

Novitiate Module

Lay Fraternities of St. Dominic

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Province of St. Joseph

PRAYER - THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS and THE PSALMS

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INTRODUCTION

This formation module is written for all who are learning to pray. It is written specifically for those Lay Dominicans who are in the Novitiate stage of advancement, to introduce them to one of the Church's greatest treasures of prayer, the Liturgy of the Hours (also known as the Divine Office). The word "Office" comes from the Latin (*officium*), meaning "service," something done for someone. The Divine Office is the service given to God in prayer.

The Divine Office is a pattern of prayer based on the psalms. In the early centuries of the Church the Office was the prayer of the whole Christian community, not just the clergy or religious. It was the Church's school of prayer. By 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. There are riches in the Office that need to be unlocked, and questions that need to be answered if beginners are to gain the most benefit from it.

NOTE: In order to prevent confusion, it must be noted that the following titles: *The Liturgy of The Hours*, *The Divine Office*, *The Breviary* and *The Hours*, are all synonymous titles, and are being used interchangeably throughout this document.

I. Morning and Evening Prayer from the Divine Office

The Bishops of the Second Vatican Council acted to restore the traditions, which made Morning and Evening Prayer the two chief hours of prayer for the day. The Council described Morning and Evening Prayer as "The two hinges on which the daily office turns." (Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, henceforth cited CSL, n. 89).

The other hours became: *The Office of Readings* which includes both a substantial reading from Scripture and from the Church's greatest spiritual authors; Prayer During the Day, to be said before noon, at midday, and in the afternoon; Night Prayer, to be said just before going to bed. Note: these particular hours will not be covered in this document. The revision was completed in 1970 and an English translation published in 1974.

In what follows, the main text that will be referred to is: *Shorter Christian Prayer*, published by the Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, NY, (a one-volume edition of the Liturgy of the Hours). It has been drawn upon to present a selection of material for Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer in a format that is easier for the layperson to use than the complete one-volume *Christian Prayer* or the four-volume *Liturgy of the Hours*, all of which are published by the Catholic Publishing Co. NYC, NY.

The *Shorter Christian Prayer* contains the complete four-week Psalter; material from the Proper of Seasons and the Proper of Saints; Night Prayer; Office for the Dead; Memorial of the Blessed Virgin; and the complete series of hymns found in the regular edition of *Christian Prayer*. The whole volume is printed in two colors on Bible paper and is a very handy pocket-size Office Book.

The Various Parts of Morning and Evening Prayer

A. *Invitation to prayer*

Morning prayer begins with what is technically called the Invitatory (pronounced with the accent on the second syllable, *invitatory*). The invitatory is an invitation to pray. It serves to bring us into the presence of God, it helps us to set aside the concerns that crowd in at the beginning of the day, and it calls us to give our full attention to God. It is like the warm up that an athlete does before the actual event, a slow flexing of the spiritual muscles. The invitatory begins the dialogue with God, which continues throughout the whole Office.

There are three parts to the invitatory:

The first part of the invitatory is the versicle from Psalm 51:17.

Verse: *Lord Open my lips*
Response: *And my mouth will proclaim your praise.*

The second part of the invitatory is a psalm, usually Psalm 95, sometimes Psalm 100, 67, or 24. Psalm 95 is a striking call to prayer.

The third part of the invitatory is the antiphon, which changes each day and serves to focus our attention on either a theme of the invitatory psalms, or on a theme of the particular day in the Church's liturgical calendar. The invitatory antiphon is always given at the very beginning of each day's prayer. The antiphon can be said just at the beginning of the invitatory psalm, or after each verse of the psalm. The invitatory antiphons for the different seasons of the Church's year are found beginning in page 18 in *Shorter Christian Prayer*. The psalm itself begins on page 22. Alternative invitatory psalms are on pp. 24-25.

Evening Prayer begins 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 (The Doxology)*

B. *Hymn*

In addition to the hymn set for each day there are special hymns for the different seasons of the Liturgical year. These are found on pp. 578 ff, (*Shorter Christian Prayer*). As well as the hymns given in the book, any suitable hymn can be used. Even if you are reading the Office on our own, but you enjoy singing, by all means, go ahead and sing the hymn aloud.

C. *Psalmody*

The psalms for Morning and Evening Prayer have been carefully selected and arranged to best aid Christian worship. The psalmody of Morning Prayer consists of three psalms.

