

# Devotions For The Watch Before The Blessed Sacrament

## Maundy Thursday

### Introduction

Jesus said to them, “*My heart is full of sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me.*” (Matthew 26:38).

The Passover Meal finished, Jesus led his followers to Gethsemane, and there he prayed. He asked them to be with him, to stay awake, to watch, and guard against temptation (Matthew 26:40-41, Mark 14:37-38; Luke 22:46).

On Maundy Thursday we gather to celebrate the Last Supper, just as the Disciples did so long ago. We also come to pray with Jesus. We come in prayer and silence to remember the last hours of his earthly life. We come to reflect on the mighty acts of God accomplished in Jesus for the salvation of all. For centuries Christians have observed a time of intense watching and prayer on Maundy Thursday evening.

It is important to use one’s imagination, aided by the Scriptures, to contemplate Jesus’ Agony in the Garden. This is a time to honestly face our own denials of Jesus and seek God’s forgiveness. Silence is key, as we allow the story to reveal a deeper awareness of God’s presence.

*Pray* the prayers and readings. There is no hurry. Read slowly; pause; ponder. Seek God in the Word of Scripture, in the silence and in the quietness of your heart and mind. Observe the times for silence and reflection indicated. Allow yourself the experience of the darkness without and the silence within. Come to the garden with our Lord: watch and pray, if only for a little while.

You will need a Book of Common Prayer at hand for the Psalms.

## Prayer of Intention

Bless us, O God, with a reverent sense of your presence, that we may be at peace and may worship you with all our mind and spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## A time of silence

### Pray

God our Father, whose Son our Lord Jesus Christ in a wonderful Sacrament has left us a memorial of his passion: Grant us so to venerate the sacred mysteries of his Body and Blood, that we may ever perceive within ourselves the fruit of his redemption; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Pray Psalms 142 and 55

### A Reading

Jesus told his followers, "Tonight you will all stumble in your faith on account of me, because it is written in Scripture: 'I will kill the shepherd and the sheep will scatter.' But after I rise from the dead, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." Peter said, "Everyone else may stumble but I will not." Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, tonight before the rooster crows you will say three times that you do not know me." But Peter said, "I will never say that I do not know you. I will even die with you!" And all the others said the same thing. (Matthew 26:31-35)

## A Time of Silence for Reflection and Meditation

### Pray

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## Pray Psalms 17 and 140

## A Time of Silence for Reflection and Meditation

### Pray

Heart of Jesus, think of me; Eyes of Jesus, look on me; Face of Jesus, comfort me; Hands of Jesus, bless me; Feet of Jesus, guide me; Arms of Jesus, hold me; Body of Jesus, feed me; Blood of Jesus, wash me. Jesus, make me thus your own, now and in the world to come. Amen.

## Pray Psalms 11 and 130

### A Reading

Jesus and his followers went to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, "Sit here while I pray." Jesus took Peter, James and John with him, and he began to be very sad and troubled. He said to them, "My heart is full of sorrow, to the point of death. Stay here and watch." After walking a little farther away from them, Jesus fell to the ground and prayed that, if possible, he would not have this time of suffering. He prayed, "Father! You can do all things. Take away this cup of suffering. But do what you want, not what I want." Then Jesus went back to his followers and found them asleep. He said, "Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn't you stay awake with me for one hour? Stay awake and pray for strength against temptation. The spirit wants to do what is right, but the body is weak." Again Jesus went away and prayed the same thing. Then he went back and again found them asleep, because their eyes were very heavy. And they did not know what to say to him. After Jesus prayed a third time, he went back to his followers and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? That is enough. The time has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to sinful people." (Mark 14:32-41)

## A Time of Silence for Reflection and Meditation

### Pray

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life:

Grant us to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Pray Psalms 42-43, 121 and 143

A Time of Silence for Reflection and Meditation

Pray

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Pray Psalms 134 and 126

A Reading

Jesus said to his followers, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house; I would not tell you if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you. After I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me so that you may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where you are going? How can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. The only way to the Father is through me." Jesus prayed, "I am coming to you now. But I pray these things while I am still in the world so that my followers can have all of my joy in them. I have given them your teaching. And the world has hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world but to keep them safe from the Evil One. For their sake, I am making myself ready to serve so that they can be ready for their service of the truth. I pray for these followers, but I am also praying for all those who will believe in me because of their teaching." (John 14:1-6; 17:13-15, 19-20)

A Time of Silence for Reflection and Meditation

Pray

God be in my head and in my understanding; God be in my eyes and in my looking; God be in my mouth and in my speaking; God be in my heart and in my thinking; God be at my end and in my departing. Amen.

Pray Psalms 62, 138 and 145

A Time of Silence for Reflection and Meditation

Concluding Prayers

Psalm 117

Praise the Lord, all you nations;  
    laud him, all you peoples.  
For his loving-kindness toward us is great  
    and the faithfulness of the Lord endures for ever.

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

O God, our true life: I praise, bless and adore you; I worship you, glorify you and give thanks to you for your great glory. Amen.

Blessed, praised, hallowed, worshipped and adored be our Lord Jesus Christ: on his throne of glory in heaven, in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and in the hearts of his faithful people; may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.