

Seven Sisters Apostolate



Seeking a quietness in the day, in the midst of your usual routines,
you steal away to pray for your beloved Pastor -
unbeknownst by most - effecting eternal affairs.

May God richly reward you - now and later - for your fidelity and sacrifices.

Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight.... Heb 4:13a

Prayer for Priests

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Mary, Mother of Jesus throw your mantle of purity over our priests. Protect them, guide them and keep them in your heart. Be a mother to them especially in times of discouragement and loneliness. Love them and let them belong completely to Jesus. Like Jesus, they too are your sons, so keep their hearts pure and virginal. Keep their minds filled with Jesus, and put Jesus always on their lips, so that He is the one they offer to sinners and to all they meet. Mary, Mother of Jesus, be their Mother, loving them and bringing them joy. Take special care of sick and dying priests and the ones most tempted. Remember how they spent their youth and old age, their entire lives serving and giving all to Jesus. Mary, bless them and keep a special place for them in your heart. Give them a piece of your heart, so beautiful and pure and immaculate, so full of love and humility so that they, too, may grow in the likeness of Christ. Dear Mary, make them humble like you and holy like Jesus. Amen.



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Booklet layout – special gratitude to Seven Sister, Ann Manthey





**In strengthening the priest
you strengthen the whole Church....
Strengthen the priest and
you strengthen the whole foundation,
you strengthen everything in the Church.**

**Fr. Gerald Fitzgerald, s.P., Founder
Handmaids of the Precious Blood**

Seven Sisters Apostolate

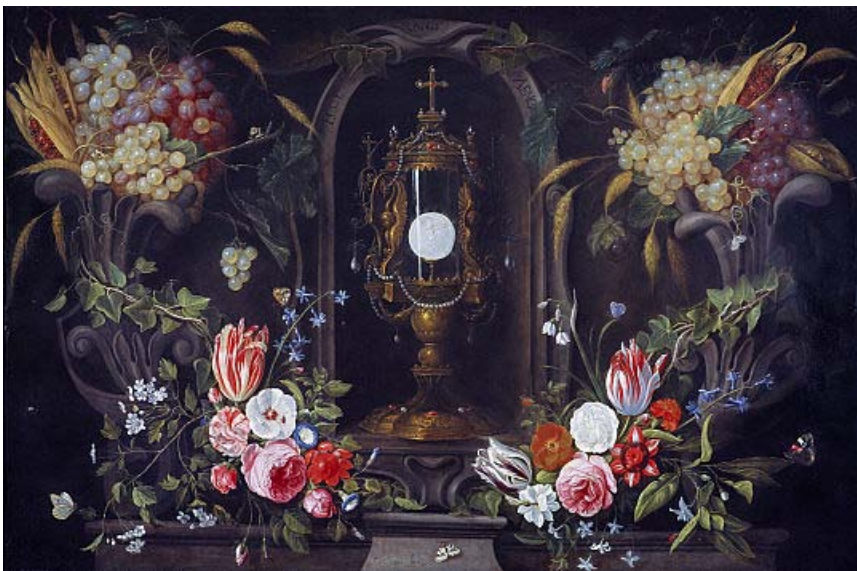


Artist: Daniel Gerhartz (1965)
Permission granted for use of image

⁶ Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷ a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head, as he sat at table.⁸ But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? ⁹ “For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor.”¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹² In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” **Gospel of Matthew 26: 6-13** (Also consider: Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:1-8; Lk 7:36-38) RSV, Catholic Ed

MISSION: Committed prayerful support toward a parish pastor through the assurance of the offering of at least one Holy Hour every day of any given week for that pastor alone – a ‘holy wasting’, as it were, for the conversion and holiness of that particular priest.

(The mission now also serves individual Archbishops, Bishops, associate priests, retired priests, hospital Chaplains, Seminary Rectors, spiritual directors—all priests.)



Artist: Jan Van Kessel (circa 1670)

STRUCTURE: The Seven Sisters apostolate for any given parish may commence when seven women commit to offering a Holy Hour exclusively for their parish Pastor – each on a distinct day of the week, thus covering a complete week. The commitment of each intercessor is to the day of the week versus a particular hour on a particular day. If a Seven Sister wishes to commit to a particular hour this is perfectly acceptable, and may, in fact, help her to be faithful to the commitment.

The Hour is ideally prayed in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament – either in an Adoration Chapel or in front of a Tabernacle – but not restricted to the parish for which the Seven Sister is a member. Thus one can stay faithful to the commitment even when traveling or when a particular parish does not offer Perpetual Adoration or perhaps have limited access to the church which houses the Tabernacle.

For whatever reason, if a Seven Sister is unable to offer her Holy Hour she is to secure her own coverage and explain the Apostolate prayer mission to the substitute. The substitute need not be a woman. If unable to secure coverage, the Seven Sister should contact the anchoress (leader of the group) for assistance.

