

# General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours

## GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

### CHAPTER 1

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS OR THE DIVINE OFFICE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

1. Public and common prayer by the people of God is rightly considered to be among the primary duties of the Church. From the very beginning those who were baptized “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the community, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The Acts of the Apostles give frequent testimony to the fact that the Christian community prayed with one accord.

The witness of the early Church teaches us that individual Christians devoted themselves to prayer at fixed times. Then, in different places, the custom soon grew of assigning special times to common prayer, for example, the last hour of the day, when evening draws on and the lamp is lighted, or the first hour, when night draws to a close with the rising of the daystar.

In the course of time other hours came to be sanctified by common prayer. These were seen by the Fathers as foreshadowed in the Acts of the Apostles. There we read of the disciples gathered together at the third hour. The prince of the Apostles “went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour” (10:9); “Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour” (3:1); “about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (16:25).

2. This kind of common prayer gradually took shape in the form of an ordered round of Hours. This Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office, enriched by readings, is principally a prayer of praise and petition. In fact, it is the prayer of the Church with Christ and to Christ.

#### I. THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

##### *Christ the Intercessor with the Father*

3. When he came to give men and women a share in God’s life, the Word proceeding from the Father as the splendor of his glory, “Christ Jesus, the high priest of the new and eternal Covenant, took our human nature and introduced into the world of our exile that hymn of praise which is sung in the heavenly places throughout all ages.” From then on the praise of God wells up from the heart of Christ in human words of adoration, propitiation and intercession, presented to the Father by the head of the new humanity, the mediator between God and mankind, in the name of all and for the good of all.

4. In his goodness the Son of God, who is one with his Father (see John 10:30), and who said on entering the world: “Here I am! I come, God, to do your will” (Hebrews 10:9; see John 6:38), has left us testimony to his own prayer. The gospels very frequently show us Christ at prayer: when his mission is revealed by the Father, before he calls the apostles, when he blesses God at the multiplication of the loaves, when he is transfigured on the mountain, when he heals the deaf mute, when he raises Lazarus, before he asks for Peter’s confession of faith, when he teaches the disciples how to pray, when the disciples return from their mission, when he blesses the little children, when he prays for Peter.

The work of each day was closely bound up with his prayer, indeed flowed out from it. He would retire into the desert or into the hills to pray, rising very early or spending the night as far as the fourth watch in prayer to God.

We are right in believing that he took part in public prayers, in the synagogues, which he entered on the Sabbath “as his custom was,” and in the temple, which he called a house of prayer, as well as in the

private prayers which devout Israelites would recite regularly every day. He used the traditional blessings of God at meals. This is expressly mentioned in connection with the multiplication of the loaves, the Last Supper, the meal at Emmaus; he also joined with the disciples in a hymn of praise.

To the very end of his life, as his Passion was approaching, at the Last Supper, in the agony in the garden, and on the cross, the divine teacher showed that prayer was the soul of his messianic ministry and paschal death. "In the days of his life on earth he offered up prayers and entreaties with loud cries and tears to the one who could deliver him out of death, and because of his reverent attitude his prayer was heard" (Hebrews 5:7). By a single offering on the altar of the cross, "he has made perfect for ever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Raised from the dead, he is alive for ever and makes intercession for us.

## **II. THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

### ***The Commandment to Pray***

5. Jesus has commanded us to do as he did. On many occasions he said: "Pray," "ask," "seek," "in my name." He gave us a formula of prayer in what is known as the Lord's Prayer. He taught us that prayer is necessary, that it should be humble, vigilant, persevering, confident in the Father's goodness, single-minded and in conformity with God's nature.

The apostles have handed on to us, scattered throughout their letters, many prayers, especially of praise and thanksgiving. They warn us that we must be urgent and persevering in prayer offered to God in the Holy Spirit through Christ. They tell us of its sure power in sanctifying and speak of the prayer of praise, of thanksgiving, of petition and of intercession on behalf of all.

### ***Christ's Prayer Continued by the Church***

6. Since man depends wholly on God, he must recognize and express this sovereignty of the Creator, as the devout people of every age have done by means of prayer.

Prayer directed to God must be linked with Christ, the Lord of all, the one mediator through whom alone we have access to God. He unites to himself the whole community of mankind in such a way that there is an intimate bond between the prayer of Christ and the prayer of the whole human race. In Christ and in Christ alone the religious activity of mankind receives its redemptive value and attains its goal.

7. There is a special, and very close, bond between Christ and those whom he makes members of his body, the Church, through the sacrament of rebirth. Thus, from the head all the riches that belong to the Son flow throughout the whole body: the fellowship of the Spirit, the truth, the life and the sharing of his divine Son-ship, manifested in all his prayer when he dwelt among us.

The priesthood of Christ is also shared by the whole body of the Church, so that the baptized are consecrated as a spiritual temple and a holy priesthood through the rebirth of baptism and the anointing by the Holy Spirit, and become able to offer the worship of the New Covenant, a worship that derives, not from our own powers but from the merit and gift of Christ.

"God could give no greater gift to mankind than to give them as their head the Word through whom he created all things, and to unite them to him as his members, so that he might be Son of God and Son of man, one God with the Father, one man with men. So, when we speak to God in prayer we do not separate the Son from God, and when the body of the Son prays it does not separate its head from itself, but it is the one savior of his body, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who himself prays for us, and prays in us, and is the object of our prayer. He prays for us as our priest, he prays in us as our head, he is the object of our prayer as our God. Let us then hear our voices in his voice, and his voice in ours."

The excellence of Christian prayer lies in this, that it shares in the very love of the only-begotten Son for the Father and in that prayer which the Son put into words in his earthly life and which still continues

unceasingly in the name of the whole human race and for its salvation, throughout the universal Church and in all its members.

