

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

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(Let me begin with this favorite prayer of mine that I start with every day when I privately recite the Liturgy of the Hours)

Lord, open my lips + to praise your holy name. Cleanse my heart of any worthless, evil or distracting thoughts. Give me the wisdom and love necessary to pray this Office with attention, reverence, and devotion. Father, let my prayer be heard in your presence, for it is offered through Christ our Lord. Amen. Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, pray for us!

The Liturgy of the Hours - five little words, but with so much meaning to us as secular members in Carmel. Interestingly enough, these words can also mean Praying Formal Prayers around the Clock. We can refer to Mark 15:25-34, where it states that Jesus was crucified at the third hour and that darkness fell over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour. In today's time, those hours can correspond with Jesus being crucified at 9 AM and darkness covering the land from noon until 3 PM. In biblical times, people used the word "hours" rather than "o'clock." Traditionally, religious prayed the Liturgy of the Hours seven times daily. Some Carmelite cloistered nuns still do. ¹

Per our Constitutions (#24), as Secular members, we are asked to recite only morning and evening prayer and night prayer, if possible. Morning and evening are the chief hours, placed at those times most appropriate for prayer, namely, in the beginning of the day and when the day is drawing to a close. Night prayer is recited just before going to bed.

Much of what I will be sharing with you is probably nothing really new to you or you may already have heard or read before in other ways. However, it is worth repeating and revisiting, especially if it is part of our way of life in Carmel. I will be sharing with you much of what I have experienced in my years in Carmel, what I have gleaned through my study, reading, researching, and what I continue to learn through trial and error.

This prayer that we say everyday has been part of our church for many years and even centuries. The Second Vatican Council showed the importance of the traditional discipline of the Church and desired to renew that discipline. It was the intention during

¹ The Divine Office for Dodos, A Step by Step Guide, Madeline Pecora Nugent pg. 16,17

Vatican II to continue its discipline. (*Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Divine Work*) It was very concerned to bring about a suitable restoration of this liturgy of prayer so that priests and other members of the church in today's circumstances might celebrate it better and more effectively (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, number 84). One of the major innovations of Vatican II was to make the Liturgy of the Hours more accessible to lay people.

Pope Paul VI approved this work of restoration in the apostolic constitution *Laudis Canticum* of November 1, 1970.² This can also be found in the beginning of the four-volume breviary, Volume 1 (Advent Season/Christmas Season).

We are so privileged to share in this beautiful gift of the church to us in its present format and to participate in its richness--Praying unceasingly united with others throughout the world.

So how do we as Secular members help our communities to appreciate and be faithful to its recitation? Many community members continue to struggle with its recitation in community or alone and become frustrated. It is so important that we as Formators and leaders teach our members how to recite the Liturgy of the Hours properly in community and also to ensure our members' understanding of this book we pick up and hold in our hands daily. We are not looking for perfection, but close enough to say it well with others and when by ourselves. Anything worth doing, is worth doing well. Our goal and purpose is to remain faithful to it. So let's begin.

First, we must know how to recite the Liturgy of the Hours ourselves. If we don't know how to recite it, how can we expect to teach it to others? Secondly, select members in your community who also know it well enough, so they too can lead the prayers in community and teach it to others. In our community we have two members who have volunteered to help anyone having difficulty reciting the Liturgy of the Hours. They meet after the general meeting, and one of them has even opened her home for anyone who would like one on one training. It is the intention of our Provincial Council to begin a year concentrating on teaching, learning, and praying the Liturgy of the Hours in our Province.

² Sacred Congregation of Divine Worship, see also beginning of four-volume Breviary

We have a standard way of reciting the Liturgy of the Hours as the Friars recite it. This can be found in the **Tools** section of our Formation Guidelines, pages 153-156. As you will see in this section, it provides the step by step format on who leads the various parts of the Office—such as the Hebdomedary or Hebdom for short, the First & Second Cantors, etc. We ask that communities and groups follow this standard, even if you have heard it said “we’ve always done it our way.” You will see in time how this prayer will bear much fruit in our members’ lives and in our communities.