First is a morning psalm that is a psalm whose mood and content fit the beginning of the day.

Second is a canticle. A canticle is a song, a hymn of praise, a psalm that comes from somewhere else in Scripture other than the book of Psalms. At Morning Prayer the canticle is always from the Old Testament and is often a classic passage from the prophets, especially Isaiah.

Third is another psalm; traditionally a psalm of praise. To begin the day with praise is one of the greatest antidotes to self-interest or self-pity.

The psalmody of Evening Prayer consists of three passages: two psalms or two sections of a longer psalm chosen because of the way they express prayer at the close of day, followed by a canticle from the New Testament (from the Epistles or Revelation). The dominant note of the evening psalms is thanksgiving. In the evening we give Thanks to God for the gift of the day.

NOTE: The numbering of the Psalms in the Office listed in *Shorter Christian Prayer* coincides with numbering of the Psalms in any modern Bible.

When the Office is prayed in community, the community can be divided into two groups. This gives evidence to the remark that the Office is like a conversation between two people. The first group says the first two lines of the psalm, and the second group says the next two lines, and so on through the psalm. For each pair of lines the group pauses for a moment at the end of their first line

Each psalm has an antiphon adapted from a verse in the psalm and designed to highlight a dominant theme in the psalm. The antiphon is said at the beginning of the psalm, and sometimes after each verse and said again at the conclusion of each psalm, before this final antiphon the doxology (ascription of praise) is used:

*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.*

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.

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*

Silence following the psalms and the readings is an integral part of the prayer. To pause, to be silent after each psalm, allows the word of God to germinate in us. It gives us time to meditate on the word of God, and to listen to the voice of the Spirit in our hearts.

F. *The Responory*

The short verse and response is another way of absorbing the word of God by putting into words a proper response to the Scripture reading. The response is designed to turn the reading into prayer and contemplation. (*General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours* henceforth cited as GILH, ¶ 172).

G. *Gospel Canticles*

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel canticle, the Benedictus (Luke 1:68-79), follows the Scripture reading and response. At Evening Prayer the canticle is the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). "These canticles express praise and thanksgiving for our redemption." (GILH, ¶ 50) The sign of the cross is made at the beginning of the canticles.

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. When praying alone, each intercession offers direction for our personal prayer, bringing 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 departed.

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 honor at the end of the intercessions and it sums up the whole prayer.

J. *Concluding Prayer*

A concluding prayer completes the Hour. On Sundays and feast days, this concluding prayer is the same as opening prayer at Mass.

K. *Conclusion*

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. Amen.*

One peculiar feature of the structure of The Office is that each Sunday has two Evening Prayers. This is a remnant of the Jewish way of reckoning time, where the new day begins at sunset, not at midnight. Evening Prayer I is said on Saturday evening, and Evening Prayer II on Sunday evening.

STRUCTURE OF MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER

MORNING PRAYER

EVENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

V. Lord, open my lips.

R. And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

[Invitatory psalm (95, 100, 67, or 23) with its antiphon]

V. God, come to our assistance.

R. Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be ...

HYMN

PSALMODY

A "Morning" psalm

Old Testament Canticle

A psalm of praise

A psalm

A psalm

New Testament Canticle

SCRIPTURE READING

(followed with a period of 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

Getting Started

1. *On Your Own*

If you have not used the psalms regularly in prayer before, the full form of The Office can be daunting. At first sight it looks complex, with lots of different Scriptures for prayer. There seems to be more than one can possibly take in or pray with concentration, and many who start praying the full form of Morning and Evening Prayer by themselves give up after a few weeks either because they cannot work out how to follow all seasonal texts, or because they feel that they are saying a lot of words rather than praying to God.

One practical way of overcoming this problem is to start slowly, to take as much as you can handle and leave the rest until later. For example, if you have never prayed the psalms before, cut out the invitatory and the opening hymn, and begin Morning Prayer by praying either the first psalm (the “morning” psalm), or the third psalm (the “praise” psalm), go on to the Scripture reading and the responsory, then conclude with the intercessions and the Lord’s Prayer. That may be plenty to begin with. After a few weeks or months, when you feel you are able to expand your daily diet of praying the Scriptures, add the second psalm of the day. After some time, you will be ready to move in to the full form of Morning and Evening Prayer. The most important thing is not to try too much, and so become discouraged and give up. Start slowly, and work up to the full form at your own pace.