### ***The Action of the Holy Spirit***

8. The unity of the Church at prayer is brought about by the Holy Spirit, who is the same in Christ, in the whole Church, and in every baptized person. It is this Spirit who “helps us in our weakness” and “intercedes for us with longings too deep for words” (Romans 8:26). As the Spirit of the Son, he gives us “the spirit of adopted sonship, by which we cry out: Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15; see Galatians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Ephesians 5:18; Jude 20). There can be no Christian prayer without the action of the Holy Spirit who unites the whole Church and leads it through the Son to the Father.

### ***Prayer as Community Prayer***

9. It follows that the example and precept of our Lord and the apostles in regard to constant and persevering prayer are not to be seen as a purely legal regulation. They belong to the very essence of the Church itself. The Church is a community, and it must express its nature as a community in its prayer as well as in other ways. Hence, when the community of the faithful is first mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, it is seen as a community gathered together at prayer “with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and his brothers” (Acts 1:14). “There was one heart and soul in the company of those who believed” (Acts 4:32). Their oneness in spirit was founded on the word of God, on the brotherly communion, on the prayer and on the Eucharist.

Though prayer in one’s room behind closed doors is always necessary and to be encouraged and is performed by the members of the Church through Christ in the Holy Spirit, yet there is a special excellence in the prayer of the community. Christ himself has said: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst” (Matthew 18:20).

## **III. THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS**

### ***The Consecration of Time***

10. Christ has taught us the necessity of praying at all times without losing heart (Luke 18:1). The Church has been faithful in obeying this instruction; it never ceases to offer prayer, and makes this exhortation its own: “Through him (Jesus) let us offer to God an unceasing sacrifice of praise” (Hebrews 15:15). The Church satisfies this requirement not only by the celebration of the Eucharist but in other ways also, especially through the Liturgy of the Hours, which is distinguished from other liturgical actions by the fact that it consecrates to God the whole cycle of day and night, as it has done from early Christian times.

11. Since the purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours includes the sanctification of the day and of the whole range of human activity, its structure has been revised in such a way that, as far as possible, each Hour might be celebrated once more at the proper time and account taken of the circumstances of life today.

Hence, “in order that the day may be truly sanctified and the Hours themselves recited with spiritual profit, it is preferable that they should be recited at the hour nearest to the one indicated by each canonical Hour.”

### ***The Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharist***

12. The Liturgy of the Hours extends to the different hours of the day the praise and thanksgiving, the commemoration of the mysteries of salvation, the petitions and the foretaste of heavenly glory, that are present in the Eucharistic mystery, “the center and apex of the whole life of the Christian community.”

The Liturgy of the Hours is an excellent preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist itself, for it inspires and deepens in a fitting way the dispositions necessary for the fruitful celebration of the Eucharist: faith, hope, love, devotion and the spirit of self-denial.

### ***The Priesthood of Christ in the Liturgy of the Hours***

**13.** In the Holy Spirit Christ carries out through the Church “the work of man’s redemption and God’s perfect glorification,” not only when the Eucharist is celebrated and the sacraments administered but also in other ways, and especially when the Liturgy of the Hours is celebrated. In it Christ himself is present, in the assembled community, in the proclamation of God’s word, “in the prayer and song of the Church.”

#### ***Man’s Sanctification***

**14.** Man’s sanctification is accomplished, and worship offered to God, in the Liturgy of the Hours in an exchange or dialogue between God and man in which “God speaks to his people... and his people reply to him in song and prayer.”

Those taking part in the Liturgy of the Hours have access to holiness of the richest kind through the life-giving word of God, to which it gives such great importance. The readings are drawn from the Sacred Scripture, God’s words, the psalms are sung in his presence, and the intercessions, prayers and hymns are steeped in the inspired language of Scripture.

Hence, it is not only when those things are read “that are written for our instruction” (Romans 15:4), but also when the Church prays or sings, that faith is deepened for those who take part, and their minds are lifted up to God, so that they may offer him spiritual worship and receive grace from him in greater abundance.

#### ***Praising God with the Church in Heaven***

**15.** In the Liturgy of the Hours the Church exercises the priestly office of its head and offers to God “unceasingly” a sacrifice of praise, that is, a tribute of lips acknowledging his name. This prayer is “the voice of the bride herself as she addresses the bridegroom; indeed, it is also the prayer of Christ and his body to the Father.” “All therefore who offer this prayer are fulfilling a duty of the Church, and also sharing in the highest honor given to Christ’s bride, because as they render praise to God they are standing before God’s throne in the name of Mother Church.”

**16.** When the Church offers praise to God in the Liturgy of the Hours it unites itself with that hymn of praise which is sung in the heavenly places through all ages; it also receives a foretaste of the song of praise in heaven, described by John in the Book of Revelation, the song that is sung without ceasing before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Our close union with the Church in heaven is given effective voice when “we rejoice together and celebrate the praise of God’s glory, when all who have been redeemed in the blood of Christ from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (see Revelation 5:9) and have been gathered into the one Church glorify the one and triune God in one canticle of praise.”

This liturgy of heaven was commonly foreseen by the prophets as a victory of day without night, of light without darkness: “The sun will no more be your light by day, and the brightness of the moon will not shine upon you, but the Lord will be your everlasting light” (Isaiah 60:19; see Revelation 21:23,25). “There will be a single day, known to the Lord, not day and night, and at evening there will be light” (Zechariah 14:7). Already “the end of the ages has come upon us” (see 1 Corinthians 10:11), and the renewal of the world has been irrevocably established and in a true sense is being anticipated in this world.” We are taught by faith that meaning of our temporal life also, so that we look forward with all creation to the revealing of God’s sons. In the Liturgy of the Hours we proclaim this faith, we express and nourish this hope, we share in some degree the joy of everlasting praise and of that day which knows no setting.

