

Orantes

Newsletter of the Office for Divine Worship
of the Diocese of Worcester

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A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

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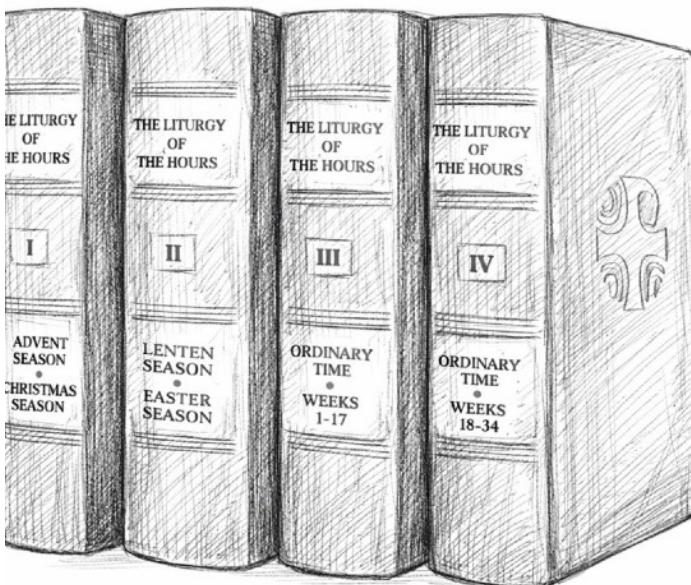
In response to the Apostolic Constitution *Liturgiam authenticam*, a revision of the *Liturgy of the Hours* was begun a decade ago and completed with a final canonical approval by vote of the members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in May of 2025. In a decree dated October 18, 2025 (Prot. n. 58/24), the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has confirmed this revised English translation of the *Liturgy of the Hours* for use in the Dioceses of the United States.

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, USCCB President, has signed a decree of promulgation establishing the first-use date of the new breviary on Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2027, and the mandatory-use date as the First Sunday of Advent, December 3, 2028.

In light of this announcement, this issue of ORANTES is devoted to an extended review of the origin and nature of the Divine Office and the obligation of Priests to pray it daily. This edition contains, therefore, a discussion of the Prayer of Christ as the source of the *Liturgy of the Hours* (page 3), a review of the priestly obligation for its use (page 7) and the place of its celebration in the Parish (page 9).

The Committee on Divine Worship has also announced its selection of two exclusive publishers (Ascension Press and Word on Fire Publishing) of the four-volume edition of the revised *Liturgy of the Hours*, while extracted editions will be published by others. Editions will not be available for sale, however, until at least January of 2027, with each volume being released throughout the year.

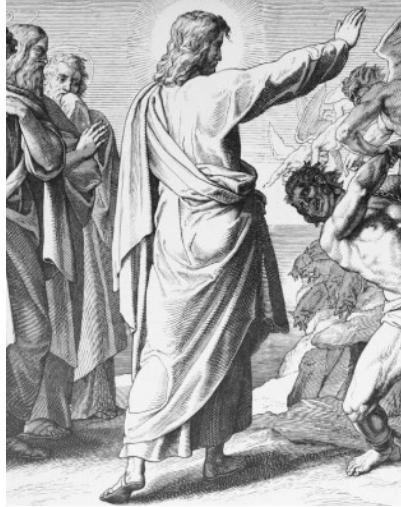
In the meantime, the only publisher of the current edition of the *Liturgy of the Hours* is Catholic Book Publishing Company. Available editions can be viewed by scanning this QR code.



The Prayer of Christ

Why do we pray the Liturgy of the Hours? Indeed, why do we pray at all?

We do so in imitation of the Lord Jesus, who prayed throughout each day as a Son speaking to his Father in a constant dialogue of love and trust.¹



Following the call of his first disciples in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus performs his first miracles in Capernaum, including casting out a demoniac and curing Simon's mother-in-law. As a result, "the whole town was gathered at the door."² Jesus' quite human response must have been exhaustion and not a bit of apprehension.

So, what does he do? Mark tells us that he rises before dawn the next day and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.³ The frantic disciples seek him out to tell him that "Everyone is looking for you."⁴ But Jesus knows, even from the start, that the ministry he has begun must flow from an intimate dialogue between him and his heavenly Father.

Indeed, throughout his ministry, Jesus regularly withdraws from the crowds, seeking a place to be alone to pray. Luke tells us that as his fame spread and great crowds would gather to hear him or be cured, "he would withdraw to deserted places to pray."⁵

Thus, prayer precedes every decisive moment in Jesus' ministry, as when he goes up a mountain and spends the

¹ Cf *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* [GILH], nos. 1-3.

² Mark 1:35.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Mark 1:37.

