**Chapter 4, Section C: Lauds, the Morning Office**

Lauds, also known as the Morning Office, is a traditional monastic prayer observed at sunrise. Historically referred to as “*Matutini*” (from the Latin for morning), it focuses on **praising God at the start of a new day**.

The name “Lauds” derives from the daily recitation of Psalms 148, 149, and 150, which are hymns of praise. This practice dates back to at least the 4th century, with early Christian monks incorporating it into their daily routines, associating it with Christ’s resurrection at dawn.

**Structure and Key Elements**

* **Psalms and Canticles**: Core psalms include Psalms 66, 50, and 148-150, often complemented by others like Psalms 5, 62, and 117, which reflect themes of daybreak and renewal. An **Old Testament canticle** is also included before the “Laudate Psalms.”
* **The Benedictus**: The “Canticle of Zechariah” from Luke’s Gospel is a central part of Lauds, prayed while standing in reverence, similar to the Magnificat at Vespers.
* **The Our Father**: The *Pater Noster* holds a significant place toward the end of Lauds. In the Benedictine tradition, the abbot chants it alone, with the monks joining in at the conclusion. This practice emphasizes **forgiveness and communal unity**, inspired by teachings of Saint Augustine.

**Significance in Monastic and Lay Life**

Lauds, together with Vespers, is considered one of the **“hinges” of the daily prayer cycle**, marking the pivotal moments of daybreak and sunset. These offices are the most commonly celebrated among both monks and the laity, symbolizing **God’s creation and the light of the Risen Christ**. While monastic communities may observe additional hours, active religious congregations often limit their practice to Lauds, Vespers, and possibly Compline.

**Historical and Spiritual Importance**

The tradition of Lauds underscores themes of **praise, forgiveness, and community**, aligning with the rhythm of the day and the life of the Church. Its use of psalms and canticles reflects a connection to both the Old and New Testaments, while the recitation of the Our Father fosters a spirit of reconciliation and covenant among participants.