

Liturgy of the Hours

I. Introduction

One form of prayer that the Church has employed throughout the ages to help its ministers stay connected to the Lord, sanctify the day, and intercede for their flock is the Liturgy of the Hours. If prayed with heart and mind engaged it has proven to be a powerful force of renewal in individual lives and that of the whole Church.

With the repeatedly expressed need for means to overcome “spiritual stagnation” and restore elements of our Catholic identity in the Ordinariate, we are renewing and extending the use of this prayer as part of our mission and mandate.

II. Obligation to Pray the “Divine Office”

As you know the clergy and religious of the Catholic Church make a promise to pray the Liturgy of the Hours each day. The reason for this obligation is that the “divine office” *is intimately connected to the mission of the Church and each individual minister of the Gospel* as will be explained in greater detail below.

Because Pastoral Associates are also commissioned ministers of the Gospel in the Ordinariate, it is important that they too embrace this discipline of ecclesial prayer.

Therefore, as of January 7, 2018, the Epiphany of the Lord, the policy will take effect that all Pastoral Associates of the Ordinariate must join the clergy in praying the Liturgy of the Hours each day as part of their mission and mandate.

Priests are required to pray the full five offices of the Liturgy of the Hours each day. Deacons are required to pray the two major offices of Lauds (Morning Prayer) and Vespers (Evening Prayer) each day. Likewise, Pastoral Associates are also required to pray the two major offices of Lauds (Morning Prayer) and Vespers (Evening Prayer) each day.

It is intended that where there are at least two Catholic chaplains at a particular location they would pray the major Offices in common when and where possible, preferably before the Blessed Sacrament in the Chapel. Morning Prayer could start the day and Evening Prayer could be prayed at the conclusion of the day. Either could be prayed in conjunction with the celebration of daily Mass.

You probably already appreciate that there are different breviaries for the Western and Eastern rites. Ordinarily, one is expected to pray the breviary of their own rite. However, where there are members of different rites in a certain location, the breviary of either the Western or Eastern rites may be used in this common recitation. Generally, the rite of the majority of the chaplains would be used, but it may prove enriching to alternate rituals on occasion. For the purposes of common prayer, I decree that the breviary of any rite fulfills the obligation of every chaplain completely.

These major offices (Lauds and Vespers) may only be missed for *grave* pastoral reasons. In military situations wherein it is not possible to pray the breviary it is licit to substitute the recitation of the *Holy Rosary* or a suitable time of recitation of the *Jesus Prayer* as it is practised in the Oriental rites of the Catholic Church.

III. Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours

In order to appreciate the purpose and importance of the Liturgy of the Hours, and therefore to pray it with worthy devotion, it is important to understand its origins and the spiritual theology that lies behind it. Portions of this introduction have been copied or adapted from the Introduction to the Liturgy of the Hours.

From ancient times the Church has had the custom of celebrating each day the Liturgy of the Hours. It is a rich form of prayer, steeped with the Word of God, the tradition of the Church and the wisdom of the Saints.

All the faithful are advised to celebrate some parts of the Liturgy of the Hours, in accordance with circumstances, for it is the prayer of the Church and makes the whole Church, scattered throughout the world, one in heart and soul (CCC 1175). It is particularly fitting for priests, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers, who are specially called to immerse themselves in prayer, the Word of God, and intercession for those entrusted to their pastoral care.

Through praying the Liturgy of the Hours the Church fulfils the Lord's precept to pray without ceasing, at once offering its praise to God the Father and interceding for the salvation of the world. This public and common prayer by the people of God is no ordinary devotion. It is considered to be among the primary duties of the Church.

The Liturgy of the Hours initially developed out of the prayer tradition of the first Jewish Christians. The witness of the early Church teaches us that individual Christians and the community devoted themselves to prayer at fixed times (Acts 2:1-15, 3:1, 10:9, 16:25, etc.). Gradually it took shape in the form of an ordered round of hours.

As it is such an integral part of the life of a lay or clerical minister it is important to begin with a proper understanding and appreciation of its purpose and rich significance.

