

“The Liturgy of the Hours”

by Rebecca Lambert, OCDS

While the General Instruction to the Liturgy of the Hours describes the structure for praying the Hours in common, there is still much variation, even among Carmelites. For a more consistent practice in the tradition of the Carmelite Friars of our Province, we have a detailed description in our Formation Guidelines, pages 153 - 156. The additional tips listed here are meant to help our praying the Hours in Community to be more unified and reverent. Also, a Cantor's Guide to both Morning and Evening Prayer follows on the next page. It's ready to be printed, trimmed to size, and then folded to fit your breviary.

- 1) If the two cantors don't sit on clearly opposite ends of the pews, people don't know whether they're on side one or side two. If the cantors sit near the same side, or if both of them sit toward the middle of the pews, we get confused even mid-way through the office.
- 2) When starting the antiphons, if the cantors aren't consistent about giving a clear stop after reciting the first word or phrase, the rest of us don't have a clear signal to know when to join in.
- 3) When starting the antiphons that follow after the psalms and canticles, we need to make it a point that the community wait for the cantor before joining in - just as we do at the first recitation of the antiphon at the beginning. If the community doesn't wait for the cantor, it's not crisp.
- 4) The above can probably be fixed pretty easily, once folks are alerted - and the cantors reminded if they ask for a review. It's clearly harder to get us to not join in on the Glory after the Invitatory Psalm - it's such a habit to finish this prayer once it's started. As unhappy as this sounds, the most effective technique I've found is to have the cantor hurry through the prayer so that flows quickly past the point where people would automatically join in.
- 5) As seen in the *Formation Guidelines*, page 153, the beginning of Evening Prayer the Glory is recited by all and not just started by the presider. Outside of Lent, the alleluia is always said.
- 6) A basic rule is to "follow the leader." Practice the patience to wait for the cantor to speak before joining in, and don't hurry the pace of the recitation ahead of the cantors. It sometimes helps even experienced cantors to have a partner in the case of losing one's place in the book or getting tongue-tied. If the community knows that the cantor has a partner, they may be more likely to wait if there is a prolonged pause rather than jumping in with the idea of helping out.
- 7) It helps to learn about the history and structure of the Liturgy of the Hours, and many resources are available online.
- 8) The emphasis is always on *praying*.

The Importance of the Liturgy of the Hours

by Lucy Okoh, OCDS

Through the gift of speech we are able to give praise to Our Lord. What better way than following the Universal Church's example of universal prayer through the Liturgy of the Hours?

In 1 Chronicles King David appointed the Levites to give praise, glory, and thanksgiving to the Lord before the Ark of the Covenant in the morning and in the evening. This prayer of chants and readings consecrated the day to the Lord.

We know that Our Lord sanctioned vocal prayer by giving us the Our Father. We see Our Lord at prayer before He called the apostles, in Luke 6:12, ". . . he went out into a mountain to pray, and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God." He prayed when at the Transfiguration, when he heals the deaf mute, when he raises Lazarus, and so on.

From the Acts of the Apostles in the Upper Room after the Resurrection we learn that the early Christians continued this practice, as in Acts 1:14, "All these were persevering with one mind in prayer..."

Pagan sources recorded that the early Christians met for prayer before sunrise and sung the morning praise as the first streaks of dawn reddened the sky. And in the evening with the lighting of the lamps the Christians again praised the Lord.

These early services of psalms, readings, and hymns were recited by consecrated virgins, ascetics, and monks for the benefit of the whole of the church. Many reforms have taken place in the Divine Office to arrive at what is used by everyone today: priests, religious, and laity.

We can best understand the Divine Office as a continuation of the Sacrifice of the Mass in praising and thanking God throughout the day.

The Divine Office sanctifies time. The Morning, Evening, and Night Prayers encapsulate our praise of God through our activities throughout the day. We use our prayer to remind us of the presence of God in our actions and thoughts that occur in our lives.

The Divine Office sanctifies the *hours of the day*: the first light of day as in our Morning Prayer. "Let there be light, and the light was made. And God saw that light was good." And in "I am the light of the world." The Evening Prayer as the sun is setting and the Evening Star, the symbol of Christ, rises as our guide and beacon in the world of darkness.