#### ***Petition and Intercession***

**17.** Besides the praise of God, the Church in the Liturgy of the Hours expresses the prayers and desires of all the Christian faithful; indeed, it prays to Christ, and through him to the Father, for the salvation of the whole world. The voice of the Church is not just its own; it is also the voice of Christ, since its prayers are

offered in the name of Christ, that is, “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” and so the Church continues to offer the prayer and petition which Christ poured out in the days of his earthly life and which have therefore a unique effectiveness. The ecclesial community thus exercises a true maternal function in bringing souls to Christ, not only by charity, good example and works of penance but also by prayer.

This work of prayer belongs especially to all who have been called by a special mandate to carry out the Liturgy of the Hours: to bishops and priests as they pray in virtue of their office for their own people and for the whole people of God, to other sacred ministers and also to religious.

### ***The Apex and Source of Pastoral Activity***

**18.** Those then who take part in the Liturgy of the Hours bring growth to God’s people in a hidden but fruitful apostolate, for the work of the apostolate is directed to this end, “that all who are made sons of God through faith and baptism may come together in unity, praise God in the midst of the Church, share in the sacrifice and eat the supper of the Lord.”

Thus by their lives the faithful show forth and reveal to others “the mystery of Christ and the genuine nature of the true Church. Its characteristic is to be ... visible, yet endowed with invisible realities, fervent in action, yet devoted to contemplation, present in the world, yet a pilgrim and a stranger.”

In their turn the readings and prayers of the Liturgy of the Hours form a wellspring of the Christian life, which is nourished at the table of Sacred Scripture and the writings of the saints, and receives strength from the prayers. Only the Lord, without whom we can do nothing, can give, in response to our request, power and increase to what we do, so that we may be built up each day in the Spirit into the temple of God, to the full stature of Christ, and also receive greater strength to bring the good news of Christ to those outside.

### ***Harmony of Mind and Voice***

**19.** Mind and voice must be in harmony in a celebration that is worthy, attentive and devout if this prayer is to be made their own by those taking part in it, and be a source of devotion, a means of gaining God’s manifold grace, a deepening of personal prayer and an incentive to the work of the apostolate. All should be zealous in cooperating with God’s grace, so as not to receive it fruitlessly. They should seek Christ, penetrating ever more deeply into the mystery of Christ through prayer, and so offer praise and petition to God with the same mind and heart as the divine Redeemer when he prayed to God.

## **IV. THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS**

### **a) Celebration in Common**

**20.** The Liturgy of the Hours, like other liturgical actions, is not something private but belongs to the whole body of the Church, which it manifests and influences. Its relation to the Church is most clearly seen when it is celebrated by a local Church in the presence of its bishop in the company of his priests and ministers, for in the local Church “the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and active.” Such a celebration is therefore most highly recommended. When the Liturgy of the Hours is celebrated, in the absence of the bishop, by the chapter of canons or other priests, it should always follow the proper times for the Hours, and as far as possible the people should take part. The same is to be said of collegiate chapters.

**21.** Where possible, the principal Hours should be celebrated communally in church by other groups of the faithful. The most important of these groups are the local parishes – the cells of the diocese – established under a pastor acting for the bishop. These “represent in some degree the visible Church established throughout the world.”

**22.** Hence, when the faithful are invited to the Liturgy of the Hours and come together in unity of heart and voice, they show forth the Church in its celebration of the mystery of Christ.

**23.** Those in holy orders or with a special canonical mission have the responsibility of initiating and directing the prayer of the community; “they must work hard to ensure that all entrusted to their care may be united in prayer.” They must therefore see to it that the faithful are invited – and prepared by suitable instruction – to celebrate the principal Hours in common, especially on Sundays and feast days. They should teach them how to make the celebration a sincere prayer; they should therefore give them suitable guidance in the Christian understanding of the psalms, so that they may be led by degrees to a greater appreciation and more frequent use of the prayer of the Church.

**24.** Communities of canons, monks, nuns and other religious which celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours by rule or according to their constitutions, whether in the common rite or in a particular rite, in whole or in part, represent in a special way the Church at prayer. They are a fuller sign of the Church as it continuously praises God with one voice, and they fulfill the duty of “working” above all by prayer, “to build up and increase the whole mystical Body of Christ, and for the good of the local Churches.” This is especially true of those who follow the contemplative life.

**25.** Sacred ministers, and all clerics (not otherwise bound to a common celebration) living in community or assembling together, should arrange to say at least some part of the Liturgy of the Hours in common, particularly Morning and Evening Prayer.

**26.** It is strongly recommended that religious of either sex, not bound to a common celebration, as well as members of any institute of perfection, should gather together, by themselves or with the faithful, to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours or part of it.

**27.** Gatherings of the laity – for prayer, apostolic work or any other reason – are encouraged to fulfill the Church’s office by celebrating part of the Liturgy of the Hours. The laity must learn, especially in liturgical actions, how to adore God the Father in spirit and in truth, and be reminded that through public worship and prayer they are in touch with all mankind and can contribute in no small degree to the salvation of the whole world.

Finally, it is desirable that the family, the domestic sanctuary of the Church, should not only pray together to God but should also celebrate some parts of the Liturgy of the Hours as occasion offers, so as to enter more deeply into the life of the Church.