This generous commitment of prayer is ideally for a period of one year, but can remain open-ended in time as each individual senses the call to continue.

This Apostolate should refrain from any appearance of exclusivity, and if other women learn of it and desire to pray, this is welcomed. A core group should ideally be kept as originally designated; the others may sub or commit to additional hours.

To emphasize, the Hour is offered solely for the intentions of the Pastor. If other personal intercessions weigh heavily, it is suggested that, if possible, the Seven Sister arrive early for the Hour to pray through these other intentions – or perhaps stay after the Hour is completed for the Pastor. In God's marvelous economy, this challenge that will undoubtedly present itself can in itself be offered as additional sacrifice for the benefit of the Pastor. Be assured that eventually the discipline will be formed to joyfully and completely give this Hour to the Pastor.



ANCHORESS: There will be one Seven Sister designated as the organizer and guide for each Seven Sister group - and lovingly referred to as the anchoress. In the Middle Ages the term denoted someone who withdrew from secular society *so as to be able to lead an intensely prayer-oriented, ascetic, and – circumstances permitting – a Eucharist-focused life*. The anchoress would often take up residence in a single cell room next to a church and literally live and die in that one cell.

While the Seven Sister anchoress is not called to such a rigorously austere life, the title holds some apropos sentiment. This prayer-oriented Seven Sister will thoroughly understand the prayer mission and zeal of the Apostolate. She will be the contact for the Pastor, explaining the Apostolate to him; will pray for fidelity to commitments of the members of the group; and assure that the holy endeavors of the Seven Sisters group remain proper to the mission. She will serve to field questions, help secure subs when needed and if the Pastor would have particular intentions she would be the contact. (On that note: if ever the need to inform the group about confidential prayer requests from the Pastor the anchoress should refrain from emailing, texting or the like. Conveying in person or via the telephone would be the ideal option – person to person – no voice mail.) The anchoress will agree to forward periodic encouragement emails from the Seven Sisters foundress and serve in her role at least one year if able, two years ideally.

The Seven Sisters groups will ideally consider their **year of service** as **JUNE to JUNE** – the month of the Sacred Heart, so dear to priests. However, a group may **begin** any time during the year. **A discernment period to continue** or end a current commitment to the Apostolate is ideally **reserved for May**, the month of the Immaculate Heart, also dear to the priestly heart. NOTE: If someone assumes another's Seven Sister position outside of the month of June, the anchoress may either suggest an abbreviated or extended one year length of commitment. (Example: If an intercessor cannot continue past March of a particular year, the anchoress can suggest the new Seven Sister commit to 14 months vs. 12. Likewise, if a new Seven Sister is secured in November – the anchoress may suggest she commit holy hours through the following May, discerning then as to a further commitment to prayer).

SEVEN SISTERS Apostolate

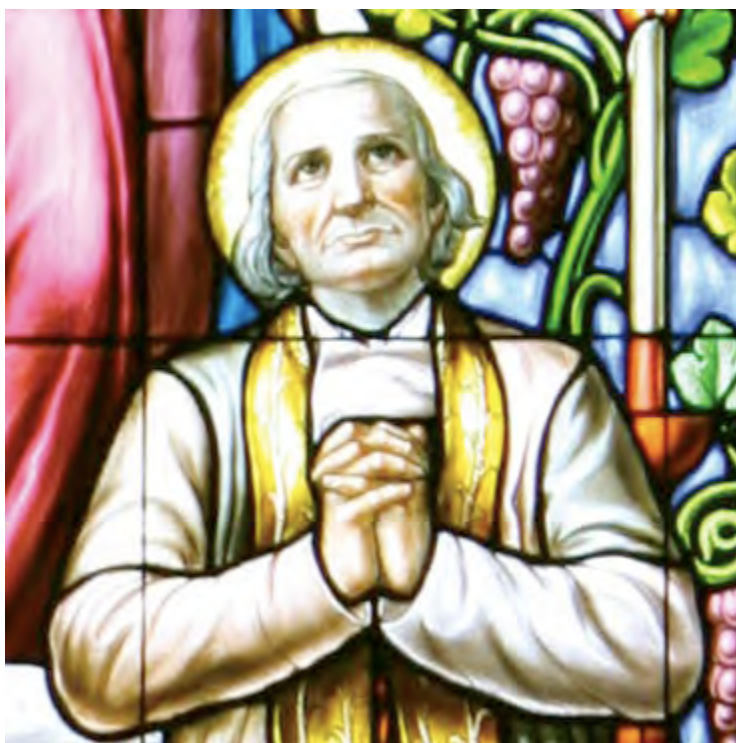
Under the tri-patronage of
Madonna of the Grapes, St John Vianney and St Margaret Clitherow



Madonna of the Grapes – Mignard, Pierre (original in Louve ~ Paris)