The Divine Office sanctifies the *week*. God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. So the Office is set out with the first day of the week as the Lord's Day followed by the six days remaining of the week. Over a period of a month the whole of the Psalter is recited.

The Divine Office sanctifies the *year and its seasons*. The life, death, and resurrection of Our Lord, the history of our salvation, is covered through biblical readings from Advent Season through to the Season of Pentecost. Feasts of Our Lord, Our Lady and the Saints are interspersed throughout the Liturgical Year to emphasize the life of Christ.

The psalms are the core of the Divine Office. The psalms are sacred poetry utilizing the rhyming of thoughts inspired and directed toward God, and God alone. They express every human emotion, always knowing that all is in Him, with Him, and through Him.

The psalms are a true blessing to us in that they were prayed by Our Lord, by Our Lady and the Apostles and early Christians. They are the true reflection of Christ in speaking of the just man who suffers persecution or of the suffering servant, who endures patiently.

The Divine Office is important in leading us in praising God morning and evening with great faith, hope, and love. The Office is an important in teaching us obedience and humility as we persevere in our daily prayer.

The Liturgy of the Hours
by Cindy Sliger, OCDS

The best source I have found to learn the Liturgy of the Hours is the “General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours”: found at the beginning of volume 1 of the 4 volume set.

Also at the beginning of volume 1 of the 4-volume Liturgy of the Hours is the “Apostolic Constitution on the Liturgy of the Hours” by Pope Paul VI (November 1, 1970). In it he writes “... ‘the warm and living love for holy Scripture’ which is the atmosphere of the Liturgy of the Hours must come to life in all of us, so that Scripture may indeed become the chief source of all Christian prayer. The praying of the psalms which continually ponders and proclaims the action of God in the history of salvation must be embraced with new warmth by the people of God. This will be achieved more easily if there is a deeper understanding of the psalms.” (p. 17)

A source I have found very helpful in going deeper into the understanding of the psalms is, *The School of Prayer, an Introduction to the Divine Office*, by John Brook. In this book, part 1 gives a general introduction to the basic principles of praying the office. Part 2 is a commentary which helps put the principles into daily practice.

Most of us struggle with knowing what to do in the Liturgy of the Hours on special feast days.

I am one who is in favor of utilizing the little guide book produced by the Catholic Book Publishing Corporation.

I would like to share a fun way of looking at this. It is from a Day of Recollection I attended in 1999.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours can be compared to a meal.

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.” (Mt 4:4)

Grace before and after meals are like the invitatory, and the blessing, and dismissal of morning and evening prayer.

The main “food groups” included in the meal are like the hymn, the psalms, the scripture reading with the responsory, the Gospel canticle with its antiphon, the intercessions, the Lord’s Prayer, and final prayer.

The “psalm prayers” found in the breviaries are like condiments and are optional. (They are wonderful meditative points. Many use them when praying alone, but we may omit them too.)

The menu is like the Church’s liturgical calendar that tells us which elements from these different “food groups” should be served.

In the Table of Liturgical Days (volume 1 of the 4-volume Breviary) there are three categories: The first category is Solemnities, which celebrates the great mysteries of our salvation or honors the very most important patrons of a country or a religious order. It is like the important events, Thanksgiving, weddings, so forth. Everything comes from the proper (*check it first*) or the common. A solemnity always begins the evening before with Evening Prayer I.

The second category is Feasts, which is like a birthday celebration as we honor a special patron or more important mystery from the New Testament. As far as morning and evening prayer are concerned, a feast is identical to a solemnity. They are not ordinary days, and nothing comes from the ordinary. A feast has an Evening Prayer I if it is celebrated on a Sunday.

The third category is Memorials which is like an ordinary meal at which a friend drops in. The entrée may not change, but you might serve a fancy dessert. So on a memorial, the psalms come from the ordinary, and everything else comes from the proper of the saints and the common of the saints. (Usually only the prayer and sometimes the Gospel canticle antiphon are proper and everything else comes from the common.)