2. *In Community*

It is an immense advantage, in the beginning, to pray the Office with a community. The Liturgy of the Hours is common prayer, and the discipline of community prayer carries a beginner along while you are growing into a new form of prayer.

II. The Proper of Seasons and the Proper of Saints

The main sections of the edition of The Office published by Catholic Book Publishing Co. as *Shorter Christian Prayer*:

1. The Proper of Seasons (pp.335-540);
2. The Psalter (pp, 35-329);
3. The Proper of Saints (pp.541-558).

The second section (the Psalter) is the heart of the book. It contains the psalmody which is used all year (apart from solemnities and saints’ days) as well as the Scripture readings, responsories, antiphons for the Benedictus and the Magnificat, intercessions, and concluding prayers for use in ordinary time.

The first and third sections contain the Propers. The word “Proper” is a technical liturgical term referring to those parts of the liturgy, which change according to the season of the Christian year or the saint’s day being observed. “Proper” comes from the Latin word *proprius*, meaning “one’s own,” and so the Proper refers to those parts of The Office, which belong specifically to a particular season or saint’s day.

It is quite easy to find your way around and to discover the texts for a particular day’s prayer in the *Shorter Christian Prayer*, especially as you are praying the Office consistently on a day to day basis. The text in red print is designed to lead you through the proper sequence of the particular Hour you may be praying.

It’s somewhat more difficult if you intermittently pray the Hours, especially when trying to determine which week of the four-week Psalter you should be in for a particular day. Page 15, under the title “The Cycle of the four-week Psalter” is designed to help you solve this problem.

The following outline of the Church's Liturgical Year can also be a big help in determining which week of the Psalter you should be in.

The Church's Liturgical Year is so inextricably interwoven with the "Liturgy of The Hours," that it behooves one to first gain a good understanding of the Church's Liturgical Year, in order to become more proficient in praying the Liturgy of The Hours. The following outline points out how the four weeks of the Psalter tie in with the Church's Liturgical year:

The following outline of the Church's Liturgical Year has been designed for use in praying The Liturgy of the Hours. It has been found helpful in determining the proper week of the Psalter to be used at any time, and which week of Ordinary Time to resume with on the Monday following Pentecost Sunday.

NOTE: This outline may be used for each and every year.

Liturgical Year of the Catholic Church

In the Diocese of the United States of America

1. Season of Advent

The 1st Sunday of Advent always falls on the Sunday closest to November 30. **(Begin with the first week in the Psalter.)**

2. Season of Christmas

Christmas Day (Solemnity) always falls on 25 December.

Holy Family (Feast) falls on the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, except when Christmas falls on a Sunday; then, *Holy Family* is celebrated on December 30.

Mary Mother of God (Solemnity) always falls on January 1.

Epiphany Sunday (Solemnity) falls on the first Sunday of January, or on the second Sunday of January when *Mary Mother of God* falls on Sunday, January 1.

Christ's Baptism (Feast) falls on either the Sunday following January 6, or on the Monday following

Epiphany Sunday, when *Epiphany Sunday* falls after January 6.

3. Ordinary Time (First Portion)

O. T. starts on the Monday following the feast of *Christ's Baptism* or on the next day (Tuesday) if the feast of *Christ's Baptism* falls on a Monday. **(Begin over with the first week of the Psalter.)**

4. Season of Lent

Lent always starts on *Ash Wednesday*, which is 40 days before *Easter Sunday* (Not counting Sundays). **(On the first Sunday of Lent begin over with the first week of the Psalter.)**

5. **Season of Easter**

Easter Sunday always falls on the Sunday after the 1st full moon following March 21. **(Begin over with the first week of the Psalter)**

Feast of the Ascension (Solemnity) always falls on the 40th day after *Easter Sunday*, **(counting *Easter Sunday* as one day)**

Pentecost Sunday (Solemnity) always falls on the 10th day after the *Feast of the Ascension*.

“*After Pentecost*” consists of from 24 to 28 weeks (in the second part Ordinary Time) to Advent, it takes up the main part of the year, and is devoted to feasts of the Saints, to Christian work, and to prayer.