⁵ Luke 5:16.

entire night in prayer to God, preparing for the choice of the Twelve.⁶



On the evening which followed the feeding of the five thousand with the loaves and fishes in both the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, Jesus sent his disciples ahead, dismissed the satisfied crowd and “went up on the mountain by himself to pray.”⁷ Matthew repeats the fact that “When it was evening he was there alone.”⁸ Jesus’ prayer culminates in both Gospels, with his appearance to the Twelve as they fear they are overwhelmed by the turbulent waters of the Sea of Galilee “during the fourth watch of the night.”⁹

The Lord often withdrew before key moments in his ministry to pray alone, as when he prepares for his Baptism by John and the inauguration of his ministry,¹⁰ on the night before he calls the Twelve,¹¹ the healing of the man who was deaf¹² and the raising of Lazarus.¹³

Likewise, the Lord would offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving,¹⁴ and prayed for his disciples,¹⁵ for children¹⁶ and teaches his disciples to do the same.¹⁷

⁶ Luke 6:12.

⁷ Matthew 14:23 and Mark 6:46.

⁸ Matthew 14:23.

⁹ Matthew 14:25, between 3am and 6am.

¹⁰ Luke 3:21–22.

¹¹ Luke 6:12.

¹² Mark 7:34.

¹³ John 11:41ff.

¹⁴ Cf. Matthew 11:25ff, Luke 10:21ff.

¹⁵ Luke 22:32.

¹⁶ Matthew 19:13.

¹⁷ Cf. Luke 9:18 and 11:1.

Jesus takes an active part in the public prayers of the synagogue ('as was his custom'¹⁸) and in the prayers of the temple which he called a house of prayer.¹⁹ His daily prayers likewise, were those of a pious Jew, including the customary blessings over meals,²⁰ at the Last Supper,²¹ and at the meal in Emmaus.²²



Jesus and the Psalms

As a pious Jew, Jesus would have learned many psalms by heart and they would have provided the vocabulary for his prayer. By the Second Temple period, Jewish prayer followed a popular daily rhythm, tied to Temple sacrifice and later preserved in the synagogues, consisting of prayers and Psalms appropriate for the time of day.²³ Jesus would have been familiar, as well, with the singing of Psalms by the priests at the morning and afternoon sacrifices, as well as the assignment of particular Psalms to particular days of the week.²⁴

Indeed, the Passion of the Lord opens and closes with the singing of the Psalms. The Last Supper concludes with the singing of the Hallel Psalms,²⁵ as, while dying on the Cross, Jesus prays Psalm 22, beginning with its first line, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"²⁶ and

¹⁸ Lk 4:16.

¹⁹ Mt 21:13 par.

²⁰ cf. the multiplication of the loaves, Mt 14:19, Mt 15:36.

²¹ Mt 26:26 par.

²² Lk 24:30.

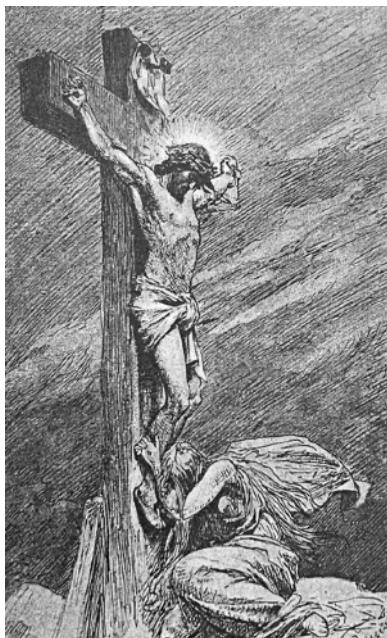
²³ Morning (*Shacharit*), Afternoon (*Minchah*) and Evening/Night (*Ma'ariv*).

²⁴ Sunday: Psalm 24; Monday: Psalm 48; Tuesday: Psalm 82; Wednesday: Psalm 94; Thursday: Psalm 81; Friday: Psalm 93; Sabbath: Psalm 92.

²⁵ Cf. Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26. The Hallel Psalms were mandated for the Passover meals and consisted of Psalms 113-118.

²⁶ Cf. Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34.

with his last breath quoting from Psalm 31:6, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”²⁷



The Psalms play an especially important role in the prayer of Jesus throughout his Passion and death, as the language he uses in his first anguish²⁸ and his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane²⁹ are drawn almost exclusively from the Psalms.³⁰

Thus has the prayer of Christ, made perfect in the Sacrifice offered upon the Cross, “achieved the eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying,”³¹ as the Messiah who has been raised from the dead, lives forever to intercede for us.³²

Why We Pray the Psalms

It is for this reason that the Church, from her first days, has remained faithful “to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, [and] to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.”³³ In this, she followed the example of our Great High Priest, who from his human heart sang a hymn of adoration, propitiation and intercession, “in the name of and for the good of all mankind.”³⁴

²⁷ Luke 23:46.

