Spirit and Acts of Faith, Hope and Love in the Traditional Prayer handout

.:05-:15—Adoration Next 10 Minutes:

Participate in the leader lead session Or:

Adore God. He holds the universe like a seed in the palm of his hand. He is all powerful, all good, more beautiful than we can imagine, and more real than the small things that we grasp so easily. Imagine Christ sitting with you. Tell him: "Oh my God, I adore your divine greatness from the depths of my littleness; you are so great, and I am so small." or "Glory be ..."
Repeat as long as necessary.

Quick Tip: Try the Te Deum in the Traditional Prayer handout. Scriptural helps for adoration—Exodus 33:18-23; Song of Songs 2:8-17; Matthew 2:1-11; John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians, 2:6-11

.:15-:25–Contrition Next 10 Minutes: Offer reparation. It's not your love for God, but his for you that saves. Examine your conscience. Offer reparation for the sins of the world. Pray: "Oh my Jesus, I am so sorry. Forgive me." (Imagine Jesus on the cross; kiss each wound.)

Quick tip: Scriptures for contrition—1Corinthians13:4-7; Colossians 3:5-10; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; James 3:2-12; 1 John 1:5-2:6; Penitential Psalms: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 142

.:25-:40–Meditation Next 15 Minutes: Contemplate God's action.

Participate in the leader lead session Or:

You may wish to meditatively pray the Stations of the Cross or a Rosary.
Or:

Scriptural meditation. Read a brief Gospel passage. Imagine the scene. Notice Christ's reactions. Think of three ways the passage applies to your own life. Meditate on each line.

Doctrinal meditation. Read Scripture or Catechism passages that apply to a doctrine of the Church. Appreciate God's plan and find ways it applies to you. (Perhaps: Sun, Resurrection; Mon, Incarnation; Tues, Mercy/confession; Wed, Holy Spirit; Thurs, Eucharist; Fri, Passion; Sat., Mary).

Life meditation. Or, deepening your examination of conscience, look at your own life. Which kind of pride do you most fall into? Selfishness (valuing yourself most), Vanity (valuing others opinions most), Sensuality (valuing comforts most). Pray for the opposite virtues: Charity (serving others first), Fidelity (putting Christ's opinion first), Discipline (accepting your crosses)

.:40-:50–Thanksgiving Next 10 Minutes: Express gratitude for all God's gifts. He didn't just create you, he sustains your existence out of love in every moment. Thank him for literally everything, and be specific: food, shelter, clothing, health, family, friends, teachers, coworkers, home, and most of all spiritual gifts —faith, hope, love, this time of prayer, the Catholic faith, the disciples who reached you. Thank God for answers to prayer.

Thank him for crosses. Thank him for creating you and caring so much for you that he died for you.

Quick tip: Scriptures for thanksgiving -Genesis 1; Genesis 8:15-22; Job 1:13-22; Daniel 3:46ff.; Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 17:11-19; Psalms: 8, 65, 66, 100, 111

.:50-:55–Petition God Next 5 Minutes: Ask God for what you and others need. He is the king of the universe. He's in control, even when it isn't obvious.

Pray for: The Church, the pope's intentions, for those who are suffering, for priests and bishops, for religious, for vocations, for your country, your family, for what you need most in the spiritual life.

Pray for peace and the protection of the institution of the family.

Pray for those who have asked for prayers.

.:55-1:00 Final 5 Minutes: Make a resolution to act on a light of the Holy Spirit you received: something doable and checkable. Ask the Blessed Mother to help you, perhaps with Marian prayers from the Traditional Prayer handout.