6. **Ordinary Time (Second Portion)**

Ordinary Time resumes on the Monday after *Pentecost Sunday*. **(See table below for proper O.T. week and the proper week in the Psalter to use.)**

Trinity Sunday (Solemnity) always falls on the Sunday following *Pentecost Sunday*.

Body and Blood of Christ (Solemnity) always falls on the Sunday following *Trinity Sunday*.

The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (Solemnity) always falls on the Friday following the 2nd Sunday after *Pentecost Sunday*.

Christ the King (Solemnity) falls on the last Sunday in Ordinary Time.

ORDINARY TIME TABLE		
When Pentecost Sunday Is closest to:	Resume with this week in Ordinary Time:	Resume with this week in the Psalter:
May 11	Week 6	Week 2
May 18	Week 7	Week 3
May 25	Week 8	Week 4
June 1	Week 9	Week 1
June 8	Week 10	Week 2
June 15	Week 11	Week 3

The proper weeks to use can also be found in your church’s Missalette.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Breviary can best be described as the daily prayer of the Church, beginning with Morning Prayer or The Office of Readings, and ending with Night Prayer: from dawn till dusk, and into the black watches of night, the Church prays by the Spirit of Christ; Christ, too, prays, through “his body,” the Church. The Breviary is, thus, in very truth “the prayer of God” (Luke 6:12).

In these fearful days of crises, the pattern of life in the world is tangled and oddly out of focus. Minds are confused, and hearts are restless. If the human mind is to have calmness in crises, if the human heart is to have courage amid crosses, recourse must be had to the power that prayer gives and to the patience that penance brings. Prayer and penance, and they alone, can calm the problems now trying the souls of men. In hopes of progress towards peace and plenty where now there are war and want, it is the hope that the Roman Breviary may be fruitful in many souls, fruitful in prayer, fruitful of penance and fruitful of unity with Christ through His Church.

Glossary

Antiphon – Sentences, usually from Scripture, recited before and after the Psalms and Canticles of the Office. They vary with the season, and their purpose is to highlight one aspect of the Psalm or Canticle.

Benedictus- The canticle from Luke 1:68-79 is called the Benedictus, after its opening word: “Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel...” The Benedictus is recited at Morning Prayer after the Scripture reading.

Breviary- The book, in which the text of the Liturgy of The Hours is printed.

Canticle- From the Latin *canticulum*, “A little song.” Canticles in the Divine Office are songs from Scripture outside the book of Psalms. In Morning Prayer, the second passage of the psalmody is one of the Old Testament Canticles. In Evening Prayer, the last passage of the psalmody is a New Testament Canticle.

Common- Those sections of the Office, which belong equally to a particular group of saints, are *common* to that group. For example, the Common of Apostles is the set of texts (psalmody, Scripture readings, intercessions, etc.), which can be used on all the feast days of apostles. The common of Women Saints is the set of texts, which can be used on all the days in which we honor Women Saints.

Divine Office – The name given to the official daily prayer of the Church, made up of the seven “hours”: (1) Office of Readings, (2) Morning Prayer, (3) Prayer Before Noon, (4) Midday Prayer, (5) Afternoon Prayer, (6) Evening Prayer, (7) Night Prayer. The word “Office” comes from the Latin *officium*, meaning “service,” something done for someone. The Divine Office is the Service given to God in prayer. Other names for The Divine Office are: Liturgy of The Hours, Daily Office, and The Prayer of The Church. **The preferred name used in the Church documents is “The Liturgy of The Hours.”**

Feast – A feast day is a day commemorating an event in the history of salvation, or a Saint. There are 25 Feast Days in the General Roman Calendar of Solemnities, Feasts, Memorials.

Hour – In Liturgical language, an hour is one of the seven times for prayer, which make up the Divine Office. These are (1) Office of Readings, (2) Morning Prayer, (3) Prayer Before Noon, (4) Midday Prayer, (5) Afternoon Prayer, (6) Evening Prayer, (7) Night Prayer. The hours are sometimes called the canonical hours, because they are governed by Canon Law. The two “Major hours” are Morning and Evening Prayer.

