

THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Note -The *Liturgy of the Hours* is also known as the *Divine Office*. The word “Office” comes from the Latin (*officium*), meaning “service” that we give to God in prayer.

In the early centuries of the Church the Divine Office was the prayer of the whole Christian community, not just the clergy or religious. It was the Church’s school of prayer.

In medieval times the Office had, outside the monasteries, become the private prayer of the clergy. The Second Vatican Council revised the Office in such a way as to restore it to its original function as the prayer of the whole people of God.

Therefore Secular Carmelites seek to discover in liturgical prayer the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit in everyday life. The Liturgy of the Hours is a pattern of prayer based on the psalms that brings the Secular Carmelite into communion with the prayer of Jesus and the Church.

We recite Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer of the Hours in union with the whole Church throughout the world. When it is possible we also recite *Night Prayer*.

Morning and Evening Prayer

Morning and Evening Prayer are the chief hours of prayer for the day. The Second Vatican Council described them as “the two hinges on which the daily office turns” (CSL 89).

Note: The other hours in the *Divine Office* are:

Office of Readings (readings from Scripture and the Church’s greatest spiritual authors)
Prayer During the Day, to be said before noon, at midday, and in the afternoon.
Night Prayer, said just before going to bed.

The Parts of Morning and Evening Prayer

A. Invitation

At Morning Prayer we begin with what is technically called the “**Invitatory**” (pronounced with the accent on the second syllable, inv-Í-tatory). It is an invitation to pray. It calls us at the beginning of the day to set aside all distractions so as to give our full attention to God. The invitatory begins with -

Verse: **Lord, open my lips**

Response: **And we shall praise your name.**

Then we say the **invitatory psalm** 94 (or Ps 99 or Ps 66 or Ps 23) with its **invitatory antiphon** which changes each day and focuses on the theme of the particular day.

The invitatory antiphon is said at the beginning of the invitatory psalm and after each verse of the psalm.

Note: If you are reciting the Morning Prayer on your own, then you may say the invitatory antiphon just at the beginning and the end of the invitatory psalm.

At Evening Prayer we begin with a simpler invitation –

Verse: **God, come to my assistance**

Response: **Lord, make haste to help me.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**

B. Hymn

This may be sung or recited. In addition to the hymn set for each day there are special hymns for the different seasons of the Liturgical year (*see Appendix II, pp. 1102 ff*).

As well as the hymns given in the book, any suitable hymn or poem can be used.

C. Psalmody

The psalms are distributed over a four-week cycle and include most of the psalms. The praying of the psalms and canticles is the chief part of the Office. The psalms for Morning and Evening Prayer have been carefully selected and arranged to best aid Christian worship.

Psalmody of Morning Prayer consists of 3 psalms.

- A psalm whose mood and content fit the beginning of the day.
- A canticle, i.e. a song of praise that comes from somewhere else in Scripture other than the *Book of Psalms*.
- Another psalm; traditionally a psalm of praise.

Psalmody of Evening Prayer consists of 3 psalms.

- Two are chosen because of the way they express prayer at the close of day,
- A canticle from the New Testament (from the Epistles or Revelation).

The dominant note of the evening psalms is giving thanks to God for the gift of the day.

Note: When the Office is prayed in a group it becomes like a conversation between two people. Psalms can be chanted or recited in various ways (*Introduction - 55-56*).

They may be said or sung straight through with alternate verses sung or recited by two parts of the group. Another way is the responsorial method by which the first group says the first two lines of the psalm, and the second group says the next two lines, and so on. The asterisks at the end of the line * indicate a short pause. They help breathing and give time for the meaning to sink in.

Each psalm has an antiphon designed to highlight a dominant theme in the psalm.

The antiphon is said at the beginning of the psalm.

At the end of the psalm there is the doxology -

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Then the antiphon is repeated. When the antiphon is the same as the first line of the psalm, you skip that first line and go straight onto the next one marked †

When the Office is recited by a group in two parts (two “choirs”), the first cantor recites the antiphon and the first line of the psalm up to the asterisk * then the first choir joins in.