II. Sanctifying the Day

The first and most basic purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours is that by praying it attentively and faithfully, a person stays in close communion with the Lord and sanctifies all the hours of the day. God's grace and power are invoked upon all the spheres of human activity. He is called upon for help throughout the day and given praise throughout the day. He is invited to make holy all that we do, all those whom we meet, and to be present with us at every junction of the day. In short, God Himself becomes the centre of our day and of all our activity.

It is also helpful to remember that the psalms, canticles, and readings from Sacred Scripture which form such a large part of the Office are the work of the Holy Spirit. We bring His Word

into every part of our lives. We are continually being immersed in, formed in, and guided by the Word of God.

These prayers flowing from Sacred Scripture are pleasing to the Father and draw His grace upon us. For this reason many liturgists and authors claim that the Liturgy of the Hours has an intrinsic value that makes it more pleasing to God than any devotional prayer (especially since it is considered an extension of the Mass, the very source and summit of the Christian life)!

III. The Liturgy of the Hours and the Chaplain

The chaplain prays the Office as the official representative of the Church. He or she is a leader, interceding and “standing in the gap” for the flock entrusted to them - as Moses did. There is nothing a chaplain can do for the souls in their charge so effectively as to recite the Divine Office in their name.

Pope St. John Paul II stuffed his breviary with all the intentions of the people asking for his prayers. In this way he offered them all to God along with the prayers of the Office (eventually there got to be so many that he put them in a large container in his ‘kneeler’ where he prayed the Office). This perfectly symbolizes the purpose of the Office and is a good practice to be recommended to all.

IV. The Prayer of the Church

The Liturgy of the Hours is a public liturgy of the Church, not a private devotion, even if we pray it alone. We are repenting, petitioning, adoring, thanking and praising God on behalf of all the Church and all Creation! As (clerical and lay) ministers of the Church we are praying in the name of those entrusted to our pastoral care!

The heart of the Liturgy of the Hours is the psalms. Many of the psalms are in the form of petitions. As we pray these psalms we are praying as the Church, the Bride of Christ, calling out to the Bridegroom Jesus, or calling out to the Father in the name of Jesus, Mediator and Bridegroom.

Often the words of the psalms do not apply to our own circumstances. They may seem completely inapplicable to us personally. Therefore, it is very important to understand that our words go far *beyond ourselves*. When praying the Liturgy of the Hours we are the voice of the whole Church calling out to God. The words we are praying may not apply directly to us, but they do apply to some other member of the Church, especially a member of our unit, chapel, etc. who is in need. We are the Church interceding to the Father, through Jesus, in the Holy Spirit for our people.

V. The Prayer of Christ

The Liturgy of the Hours is not only the prayer of the Church, but also the prayer of Christ Himself! This is the most sublime and powerful aspect of the Liturgy of the Hours. If we are able to grasp this - we will have little trouble motivating ourselves to pray the Divine Office.

The book of Hebrews tells us that “In the days of His life on earth He offered up prayers and entreaties with loud cries and tears to the One who could deliver Him out of death, and because of His reverent attitude His prayer was heard” (Hebrews 5:7). Jesus continues to do this. He is still crying out to the Father on our behalf. He does so personally before God the Father in heaven, but he also still does it on earth! You might ask, “How is Jesus still doing all this on earth if He is now in heaven?”

He does so through His mystical Body, the Church. Through Baptism we become one with Christ. We become His Mystical Body on earth. He continues His ministry through us. In fact Jesus is still baptising, preaching, healing, suffering, consecrating and doing all the other things that were a part of His earthly ministry, only now He is using your voice and mine. He is using your hands and mine. He is using your life and mine.

When we pray the Liturgy of the Hours something almost unimaginably powerful is going on. Jesus is crying out to the Father - and He is using your voice! He is interceding for our needs as our Advocate, praising the Father for His marvellous deeds, adoring Him, offering thanksgiving, and offering Himself for us.

Fr. Tom Roland of the community of Madonna House captures this mystery beautifully in his book *He Acts, We React*:

“The essential point is that the Church, the sum total of all the baptised, is the presence of Christ in the world. He is the Head of the Body of which all the baptised are the members, each with special functions and responsibilities. Thus when Paul was persecuting the Church, he was persecuting Christ... The mystery and the miracle of love is that Christ unites each of us into His own prayer. As members of His Body we are Christ, and as Christ prays the prayer of the Church we pray through, with, and in Him.”