The cupboards in the pantry (or section of a market) from which we get the food are like the main parts of the breviary: the ordinary (placed in the center of the book), the proper of the seasons, the proper of the saints, and the common of the saints.

On our website we have our Carmelite Saints listed alphabetically and also numerically (according to calendar dates) Thanks to Thomas Moore, OCDS.

What if you don't know which office to pick? If you are not sure, you are always safe to follow what is done at the celebration of the Eucharist that day.

What if you pick the wrong office? You wouldn't eat a second meal because the first wasn't perfect, and we don't go back and try to do it better the second time around.

What if you don't have time?

Never rush through the office just to get it said. If you have only five minutes, pray the more important parts of the hour in a really mindful, devout way. And if something happens and you haven't been able to pray until bedtime and you are so tired you can't see straight, go to bed. Just try to manage your time a little better the next day.

Combining the Hours with Mass or with Other Hours

by Erin Foord, OCDS

You may sometime attend mass at a monastery or parish and witness the Liturgy of the Hours integrated into the Mass of the day in different ways. The General Instructions on the Liturgy of the Hours (norm no. 93) [see volume 1 of the 4-volume edition] allows, where circumstances require it, that the public celebration of a particular Hour may be merged with the Mass, or with another Hour. Let us first review the process for combining an hour with the Mass. Norm nos. 94-98 explains how this can be done.

The general theory behind this practice recognizes that both the Liturgy of the Hours and the Mass have elements in common; introductory rites, scripture readings, intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, and concluding rites. The process of integrating would eliminate the duplication that exists. The general rule is that the duplicated elements from the Liturgy of the Hours are omitted. This is especially true on Sunday's and holy days. This makes sense for obvious reasons, because the elements of the Mass are richer and more complete. For instance the scripture from the liturgy of the word offers two or three readings as opposed to the one in the Liturgy of the Hours.

Let's walk through an example. When morning or evening prayer is celebrated with the Mass, and the celebration falls on a Sunday or holy day, it begins with the introductory rites for the Mass; with the entrance song, procession, and celebrant's greeting. Then, the psalms of Morning or Evening Prayer would be inserted with their corresponding antiphons and prayers. The penitential rite is omitted and the celebration continues as usual from the opening prayer through the end of the Communion rite. After communion the Canticle of Zechariah or Mary is sung or recited with its antiphon. The concluding rites would follow as usual. In brief then, after the celebrant's greeting we would recite the psalms and after communion we would say the canticle.

There is some flexibility granted to the above procedure when the celebration falls on a weekday. Then the introductory rite and intercessions from the Liturgy of the Hours could be substituted for those in the Mass. For example, Mass would begin with the verse "God come to my assistance..." and the hymn from the hour of the day. The psalms would follow with their corresponding antiphons and prayers as usual. Then the celebrant would say the opening prayer of the Mass followed by the liturgy of the word. The intercessions from the hour of the day would replace the general intercessions and the rest of the Mass would continue as usual, except as outlined above, where the canticle would be sung or recited after communion. In brief then, when the celebration falls on a weekday, the introductory rites and intercessions from the Liturgy of the Hours may be substituted for those elements in the Mass.

There are slight variations to the above procedure when the Liturgy of the Hours follows Mass. When an hour of the day follows Mass (97), the Mass is celebrated in the usual way up to and including the prayer after communion. Then, the psalmody of the hour begins without introduction. After the psalmody the reading is omitted and the Canticle with its antiphon follows at once. The intercessions and the Lord's Prayer are also omitted and the concluding prayer follows along with the blessing of the congregation. In brief then, when an hour of the day follows Mass, after the communion prayer the psalmody follows along with the canticle, concluding prayer, and blessing. The introductory verse and "Glory be", reading, intercessions, and Lord's Prayer are all omitted as being repetitious to those just celebrated in the Mass.

The combining of Mass with the office of readings is normally not done, since the Mass already has its own cycle of readings, to be kept distinct from any other. But if by way of exception, it should be necessary to join the two, then immediately after the second reading from the office, with its responsory, the rest is omitted and the Mass begins with the Gloria (Sunday or holyday), and continues with the opening prayer as usual.