This image and title of Our Lady is perhaps indicative of how intimately she holds not only Jesus, but those chosen *in persona Christi*, the priests – close to her heart and ever-encouraging the centrality of the Eucharistic life. She simply and quietly offers and encourages the grapes – Jesus embraces. Our Lady, though holding Jesus securely, does so tenderly and lightly. Jesus glances from beneath the security of her veil, where there is a shadow cast on His eyes, creating for Him a veil of sorts, as well. How close is Mary in His veiled Eucharistic presence! The window in the background gives a glimpse of a world of somewhat hazy skies, perhaps a world that summons the fullness of light offered and hoped for in the Eucharistic Presence and Eucharistic life. The gaze of Jesus is on us, deliberate. Mary maintains a posture of humility, peace and contemplation – all hallmarks of the life of a Seven Sister. Let us remain faithful in our tender, hidden, prayer offerings in the splendid Eucharistic Presence, holding our pastors near our hearts, but loosely so – for they are not ours to claim, but ours to support and ours to bring to Mary, their Mother and formator.

Madonna of the Grapes, pray for us and guide us in our prayers!

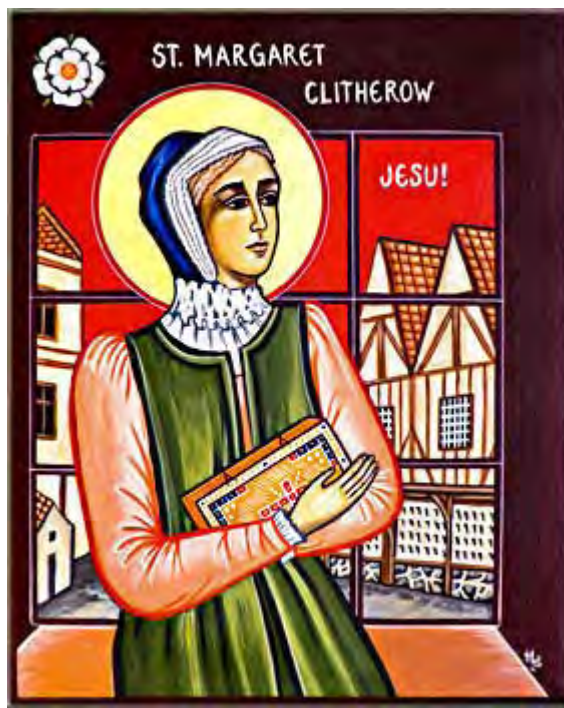


**St John Vianney, patron of all priests
FEAST DAY – August 4**

Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney (8 May 1786 – 4 August 1859), commonly known in English as **St John Vianney**, was a French parish priest who is venerated as the Patron Saint of all priests. He is often referred to as the "*Curé d'Ars*". He became internationally notable for his priestly and pastoral work in his parish because of the radical spiritual transformation of the community and its surroundings. This is attributed to his saintly life, mortification, persevering ministry in the sacrament of confession, and ardent devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Philomena.

It behooves a Seven Sister to desire and nurture a growing friendship and partnership in prayer with beloved St John Vianney. He will undoubtedly be especially generous in teaching and guiding us in the way of focus and perseverance of prayers for our pastors, while at the same time reminding us to pray for a shared and deepening devotion of our pastors to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

St John Vianney, pray for us and guide us in our prayers!



St Margaret Clitherow FEAST DAY - March 26

A convert, **St. Margaret Clitherow** (1556-1586) married and bore two sons and a daughter. She was said to be *possessed of good looks and full of wit and merriment, and of a charming personality*. During the persecution in England, St Margaret remained devoted to the true faith and attended secret Masses. So deep was her belief in the Holy Eucharist that she was imprisoned twice for her refusal to stop organizing these secret Masses. She was a staunch supporter of priests during the English persecution in both prayer and protecting them by concealing them in priest holes. Margaret said "*by God's grace all priests shall be more welcome to me than ever they were, and I will do what I can to set forward God's Catholic service.*" St Margaret was cruelly martyred by being crushed to death as she lay sandwiched between a rock and a wooden door frame while weights were incrementally dropped upon it, crushing her to death. She did not cry out but prayed "*Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, have mercy upon me.*" Moved by her saintly life, all her children entered the religious life. Anne became a nun. Henry and William both became priests. Although remaining Protestant, St Margaret's husband attested to her great love and virtue, saying "*she is the best wife in all England, and the best Catholic.*"

The Seven Sister will find a great inspiration and intercessor in dear and heroically courageous St Margaret! May we share her deep and unwavering devotion to the Holy Eucharist and our priests!

St Margaret Clitherow, pray for us and guide us in our prayers!

How do I pray during the Holy Hour? *

*Suggestions that may serve to help a Seven Sister get started, help to form a rhythm for her Holy Hours, and/or infuse some new prayer aspects into an Hour.