The Divine Office is entering into the prayer of Christ and letting Him pray through us. The psalms are His prayers to the Father, and He is the one who fulfils them (CCC 2586).

St. Augustine summarised the truth behind the Liturgy of the Hours in a direct and mystical way. He speaks of Christ as “one man who reaches to the ends of the earth” (commentary on Ps. 142); “There is but one man who reaches to the end of time, and those that cry out are always His members” (commentary on Ps. 85). He says that “We recite this prayer of the psalms in Him, and He recites it in us” (commentary on Ps. 85). In exhorting us to pray this prayer he says “Let Him [Jesus] rise up, this one Chanter; let this Man [Jesus] sing from the heart of each of us, and let each one of us be in this Man [Jesus]. When each of us sings a verse, it is still this one Man [Jesus] who sings, since you are all in Christ” (ibid.). A good example of this is Psalm 22. These are the words of Jesus in His Passion on the Cross. Now He is praying to His Father for all your people undergoing their own passions. He is offering Himself to the Father for all their sins, and pain, and wounds. He is applying His salvation to them here and now.

V. Psalms of Instruction and Command

Some of the psalms are not petitions. They may be instructions, practical wisdom, or lessons from the history of Israel. In these cases we are literally speaking the Word of God *into* our people and their circumstances. And the Word of God has power. It never returns empty but always fulfills the task for which it was sent.

VI. Praying Intentionally

So as we pray the psalms of the breviary we should do so with understanding and intentionality. In each psalm call to mind that you are “standing in the gap,” interceding for those entrusted to your pastoral care, your unit, your chapel, and all members of the Ordinariate, the universal Church, and the world.

- a) Unite yourself to your people, and the whole Church, as you cry out to God in psalms of petition.
- b) In the Christological psalms let Jesus pray through you to the Father for His whole mystical Body, the Church.
- c) In the psalms of command, wisdom, or history, intentionally pray these Words of God *into* your people and the many circumstances of their lives

One (optional) way to call this to mind each time you pray the Office is to recite this short prayer before you begin:

Father God, I offer you the very prayers that you yourself have inspired by your Holy Spirit. I do so with one heart and mind with all believers throughout the world. Hear in these psalms the voice of our Redeemer Jesus Christ crying out to you from the whole earth. Hear also the voice of His Bride, your Church, in all her needs. And let your instruction soak into our souls like the rain on thirsty ground. Do not let your Word return to you empty, but let it accomplish the task for which you sent it. Amen.

The psalms contain the most beautiful collection of religious poetry that exists. So much about the infinite Majesty, Mercy, Power, Beauty, Goodness, and Truth of the living God is wonderfully and poetically revealed. When prayed with attention and devotion it inspires, motivates, and captures our hearts. It also keeps us grounded, helping us to keep the true God before us and not letting ourselves create a substitute god in our own image.

But it is also helpful to remember that the true divine revelation of God in the Old Testament was provisional and incomplete. So we read and pray the psalms through the lens of the New Testament. So, for example, we understand anthropomorphisms such portrayals of God’s wrath not as a complete objective revelation of God, but as what is subjectively experienced by those who have rejected and refused His unchanging compassionate love.

VII. Patronal Devotion

At our Bishops Pastoral Council the following practise was agreed upon: each day, after the conclusion of the recitation of Lauds (Morning Prayer) each of us (whether our prayer is in common or alone) will invoke the Patron of our Ordinariate, St. Martin of Tours, with the following prayer:

Daily Prayer of the Canadian Catholic Military Ordinariate

St. Martin of Tours, our devoted patron, help us to imitate your zealous love for God and neighbor and to seek first the Kingdom of God in all things. Pray that we may be vigilant defenders of the faith and always provide heartfelt service to all.

O wonderworking “icon of charity,” pray that we too may be docile to the Holy Spirit as true soldiers of Christ: filled with the spirit of sacrifice, unceasing prayer, evangelical fervor, and merciful compassion for the materially and spiritually poor.

O apostle of peace, watch over us and intercede constantly for all of our military personnel, veterans, and families. Help us all to become strong in faith, just, charitable, and always ‘fighting the good fight’ to establish true and lasting peace on earth.

