

Visiting with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament

If Jesus were *visibly* present as you entered the chapel, I feel sure that he would tell you how glad he was to see you. He might say: “Welcome, I am glad that you have come to spend some time with me.” When we spend time with Jesus, we are spending time with the one who knows us the most and loves us the best. We may not always *feel* that Jesus is our best friend, but we are called to believe this in faith even when he *seems* distant and uncaring.

If you have a prayer format for a holy hour that works for you, use it. But, if you are not sure how to spend an hour with Jesus some of the followings suggestions might help.

Suggestion #1. Begin with Prayer.

As you begin your hour you might want to say a prayer like the following:

*“Jesus, thank you for being here for me.
Teach me what I need to know to pray well.
Draw me into your divine presence so that I may be fully present to you during this hour.
Help me to be open and honest about what is going on in my life.
Help me to be open and receptive to any message you may want
to communicate to me during our time together.
Mary, our Mother, pray for me.” Amen.*

Suggestion #2. Be Real with Jesus.

Spiritual directors often remind us that one reason our relationship with Jesus may feel flat and empty is that we are not sharing with him the real stuff in our lives. In Exodus 5:22-23, we find a good example of honest communication with God. Moses says:

*“Lord, why do you treat this people so badly? And why do you send me on such a mission?
Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has maltreated this people of yours,
and you have done nothing to rescue them.”*

This is a beautiful example of a man expressing his frustration with his mission and with God. Sometimes we may say: “O my God, I am heartily sorry for all my sins ...”, when in fact we may not be very sorry. The truth may be that we may be rather fond of some of them. When people ask us “how we are doing?” most of us reply, “great”. The truth may be that we are not doing so “great”. We may be feeling depressed, fearful, stressed out, etc. If our relationship with Jesus is going to be real, and not false, we must learn how to share with him what is *really* going on with us. If we are angry or frustrated with him, others, ourselves or with our life situation, we need to let Jesus know. Sure, he already knows what is going on with us, but for our emotional and spiritual well being, *we* need to *name* and *express* what we are really thinking and feeling about stuff. So after you greet Jesus, take time to be quiet and to get in touch with what is going on in your heart, mind and body. Just *naming* stuff can be very helpful “I feel angry”, “I feel very sad”, “I feel joyful”, “I feel frustrated and stressed out”, “I am jealous of ___” “I am struggling with lust.” “I feel very materialistic.” “Jesus, I can’t seem to make contact with you. You seem so distant.” “Jesus, why ___?” These are a sample of some things that we might be thinking and feeling. Honesty about our thoughts and feelings and about what is going on in our lives is *absolutely essential* to a healthy relationship with God.

Suggestion #3. Listen for a Response from Jesus.

Take a few minutes to be quiet with what you have said to Jesus about what is going on in your life. Perhaps he may have a word for you. Perhaps, he may not. Many saints experienced long periods of spiritual dryness in their relationship with God. At times, we may experience times when we think “the line is always busy” when we try to make contact with God. Sometimes the reason for our spiritual desert may be our own doing. Sometimes the Lord may be permitting us to experience spiritual dryness in order to purify us. (In my book on *Prayer* (P181-202), I respond to six questions on this topic of spiritual desolation).

One possible way to get in touch with what Jesus might be saying to us is to try to get in touch with what is in our ‘heart of hearts’, which is where the Holy Spirit resides. If a friend said to you what you have just said to Jesus, there is a good chance that what you might say to your friend from your heart of hearts (and not from the top of your head) is what Jesus might say to you. Developing an inner ear for the voice of the Spirit is both a *grace* and *art*. It takes prayer, effort and perhaps the help of a spiritual counselor.

Suggestion #4. Engage in Spiritual Reading.

If time permits, you may want to spend a portion of your holy hour in spiritual reading. In 2 Timothy 3:16, we read these words: “*All scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction and for training in righteousness*”. A good spiritual book, be it the scriptures or some other spiritual book, is an excellent way to nurture our soul. What kind of book should we read? One which “clicks” with us personally, a book that we feel at home with like a wise and trusted friend. The scriptures, especially the New Testament or a good spiritual book, will nourish, illuminate and give direction to our deepest selves. Without regular periods of reflection, we run the risk of becoming victims of passing fads and of allowing ourselves to be led by the wisdom of the world rather than by the wisdom of God. Spiritual reading should be done *slowly* and *prayerfully*. When a verse, word or sentence strikes you, close the book and ponder the word that spoke to you.

Suggestion #5. Offer Prayers of Petition and Intercession.

Consider using a portion of your hour in intercessory prayer (prayer for others) and petitionary prayer (prayer for oneself). So many people and issues need “prayer warriors” to intercede for them. We will never know in this life how our prayers of intercession impacted the lives of others and sustained them in difficult times. Praying regularly for our own spiritual transformation, for our relationships and for the things that impact our lives, is also an important part of our spiritual life.

We can carry out our prayers of intercession and petition in whatever way we feel led to do so. I often pray a decade of the rosary for a particular intention and for other people and issues. I also use “one liner prayers”. For example:

“Jesus, help me to have a deeper sense of your unconditional love for me”.

“Holy Spirit, help me to hear and respond to your promptings”.

“Jesus, may your healing hand be upon all who are suffering, especially N___”.

“Jesus, bless and watch over my loved ones”.

“Jesus, be with all who are carrying a big cross”.

When we bring the needs of others to Jesus, we are doing what Mary did at Cana. She told Jesus that they had “no more wine”. There are so many people in our world that have run out of “the wine” they need to follow the ways of Jesus.

As your Pastor, I encourage you to often pray for the spiritual and material welfare of the parish. Pray that we may grow in our ability to hear and respond with love to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Pray for the ministries of the parish and for all who serve in them. Pray for your priests, that we may be good shepherds and pray for the rest of our parish and school staff, that they may also be good servants of the Lord and his people. (For more on the Prayer of *Petition* and *Intercession*, see my book on *Prayer*, pages 77-100. On these pages, I deal with the problem of unanswered prayer.)

Suggestion # 6. End with a Prayer of Thanksgiving.

Even if your prayer was distracted and even if you think that you are being “sent away empty”, thank God for the time you were able to spend in his presence and ask him to help you to be a good witness to all whom you meet this day.