*I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever. I will praise you forever... in your name
I will hope... I will praise you in the presence of your saints. Psalm 52:8b, 9*



Take JOYFUL and PEACEFUL heart: each Holy Hour, each week of Holy Hours will be a distinctive **Spiritual Bouquet of prayers and sacrifices.**

**Every breath of prayer in charity has merit!
"Love is never finished." ~ Pope Benedict XVI**

The actual structure of a Holy Hour will be unique to each Seven Sister. It is prudent to form the habit to begin each Holy Hour in the humility of asking the Holy Spirit for the graces of discipline and guidance for that *particular* Hour. When we *ask, seek, knock* - the door is opened. Enter unhurried - there is a whole hour ahead! In these initial moments, one might wisely solicit the intercessory help of our patrons: **Madonna of the Grapes, St John Vianney** and **St Margaret Clitherow**. Some Sisters may be led to organize the prayer time in a similar fashion each hour prayed. Others may keep a basic prayer structure but tend toward variation as the hour proceeds. **Both are proper ways to commit to the Hour.**

Three things will keep a Seven Sister faithful to the mission of the Apostolate:

- (a) **Keep the commitment** to a Holy Hour on your designated day of the week or secure a sub if you are unable to offer the Hour yourself, keeping true to your Parish group's prayer commitment of at least one Holy Hour every day for the pastor.
- (b) **Pray only for the Pastor** (or Associate Pastor, if you are in an adjunct group specifically set up for the Associate Pastor alone) - as best as you can. Commit yourself to the school of learning the discipline and patience of this generous type of prayer. Trust the fruits of this fidelity and perseverance to be eternal ones! Every sacrifice of prayer has worth!
- (c) Sometime during the Hour **pray for a deepening devotion to Mary** for the priest for whom you pray.



As is true of most pious prayer effort, each week may present challenges. Resolving to *step over any proverbial barbed wire in the path* to arrive weekly at the Chapel is paramount. Let us make our 'yes' mean 'yes'. God's graces are sufficient. Signing oneself with holy water and crossing the threshold of the Chapel or sanctuary to meet Our Lord in His unique Presence in the Blessed Sacrament often happily dissolves (or at least diminishes) the many distractions that vie for attention while enroute.

Here are a few suggestions to persevere in your committed Holy Hour:

- St Padre Pio consistently and effectively used the **Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus** to offer prayers for all of the daily intentions he was given. Likewise, this has proven valuable for many Seven Sisters to use as the first half of their Holy Hour prayer time. (See subsequent pages for Sacred Heart image, novena formula and aids for use - for benefit of a Seven Sister intercessor.)
- Pray – each week, each month, as led – for Sanctity, Fidelity, Perseverance, Mercy/forgiveness, the Gifts of the Spirit, Fruit of the Spirit, Beatitudinal life, Maturity in particular virtues/Diminishment of vices, Regularity and Growth in the Sacramental life, Pious and frequent practice of Spiritual/Corporal works of mercy, Particular prayers written for priests (Holy cards, books, apostolates), etc. You will know.
- What is the **Pastor's namesake** – Baptismal/Confirmation/Religious name? Does he hold a special **devotion to a particular Saint**? What is the **name of the parish**? ~ Solicit prayers from these holy men/women/titles of Jesus – Utilize sacred Scripture, Litanies, Chaplets, Novenas, Holy Card or Prayer book prayers, etc. - as apropos. Some of your favorite prayers may be the right ones for the Pastor too.
- What **day of the week/month** is your Seven Sister Holy Hour? Consider following the Liturgical Calendar devotions as a theme. The Church has both **daily and monthly themes of devotion**. ALSO - consider the particular day you are praying – what Liturgical season is it? (Lent, Ordinary time, Easter, etc) or perhaps it is the celebration of a specific Solemnity, Feast, Memorial. Pray accordingly.

Daily devotional themes:

SUNDAY: Resurrection and Holy and Undivided Trinity

MONDAY: Holy Spirit and Souls in Purgatory

TUESDAY: Holy Angels

WEDNESDAY: St Joseph

THURSDAY: Blessed Sacrament

FRIDAY: Christ's Passion, Sacred Heart

SATURDAY: Blessed Virgin and her Immaculate Heart

Monthly devotional themes:

JANUARY: Holy Name of Jesus and Holy Childhood of Jesus

FEBRUARY: The Holy Family

MARCH: St Joseph - Feast Day is March 19

APRIL: Eucharist and Holy Spirit (Easter Sunday
and/or Easter season in April)

MAY: Immaculate Heart of Mary

JUNE: Sacred Heart of Jesus

JULY: Precious Blood of Jesus

AUGUST: Blessed Sacrament – Adoration

SEPTEMBER: Seven Sorrows of Mary - Feast Day is Sept 15

OCTOBER: Rosary – Anniversary of Battle of Lepanto/
Feast of Our Lady of Victory (Rosary) – Oct 7