Again, let us reference our Formation Guidelines, in the **Essential Resources** section, pg.33. If we take a look at this chart, you will note that the Liturgy of the Hours should be covered in the Aspirancy year. As Formators, we should not teach this matter of factly, but with every intention that when the aspirant moves to Formation Year 1, they have a good handle on how to recite it alone as well as with community. Aspirancy and Formation 1 teachers should bring in an outside, knowledgeable member from the community, who could really teach the Liturgy of the Hours well.

As in all things, it takes practice and repetition to truly grasp something well. It is a task or **Officium** in Latin, but this Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours is a “divine task.” Once it is learned, it becomes a channel of grace, a privilege and a joy.

Pope Benedict at a Benedictine Abbey in Austria, 2007 stated that “I realize that discipline is needed to pray the Office, and sometimes great effort as well in order to recite the Breviary faithfully; but through this *officium*, we receive many riches: how many times in doing so, have we seen our weariness and despondency melt away! When God is faithfully praised and worshipped, his blessings are unfailing.” Isn’t that beautiful!

Let us teach and help our members to become familiar with the terminology frequently used.³ Let’s go through some of them now. Many of the terms can be found in your Table of Contents in your Breviary.

- **Breviary** – the special book we use, plain and simple. You can use either the one-volume (Christian Prayer) or the four-volume.

³ The Divine Office for Dodos, A Step by Step Guide, Madeline Pecora Nugent, Glossary

- **Hebdomedary or Hebdom** – older name for the Leader or Presider

- **Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours** (as it is often referred) – is the official Office, written by the church to pray around the clock. The church put the Breviary together as we have it today. The Divine Office contains seven daily offices that correspond to the traditional hours of prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours.

- These formal prayers are called **Offices** – Office of Readings, Office of Morning Prayer, Office of Midmorning Prayer, Office of Midday Prayer, Office of Midafternoon Prayer, Office of Evening Prayer, and the Office of the Night Prayer, etc.

- The **Strophe** – it is one section of the psalm or Canticle, commonly called a *verse*.

- The **Psalmody** – this is the section at the beginning of each office. Each Psalmody contains Antiphons, Psalms, Psalm-prayers, Canticles, etc. Just a note that the Psalm-prayers are optional, per the general instruction #112.

- The **Psalter** – this is another term that members should know, because it begins with the headings Week I, II, III, and IV. There are only 4 weeks in the Psalter. We can think of it as a wheel. Once we reach the end of Week IV, we return to Week I.

- The **Invitatory** – This is an invitation to praise God. It is the very first prayer of the day when praying the Divine Office.

- The **Hymn** is very important too. The hymn can be sung or recited. You can make up a tune or use the tune from another hymn, select another hymn from the Index of Hymns in your Breviary or Hymnal, if available. However, it should

not be eliminated. Each Office is to begin with a “joyful noise to the Lord.” You only need to use one Hymn at the beginning of each office, even though several may be printed.

- The **Commons** – it is an office that can be used for a number of celebrations, i.e. Common of Virgins, Martyrs, Doctors of the Church, Pastors, Holy Men & Women, Religious, etc.
- Then we have the **Proper of Saints** – that section in the Breviary that is arranged chronologically by date from January through December for celebration of specific saints. Just like at Mass, not every saint is celebrated.
- Here are some other words we see often in our breviaries--**Memorials** (a celebration that is less important than a Feast), **Obligatory Memorials** (are memorials that must be celebrated by the whole church); **Optional Memorials** (are memorials that may or may not be celebrated); **Feasts** (are a high celebration of the whole church); Solemnities (are a Solemn celebration of the whole church—the highest church holiday; such as Sunday). And then we have **Commemorations**. Did you know that a Memorial whether Optional or Obligatory becomes a *Commemoration* especially during Lent, during Advent between December 17 to the 23, during the Octave of Christmas (between Christmas and New Year’s)? All Memorials celebrated during these times become Commemorations, which may or may not be celebrated. It is your choice. **Special note:** Feasts and Solemnities never become Commemorations.
- The **Proper of Seasons** – The section of the Psalter that contains various parts of the Offices that change with the week and season of the year such as Advent/Christmas, Lent/Easter, etc.

- Finally, we have the **Ordinary** - which contains the general instruction for praying the Divine Office, as well as some other repeated prayers in the Office.