²⁸ John 12:27ff.

²⁹ Mt 26:36–44.

³⁰ “In the Passion — on the Mount of Olives and on the Cross — Jesus uses passages from the Psalms to speak of himself and to address the Father. Yet these quotations have become fully personal; they have become the intimate words of Jesus himself in his agony.” Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, Ignatius Press, 2011.

³¹ Hebrews 10:14.

³² Cf Heb 7:25.

³³ Acts 2:42; Cf Acts 1:14; 4:24; 12:5, 12; cf Eph 5:19–21.

³⁴ Cf. GILH, no. 3.

Priests and the Liturgy of the Hours

Among the major promises of a Catholic priest at his ordination is to “maintain and deepen a spirit of prayer.” This is then prescribed in the canonical obligation for all Latin-rite Catholic priests to pray the *full cycle* of the Liturgy of the Hours daily (Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer, Evening Prayer, Night Prayer).³⁵

Monsignor Stephen J. Rossetti suggests that, over the past decade, the percentage of priests engaged in traditional spiritual practices, including praying the *Liturgy of the Hours*, has increased.³⁶ He also points to evidence that traditional and regular prayer practices, including the Divine Office, tend to show higher levels of psychological wellness and satisfaction in ministry.³⁷

Pope Benedict XVI spoke extensively of the priest’s obligation to pray the *Liturgy of the Hours* in his 2010 *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Verbum Domini*, noting that:

Those who by virtue of their state in life are obliged to pray the Liturgy of the Hours should carry out this duty faithfully for the benefit of the whole Church. Bishops, priests and deacons aspiring to the priesthood, all of whom have been charged by the Church to celebrate this liturgy, are obliged to pray all the Hours daily.³⁸

In addition, quoting the Synod Fathers, the Holy Father asked “that this prayer become more widespread among the People of God, particularly the recitation of Morning

³⁵ Canon 276 §2, 3°.

³⁶ Rossetti, Stephen J. *Priesthood in a Time of Crisis: A New Study of the Psychological and Spiritual Health of Priests*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2023.

³⁷ Rossetti, Stephen J. *Why Priests Are Happy: A Study of the Psychological and Spiritual Health of Priests*. Ave Maria Press, 2011.

³⁸ *Verbum Domini* [VD], no. 52; Cf. Code of Canon Law, cc. 276 § 3, 1174 § 1.



Prayer and Evening Prayer,” noting that it “could only lead to greater familiarity with the word of God on the part of the faithful.”³⁹

These admonitions grow from a conviction that the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours is “a privileged form of hearing the word of God, inasmuch as it brings the faithful into contact with Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church.”⁴⁰

In the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church, exercising the priestly office of her Head, offers ‘incessantly’⁴¹ to God the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.⁴² This prayer is ‘the voice of a bride speaking to her bridegroom, it is the very prayer that Christ himself, together with his Body, addressed to the Father.’⁴³

The Pope concludes these reflections by recalling what the Second Vatican Council said of the Divine Office, that:

“all who take part in this prayer not only fulfill a duty of the Church, but also share in the high honor of the spouse of Christ; for by celebrating the praises of God, they stand before his throne in the name of the Church, their Mother”.⁴⁴



³⁹ VD, no. 52.

⁴⁰ VD, no. 62; citing *Propositio 19..*

⁴¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

⁴² Cf. Hebrews 13:15.

⁴³ VD, no. 62, citing *Principles and Norms for the Liturgy of the Hours*, III, 15.

⁴⁴ VD, no. 62, citing SC, no. 85.

The Parish and the Liturgy of the Hours



A popular misconception in the Church is that the *Liturgy of the Hours* is a private clerical devotion. However, as the title itself makes clear, it is a liturgical act and the public prayer of the entire Church. Since the first days of the post-conciliar liturgical reform, the Church has consistently taught that the Hours belong to the whole People of God and should, as far as possible, be celebrated in common in parish communities.⁴⁵

The Second Vatican Council provided the foundational teaching, insisting that “Pastors of souls should see to it that the principal hours, especially Vespers, are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and the more solemn feasts.”⁴⁶ This directive establishes Sunday Evening Prayer as the normative starting point for parish celebration of the Hours, recognizing its accessibility and its close connection to the Eucharistic celebration of the Lord’s Day.