NOVEMBER: Poor Souls in Purgatory – All Souls Day – Nov 2

DECEMBER: Advent and coming of Christ, Christmas Season



- Some Seven Sisters have used the **Liturgical readings of the week** and prayed through them for the Pastor – that he may more closely live them, more effectively preach from them, may perhaps use them for counsel or direction or in celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation that week. The mood, meaning, and awareness of special graces of particular **Liturgical seasons** is effective also.
- Praying the Rosary or a specific Litany or Chaplet (E.g., Divine Mercy during 3-4 PM) or the like, most certainly may be incorporated as a regular part of the weekly Holy Hour. The power and eternal benefits of these offerings should not be underestimated despite their familiarity in your own prayer life outside of this hour. (One Seven Sister related that she prayed one Hail Mary – a favorite prayer - for each hour in her Pastor’s upcoming week – thus 24 X 7. She mentioned it ‘took her longer than an hour, but this is how she was led to pray, could stay the extra time and found a way of praying that helped her stay focused on the life of the priest – hour by hour!’ What a precious offering together with the other six Sisters in her group for this privileged Pastor recipient.)
- **Posture of Prayer:** choice of Seven Sister. One Seven Sister mentioned that she ‘always kneels for the first half hour in prayer’, but occasionally will receive a nudge to pray the entire hour on her knees, for whom this extended posture is quite difficult. She stated that it is in the ‘getting up’ that brings her the greatest challenge. She swiftly added that there is a ‘small further humiliation’ to those Holy Hours since she struggles to get up when the new Adorers have arrived for the next Hour of prayer. With a smile she stated, “I guess Father needs those extra sufferings those weeks, and I have come to be happy to offer them for his benefit.” ~ A lovely testimony of love in action!
- **Be patient** with yourself. Offering an entire hour for one person every week for one year (or more) will necessitate practice, becoming a student in the school of intercession and a call to steadfastness. If conflicting thoughts and concerns distract, thank God for the awareness of them – and move right back into prayer for the Pastor. As St Teresa of Avila intimated (paraphrased) in reference to distractions – the ships will pass and one may watch the ships passing by, but do not invite them into the harbor to rest. Sacred Scripture reminds that **suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us** (Romans 5:3-5).



Efficacious Novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

I. O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you." Behold I knock, I seek and I ask for the grace of..... *(here name your request)* Our Father....Hail Mary....Glory Be.... **Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in You.**

II. O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father in My name, He will give it to you." Behold, in Your name, I ask the Father for the grace of..... *(here name your request)* Our Father... Hail Mary....Glory Be.... **Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in You.**

III. O my Jesus, you have said: "Truly I say to you, heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away." Encouraged by Your infallible words I now ask for the grace of..... *(here name your request)* Our Father.... Hail Mary....Glory Be...**Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in You.**

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, for whom it is impossible not to have compassion on the afflicted, have pity on us miserable sinners and grant us the grace which we ask of You, through the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary, Your tender Mother and ours.

Pray the **Hail, Holy Queen** then add:
St. Joseph, foster father of Jesus, pray for us.

A Seven Sister may find this Novena helpful in organizing her committed Holy Hour for her pastor. This prayer by design allows great opportunity for variation.

* Part I: prayers devoted to graces for the PHYSICAL needs of pastor.

* Part II: prayers devoted to graces for the EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL needs of pastor.

* Part III: prayers devoted to graces for the SPIRITUAL needs of pastor.

See next page for suggestions that, while offered, at the same time, allow liberty for the Holy Spirit to guide each prayer time.

SUGGESTIONS to help flow of prayers - Novena to the Sacred Heart.

This Novena can be the framework of a beautiful rhythm of prayer offerings that can bear both recurring prayers and those that reflect specific weekly changes that may come about due to Liturgical seasons, parish or school events, particular intentions in the pastor's life (e.g. changing health issues, transitional needs such as new staff, transfer to new parish, new associate, etc) or the like.

Since prayers are offered every week by any given Seven Sister, her prayers need only cover the pastor's needs of that day and the days of the upcoming week. What a gift to pray so intentionally versus in sweeping generalities. This type of prayer easily fosters a growing gratitude for the uniquely fruitful, arduous and wholly sacrificial lives of our pastors.

I: Prayers for graces for the PHYSICAL needs of pastor -

God's Will and Way. Proper nutrition/rest. Adherence to special diet? If called to fast – fidelity to fasting. If summoned in wee hours for pastoral care – alertness, safety in travel, ability to rest later in day. Safety/regularity in exercising. Health care appts as warranted/apropos. Prayers for current/chronic health issue(s)/challenge(s) if shared by pastor (eg. Cancer/diabetes/heart condition/impending surgery/broken bone, etc.) Prudence in physical demands that arise (use of ladders, snow shoveling, icy walks, etc). Good model/example of these things to associate pastor (if there is one)

ADD others here:

II: Prayers for graces for the EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL needs of pastor -

God's Will and Way. Healthy, godly relationships/friendships/recreational activities – if otherwise, may God intervene to heal, bring order to them or disband. Cooperation and support from staff/congregation to carry out pastor's goals/parish mission. Generosity and fidelity of consistent prayer for pastor from congregation. Prudence in time management, boundaries, delegation of tasks to others. Professional help if/when needed. Perfect love to casteth out all fears.

