

# Fr. Paul Gerard Hinnebusch, OP, STM One Victim with the Divine Victim

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Gerard Hinnebusch couldn't remember deciding to become a priest. His sole desire was always to be a priest. Perhaps his vocation began with his mother's wedding day offering of her future children to the Lord. Of ten children, seven became Dominicans. Grace was at work in him from the birth Jan 27, 1917. He grew up in a Christian atmosphere of love, goodness, and modesty. His family held loving reverence for Mary "the Mother of God", for Jesus "the loveable God", and deep respect for religious life.



On his first Holy Communion day, he decided to receive the Eucharist daily. In grade school, Gerard was consecrated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and began praying the rosary daily. In high school, he began to read the bible daily, and thus began an extraordinary love of scripture. These habits lasted life-long.

Since 1937 his ideal was magnanimity tempered by humility. His seminary days' motto was "Ute Sims Fidelio", "Lord, that I might be faithful!" He desired the full fidelity of giving his heart to the Lord in an intimate union of identification with Jesus.

June 8, 1944, he was ordained Fr Paul Mary Hinnebusch, O.P. He began priestly life as he had always been, Eucharistic and Marian. His STL dissertation was on "Mary Mediatrix of All Graces." His first assignment, preaching Forty Hours Devotion, strengthened his already deep love of the Eucharist.

From 1949 Fr Paul always went forth to ministry singing the Verbum Supernum, identifying himself with Jesus proceeding forth, yet not leaving the Father's side. He habitually made the intention that his whole priestly life be a continuation of our Lord's priestly life. He asked Jesus to form in his heart Jesus own sacrificial journey to the Father.

He served as high school and college teacher, guest lecturer, chaplain of nuns, assistant novice master, conference and retreat preacher, bible scholar and teacher, and writer. In 1973 he joined the Christian Community of God's Delight in Dallas, and served as the bishop's liaison to the Charismatic renewal.

Throughout 58 years his priesthood was marked by reverence in liturgy, and an extraordinary understanding of and love of the sacraments. He was well loved as a gentle confessor; sought after as a wise spiritual director. His simple goodness, universal kindness, wit, and good humor, were components of his remarkable gift of friendship. He was fondly known as "Fr Honeybunch" by an enormous number of friends.

He profoundly understood that the identity of priests is to act **in persona Christi** in their whole priestly mission. He made of his whole life "a living sacrifice of praise", one act of Divine worship in the person of Christ.

Fr Paul lived well the Dominican ideal to give others the fruits of one's contemplation through his preaching, teaching, 19 books, and 200 articles, always absolutely faithful to the mainline teachings of the Catholic faith. He was awarded the post-doctoral degree of Master of Sacred Theology in recognition of his many writings on Sacred Scriptures and on the Theology of the Spiritual Life.

Sickly from youth, he suffered a variety of health problems. Hidden in his tall, frail, frame was strength of enduring all with the obedient Lamb of God.

In 1983 he began to suffer serious heart problems. God gave him first the grace to yield himself in perfect trust and peace. Second, at each consecration Jesus seemed to be personally offering his crucified and risen Body to him. Fr Paul would then offer Jesus **his** body. He said, "At that time in a very special way, I had the grace of experiencing my "oneness" with Jesus, a real union with him, my identity with him in his sacrifice."

This deepened as Fr Paul's *fiat* deepened. Every time Fr Paul passed a painting of the annunciation in the Priory he made an act of *fiat* in Mary's "Fiat." He also entered into the identity of Mary's will and Jesus' will with the Divine Will to save the world. He developed a habit of living Jesus' three *fiats* at the Incarnation, the Agony in Gethsemane, and Jesus final handing over of His Spirit on the Cross. In union with Mary and Jesus in their *fiats*, Fr Paul's went to the Father by the way of the cross. His life theme became to eucharistically live the paschal mystery by becoming one priest and victim with Jesus.

His motto from high school had been "Thy Kingdom come!" But by 1996 he began to pray with **Mary's yearning for the Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven**. This new fervor found expression in Nov 1996 in an act of consecration to the Divine Will. His constant prayer became the prayer of mutual indwelling and sacrificial offering, "I in You and You in me." Entering into Jesus to live and operate in the Divine Will, Fr Paul's asked Jesus to transform him into Himself as a victim of reparation for sin.

Mother Mary manifested her maternal formation of Paul during a 1999 retreat in Medjugorje. Twice these words seemed spoken to him by Mary: "It is your privilege not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him" (Phil 1:29). The words imparted a grace of uniting progressively deeper in and with Christ in His paschal mystery.

Jan 25, 2000 he wrote, "I found myself asking that I become one victim with Jesus through the grace of **mystical incarnation**. I believe that this prayer was inspired by the Holy Spirit. I am becoming aware that I will be a fully worthy priest only in the measure that I am not only priest with Christ, but also victim with him. **It seems to me that my sacramental grace of Holy Orders will have reached its full development only when, through the grace of mystical incarnation, I am fully victim with Christ.** ...This cross which is my body forms me in the likeness of Jesus in his incarnation. ...With Jesus and in Jesus I offer... my own body, in reparation for the sins which distress Jesus, and which more and more distress me as I share in the interior sufferings of Jesus."

