

February 7, 2021: Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Every morning I begin my day with the Divine Office or Breviary. The Office is divided up into five hours: Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer are the two most important hours that are prayed. When I was ordained, I made a promise that I would pray all five hours every day for the rest of my life. I have done so throughout my priesthood. Also, it should be stated that even though they are called hours, it does not actually take an hour. Morning, Evening and Office of Readings usually take about 8-10 minutes; the other two take about five minutes.

The hours are centered on praying the psalms, and over a four-week cycle you will pray 147 of the 150 psalms. Three of the psalms and parts of a few others were purposely left out of the cycle for pastoral reasons. "Three psalms (58, 83, and 109) have been omitted from the psalter cycle because of their curses; in the same way, some verses have been omitted from certain psalms, as noted at the head of each. The reason for the omission is a certain psychological difficulty, even though the psalms of imprecation are in fact used as prayer in the New Testament, for example, Rv 6:10, and in no sense, to encourage the use of curses." (*The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*) Basically they are not part of the cycle because they could disrupt how people pray. There is nothing wrong with them, but you really need to know the cultural and historical context in which they were written to understand why they are appropriately in the scriptures.

The whole purpose of saying these prayers is to instill a sense of staying focused on God throughout the day. By having to stop during the day and pray, even if only for a few moments, helps me refocus on why I do what I do. These prayers are not only for the ordained, but for all Christians who wish to join in. And it is now quite easy to do so because there are apps set up for the Liturgy of the Hours.

Another really cool thing about praying the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours is that it is a liturgical action. What this means is that when you pray the hours you are always praying with the entire Church, as is true with the Mass or any sacrament. Every morning when I pray, I am praying with every other person who prayed Morning Prayer that day. Therefore, this morning I prayed with the Pope, Cardinal Sean and millions of others who took the time to do so.

One of the reasons I love praying the Liturgy of the Hours is that I am reading scripture and scripture is literally God's word. I know that every time I pray through scripture God is speaking directly to me. If I am willing to listen, then I can truly hear a lot from God. This morning the first psalm was psalm 63 and a few lines really struck my heart.

*O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry weary land without water.
For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.*

I truly felt that deep longing for the Lord as I read this psalm. Yes, I know that God is always present in my life, but the truth is that I can never get enough of Him. No matter how connected I might feel, there is always the desire for a deeper connection. The truth and reality of it is that I want to be a saint. I want to live a life of holiness. However, there are times I fail to live up to that person God created me to be. Too often I get centered on how *I think* life should be, and when that happens my lips are not speaking God's praise.

This morning I was reminded of what I truly desire in my heart. I was reminded of what the Baltimore Catechism taught:

Q. Why did God make you?

A. *God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world,
and to be happy with Him forever in heaven.*

Q. What must we do to save our souls?

A. *To save our souls, we must worship God by faith, hope, and charity; that is, we must believe in Him,
hope in Him, and love Him with all our heart. Too often we make life way too difficult for ourselves.*

Today God reminded me of the simple paths to holiness and salvation.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian".

Fr. Brian