ADD others here:

III: Prayers for graces for the SPIRITUAL needs of pastor -

God's Will and Way. Fidelity, piety to daily Divine Office. Personal encounter with Jesus in each Mass celebrated this week. Growth in Beatitudinal life, virtues (may name specific each week). Loyalty to Magisterium, Scripture, all Sacraments celebrated as prescribed. Docility to compassion, counsel of Holy Spirit during Confessions heard this week. Fidelity, piety in whatever specific devotions Our Lord has called this pastor to (NOTE: no need for 7 Sis to know specifics to pray this). Fidelity to prep time for homilies, openness to enlightenment of Holy Spirit, preach truth. Model these things to congregation/assoc pastor. Seeking fraternal support from fellow priests. **Deepening devotion to Our Lady (This intention is offered EVERY Seven Sister Holy Hour)**

ADD others here:

Seven Sisters Apostolate ... a few Questions – a few Answers



Artist: Emile Friant

- 1) What if I am traveling? Can I offer a Holy Hour elsewhere?** - Absolutely! This is a great benefit and versatility of the Apostolate – in that you are **committed to a particular day of the week** – and not necessarily a particular hour or even a particular Adoration Chapel or parish. Some do have these particulars in place and feel this helps them to ‘keep the discipline’ – but this is not mandatory for the Apostolate. If you do have a regularly committed Hour in a specific Chapel and cannot make the commitment there are two options: (a) secure a sub for your committed hour at the Chapel but you offer the Apostolate Holy Hour elsewhere on your travels, or (b) secure a sub for your committed Hour at the Chapel, explain the mission of the Apostolate to the person and allot that person the opportunity to pray for your pastor that week. (NOTE: Sub need not be a woman).
- 2) What if I unexpectedly become ill, injured or unable to make a Holy Hour due to something else like transportation challenges, weather issues or unanticipated family concerns?** – If you do not have a specific hour planned at a specific Chapel and unable to secure a sub because of unexpected circumstances, apply grace! If time permits, you could try to contact your Anchoress and see if she can help, but to be sure, Our Lord understands your heart’s desires. This suffering (and perhaps some anxieties) of not being able to keep the Hour can themselves be offered for the Pastor’s benefit. God’s marvelous economy is without limit! If able – and as the circumstances may settle down, you could perhaps offer an hour of quiet time in your home for the Pastor’s merit.
- 3) Can I read a devotional book during my Hour?** If the purpose of the devotional is to launch you into prayer for the Pastor, then it is most likely valuable for the Hour. For instance you may be reading a book about the Eucharist with the idea of praying for a deeper Eucharistic life for the Pastor. During your reading, a reflection or segment would cause you to pause and pray that these edifications may prove helpful for Fr Such-and-Such. Continue on in prayer from there...

- 4) Can there be more than seven women in the group?** Frequent question and the answer is YES. With that said, the best approach is a core of seven – each specifically assigned to a day of the week, and the others can serve to supplement these prayer efforts. The supplementation can be regular or periodic. If the parish has an associate Pastor – or maybe a retired Pastor that helps out at the parish, perhaps there is an interest to form another adjunct group for that priest. Some Seven Sisters groups have one or two permanent subs that the group members may contact. This is reported to be quite effective.
- 5) The Seven Sisters apostolate and mission deeply resonate with me, but committing to one day a week is not doable in my station of life and current commitments. I sense I am to be a part of this, but how?** One comment and two suggestions. The comment: You sense a nudge toward the Apostolate, but proceed with prudence. These are exemplary strengths and the rightly -ordered way to approach the Apostolate – being open to the call and, at the same time, keenly aware of what the God-directed priorities currently are in your life. Something else may need to be laid aside or curtailed for this to work or perhaps presently the timing is not quite right for involvement. Two possible solutions if there is a call to proceed to participate: (1) Avail yourself to be a sub for the Seven Sisters group, knowing you can decline when circumstances/other commitments do not allow. (2) Inquire as to whether another woman might have the same situation and current draw to the Apostolate. Perhaps the two of you could share the committed Hours – e.g. every other week, first two weeks vs last 2 weeks, every other month, etc. Note that one woman should be designated as the Seven Sister in the core group – and the other as an assistant. This set-up is currently working well in some groups.
- 6) How can I get a group started in another parish?** Contact your Anchoress with the parish name, location, and contact person. She is aware of how to set this process in motion. An initial phone conversation and issuance of guidelines, if appropriate, will follow. Good to note here: One does not have to be a member of a particular parish to pray for the pastor of that parish. Fidelity to the prayer is the priority versus geography.
- 7) Is Seven Sisters in states other than Minnesota?** Yes, there are groups that are forming elsewhere. The Archdiocese of St Paul-Minneapolis was first to launch the groups.
- 8) What fruits are being noticed from the prayer efforts of the Apostolate?** The priests themselves have given varying testimonies – *“I sense a greater prayer coverage in my life.” – “I smile to know that every day someone will be praying a Holy Hour for me. I hope I remain open to the graces of that.” – “Some have told me my homilies are stronger and my Masses more reverent. I hope so! ... and am thankful for the generous prayers.”* When a priest is transferred to another parish, this is a question seemingly routinely posed, *“Is there a Seven Sister group there?”* The women themselves have shared a transformation: *“Sadly, I used to talk about the priest in unflattering terms at times and now find myself embarrassed by that behavior and see it as wrong. I am much more ready and willing to defend the priest when such talk begins in a setting.” – “I have found greater love developing for the priesthood at large.” – “I am praying more for vocations than ever before. The priest has a challenging call.” – “I totally believe Mary desires to be near every single priest. This is my greatest prayer effort – praying for openness from the priests.”* A few parishes have begun groups for the Associate priest and one woman organized a prayer effort based on Seven Sisters for a relative that became a priest. In this arrangement, there is a family member praying one day a month. The young priest has a Holy Hour offered every day for him!