Teach members to use the actual **Breviary** from the beginning. Most importantly, your members, Aspirants in particular, should know which Breviary your community is using before they purchase one. There are many prayer books out there such as the *Christian Prayer from the Daughters of St. Paul*, the *Shorter Christian Prayer*, the *Magnificat*, *Give us This Day*, and *The Word Among Us* to name a few that contain morning and evening prayers and maybe night prayer. There is nothing wrong with them, but the one we should use in our communities is the one that is most universal—the Liturgy of the Hours (Four volume set) by Catholic Book Publishing and the one single volume called *Christian Prayer: the Liturgy of the Hours* also by Catholic Book Publishing.

We have to be able to be comfortable and find our way through the Breviary first. Go through the Table of Contents when teaching your classes. Technology is good, but not when we are first learning to navigate our way through the Breviary. We need to teach our members not to be afraid to go through their Breviary, and to become familiar with it. Remind them that this is their book and it will help them to become less frustrated. There is something to be said about the feel of a book over a laptop, iPhone or tablet. Also, keep in mind the sacredness of this book which contains the beautiful Psalms written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Just a note, that although it has become a popular trend these days to use your phones or tablets to recite your Office, and there are some good apps such as the *Divine Office.org*, *iBreviary*, *Laudate*, etc., we should be sensitive to others who may find it distracting or disturbing to use them while reciting the Office in community. These electronic devices can best be used as a backup while traveling or if by happenstance you have forgotten to bring your Breviary along with you and it is not readily available. Will using electronic devices make your prayer any less acceptable? Absolutely not. But there may be a tendency to rush & it is easier to do so when using a phone. So in our community meetings, let us be consistent with using our Breviary together as community, so we can learn it well.

Here is something else that we find in the Breviary or should have when we purchase it-
- Ribbons & Inserts

Each Breviary has colorful ribbons to use as place marks for our navigation during our prayer time. Use them and initially teach members to stick with a certain color for the various Offices and Commons, so they will remember what each one is designated. Here is a suggestion I read that may help them. Certain colored ribbons can be called “restful ribbons” to mark those prayers we repeat often.

Once you put a ribbon in its proper place, hands off! It rests there forever. The “bouncing” ribbons are the ones we use to bounce along as we pray the offices from one day to the next.⁴

I know some members who use small post-it stickers. No harm in that, if it helps you to navigate comfortably to where you need to be. Holy cards are good, if it works for you. But if you are like me, I love holy cards and before I know it, my prayer book is overflowing with them. It can be distracting and you can easily lose your place.

Then you should have the insert cards. The breviary comes with insert cards numbered 1, 2, 3 & 4 to use with the various offices, especially with prayers for Solemnities and Feasts that we recite quite often and for those prayers found in the **Ordinary**, such as the Canticles of Zechariah and Mary, the Te Deum, the Invitatory Psalms, Conclusions of Prayer, and Night Prayer. These are a great help and could eliminate the flipping of too many pages and ribbons.

How about the **Ordo**? I must stress that an Ordo is very important. It is a daily guide for praying the Divine Office for the entire year. Use it! And have your Formators go through it with those in their formation class. The one we use for the four-volume Breviary is the St. Joseph Guide for the Liturgy of the Hours. There is also one printed for those who use the Christian Prayer St. Joseph’s edition.

In Carmel, we have an Ordo called the **Carmelite Ordo**. Does this surprise anyone? Well, it really shouldn’t. We have many Carmelite saints and blessed feasts and

⁴ The Divine Office for Dodos, A Step by Step Guide, Madeline Pecora Nugent, pg. 28

memorials throughout the year that is not found in the St. Joseph Guide, because they are sometimes only particular to our Order and not the entire universal church.

We, as members of so great a family in Carmel, should become familiar with our saints and blessed. Just like the many birthdays we remember of our own earthly family, we unite in a special way to celebrate these feast days of our Carmelite brothers and sisters in heaven. This Carmelite Ordo is used by our Friars and can be used by us as well. This particular Ordo contains everything for each day of the year not only for Carmelite saints but for all those saints celebrated in the universal church. It also includes instructions for celebrating Mass, the readings, the vestment colors, etc. I like to keep it simple, so I prefer the St. Joseph's Guide, but the Carmelite Ordo is also good to have so that you will know when a Carmelite saint or blessed's feast day is coming up and which Office to recite, uniting ourselves with the entire Carmelite Order in remembering them.

