

*Could you not watch with me one hour?*

—Matthew 26:40

# ***If Only I Could!***

by Russell Ford

After serving a year behind bars, I met an old prisoner who had at that time served twenty-five years of a life sentence. He began by engaging me in a conversation on metaphysics. It wasn't long before he had me hooked, and I simply *had* to have the truth he offered.

Obviously the truth he had to offer was that of the Catholic Church, established by the Author of Truth. But there was one truth that absolutely changed my life. That truth was the very core of our holy and ancient Faith: the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist.

At first I couldn't believe what Mike was telling me. My incredulity wasn't from the inability to believe, but rather what I was hearing was too good to be true! As Mike's words flowed into my ears, thirteen years of fear, pain, and uncertainty flowed out of my heart. I began to realize that my very Creator—the God who lowered Himself to adopt a mortal nature, just so he could die for all of my evil—had made Himself a Prisoner I could so I could take Him into my own body, worship Him, adore Him and just spend time at His feet here on earth!

I fell hopelessly, helplessly in love with the Holy Eucharist. In fact, when the old convict taught me about the Real Presence on August 24, 1988, I did something I hadn't done for twenty years. I wept like a small child.

On the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes in 1989, I was baptized into the full embrace of the Church. It is fitting that I was baptized on that particular day. Our Lady at Lourdes told St. Bernadette that she would not be happy in this life. How well I know the suffering of that vocation. My soul is filled with joy, but happiness continues to elude me. Why? Because divine justice is being satisfied via my love of our Eucharistic King.

Divine mercy is what allowed me to learn and embrace the truths of the Catholic Church. But God wouldn't be God if His divine mercy was not balanced by divine justice. I spent the first thirty years of my wretched life driving nails into the flesh of Jesus. Divine mercy allowed me to be bathed in the Precious Blood I drew, but divine justice had to be satisfied.

This prison in the heart of Dixie is also in the heart of Protestant Fundamentalist country. We have no chapel. We have no tabernacle. We have no opportunity for an hour of adoration. We only hear Mass twice a month. The idea of being able to worship Jesus in His physical presence is what won my heart to this Church, but I am now denied that opportunity.

My greatest penance in prison is never being allowed to visit my Love. I may never kneel before my Love. But I will tell you one thing in all honesty and sincerity. I could easily go to my end in this prison if only allowed one hour at the feet of my Love. I want to adore Him. I want to worship Him. I want to sing to Him. I want to thank Him. But I cannot.

I read how He is left alone and neglected in so many churches. I cry and wonder why. I hear how people approach Him at Communion dressed as if they are at a picnic. I cry and wonder why. I hear that He is abused by being stuck to the bottom of pews and trampled in the aisles. I cry and wonder why.

When was the last *you* went to visit Jesus? Too busy??? Are the television, business meeting, party or other wants and desires more important than visiting your Creator? He died on the cross for you! Can't you give Him just one hour a week? If you're too busy to visit Him, friends, you're too busy!

Jesus gave you life—physical and spiritual. He has made Himself and His Church available to keep you out of hell. He suffered more than you can ever imagine for your salvation. You, at least, *owe* Him one hour of the 168 hours you have in a week. I beg you to drive to your parish church. Go in and sit with Him for awhile. He will surely appreciate your presence and you will never regret keeping Him company. And while you're there, if you think of it, mention me to Him. Tell my Love that I want to be there too.

***If only I could!***