9) Should the Pastor be told about the Apostolate? Absolutely! Nothing should be kept from the Pastor. Some priests prefer not to know the names of the actual intercessors, but the Anchoress should introduce herself and the Apostolate mission and structure.

10) Any plans for including men in the prayer efforts? Men are wonderful and willing subs for the Holy Hours, but for now the Apostolate remains as from the original inspiration – for Seven Sisters.



Young Lady Saying the Rosary – Vincent Vidal

**Every sacrifice,
every breath of prayer
– has merit.**

Books that may be of interest. *To know, to love ...*

As one grows in knowledge of the priesthood, it would follow that one would grow in holy love for the priest, the richness of his unique call, and the need for prayer.



Carola, Joseph.

Conformed to Christ Crucified: Meditations on Priestly Life and Ministry

These meditations call the priest to be one with the risen Christ Crucified for God's glory and the salvation of souls and could be effectively used during a Seven Sister Holy Hour.

Ciszek, Fr Walter with Flaherty, Daniel. He Leadeth Me

American Jesuit priest captured by Russian army during WWI. Spent 22 agonizing years in Soviet prisons and labor camps of Siberia. Extraordinary testimony of faith and perseverance in priesthood.

Cordes, Paul Josef Cardinal. Why Priests?

Reflections on the priesthood that draw on Pope Benedict XVI's thinking and scholarship.

Gallagher, J.P. The Scarlet and the Black

(Originally titled: The Scarlet Pimpernel of the Vatican)

True story of Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty, hero of the Vatican Underground. Also - Movie (1983)

Heidemann, Steen. The Catholic Priest – Image of Christ (2010) – Printed in Italy

Coffee table size book – jam-packed with beautiful and stunning artistic images through 15 centuries of art – complemented with corresponding short texts (homilies, quotes, letters, etc) about the priesthood, the life, the path to sanctity, martyrdom, lives of Saintly priests. Much to savor, consider.

Lucia, Fr Vincent Martin and Ramirez, Msgr Josefino.

Letters to a Brother Priest

Letters of Msgr to new priest – encouraging love of Eucharistic Lord via personal letters. One notes the beautiful and essential pastoral role of the priest in the Church – for brother priests and the Church at large. Centrality of the Eucharist in the lives of these priests is exemplary – to note, to live!



Sheen, Fulton. *The Priest is Not His Own* - [*Strongly Recommend](#)

Profound and deeply spiritual look at the meaning of the priesthood and relationship of the priest with Christ as an "*alter Christus*". Sheen delves deeply into what he considers the main character of the priesthood, and one not often discussed, that of being, like Christ, a "holy victim". To be like Christ, Sheen emphasizes that the priest must imitate Christ in His example of sacrifice, offering himself as a victim to make His Incarnation continually present in the world. Strong Marian theme.

**Year for Priests Companion (*Magnificat* publication) - [*Recommend](#)
[for SS group members](#)**

Prayers, devotions, meditations, essays celebrating priesthood. Special Novena in honor of Priesthood, each day highlighting a different dimension of the priestly vocation. Meditation texts on significant facets of the priesthood. 112-page booklet - Size: 4.5 x 6.7 inches (\$3.95)



The beginnings of the Apostolate ...

In 2010, Janette Howe, sensed a nudge to pray more frequently and intentionally for her Pastor, Fr Joseph R Johnson, rector of the Cathedral of St Paul in St Paul, Minnesota. Fr Johnson was also Director of the local Lay Missionaries of Charity group of which she was a member and also served as her personal Spiritual Director. Her son, Spencer, was studying for the priesthood during that time (ordained in 2013), and Fr Johnson here again was seen as very actively generous in his guidance, concern and prayerful support of him.

