

Deacon Jim's Corner

A Letter from Our Pastoral Coordinator

March 31, 2019



May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

I find these verses from three different psalms particularly strengthening. "The LORD supports all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down" (Psalm 145:14). "When I say, 'My foot is slipping,' your mercy, LORD, holds me up" (Ps. 94:18). "The LORD gives sight to the blind. The LORD raises up those who are bowed down" (Psalm 146:8). These excerpts from the psalms reflect our ancient Jewish ancestors in faith who sung and prayed these verses at the Temple in Jerusalem. Early Christians took up the practice as well and ever since disciples have prayed the Psalms both individually and in choir (in community).

There's nothing quite like the Psalms. In all 150 of these Biblical songs, they run the gambit of emotion from distress to joy and styles of prayer from laments to praise. The official daily prayer of the Church is "The Liturgy of the Hours" (AKA the "Divine Office" or the "Breviary") which priests and deacons are obligated to prayer twice a day in the morning and the evening. There are also any religious communities of women and men who pray the Liturgy of the Hours in common from twice to five times per diem. However, the common misunderstanding is that this great rhythmic prayer is exclusively for clerics and monastics. All Catholics and in fact other Christians are invited to prayer these "Hours." It is considered the public prayer of the Church. Almost all of the 150 psalms are contained in the Liturgy of the Hours. It's supplemented by hymns and other prayers. The Catholic Catechism notes: "The Liturgy of the Hours is intended to become the prayer of the whole People of God. In it Christ himself 'continues his priestly work through his Church'... The laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office, either with the priests, or among themselves, or even individually" (CCC 1175).

There are multiple print versions available in English: the 4-volume complete Liturgy of the Hours, a one volume version, and an abbreviated form. There are multiple apps for your smart phone available as well. The most widely used that I have seen is the **iBreviary**. It contains the complete Liturgy of the Hours from the Office of Readings through Night prayer. More and more people are using the app. I like the feel, however, of the printed page.

If you've never prayed the Liturgy of the Hours, I suggest you consider attending the Chanted Vespers for Lent at Holy Rosary Bilingual Academy auditorium on Sunday on the two remaining evenings from 5:30pm to 6:15pm of our Lenten Sundays, March 31st and April 7th. The easiest way, however, is to just download the iBreviary app on your Smart phone or other device and then pray.

In a world that is often measured by practicality and utilitarian approaches, prayer is spending time with God that isn't necessarily "productive." As Lent is devoted to prayer, and reminds us to recommit ourselves to it, why not check out the Liturgy of the Hours? It is something that the Church has treasured for almost 2000 years. It was not until my diaconal formation that was exposed most directly to praying the Hours. I urge you to give it a shot. It's also a great follow-up to Easter.

May your Lenten practices continue to draw you closer to Jesus.

Deacon Jim

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deacon Jim".

Deacon Jim Fish, Pastoral Coordinator
Holy Rosary and Visitation parishes
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