

VISITATION OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

What does this custom symbolize and what does it mean to those who practice it? Why do parishioners walk through seven churches on Holy Thursday? This is one of the most common traditions practiced during Holy Week throughout the Catholic world and whose explanation is due to the seven routes that Jesus made from the Last Supper on Holy Thursday to Calvary in His crucifixion. This devotion symbolizes the intention of the Catholic faithful to accompany Jesus in a spiritual way during His journey with His apostles.

The following meditations may be used for your visits. You are encouraged to use your own personal prayers if desired.

FIRST VISIT

FROM THE UPPER ROOM TO GETHSEMANE, JESUS IS TAKEN PRISONER AND BROUGHT BEFORE ANNAS (St. John 18:1-14)

Meditation: It would be about 10 o'clock at night when Jesus arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane. His soul was filled with sadness. He went into agony at the sight of the sufferings that were coming upon Him and experienced the ingratitude of humanity. He prayed for about three hours with tears, blood and sweat, the drops of which fell to the ground. Here Judas arrived and with a kiss, he gave Him to those who came to apprehend Him, although rather it was His Love for you that permitted Him to be taken.

My Lord, Jesus Christ: You said, "I am the Bread of life, which has come down from heaven. If anyone eats of this Bread, he will live forever, and the Bread that I will give is My flesh. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day." (St. John 6:47-54). I promise to always receive Communion with living faith and awareness that You are in me, to fortify grace in me.

(Pray an Our Father and spend some time in adoration)

SECOND VISIT

NIGHT TRIAL BEGINS BEFORE CAIAPHAS (St. Mt. 26, 57-68).

Meditation: Jesus, handcuffed like a crude evildoer, questioned by Annas about His disciples and teaching, responds with fortitude and meekness to ask those who have listened to Him and who know well what He has said and taught. A guard slapped Him in a way that most certainly made him stagger.

My Lord Jesus Christ: On the eve of giving me the greatest proof of love by dying for me on the cross, You wanted to leave me Your Body and Blood in a Sacrament, to be present in my life so that I could take You as food. I come to thank You for this immense gift that even the angels have not received and ask You to grant me the grace to contemplate You face to face for all eternity in heaven.

(Pray an Our Father and spend some time in adoration)

THIRD VISIT

JESUS BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN (St. Luke 22:66-71).

Meditation: Here Jesus has to hear how His teachings are misrepresented. How false testimonies are cited as evidence against him. How He is challenged by his interrogators to proclaim that He is the Son of God, but with no intention of recognizing Him as such. How Peter denies knowing Him. How He is condemned to death.

My Lord Jesus Christ: I firmly believe that the Holy Mass is really the sacrifice of Calvary, which makes You present on our altars. I firmly believe that the bread and wine that You consecrated at the Last Supper became Your Body and Your Blood, and become again in every Mass through the words of consecration of our priests who represent You.

(Pray an Our Father and spend some time in adoration)

FOURTH VISIT

JESUS BEFORE PILATE. (St. John 18:28-38).

Meditation: Jesus is accused before Pilate of being an evildoer, a troublemaker of the people, who forbids paying tribute to Caesar and who proclaims himself king. However, He also announces that everyone who is of the truth hears His voice. What His enemies are asking for is that He be sentenced to death.

Lord Jesus, who in the Eucharist remains with us to be our food, I want to thank you for the Sacrament of Holy Orders that you instituted on Holy Thursday. You transmitted to your apostles and their successors until the end of the centuries, the power to consecrate the bread and wine in the Holy Mass. Without the Priesthood, we would not have You in the Eucharist.

(Ask for known or unknown priests as well)

(Pray an Our Father and spend some time in adoration)

FIFTH VISIT

JESUS BEFORE HEROD ANTIPAS. (St. Luke 23:5-12)

Meditation: Herod, curious, but without compromising his own plans, is glad to see Jesus. He hopes to be entertained, watching Christ perform some miracle. Jesus is silent as Herod attempts to flatter him. Having no answer, he reviles Him, mocks Him, and places upon Him a white robe.

I believe, Jesus, that you are present in the Most Holy Eucharist, under the sacramental signs of bread and wine. I promise to venerate in Your churches, Your Real Presence with all devotion and reverence. I will worship You in the Sacred Host because I firmly believe in Your presence that the eyes of my body cannot see. Help me with Your grace to visit You often in Your Tabernacle and to live in Your favor always.

(Pray an Our Father and spend some time in adoration)

SIXTH VISIT

JESUS AGAIN BEFORE PILATE (Matthew 27:15-30)

Meditation: Pilate recognizes that Jesus is neither a troublemaker nor has he committed any crime that He is accused of. Pilate seems to want to set Christ free, but he gives in to the pressures of His enemies who have sworn to end Jesus. They are uncomfortable with the Lord. His conduct and His teachings clash with their vested interests. Jesus is condemned to death on the cross, scourged, and crowned with thorns.

I come to visit you, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. I carry the enormous burden of my lifelong sins. With great repentance, I come to You, as to my Physician, my Savior. I thank You, Lord, for all the immense compassionate love You have had in leaving within my reach the Sacrament of Confession that purifies me in order to receive Your Eucharistic Body.

(Pray an Our Father and spend some time in adoration)

SEVENTH VISIT

JESUS SENTENCED TO DEATH. (St. Luke 23:24-25)

Meditation: Jesus has died on the cross amid unspeakable pain, mockery, contempt; abandoned by God. Mother and the friends who have accompanied Him in these hard times have not been able to help Him. Some friends reverently bury His body. The scriptures have been fulfilled. Now we wait for the third day. Christ, the mighty one in deeds and words, has said that He will rise again.

Jesus in the Sacrament: my Savior, my God: I want to worship You in all the Tabernacles of the earth, where you are abandoned while people pass hurriedly pressured by material concerns. I ask your forgiveness for my forgetfulness and my lack of attention to Your ever-vigilant love, always waiting for me here. I promise to visit You more often.

I ask your forgiveness for all those who, with little faith, forget to approach Holy Communion, and I regret having also not received You, burdened by my own preoccupations, or with the indifference that makes me accustomed to sin.

I put my good intentions in Your hands. Give me strength with Your grace to break with my faults and live by feeding myself frequently with Your Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

(Pray an Our Father and spend some time in adoration)

