

INTRODUCTION AND PASTORAL GUIDE

Wherever possible, other groups of the faithful should celebrate the liturgy of the hours communally in church. This especially applies to all parishes – the cells of the diocese, established under their pastors, taking the place of the bishop; they “represent in some degree the visible Church established throughout the world.”

The General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours, 21.

THE MUNDELEIN PSALTER intends to be a contribution to the continuing renewal of the liturgy. It highlights a new realization of the value of this type of prayer, especially for Catholic communities today. With its roots sunk deep in the daily prayer of Judaism, the diurnal, public recitation of the Psalms has been the daily companion of Christians through the history of the Church. The structuring of liturgical year, of the week, and of the day gives a profound meaning and stability to the Church’s desire to keep the mysteries of faith ever before us. The important value of the public, communal celebration of the Divine Office must not be underestimated, especially in communities that do not have the daily celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy.

The deep, sober beauty of the chanting of the psalms provides an oasis of calm and peace in the often hectic and frenzied pace of people today. And so, this volume does not intend to offer anything flashy or flamboyant. It does not boast of any innovation; it does not introduce the next fad. The Church’s prayer must be allowed to speak for itself, to express the joy and grief, the anguish and elation of God’s children across the ages and around the globe. This volume hopes to offer an opening to the radical beauty of the Judeo-Christian prayer, in an accessible, comprehensible way. This, after all, is the prayer of the Church.

This Psalter does, however, signal a rediscovery in a way: it is simply the Church’s prayer, not charged with any political agenda, not aimed directly at

social reconstruction. It harbors no hidden motive of changing the world or the Church or even ourselves, (these changes occur by grace). Its sole intent is to foster fidelity in the praise of God by joining our prayer to those of other cultures and generations which offer the same sacrifice of praise. The Divine Office is the expression of Church, the Body of Christ, at prayer.

HOW DOES THIS WORK? There have been many images used to describe what happens during the singing of the Psalms. The pace and rhythm of it can be likened to waves that constantly wash over us with the Biblical prayer, bathing us in the images and emotions of the Psalms, wearing a path in the stone of our hearts by its constant, gentle force. A hymn for the Common of Holy Men and Women gives marvelous expression to this idea: “May all that splendid company/whom Christ our Savior came to meet,/ help us on our uneven road/ made smoother by their passing feet.”

The regularity of this prayer and fidelity to it, afford its participants a different kind of appreciation. Christians come to live with the praise of God, abide with it. In the frenzied pace of the contemporary world, people rush from “thing to thing” or activity to event, like tourists rushing from monument to monument for the “souvenir snapshot” without really seeing or experiencing the genius of a place. Those who engage in the Liturgy of the Hours, on the other hand, gradually come to *know* the Scriptures, become one with the culture of the Bible and of the Church. It is only

then that the Christian cultural symbols begin to reveal their richness and a new depth of meaning.

Christian prayer is bound up inextricably in the weave of the liturgical year and the mysteries of faith. The fundamental connection between the Paschal Mystery and human life unfolds in the rhythm of each day, week, and year as each sunrise promises resurrection and each dying day begs for mercy.

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE LITURGY OF HOURS IN THE PARISH

Because the Liturgy of the Hours is the official public prayer of the Church, certain members are bound to celebrate it: those in Holy Orders, religious communities and secular institutes are required to celebrate all or part of the office for the good of the whole People of God. This, however, does not mean that the Catholic faithful should think it reserved to a religious elite. This prayer belongs properly to the people. And so the Church has insisted that the people be given access to it.

Many parish communities celebrate some form of the office during the more solemn seasons of the year, especially Advent, Lent and Holy Week. The Second Vatican Council encouraged *at least* a weekly celebration of Sunday Vespers.

Beginning the public celebration of the Liturgy of Hours need not be a complicated project. A pastor might celebrate one or more hours with parishioners before or after the daily Mass. Pastoral Council meetings might begin with the communal recitation or singing of all or part of the office. Parish staffs might adopt the structure given by the Divine Office to provide rhythm to the daily engagement in ministry. Choirs could begin their rehears-

als with this form of prayer as a reminder of the ministry of sacred music and its relation to the Paschal Mystery. Christian families can find a center and source of stability in praying the office daily, paying particular attention to the rhythm of the liturgical year, the celebration of saints' days, and night prayer. The Office for the Dead can provide an important structure for families in grief or can be used as a regular reminder of deceased relatives. Even two people, praying together publically in church, can be an important witness of Christian fidelity and offer an invitation to others to join.

The prayer requires no particular expertise. The following fundamental principles can easily be learned, understood and gradually adopted.

1. The office begins with the sign of the cross, indicated by the symbol (✠), and the **OPENING VERSE**. Notice that the verse, "O God, come to my assistance," even in communal celebration uses the word "my" instead of "our". This signals that those assembled for prayer join together as the Body of Christ, praying in him, through him praising the Father. The first task then is to foster the unity that goes beyond individual or personal prayer. Not "our" assistance as if we were a group of disconnected individuals in a recitation of personal prayers, but "my" assistance as members of one body already seeking unity and wholeness.
2. The **HYMN** follows. The hymn is an integral part of the celebration of the office, as made evident by the care with which the Church has developed proper texts especially for the feasts of the saints and the seasons of the year. Three aspects of these hymns can be noted. 1) Most of the hymns are arranged to be sung to any Long Meter tune (such as *Iesu duclis memoria* or Old Hundreth.)