Invitatory – Means “invitation.” The prayer of the Office begins each day with the invitatory, the invitation to prayer, which is made up of three parts:

- 1) The opening versicle and the response (Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will proclaim your praise).
- 2) A Psalm, usually Psalm 95, sometimes Psalms 100, 67, 24. The psalm used at this point is called the invitatory Psalm.
- 3) An antiphon, which changes each day and serves to highlight a theme from the invitatory psalm or from the particular day in the Church’s calendar.

Liturgy – In the broadest sense, liturgy is the public worship of the Church and includes all the official acts of prayer and celebration of the Sacraments, which make up the Church’s worship. In a more practical sense, the word liturgy is often used as the Holy Eucharist, the very heart of the Church’s worship. The root meaning of liturgy (from the Greek *leitourgia*) is service, or the work of the people. In the Greek O.T. and N.T., liturgy is a technical term for worship.

Liturgy of The Hours - (See Divine Office).

Magnificat – The canticle from Luke 1:46-55, is called the Magnificat, after its opening words: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord...” The Magnificat is recited after the Scripture Reading at Evening Prayer.

Memorial – Is a celebration of a lesser importance, which may be obligatory or not.

Nunc Dimittis – The Canticle from Luke 2:29-32 is called the *Nunc Dimittis*, after its opening words: “Lord, now let your servant go in peace...” The Nunc Dimittis is recited after the Scripture Reading at Night Prayer.

Octave – An eight-day celebration of a major feast, in particular the feast of Easter, Pentecost and Christmas.

Office - See Divine Office.

Ordinary Time- In liturgical language, ordinary time is time outside the Special seasons and feast days of the Church’s year.

Proper- A term, which refers to those parts of the Office (or any liturgical prayer), that vary according to the day or season of the Church year. The list of contents in the texts of the Office has *the Proper of Seasons* (those texts which are used on particular seasons of the Church Year, e.g. Lent, Eastertide, Christmastide); and *The Proper of Saints* (those texts which are used on Saint’s days). From the Latin word *proprius*, “One’s own.” The Proper Texts belong to one particular day or season.

Psalm- Psalms with a capital “P” means the Book of Psalms found in Sacred Scripture. The word psalms (in Greek) means: “songs sung to stringed instruments,” and so psalms, small “p,” can refer to any songs found in Scripture, although the preferred way of referring to psalms outside the Book of Psalms is to call them Canticles.

Psalmody- a collection of psalms arranged for singing. When used in the office, psalmody refers to the selection of Psalms and Canticles used at each hour of prayer.

Psalter- can be used to describe the Book of Psalms in the Bible, or to a book of psalms arranged for liturgical prayer. In The Divine Office, the Psalter is the selection of Psalms and Canticles used at each hour of prayer. It is synonymous with psalmody.

Responsory- Responsory is from the Latin *respondere*, “to answer.” A responsory is a liturgical chant made up of a series of versicles and responses, designed for alternate singing by different people. In Morning and Evening Prayer the Scripture readings are followed by a short responsory consisting of a single versicle (V.) and a response (R.).

Solemnity- A feast day of special importance. There are 15 Solemnities in the General Calendar of the Divine Office.

Through The Year- In some editions of Morning and Evening Prayer, this expression is used to identify antiphons and texts, which are used outside of the liturgical seasons and feast days.

Triduum- Triduum is a celebration lasting three days. The Easter Triduum begins with evening Mass on Holy Thursday and ends with Easter Vigil.

Vatican II- A Council of the Catholic Church called by Pope John XXIII in 1959. The Council met from 1962 to 1965 and issued a number of documents, which initiated a radical reform of the life and worship of the Church. The document, which guided the reform of The Divine Office, was the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, known by its Latin title as *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Versicle- Versicle is a sentence of prayer, which forms one part of a responsory, the other part being the response. From Latin *Versiculus*, “little verse.”

Abbreviations:

CSL - Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*)

GIHL- General Instructions on the Liturgy of the Hours.

LC - *Laudis Canticum* (Apostolic Constitution Promulgating the Divine Office)

PG – *Patrologia Graeca*

PL – *Patrologia Latina*

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<http://www.newadvent.org.cathen> - The Catholic Encyclopedia.

<http://www.romanrite.com/hours.html>

<http://www.cwo.com/~pentrack/catholic/romcal.html> – The Roman Calendar of Solemnities, Feasts, Memorials

prayer definition: 1. the words that someone says or thinks when they are praying: 2. the act or ceremony in whichâ€¦. Learn more.Â

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