#### **b) The Mandate of the Liturgy of the Hours**

**28.** The Liturgy of the Hours is entrusted to sacred ministers in such a special way that even when the faithful are not present it should be recited by individuals with the adaptations necessary under these circumstances. The Church commissions them to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours in order that, at least in their persons, the duty of the whole community may be carried out regularly and reliably, and the prayer of Christ continue unceasingly in the Church.

The bishop represents Christ in an eminent and visible way and is the high priest of his flock; the life in Christ of his faithful people may be said to derive from him and depend on him. He should then be the first of all the members of his Church in offering prayer. In the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours his prayer is always in the name of the Church and on behalf of the Church entrusted to him.

Priests, united as they are with the bishop and the whole presbyterium, are themselves representative in a special way of Christ the priest, and so share the same responsibility of praying to God for the people entrusted to them, and indeed for the whole world.

All fulfill the ministry of the good Shepherd who prays for his sheep, that they may have life and so be brought into perfect unity. In the Liturgy of the Hours, which the Church sets before them, they are not

only to find a source of devotion and a strengthening of personal prayer but must also nourish and foster pastoral and missionary action by abundant contemplation, and so bring joy to the whole Church of God.

**29.** Hence, bishops and priests and other sacred ministers, who have received from the Church the mandate of celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours (see no. 17), should recite the full sequence of Hours each day, as far as possible at the appropriate times.

They should, first and foremost, attach due importance to those Hours that are, as it were, the hinge of the Liturgy of the Hours, that is, Morning and Evening Prayer, which should not be omitted except for a serious reason.

They should faithfully recite the Office of Readings, which is above all a liturgical celebration of the word of God. In this way they fulfill daily a duty that is particularly their own, that is, of receiving the word of God into their lives, so that they may become more perfect as disciples of the Lord and experience more deeply the unfathomable riches of Christ.

In order to sanctify the whole day more perfectly, they will have also at heart the recitation of the Daytime Hour and Night Prayer, to round off the whole "Work of God" and to commend themselves to God before retiring.

**30.** It is most fitting that permanent deacons should recite daily at least some part of the Liturgy of the Hours, to be determined by the conference of bishops.

**31.** (a) Cathedral and collegiate chapters should celebrate in choir those parts of the Liturgy of the Hours that are prescribed for them by common or particular law.

In private recitation individual members of these chapters should include those Hours that are recited in their chapter, besides the Hours prescribed for all sacred ministers.

(b) Religious communities, bound to the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours, and their individual members, should celebrate the Hours in accordance with their own particular law, but observing the prescription of no. 29 in regard to those in holy Orders.

Communities bound to choir should celebrate the whole sequence of the Hours daily in choir; when absent from choir their members should recite the Hours in accordance with their own particular law, but observing always the prescriptions given in no. 29.

**32.** Other religious communities, and their individual members, are advised to celebrate some parts of the Liturgy of the Hours, in accordance with circumstances, for it is the prayer of the Church and makes the whole Church, scattered throughout the world, one in heart and soul. This exhortation applies also to lay people.

### **(c) The Structure of the Celebration**

**33.** The Liturgy of the Hours, while it combines those elements that are found in other Christian celebrations, is arranged according to its own laws. It is so constructed that, after a hymn, there is always psalmody, then a long or a short reading of Sacred Scripture, and finally intercessions.

In a celebration in common or in individual recitation the essential structure of this liturgy remains the same, that is, it is a conversation between God and man. Celebration in common reveals more clearly the ecclesial nature of the Liturgy of the Hours; it makes for the active participation of all, each in his own role, by means of acclamations, dialogue, alternating psalmody and similar elements, and allows greater scope to variety of expression. Hence, whenever it is possible to have celebration in common, with the faithful present and actively sharing in it, this kind of celebration is to be preferred to one that is individual and as it were private. It is also preferable to sing the Office in choir and in community as opportunity offers, in accordance with the nature and function of its individual parts.

In this way the apostle's exhortation is obeyed: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you in all its richness, as you teach and advise each other in all wisdom by psalms, hymns and spiritual canticles, singing thankfully in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16; see Ephesians 5:19-20).

## CHAPTER II

### THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE DAY: THE DIFFERENT LITURGICAL HOURS

#### I. THE INTRODUCTION TO THE WHOLE OFFICE

**34.** The whole Office regularly begins with a invitatory. This consists in the verse *Lord, open my lips. And my mouth will proclaim your praise*, and psalm 95. This psalm invites the faithful each day to sing God's praise and to listen to his voice and draws them to hope for "the Lord's rest."

In place of psalm 95, psalm 100, psalm 67 or psalm 24 may be used.

It is preferable to recite the invitatory psalm responsorial (as indicated in the appropriate place), that is, the antiphon is recited at the beginning and the repeated, and repeated again after each strophe.

**35.** The invitatory is placed at the beginning of the whole sequence of the day's prayer, that is, it precedes either Morning Prayer or the Office of Readings, whichever of these liturgical actions begins the day. The psalm with its antiphon may, however, be omitted when it should precede Morning Prayer.

**36.** The variations of the antiphon at the invitatory, to suit the different liturgical days, are indicated in the appropriate place.

#### II. Morning and Evening Prayer

**37.** "In keeping with the ancient tradition of the universal Church, Morning and Evening Prayer form a double hinge of the daily Office and are therefore to be considered the principal Hours and celebrated as such."

**38.** Morning Prayer, as is clear from many of the elements that make it up, is intended and arranged for the sanctification of the morning. Saint Basil the Great gives an excellent description of its character in these words:

It is said in the morning in order that the first stirrings of our mind and will may be consecrated to God, and that we may take nothing in hand until we have been gladdened by the thought of God, as it is written: "I was mindful of God and was glad" (Psalm 77:4), or set our bodies to any task before we do what has been said: "I will pray to you, Lord, you will hear my voice in the morning; I will stand before you in the morning and gaze on you" (Psalm 5:4-5).

