

Sample Format for Children's Holy Hour

General norms for the worship of the Eucharist are found in Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, published by Catholic Book Publishing Co., Ó 1976. It is important that those who plan a children's Holy Hour be familiar with the teachings and rubrics of this ritual text. What follows are only suggested adaptations for children that are in harmony with the official ritual book. You can mix and match ideas and tailor them to fit the desires of your group. The amount of time spent in silence will vary according to the ages of the children attending. Some weeks you may have more younger children, so your periods of silence will not be as long. When there are more older children present you will of course be able to have longer periods of silence)

Exposition with incense – priest or deacon (it is better if the children are not in the pews but allowed to be on the floor at the foot of the altar, outside the sanctuary). If you are in a parish where there is Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration, then of course the Eucharist is already exposed and this step is omitted.

Opening remarks (all are kneeling) – the priest (or leader) may begin with a few opening words to bring our hearts and minds to Jesus. He is here in the monstrance in the Blessed Sacrament. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us to pray during this hour (prayer to Holy Spirit from booklet).

First act of prostration for all – may last just a short time

We believe Jesus is really present here in the Eucharist. We want to express this belief so we make an act of faith (Act of Faith from booklet).

Remind children that Mary is always here adoring her Son, Jesus, with us.

Thank her for the gift of her Son. Ask them if they would like to ask Mary to help them to adore Jesus and to love Him as she loves Him. Then pray one decade of the Rosary with them. The last Hail Mary may be sung (listen to the one on the CD). End with Glory be, and O My Jesus. (Don't worry about getting it exactly at 10. Let the children take turns going around the group leading each Hail Mary. Make sure the children go slowly, not rushing through the prayers.)

Now we enter into a silent prayer from the heart to thank Mary for her help.

Talk about how Jesus is truly present in the Host, our Hidden God. Talk about how much He loves us and wants to be loved by us. He waits for us night and day in the little Host. He longs to hear from us. He waits. We adore Him because He is God.

Second act of prostration before God – silence for a bit while they remain bowed down. Now is a good time to introduce them to interior prayer. Give them silence mixed with a few words from Scripture, and some thoughts to help them listen to Jesus talking to them in the silence of their hearts. Invite them to close their eyes to remain more attentive to Jesus' presence. You may ask them to tell Jesus quietly in their hearts what they would like to share with Him.

If they begin to fidget, you could begin another song. If they do not seem comfortable kneeling or sitting on their heels, they may sit directly on the floor, but in a proper way. Hopefully, the joy received from Christ in silence will overflow into songs of praise!

Alternate between silence, little phrases of love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and Scripture readings.

Contrition – little talk about how even though we try to be good we sometimes offend God. Think of the little ways we might have offended Him recently; give a few examples of small things. Then we ask Jesus to forgive us for the things we have done that were wrong. Speak to Him in the silence of your heart. Silence for a bit (Act of Hope from booklet).

God loves us and forgives us when we are sorry and ask for His mercy. He also likes for us to ask for mercy

for those who offend Him and are hard of heart. These are poor souls who need God's mercy so much but do not know of His love yet. We ask for mercy for them. Remind them of the story of Fatima (see the prayers of Fatima in the booklet).

Gospel reading/talk or story of a saint, story of the Eucharist, etc. – (depending on whether it is a priest or parent doing the talking). Take several minutes . . . the priest can give a little homily fit for children; a lay person leading might be more comfortable in telling a story of a saint and his or her love for the Eucharistic Lord (the Holy Spirit will inspire you, but it's good to prepare a bit ahead of time, too!).

Ask the children to take a minute of silence to think about what they have just heard. Then you may invite them to choose one thing they would like to do this week for Jesus.

Remember to continue to read short passages from Holy Scripture, especially the words of Jesus. Just let the Holy Spirit guide you along. There are also some suggested passages in this booklet.

Thanksgiving – you may invite the children to individually express their thanks to God. Think about all the good things we have been given—family, friends, health. Tell Jesus about them in the silence of their hearts (Act of Love from the booklet).

Third act of prostration before God – this time you may invite them to take a longer time of silence (4 – 5 minutes), and to close their eyes to receive Jesus' loving gaze upon them.

You may choose another song.

Petitions – Invite the children to take turns saying their petitions. Give them time to offer up all those whom they can think of who are in need of prayers (pray prayer for the intentions of the hour).

Ask God in the silence of your hearts to bless your family and friends and all the intentions that have been mentioned today.

Pray for the poor souls in Purgatory. Explain how they need many prayers to go to Heaven. Ask for their prayers for us and our intentions.
(Pray the prayer of St Gertrude for souls.)

Pray for all priests, pray for vocations, pray for God to show us how He wants us to serve Him. (prayer to know my vocation)

Silence

Time to say goodbye and tell Jesus thank you for blessing us today. Thank Him for the time together, for His Real Presence, etc.

If the priest or the deacon goes to the sacristy to vest for Benediction, you may want to take another song at that moment. Choose a song that is appropriate for Benediction.

Benediction/closing – pray the Divine Praises together.

If no priest is available, pray the prayers together and make the Sign of the Cross, bow and say goodbye.

End with a song of praise! (Thanksgiving)

Special Notes:

Don't be afraid to have moments of silence during the Adoration time. It is important that the children experience times of silence, as these moments are of equal importance during the Holy Hour.

If possible, it is very beneficial to have a priest available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation during the last half hour, to show the children how good and merciful Jesus has been to give us priests with the power to cleanse our souls from sins committed after baptism.

A traveling pilgrim statue of Mary, that may be placed at the foot of the altar during Adoration, and which can go home with a different family each week, has proven to be very fruitful. The family may pray the Rosary in front of the statue the week that it is in their home and also invite their friends to join them.