Feb 14, 2000, he wrote, "Only in Jesus can I live and operate in the Divine Will, and share in the external operations of the Holy Trinity. ...Only by living his

triple *Fiat* can I be **victim with the Divine Victim of the Cross and of the Eucharist.**

**He explained,** “When I suffer with Jesus in adoration of the Father’s will, my sufferings are united with the sufferings of Jesus, who himself therefore suffers in my sufferings...To paraphrase St. Paul, “It is no longer I who suffer, but Christ **suffers** in me” (*Gal 2:20*).”

Dec 2000, Fr Paul realized that his bodily afflictions and pain can themselves be authentic prayer when he offers his suffering with Jesus’ mutual indwelling suffering.

“I realize more and more, that Jesus living in me says of my body, “This is *My body,*” for my body is truly his body, for **he is incarnate in me and lives in me.** This is because I have been consecrated to him in baptism to be his own. My whole life is his; my whole person belongs to him. I need to remember this, and let him suffer in me and offer my body to the Father as his own.”

Thus my actual suffering, when I let Jesus suffer in me, is a far deeper prayer than saying in words, “I offer myself to you.” It is not just offering my intention and my willingness; **it is actually here and now being sacrificed with him. He has given me his chalice. I am a living host.**

Fr Paul’s transfer to Our Lady of Wisdom Care Center in Nov 2001 brought about a complete kenosis. It occasioned a radical self-emptying of his will. His crushed vertebrae held a future of much suffering. With love’s generous acceptance, he made his perduring FIAT that had long characterized his life! Now *Fiat* evolved into “*Suscipe*”.

He wrote, “My Fiat became, ‘*Suscipe Sancta Trinitas* - Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation that we offer you in memory of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.’ I had to express my *Fiat* as *Suscipe*, because I was not simply accepting my sufferings, but was (actively voluntarily) offering them as a sacrifice of reparation in the sacrifice of Jesus. ...The word *Suscipe* expresses the priestly character of my *fiat*.... I am to be one Victim in union with Jesus, the Victim on Calvary and the Victim in the Mass.”

Through “*suscipe*” Fr Paul came to a new way to offer himself with Jesus as the Victim of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. He offered to the glory of the Holy Trinity what Jesus presented to the Trinity on the Cross - “the **full fruit** of his sacrificial life on earth completed in his death on the Cross,” that is, “the restoration of all creation to its original perfection and glory.” In his *suscipe* Fr Paul offered this final full fruit of redemption. He offered “the whole human race as sanctified, restored, and perfected in its final glory.”

In one of the last things he wrote he said, “**I am experiencing myself as one body, one spirit with Christ -- as ONE LIVING ENTITY WITH CHRIST – Christ living in me, and I living in Christ, as ONE MYSTICAL REALITY WITH CHRIST. My sufferings are integral to the sufferings of Christ.**”

In the final evolution of *suscipe*, Fr Paul desired to become a purified oblation with Jesus’ own purity and sanctity ever more “incarnated” in him. He burned for the Holy Trinity to receive the **maximum glory** of the full fruits of the sacrament of the Cross and the Eucharist that only comes from God’s universal

reign in every creature. His burning desire was for the coming of the Holy Spirit to enflame the whole world with Divine love.

For this purpose, as **one victim priest in the person of Christ**, Fr Paul faithfully, generously lived out his *suscipe* for the final coming and reign of the Kingdom of God. Aug 20, 2002 at the hour of mercy, Fr Paul Hinnebusch passed into the eternal “embrace of the Holy Trinity” **“as ONE MYSTICAL REALITY WITH CHRIST”**.

In his humility, he would have us defer to the Church’s judgment the nature and degree of his gift of sanctity. We can be confident that he leaves us a solidly scriptural example that we can emulate in our daily lives -- FIAT SUSCIPE!

So that this saintly priest’s life and prayer and ministry may continue to be a source of teachings, inspiration, and strength for the Body of Christ, his life-work is accessible at <http://FrPaulHinnebusch.org>, in both text and audio. To help with this ongoing ministry or to contribute, please contact Celine Powers, Administrator, at [frpaul@frpaulhinnebusch.org](mailto:frpaul@frpaulhinnebusch.org).

Fr Paul, grace us to always be more and more passionately **in love with the Most Holy Trinity and Mary**, in love’s abandonment of our wills in unity with Jesus in the Eucharist and on the cross!

### **Eucharistic Prayer – One Victim with the Divine Victim**

**Lord Jesus, to be victim in You, and to let You be victim in me, I must empty myself completely in Your Self-emptying. I must empty myself above all by emptying myself of all self-will, of all self-assertion before God. In my sufferings, I need to empty myself by not focusing my attention on my sufferings, or moaning over my pains. Lord Jesus, let me focus my heart on You crucified, on You scourged mercilessly, You crowned with thorns, You pierced with a lance. I desire to be one victim with the Divine Victim, forgetting self, dying to self, dying to my own will, living only in Your Divine Will, fusing my heart with Your Divine Heart for Your intentions of pure love. Such is the purpose of the Eucharist: to make me one priest and victim with Jesus.**

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