Subsequent liturgical legislation built upon this vision. The *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* maintains that communal celebration “reveals more clearly the ecclesial nature of the Liturgy of the Hours”⁴⁷ and encourages pastors to celebrate Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer in the parish whenever possible.⁴⁸ The instruction further notes the catechetical value of parish celebration of the Divine Office, by which the Psalms

⁴⁵ “By tradition going back to early Christian times, the divine office is so arranged that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God. Therefore, when this wonderful song of praise is rightly performed... it is the voice of the Bride herself addressing her Bridegroom.” SC, no. 83.

⁴⁶ SC, no. 100.

⁴⁷ GILH, no. 20.

⁴⁸ GILH, nos. 21, 26, and 207.

and biblical canticles shape Christian prayer according to Scripture and the liturgical year.⁴⁹ The Psalms thus become the Church’s daily school of prayer, teaching her sons and daughters how to praise, lament, intercede, and give thanks in union with Christ.⁵⁰



Recent Popes have reaffirmed this pastoral priority. **Pope Francis**, in *Desiderio desideravi*, stresses that authentic liturgical formation must move beyond theory to lived experience, enabling the faithful to enter the prayer of the Church through actual celebration.⁵¹ In continuity with this vision, **Pope Leo XIV** has explicitly called for “the promotion of the Liturgy of the Hours” as a concrete responsibility of diocesan and parish liturgical ministry, situating it alongside popular piety and dignified celebration as essential to liturgical renewal in parish life.⁵²

Practically, the Church envisions flexible but faithful implementation. Parishes may celebrate Evening Prayer on Sundays and solemnities, Morning Prayer on weekdays during Advent or Lent, or incorporate the Hours into parish missions, retreats, and communal devotions. Music, silence, and well-prepared proclamation of the Word are encouraged, while adaptations should respect the structure and texts approved by the Church.⁵³

In sum, the Church recommends the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in parishes as a privileged means of

⁴⁹ GILH, nos. 13–14, 109.

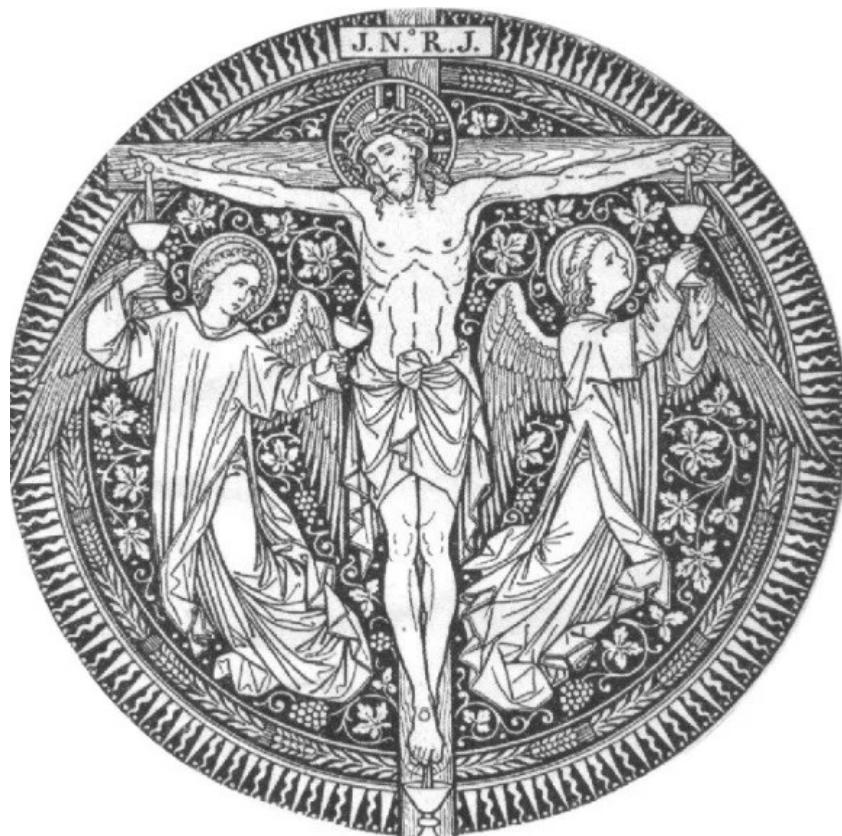
⁵⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2585; cf. GILH, no. 102.

⁵¹ Pope Francis, *Desiderio desideravi* (Apostolic Letter on the Liturgical Formation of the People of God, 29 June 2022), nos. 31–34.

⁵² Pope Leo XIV, Address to the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 17 November 2025.

⁵³ GILH, nos. 268–274; Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, no. 183.

sanctifying time, deepening participation in Christ's prayer, and fostering a truly liturgical spirituality among the faithful. When prayed together, the Hours reveal the Church at prayer—Christ praising the Father in the midst of his people.⁵⁴



⁵⁴ SC, no. 84.