- Traditional chant tunes have been provided for the cycle of Ordinary Time so that the ancient hymn texts (most of which date from the first eight centuries of Christianity) can be chanted with their traditional tunes. 2) The texts provided for certain feast days are proper to these celebrations. They are frequently biographical and thus provide a treasury of reflection. 3) From the earliest days of the Church, these hymn texts have been chanted so that the faithful might constantly have on their lips the orthodox faith.
3. The **PSALMODY** is generally composed of two psalms and a canticle. The antiphon is first intoned by the cantor or leader and then continued (after the *) or repeated by the participants. Alternation of the verses can be done in a variety of ways: side to side, between cantor and assembly, men alternating with women.
 4. The **READING** follows the psalmody. The text is read without introduction or concluding verse. During the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter the readings are taken from the Proper of Seasons.
 5. The **RESPONSORY** is chanted or recited.
 6. All stand and make the sign of the cross for the **GOSPEL CANTICLE** and its proper antiphon.
 7. The **INTERCESSIONS** are intoned by the cantor or leader. They may be recited or sung with the assembly repeating the response after each petition.
 8. **THE LORD'S PRAYER** with its invitation follows the petitions.
 9. The **CONCLUDING PRAYER**, without invitation, follows immediately after the Lord's Prayer. At Compline (Night Prayer) the invitation "Let us pray" is said before the concluding prayer.
 10. A priest or deacon may give the **BLESSING** and **DISMISSAL**. In the absence of an ordained minister, a lay person sings or says, "May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. **℟** Amen."
 11. At Compline, the blessing is said, even in individual recitation: "May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death. **℟** Amen." An antiphon in honor of the Blessed Virgin follows.

NOTES FOR CHANTING THE OFFICE

The singing of chant must be characterized by the three virtues of sobriety, simplicity and restraint. This requires on the part of the singer a mind disciplined in the art of prayer as well as in the art of music. There must never be a sensation of dragging in the rendition of the chant. It must be sung *lightly* and it must *move*.

Chants of the Church, 1953.

THIS EDITION OF THE DIVINE OFFICE is arranged to foster the communal singing of the prayer. It uses Gregorian notation which might at first seem intimidating, but is actually more flexible and more accessible than modern notation. Many new resources are becoming available to help with understanding chant. The following basic information can provide a starting point for novices:

1. The Gregorian staff is composed of four horizontal lines. The first signal for

chanting is given at the beginning of the staff; is called the clef. In the *Mundelein Psalter*, the "Do clef" and the "Fa clef" are used. The Do clef indicates on which line the first note of the diatonic scale is to be sung; the Fa clef indicates the fourth note of the scale. In the song made famous by Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music* the diatonic scale is given: do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. In the following example, the Do clef is on the third line, thus the notes to be chanted are: Do, ti, la, do; do, ti, la.



In the second example, the Fa clef is shown on the third line, thus one chants: Fa, mi, re, do; do re.



2. The open note, usually found at the beginning of each phrase, indicates the reciting tone; it can include many words or syllables.
3. Text in *italics* indicates the syllable on which the recitation note changes.
4. In chant, the principle is that the “many voices become one.” In this way the assembly is formed into the one Body of Christ. The soft human voice of individual singers, joined together, is aided by the acoustics of the chapel to create a rich, full sound.
5. Special notions in the text help the assembly to sing in unison. While in general, one sings to the end of the phrase, a dagger (†) in the text signals a short pause within a phrase. An asterisk (*) indicates the second half of the chanted phrase.
6. Chant is designed to sustain and highlight the text; music serves the prayer so that the participants may reflect on the mystery revealed in the text.
7. In general, the cantor will intone the antiphon; all repeat it.

8. The cantor intones the first phrase of the psalm, the left side of the assembly joins to finish the verse. The right side alternates with the left side through the doxology (*Gloria*), then all join together to repeat the antiphon.

Prayer of this kind requires patience, practice, humility and charity. The richness of the liturgy is revealed gradually. It is over the course of the liturgical year, and week and day that we attend the mystery of our faith.

The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours, included in this volume, pages 7-36, provides a rich theological and liturgical introduction to the Church’s public prayer and more ample instruction on the implementation of the Divine Office. Those who use the Mundelein Psalter are urged to read and meditate on it regularly as a source of spiritual enrichment.

Additional information, audio files and other helpful tools can be found at www.mundeleinpsalter.com.

THE BENEDICTINE SISTERS of Saint Cecilia’s Abbey, located on the Isle of Wight, (U.K.) are owed our profound gratitude for their selfless work at translating from the Latin the majority of hymns that appear in this volume. Please pray for them, that Lord will reward their efforts in this life with growth in holiness and in the members of their community, and grant they they may sing in the presence of the Lamb for all eternity. May every celebration of this Office be an implicit prayer for them.