This Hour, celebrated as it is as the light of a new day is dawning, also recalls the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the true light enlightening all mankind (see John 1:9) and "the Sun of justice" (Malachi 4:2), "rising



from on high" (Luke 1:78). Hence, we can well understand the advice of Saint Cyprian: "there should be prayer in the morning, so that the resurrection of the Lord may be celebrated by Morning Prayer."

**39.** When evening approaches and the day is already far spent, Evening Prayer is celebrated in order that "we may give thanks for what has been given us, or what we have done well, during the day." We also recall the redemption through the prayer which we send up "like incense in the Lord's sight," and in which "the raising up of our hands" becomes "an evening sacrifice." This "may be understood also in a deeper spiritual sense of that true evening sacrifice which, as is handed down to us, was offered in the evening by the Lord and Savior, at supper with the apostles, when he instituted the most holy mysteries of the Church, or of the evening sacrifice, that is, the sacrifice at the end of the ages, in which on the next day he was offered to the Father as he raised up his hands for the salvation of the whole world." Again, in order to fix our hope on the light that knows no setting, "we pray and make petition for the light to come down on us anew and ask Christ to give us the grace of eternal light." Finally, at this hour we join with the Churches of the East in calling up the "joy-giving light of holy glory, born of the immortal, heavenly Father, holy and blessed, Jesus Christ; now that we have come to the setting of the sun and seen the evening star, we sing in praise of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit as God..."

**40.** Morning and Evening Prayer are therefore to be reckoned as of the highest importance, as the prayer of the Christian community. Their public or communal celebration should be encouraged, especially in the case of those who live in community. Indeed, the recitation of these Hours should be recommended also to individual members of the faithful unable to take part in a celebration in common.

**41.** Morning and Evening Prayer begin with the introductory verse God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me. There follows the Glory to the Father, with As it was in the beginning and Alleluia (the Alleluia is omitted during Lent). This introduction is omitted at Morning Prayer when the Invitatory immediately precede it.

**42.** Immediately after, an appropriate hymn is sung. The purpose of the hymn is to provide a setting for the Hour or the feast, and, especially in celebrations with a congregation, to form a simple and pleasant introduction to prayer.

**43.** After the hymn there follows the psalmody, in accordance with the rules laid down in Nos. 121-125. The psalmody of Morning Prayer consists of one morning psalm, then a canticle from the Old Testament, and finally a second psalm of praise, following the tradition of the Church.

The psalmody of Evening Prayer consists of two psalms (or two parts of a longer psalm) suitable for the Hour and for celebration with the people, and a canticle from the letters of the apostles or from the Book of Revelation.

**44.** After the psalmody there is a reading, either a short reading or a longer one.

**45.** The short reading varies with the day, the season and the feast. It is to be read and received as a true proclamation of God's word, setting out some passage of Sacred Scripture in a striking way, or highlighting some shorter sentences that may receive less attention in the continuous cycle of Scripture readings.

The short readings are different for each day of the psalter cycle.

**46.** There is freedom to choose – especially in a celebration with the people – a longer Scripture reading, either from the Office of Readings or the Lectionary for Mass, particularly texts which for some reason have not been used. In addition, there is nothing to prevent the use from time to time of a more suitable reading, in accordance with the rules laid down in nos. 248-249 and 251.

**47.** In a celebration with the people a short homily may follow the reading to explain its meaning.

**48.** After the reading or homily a period of silence may be observed.

49. As a response to the word of God a responsorial chant or short responsorial is given; this may be omitted. Other chants with the same purpose and character may be substituted in its place, provided that these have been duly approved by the conference of bishops.

50. There follows the solemn recitation of the Gospel canticle with its antiphon, that is, the Canticle of Zechariah at Morning Prayer and the Canticle of Mary at Evening Prayer. These canticles, sanctioned by age-old popular usage in the Roman Church, are expressions of praise and thanksgiving for our redemption. The antiphon for each canticle is given to suit the day, the season or the feast.

51. After the canticle, there follow at Morning Prayer petitions for the consecration of the day and its work to God, and at Evening Prayer intercessions (see nos. 179-193).

52. After the petitions or intercessions the Lord's Prayer is said by all.

53. Immediately after the Lord's Prayer there follows the concluding prayer, which for weekdays in Ordinary Time is found in the Psalter, and for other days in the Proper.

54. Then, if a priest or deacon is presiding he dismisses the people with the greeting **The Lord be with you**, and the blessing as at Mass. He adds the invitation **Go in peace. Thanks be to God**. In the absence of a priest or deacon the celebration concludes with **May the Lord bless us**, etc.

### III. THE OFFICE OF READINGS

55. The Office of Readings seeks to provide God's people, and in particular those consecrated to God in a special way, with an ampler selection of passages from Sacred Scripture for meditation, together with the finest extracts from spiritual writers. Though the cycle of scriptural readings at daily Mass is now richer, the treasures of revelation and tradition to be found in the Office of Readings will contribute greatly to the spiritual life. Bishops and priests in particular should seek out these riches, so that they may hand on to others the word of God they have themselves received and make their teaching "nourishment for God's people."

56. Prayer should accompany "the reading of Sacred Scripture so that there may be a conversation between God and man: 'we talk with God when we pray, we listen to him when we read God's words.'" For this reason the Office of Readings consists also of psalms, a hymn, prayer and other texts, giving it the character of true prayer.

57. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy directs that the Office of Readings, "though it should retain its character as a night office of praise when celebrated in choir, should be suitable for recitation at any hour of the day and consist of fewer psalms and longer readings."