Not all agree that Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours should be combined. Norm 93 makes clear that joining the office to Mass should not be contemplated as a daily practice. It would mean, for example, that the faithful would almost never use the penitential rite. I experienced this Liturgy of the Hours/Mass hybrid for several months during our community meeting. I am not a fan of it. I have heard the joining referred to derogatorily as “mauds and mespers” (mass + Lauds, etc.). I feel it is better to pray the office completely, omitting perhaps the office's concluding verse, and then begin Mass as usual. The Eucharist is certainly the highest form of worship. But the higher does not require the elimination of the lower, which augments our thanks and praise for the higher in the form of a preparation or thanksgiving. Still, I think it is important to know that if someone ever happens across it, they can be assured that it is a legitimate option and not an unapproved liturgical shortcut.

Now, in the context of combining the hours of the office with each other, only the office of readings may be combined with another office (No. 99). This may be done with morning, midday, or evening prayer. The appropriate hymn for the hour may be sung at the beginning of the office of readings. At the end of the office of readings the prayer and conclusion are omitted along with the introductory verse and “Glory be” of the Office of the hour of the day. The Office of Readings may not be combined with Evening Prayer I of a Sunday or solemnity.

In other cases, when one office follows immediately after another (for example, evening prayer and night prayer), they are not joined. The only difference is that after praying the first closing prayer, one may omit the usual conclusion of the first office and the introductory verse and “Glory be” of the second office, thus commencing with the hymn of the second office, which proceeds as normal.

The Liturgy of the Hours

by Thelma Prisco, OCDS

- 1) Praying the Liturgy of the Hours together should be well planned so that it is an experience of prayer and community.

The page numbers of the Hour to be prayed could be listed in an e-mail or hand-out and distributed ahead of time; other information that could be included in an e-mail or hand-out might be what antiphon you will be using for the Invitatory, if there is a choice, and also, which hymn you will be using and whether it will be recited or sung. If you are going to be praying the liturgy of the hours in church, you could also take advantage of the church's hymnals for songs, but it would be prudent to choose a hymn that is appropriate for the liturgical season and that most will know. Otherwise, it might be best to take a hymn from the liturgy of the hours, whether you need to recite it or if it is to be sung. The most important thing, and the object of all this, is that you want it to be an experience of prayer and community.

- 2) Less effective would be reading page numbers from a blackboard; calling out page numbers during prayer should be avoided.
- 3) Ideally, members should have their breviaries marked ahead of time.
- 4) The presider and your cantors should be experienced with the Liturgy of the Hours. Among themselves, and ahead of time, they need to make sure that they are literally "on the same page".
- 5) Instructions, corrections and pointers should not be given during the actual recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours. This would be very distracting from achieving our aim, that is, an experience of prayer in community.
- 6) Members in your community should be taught to listen to others, particularly the cantors, not to rush, and not to be too loud. We should never rush when we are reciting the Liturgy of the Hours.
- 7) There should be appropriate moments of silence during the recitation. In order to receive into our hearts the voice of the Holy Spirit, it is good to have an interval of silence after the repetition of the antiphon that comes after the psalm, as this can enhance the spirit of quiet prayer. It is also appropriate to pause for reflection either after the Scripture reading or after the responsory that immediately follows it.
- 8) At Evening Prayer or at other Offices when the Invitatory is not used, the "Alleluia" is said all during the year, except during Lent. The "alleluia" is not used in the Church's liturgy during Lent.
- 9) For all of this information, you can always refer to the Formation guidelines, pages 153-156, should a question should come up about praying the Hours in community. These guidelines reflect the CA-AZ Province's Carmelite tradition in praying the hours, so they should always be followed when you are praying in community.
- 10) At night prayer, we are to make an examination of conscience immediately after the Glory to the Father....This is not meant to be an extended period of time as it would be when we are going to the sacrament of Reconciliation, but it is a time to ask for God's forgiveness for our failings and to beg for the graces to do better.