During a walk one day, 'like a flash' it occurred to Janette that the very least she might do in gratitude and appreciation for Father's ever-generous pastoral and prayerful counsel and care might be to offer a Holy Hour once a week for him. Yes, this seemed the very least! The efforts and kindnesses he put forth for her own family alone, lay apostolate group and Cathedral parish were certainly deserving of one Holy Hour. Janette began to offer this additional hour in the summer of 2010, not mentioning it to Father, but delighting in simply offering the hour and trusting he was benefitting from the graces. She chose to make the Chapel visit on Thursdays, the anniversary day of the institution of both the Holy Eucharist and Holy Orders and during the power-packed Hour of Divine Mercy, 3- 4 PM.

Almost from the beginning, Janette recalls that there were distractions. Someone in desperate need of prayer would email right before leaving home for the Holy Hour, or on the way into the Chapel someone else would call with a prayer request, or she felt that someone in the neighborhood or family could sure use the benefit of "Father's Holy Hour". Nonetheless, she knew what she was called to do and she knew the graces were sufficient to accomplish it. She would linger in the Chapel after the hour to cover these urgent prayer requests or offer prayers in the car on the way to the Chapel.

Some days she met with a barrage of disruptions while in the Chapel, but her resolve surprisingly increased rather than diminished. She recollects that one afternoon thoughts surfaced challenging her sensibilities that perhaps the difficulties came because she fashioned this idea herself. Afterall, God can certainly take *the intentions of the world* into His heart in any given millisecond. Was she 'wasting' this hour by limiting it to one person? Despite the challenges, she persisted and prayed for strength and focus to continue.

After several weeks a steady rhythm of prayer and ease had undeniably developed and these became happily anticipated hours of the week. In mid Fall of 2010 while in prayer for Fr Johnson, Janette 'heard' the words *Seven Sisters* in her heart. Thinking that she 'misheard', she reached into her purse for the Chaplet of the Seven Sorrows which she had learned to pray during the Lenten Season of that year. She was going to offer the Chaplet for

Father. When she leaned over her purse to retrieve the Chaplet beads, she more clearly heard “*Seven Sisters*”. There was no mistake. She sat in silence, eyes closed, before the Blessed Sacrament and waited.

After some time, in ‘another flash’ she knew – there was a sense that Father Johnson could benefit from six others – seven in total – to offer one Holy Hour once a day – just like she was doing. The reality was exhilarating to consider the benefit of these multiplied graces for Father Johnson and also the interior benefit for these intercessors. Janette strongly sensed that in these weeks she had been a student in the school of discipline and intercession, complete with distractions and disruptions – and now others were being called to that same school of prayer and sacrifice – and joy!

That weekend Janette was scheduled to go on a silent retreat. She folded up her notebook where she had jotted a few things and determined to focus on the themes of the retreat and return to the Seven Sisters inkling at a later time. However, when before the Blessed Sacrament that weekend, she was impressed with names of women and area churches. She dutifully scribed these things, sensing she would mention this to Fr Johnson at her next time of direction – the following Friday. The only directives toward the type or way of prayer for the Hour was that the intercessor would pray (1) only for the Pastor and (2) for a deepening devotion to the blessed Mother for the priest.

Janette unfolded the aspects of the prayer time of the preceding week to Fr Johnson and he directed her to start the Apostolate with seven churches – thus 49 women in total. Further he wanted the groups to pray for at least one year (*grow a solid base before growing it high*), then desired Janette to visit them one by one and receive feedback from the women. All was in place in seven area churches by June of 2011. The visits were made in the summer/fall of 2012.

The Guidelines have been read, fine-tuned and approved by Father Johnson. The Apostolate is continuing to grow and mature, and God-willing producing eternal fruit in the hearts of both the intercessors and priests for whom they pray. All glory be to God!



A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Lord Jesus, You have chosen Your priests from among us and sent them out to proclaim Your word and to act in Your Name. For so great a gift to Your Church, we give You praise and thanksgiving. We ask You to fill them with the fire of Your love that their ministry may reveal Your presence in the Church.

Since they are earthen vessels, we pray that Your power shine out through their weakness. In their afflictions let them *never be crushed*; in their doubts *never despair*; in temptation *never be destroyed*; in persecution *never abandoned*.

Inspire them through prayer to live each day the mystery of Your dying and rising. In times of weakness send them Your Spirit, and help them to praise Your heavenly Father and pray for poor sinners. By the same Holy Spirit put Your word on their lips and Your love in their hearts, to bring good news to the poor and healing to the broken hearted.

And may the gift of Mary be Your gift to every priest. Grant that she, who formed You in her human image, may form them in Your divine image, by the power of Your Spirit, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