58. Those obliged by their own particular law, and others laudably desiring to retain the character of this Office as a night office of praise, either by saying it at night or very early in the morning and before Morning Prayer, during Ordinary Time choose the hymn from the selection given for this purpose. For Sundays, solemnities and certain feasts, what is said in nos. 70-73 on vigils should be borne in mind.

59. Without prejudice to the regulations given above, the Office of Readings may be recited at any hour of the day, even during the night hours of the previous day, after Evening Prayer has been said.

60. If the Office of Readings is said before Morning Prayer, the invitatory precedes it, as noted above (nos. 34-36). Otherwise, it begins with the verse **God, come to my assistance** with the **Glory to the Father, As it was in the beginning** and (outside Lent) the **Alleluia**.

61. Then the hymn is sung. In Ordinary Time this is chosen, from the selection given, to suit the time when it is sung, either at night (as in no. 58) or during the day.

**62.** The psalmody follows. This consists of three psalms (or parts of psalms if the psalms are longer psalms). During the Easter triduum, on days within the octaves of Easter and Christmas, on solemnities and feasts, the psalms are proper, with proper antiphons.

On Sundays and weekdays, however, the psalms and antiphons are taken from the current week and day of the psalter. On memorials of the saints they are similarly taken from the current week and day of the psalter, unless there are proper psalms or antiphons (see nos. 218ff).

**63.** Between the psalmody and the readings there is regularly a verse, forming a transition of prayer from psalmody to listening.

**64.** There are two readings: the first is from the Scriptures, the second is from the writings of the Fathers or Church writers, or else a reading connected with the saints.

**65.** After each reading there is a responsorial (see nos. 169-172).

**66.** The scriptural reading is normally to be taken from the Proper of Seasons, in accordance with the rules given below (nos. 140-155). On solemnities and feasts, however, it is taken from the Proper or the Common.

**67.** The second reading with its responsorial is taken either from the Liturgy of the Hours or from the optional Lectionary described in no. 161 below. It is normally taken from the Proper of Seasons.

On solemnities and feasts of saints a proper second reading is used; if there is none, the second reading is taken from the appropriate Common. On memorials of saints where the celebration is not impeded, the reading in connection with the saint replaces the current second reading (see nos. 166 and 235).

**68.** On Sundays outside Lent, on days within the octaves of Easter and Christmas, on solemnities and feasts, after the second reading with its responsorial the **Te Deum** is said. This is omitted on memorials and weekdays. The last part of this hymn, that is, from the verse **Save your people, Lord** to the end, may be omitted.

**69.** The Office of Readings normally concludes with the prayer proper to the day, and, at least in recitation in common, with the acclamation **Let us praise the Lord. And give him thanks.**

#### IV. VIGILS

**70.** The Easter Vigil is celebrated by the whole Church, in the rites given in the relevant liturgical books. "The vigil of this night," as Saint Augustine said, "is of such importance that it could claim exclusively for itself the name of 'vigil,' common though it is to all other vigils." "We keep vigil on that night when the Lord rose again and inaugurated for us in his humanity that life ... in which there is neither death nor sleep ... Hence, the one whose resurrection we celebrate by keeping watch a little longer will see to it that we reign with him by living a life without end."

**71.** As with the Easter vigil, it was customary to begin certain solemnities (different in different Churches) with a vigil. Among these solemnities Christmas and Pentecost are pre-eminent. This custom should be maintained and fostered, according to the particular usage of each Church. Where it seems good to celebrate other solemnities or occasions of pilgrimage with a vigil, the general norms for celebrations of the word should be observed.

**72.** The Fathers and spiritual writers have frequently encouraged the faithful, especially those who practice the contemplative life, to pray at night. Such prayer gives expression and stimulus to our hope in the Lord's return: "At midnight they cry went up: See, the bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him" (Matthew 25:6); "Keep watch, then, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether late or at midnight or at cockcrow or in the morning, so that if he comes unexpectedly he may not find you

sleeping" (Mark 13:35-36). Praise is therefore due to all who maintain the character of the Office of Readings as a night office.

**73.** Again, since in the Roman rite the Office of Readings is always of a uniform brevity, especially for the sake of those engaged in apostolic work, those who desire to extend the celebration of the vigils of Sundays, solemnities and feasts in accordance with tradition should do as follows.

First, the Office of Readings is to be celebrated as in the Liturgy of the Hours up to the end of the readings. After the two readings, and before the **Te Deum**, canticles should be added from the special appendix in the Liturgy of the Hours. Then the Gospel should be read; a homily on the Gospel may be added. After this the **Te Deum** is sung, and then the prayer.

On solemnities and feasts the gospel should be taken from the *Lectionary for Mass*; on Sundays it should be taken from the series of gospels on the paschal mystery, in the appendix to the Liturgy of the Hours.

## V. THE DAYTIME HOURS

**74.** Following a very ancient tradition Christians have been accustomed to pray out of private devotion at various times of the day, even in the course of their work, in order to imitate the apostolic Church. In the course of time this tradition has been embodied in liturgical celebrations of various kinds.

**75.** Liturgical custom in both East and West has retained Midmorning, Midday and Midafternoon Prayer, principally because these Hours were linked to a commemoration of the events of the Lord's Passion and of the first preaching of the Gospel.

**76.** The Second Vatican Council decreed that these lesser Hours should be maintained in choir. The liturgical custom of saying these three Hours is to be retained, without prejudice to a particular law, by those who practice the contemplative life. It is recommended also for all, especially those who take part in spiritual retreats or pastoral gatherings.

**77.** Outside choir, without prejudice to a particular law, it is permitted to choose from the three Hours the one most appropriate to the time of day, so that the tradition of prayer in the course of the day's work may be maintained.