The second cantor will start the next psalm with the antiphon and the second choir joins in in the same way. . The two lines of the doxology are also said alternately by the two choirs, continuing the sequence established in the psalm. The antiphon after the doxology is said by both choirs together.

D. Scripture Reading

A short reading is given according to the liturgical day, season or feast. The readings have been chosen with the purpose of expressing succinctly an important biblical theme.

E. Silence

The silence following the psalms and the readings is an integral part of the prayer.

Silence allows the word of God to germinate in us, giving us time to meditate on the word of God and to listen to the voice of the Spirit in our hearts.

F. Responsory

The short verse and response are designed to turn the reading into prayer and contemplation.

G. Gospel Canticles

These canticles express praise and thanksgiving for our redemption.” (GILH 50)

They follow the Scripture reading and Responsory.

The sign of the cross is made at the beginning of the canticles.

The *Gospel Canticle* at Morning Prayer, the Benedictus (Luke 1:68-79),

The Gospel Canticle at Evening Prayer is the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

H. The Intercessions

In the morning the intercessions are designed to consecrate the day and our work to God.

In the evening, the intercessions focus on the needs of the world.

We bring before the Lord our specific needs and the needs of those who are known to us.

The final intercession each evening is always for the faithful departed.

Note: The intercessions were written at a time when “men” and “man” were understood to include the whole human race, male and female. It would be good to remember that the spirit of the prayer is to be inclusive.

I. The Lord’s Prayer

The Lord's Prayer has a place of honour at the end of the intercessions and it sums up the whole prayer.

J. Conclusion of the Hours

The **Concluding Prayer** completes the Hour.

When a priest or deacon presides over the Office (and no other hour follows) he says:

The Lord be with you R. And also with you.

May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. R. Amen.

In prayer on one's own, or without a priest or deacon present, the conclusion is:

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. R. Amen.

Note: The Office on Sunday has 2 Evening Prayers:- Evening Prayer I is said on Saturday evening and Evening Prayer II on Sunday evening.

OVERVIEW OF STRUCTURE OF MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER

MORNING PRAYER

EVENING PRAYER

Showing parts different from Morning Prayer

INTRODUCTION

V. Lord, open my lips.

V. God, come to our assistance.

R. And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

R. Lord, make haste to help us.

[Invitatory psalm (94, 99, 66) with its antiphon]

Glory be ...

HYMN

PSALMODY

A "Morning" psalm

A psalm

Old Testament Canticle

A psalm

A psalm of praise

New Testament Canticle

SCRIPTURE READING

(followed by silent reflection)

SHORT RESPONSORY

GOSPEL CANTICLE

Benedictus

Magnificat

INTERCESSIONS

Consecrating the day to God

Intercessions for the needs of the world

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CONCLUDING PRAYER

BLESSING

FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND YOUR OFFICE BOOK

Turn to the CONTENTS (page v) and you will see that the book is divided into 4 parts: **PROPER OF SEASONS** (p 3-366), **PSALTER** (P 368-689), **PROPER OF SAINTS** (710-964) and **COMMON OFFICES** (p 967ff).
The Office for the Dead - see p 1087.

“PROPER” refers those items that belong to a **solemnity**, a **feast**, a **memorial** or **optional memorial**. For **solemnities** nearly all the text is proper, whereas for **feasts** rather less is proper. Items not included in the proper are taken from the **“COMMON OFFICES”**.

For a **memorial** or an **optional memorial** only a small part is proper (e.g. antiphons and concluding prayer) and items not included in the proper can be taken from the weekday in the **PSALTER** or, if desired, from the **relevant Common Office**. (*Introduction -126 b*)

All this sounds more complicated than it actually is. You will soon get into the swing of it and find yourself praying the Liturgy of the Hours without being distracted by the mechanics of it.

A note on the Universalis App

The Divine Office is also available as the *Universalis* app for tablets and mobile phones. Once downloaded it can be used offline though some features, including updates, require an internet connection. Optional memorials are not included, which limits its value slightly for Carmelites. However, with this proviso, for those happy with reading a screen rather than a printed page it is a simpler way of accessing the majority of the Divine Office text. For more information visit: <https://universalis.com>