Most Holy Theotokos, Queen of Peace, pray for us,

St. Joseph, Patron of Canada, pray for us,

Holy Canadian Martyrs, pray for us. Amen.

IMPRIMATUR, + Scott C. McCaig, CC, Military Ordinary of Canada, November 11, 2017

VIII. Getting Started

The Breviary can seem intimidating to those who are unfamiliar with it. Thankfully there are several resources to help a newcomer until they understand the rhythm of the celebrations and how to navigate the book. The first is an “ordo” booklet or guide that can be purchased annually at most Catholic bookstores. It tells you the correct pages for each day. Pastoral Associates and Deacons need not purchase the full four volume Liturgy of the Hours, but only the shorter “Christian Prayer” which only includes Morning and Evening Prayer.

One of the advantages of our digital age is that you can download an App and pray the Office from your smartphone. This has the advantage of laying out the full office in order so that you do not need to flip pages or figure out where to find prayers and psalms for special feasts. One

popular and recommended App is “IBreviary.” It also allows you to pray the Divine Office in French or English.

IX. Common Celebration

One of the difficulties in praying the Breviary in common is that there are many different ways of doing it, and different seminaries have taught many of us different traditions! So, in the interest of unity, it is best to have an agreed upon way of celebrating in common in the Ordinariate.

A. For each week one person is designated “Leader” and another person is designated “Reader.”

- 1) At the beginning everyone stands for the opening invocation and response.
- 2) The leader begins by reciting the opening invocation; to which everyone else responds.
- 3) The leader starts the hymn, or chooses another one if it is unknown.
- 4) After the hymn everyone is seated.
- 5) The leader alone recites the opening antiphon of each psalm.
- 6) Then the leader begins reading the first stanza of the psalm.
- 7) The psalm is then prayed “in choir,” meaning that half the chaplains read one stanza and then the other half read the alternate stanza.
- 8) The psalms are read meditatively at a slower pace. Each line is read as if it ended with a period.
- 9) The psalm prayers which sometimes appear at the end of psalms are optional and may be omitted. If they are prayed, they are read by the leader.
- 10) At the end of the psalm everyone prays the antiphon for that psalm together.
- 11) Then this is repeated for each of the three psalms or canticles.
- 12) The reader then stands, reads the reading, and then is seated. A brief period of silence is then observed (15-20 seconds) to let the reading soak into our hearts and minds.
- 13) The leader then leads the responsory at the end of the reading.
- 14) All stand and the leader recites the antiphon for the Gospel canticle. Then the canticle is prayed. Because it is from the Gospels it is traditional to make the sign of the Cross as it is begun as a sign of reverence. Instead of alternating stanzas everyone prays this canticle in unison. As usual all pray the antiphon together at the end.
- 15) The intercessions are introduced by the leader, who prays the first intervention. All recite the response together. Then the reader leads the rest of the intercessions, reciting the first part of the intercession, everyone else recites the response which comes after the dash.
- 16) Personal spontaneous intercessions are then added. These may include any personal or ministerial petitions.
- 17) After a suitable time of intercession the leader then introduces and begins recitation of the Lord’s Prayer.
- 18) The leader then recites the concluding prayer.
- 19) If a priest or deacon is present they give the final blessing and dismissal. If not, the leader reads the final invocation as specified.
- 20) After Morning Prayer (Lauds) all then recite the Daily Prayer of the Canadian Catholic Military Ordinariate. After Evening Prayer all recite the “Hail Mary” or chant the seasonal Marian Antiphon.

B. If you are praying the Breviary according to another rite of the Church, just follow the instructions of the chaplain from that rite!

C. It is best to pray the Breviary in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament. Of course, chaplains from other denominations or faith traditions are most welcome to attend in they so desire, but it should be clear that they are joining a Catholic devotion. It is not to be altered or reduced to an ecumenical prayer service. If it is customary for all chaplains to pray together (ecumenically) in the morning, then Catholic chaplains could pray together either immediately before or afterwards.

D. Recitation could be done in French or English, or alternating between the two. Though it is easier to pray a full office in one language.

E. The recitation of lauds or Vespers only takes between 15-20 minutes. It could be celebrated immediately before Mass, or integrated into the Mass according to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. In this case the celebrating priest leads the recitation.