**78.** Daytime Prayer is so arranged as to take into account both those who recite only one Hour and those who are obliged, or desire, to say all three Hours.

**79.** The daytime Hours begin with the introductory verse **God, come to my assistance**, with the **Glory to the Father, As it was in the beginning** and the **Alleluia** (omitted in Lent). Then a hymn is sung, one appropriate to the Hour. Afterward there follows the psalmody, then the reading followed by the verse. The Hour concludes with the prayer, and, at least in recitation in common, with the acclamation **Let us praise the Lord. And give him thanks.**

**80.** Different hymns and prayers are given for each of the Hours so that they may, in keeping with tradition, correspond to the time of day and thus sanctify it in a more appropriate way. Those who recite only one Hour should therefore choose the texts that correspond to it.

In addition, the readings and prayers vary in keeping with the day, the season or the feast.

**81.** Two psalmodies are provided: the current psalmody and the complementary psalmody. Those who say one Hour should use the current psalmody. Those who say more than one Hour should use the current psalmody at one, and the complementary psalmody at the other two.

**82.** The current psalmody consists of three psalms (or parts of psalms in the case of longer psalms) from the psalter, with their antiphons, unless directions are given to the contrary.

On solemnities, the Easter triduum and days within the octave of Easter, proper antiphons are said with three psalms chosen from the complementary psalmody, unless special psalms are to be used or the celebration falls on a Sunday when the psalms are those from the Sunday of the first week of the psalter.

**83.** The complementary psalter consists of three sets of three psalms, normally chosen from the “gradual” psalms.

## VI. NIGHT PRAYER

**84.** Night Prayer is the last prayer of the day, said before retiring at night, even after midnight.

**85.** Night Prayer begins, like the other Hours, with the verse God, come to my assistance, with the Glory to the Father, As it was in the beginning and the Alleluia(omitted in Lent).

**86.** An examination of conscience may suitably follow; in a celebration in common this takes place in silence or as part of a penitential rite using the formulas of the Roman Missal.

**87.** An appropriate hymn follows.

**88.** After Evening Prayer I of Sunday the psalmody consists of psalm 4 and psalm 134; after Evening Prayer II of Sunday it consists of psalm 91.

On the other days psalms are chosen which are full of confidence in the Lord; it is permissible to use the Sunday psalms instead, for the convenience especially of those who may wish to say Night Prayer from memory.

**89.** After the psalmody there is a reading, followed by the responsorial **Into your hands**. Then, as a climax to the whole Hour, the Cantic of Simeon **Lord, now you let your servant go in peace** is said, with its antiphon.

**90.** The concluding prayer is then said.

**91.** After the prayer the blessing **May the all-powerful Lord** is said, even in private recitation.

**92.** Finally, one of the antiphons in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary is said. In the Easter season this will be the **Regina caeli**. In addition to the antiphons given in the Liturgy of the Hours others may be approved by the conference of bishops.

## VII. COMBINING THE HOURS WITH MASS OR WITH EACH OTHER

**93.** In particular cases, if circumstances require it, it is possible to link an Hour more closely with Mass when there is a celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in public or in common, according to the following norms, provided that the Mass and the Hour belong to one and the same Office. Care must be taken, however, that this does not result in harm to pastoral work, especially on Sundays.

**94.** When Morning Prayer, celebrated in choir or in common, comes immediately before Mass, the whole celebration may begin either with the introductory verse and hymn of Morning Prayer, especially on weekdays, or with the entrance song, procession and celebrant’s greeting (especially on feast days), one or other of the introductory rites being thus omitted.

The psalmody of Morning Prayer follows as usual, up to, but excluding, the reading. After the psalmody the penitential rite is omitted and at choice the **Kyrie**; then the **Glory to God in the highest** is said, if required by the rubrics, and the celebrant says the opening prayer of the Mass. The liturgy of the word follows as usual.

The general intercessions are made in the place and form customary at Mass. On weekdays, at Mass in the morning, the intercessions of Morning Prayer may replace the daily form of the intercessions at Mass. After the communion with its communion song the Cantic of Zechariah **Blessed be the Lord** with its antiphon, from Morning Prayer, is sung. Then follows the prayer after communion; the rest is as usual.

95. If one of the daytime Hours, celebrated in public at the appropriate time of day, is immediately followed by Mass, the whole celebration may begin in the same way, either with the introductory verse and hymn from the Hour, especially on weekdays, or with the entrance song, procession and celebrant's greeting, especially on feast days, one or other of the introductory rites being thus omitted.

The psalmody of the Hour follows as usual, up to, but excluding, the reading. After the psalmody the penitential rite is omitted and at choice the **Kyrie**; then the **Gloria to God in the highest** is said, if required by the rubrics, and the celebrant says the opening prayer of the Mass.

96. Evening Prayer, celebrated immediately before Mass, is joined to it in the same way as Morning Prayer. Evening Prayer I of solemnities, Sundays or feasts of the Lord falling on Sundays may not be celebrated until after Mass of the preceding day or Saturday.

97. When a daytime Hour or Evening Prayer follows Mass, the Mass is celebrated in the usual way up to, and including, the prayer after communion.

When the prayer after communion has been said, the psalmody of the Hour begins without introduction. At a daytime Hour, after the psalmody the prayer is said (omitting the reading), and the dismissal takes place as at Mass. At Evening Prayer, after the psalmody and omitting the reading, the Cantic of Mary with its antiphon follows immediately. The intercessions and the Lord's Prayer are omitted, the concluding prayer is said and the blessing given to the people.