You can purchase one of these Carmelite Ordo's from Paulist Press. A new one is published every year.

The **Discalced Carmelite Proper of Offices** is the book that contains the various Proper for our Discalced Carmelite Saints and Blessed. There are two supplements out there that some of you may be familiar—the red supplement edition of 1990 (which is no longer in print and unavailable) and the black edition of 2006 from England. This same black edition has been updated and revised as of 2012. However, we recommend that your Councils get together and decide what to use in community. Privately, you can use whatever Proper you have. In the meantime, if you do not have the Proper for our particular Discalced Carmelite Saints or Blessed, our Breviary contains the various Commons to use so we can still celebrate their feast days as we do for other saints not in the section in our Breviary for the Proper of Saints.

Here are some practical pointers during community recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours:

- 1) Turn off cell phones or any electronic devices that may interrupt prayer time
- 2) Quiet down and place yourselves in the presence of God recollecting for a moment before beginning; remind members that this is a prayer, so do not rush (if you

notice that someone is too loud or not staying with the group, they should be gently told)

- 3) Slow down, listen to one another & stay together . Note: We may have a tendency in our eagerness to slow members down. So what happens is that some members end up reciting the prayers faster than others & the rest trying to slow the pace down are just catching up. Our prayer then becomes disjointed and distracting and loses the beautiful rhythm, flow, and prayerfulness that it should have. The key is to listen to your cantors and follow their lead, staying together.
- 4) Remind cantors to briefly pause between each Psalm
- 5) Also briefly pause after the Reading so that we can think about what the Hebdom or Presider has just read
- 6) If at all possible, you might have someone in your community or group type out the prayers for your leaders. This has helped immensely in our large community, giving confidence to the leaders, providing good structure, guidance, and less chances of getting lost and making mistakes. However, I want to make note that everyone in your communities or groups should learn how to use the Breviary and not become dependent upon the typed text.

I am sure you can think of a few other practical pointers, but I hope these will help.

Keep this in mind as you instruct your classes in the Liturgy of the Hours. First, these Psalms are human compositions which are divinely inspired, like all of Scripture. They are the prayer of men and women, though removed from us in time and culture, are like us in our humanity with all the strengths and weaknesses, our faith and wonderment, and our happiness and sorrow. In their humanness, the psalms transcend eras and cultures. Secondly, they are divine compositions.

Like all of Scripture, they are the Word of God in the Words of men. Seeing these prayers as given to us by God himself, we can enter without hesitation, knowing that they are the right way to pray.⁵

As St. Athanasius observed, “the Psalms have a unique value in that most of Scripture speaks *to us*; whereas, the Psalms speak *for us*.”⁶

There is yet so much that we can discuss and cover in our class instruction about the Liturgy of the Hours. These are just a few. I truly believe that we can enrich our community meetings each time we come together to pray.

Let us then make it our commitment not to neglect sound teaching and guidance of our members in our communities in the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours. It is such a very important component to our way of life if we are to remain faithful to it. The busier we are the more we need this simple but meaningful prayer given to us by the church through the guidance of the Holy Spirit who helps us in our weakness to pray as we ought in order to make holy the day.⁷

We can then rest assured as Formators, Councillors, and Leaders that we are helping our members grow in holiness through prayer.

God bless you!

⁵ Making Holy the Day, A Commentary on the Liturgy of the Hours, Charles E. Miller, C.M., pg. 29

⁶ Making Holy the Day, A Commentary on the Liturgy of the Hours, Charles E. Miller, C.M., pg. 30

⁷ Making Holy the Day, A Commentary on the Liturgy of the Hours, Charles E. Miller, C.M., pg. 48

Some Suggested Reading

- 1) The Apostolic Constitution Promulgation – *The Divine Office Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Council*
- 2) Making Holy the Day – *A Commentary on the Liturgy of the Hours*, by Charles E. Miller, C.M.
- 3) *The Divine Office for Dodos – A Step by Step Guide to Praying the Liturgy of the Hours*, by Madeline Pecora Nugent
- 4) Companion Prayer Book to the Liturgy of the Hours, by Georges-Albert Boissinot
- 5) Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1174-1178
- 6) The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition
- 7) OCDS Constitutions

OCDS Formation Guidelines for the California/Arizona Province of St. Joseph