98. Except for the night of Christmas the combining of Mass with the Office of Readings is normally excluded, since the Mass already has its own cycle of readings, to be kept distinct from any other. If, however, by way of exception, it should be necessary to join the two, then immediately after the second reading from the Office, with its responsorial, the rest is omitted, and the Mass begins with the hymn **Gloria to God in the highest**, if it is to be said; otherwise, the Mass begins with the opening prayer.

99. If the Office of Readings is said immediately before another Hour of the Office, then the appropriate hymn for that Hour may be sung at the beginning of the Office of Readings. At the end of the Office of Readings the prayer and conclusion are omitted, and in the Hour following the introductory verse with the **Gloria to the Father** is omitted.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS IN THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

#### I. THE PSALMS AND CHRISTIAN PRAYER

100. In the Liturgy of the Hours the prayer of the Church is in large measure in the words of those great hymns composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit by sacred writers of the Old Testament. Their origin gives them great power to raise minds to God, to inspire devotion, to evoke gratitude in favorable times and to bring consolation and fortitude in times of trial.

101. The psalms are, however, only a foreshadowing of the fullness of time that came to be in Christ the Lord, from which the prayer of the Church derives its power. Hence, while the faithful are all agreed on

the supreme value to be placed on the psalms, they can sometimes experience difficulty in making these inspired hymns their own prayer.

**102.** Yet the Holy Spirit, under whose inspiration the psalms were written, is always present by his grace to those who use them with faith and good will. More, however, is necessary: they must “acquire a richer scriptural formation, especially in regard to the psalms,” according to each one’s capacity, so that they may understand how, and by what method, they may pray them properly.

**103.** The psalms are not readings or prose prayers. They can on occasion be recited as readings, but they are properly called *tehillim* (“songs of praise”) in Hebrew and *psalmoi* (“songs to be sung to the lyre”) in Greek. In fact, all the psalms have a musical quality which determines the correct way of delivering them. When a psalm is recited and not sung, its delivery must still be governed by its musical character. A psalm presents a text to the minds of the faithful, but it aims rather at moving the hearts of those singing it or listening to it, and also of those accompanying it “on the lyre and harp.”

**104.** To sing the psalms “with understanding” we must meditate on them verse by verse, our hearts always ready to respond in the way the Holy Spirit desires. The Holy Spirit, as the one who inspired the psalmist, will also be present to those who in faith and love are ready to receive his grace. For this reason the singing of psalms, though it demands the reverence due to God’s majesty, should be the expression of a joyful spirit and a loving heart, in keeping with their character as sacred poetry and inspired song, and above all with the freedom of the children of God.

**105.** Often the words of a psalm help us to pray with greater ease and fervor, whether in thanksgiving and joyful praise of God or in prayer for help in the depths of suffering. But difficulties may arise, especially when the psalm is not addressed directly to God. The psalmist is a poet, and he often addresses the people as he recalls Israel’s history; sometimes he addresses others, even the brute creation. He even introduces dialogue between God and men, even (as in psalm 2) between God and his enemies. This shows that a psalm is a different kind of prayer from a prayer or collect composed by the Church. Besides, it is in keeping with the poetic and musical character of the psalms that they do not necessarily address God but are sung in God’s presence. Saint Benedict warns us: “We must consider what it means to be in the sight of God and his angels, and stand to sing so that our mind may be in harmony with our voice.”

**106.** In praying the psalms we should open our hearts to the different attitudes they express, varying with the class of writing to which each belongs (psalms of grief, trust, gratitude, etc.), and which Scripture scholars rightly emphasize.

**107.** In keeping to the meaning of the words the person who prays the psalms is looking for the human value of the text for the life of faith.

It is clear that each psalm was written in its own individual circumstances, which the titles given at the head of each psalm in the Hebrew psalter are meant to indicate. But, whatever its historical origin, each psalm has its own meaning, which we cannot overlook even in our own day. Though the psalms originated very many centuries ago in the East they express accurately the pain and hope, the unhappiness and trust, of people of every age and country, and celebrate especially faith in God, revelation and redemption.

**108.** The person who prays the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours prays not so much in his own person as in the name of the Church, and, in fact, in the person of Christ himself. If one bears this in mind difficulties disappear when one notices in prayer that the feelings of the heart in prayer are different from the emotions expressed in the psalm, for example, when a psalm of joy confronts a person who is sad and overcome with grief, or a psalm of sorrow confronts a person full of joy. This kind of situation is easily avoided in purely private prayer, when it is permissible to choose a psalm matching one’s mood. But in the Divine Office the public cycle of the psalms is gone through, not as a private exercise but in the name of the Church, even by someone saying an Hour by himself. The person who prays the psalms in the name of the Church can always find a reason for joy or sadness, for the saying of the Apostle applies in

this case also: "Rejoice with the joyful and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). In this way human frailty, wounded by self-love, is healed in that degree of love in which the mind and voice of one praying the psalms are in harmony.

**109.** The person who prays the psalms in the name of the Church should be aware of their total meaning (*sensus plenus*), especially their messianic meaning, which was the reason for the Church's introduction of the psalter into its prayer. This messianic meaning was fully revealed in the New Testament and indeed was publicly acknowledged by Christ the Lord in person when he said to the apostles: "All that is written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44). The best known example of this messianic meaning is the dialogue in Matthew's gospel on the Messiah as Son of David and David's Lord: there, psalm 110 is interpreted as messianic.

Following this line of thought, the Fathers of the Church saw the whole psalter as a prophecy of Christ and the Church and explained it in this sense; for the same reason the psalms have been chosen for use in the sacred liturgy. Though somewhat tortuous interpretations were at times proposed, yet, in general, the Fathers, and the liturgy itself, could legitimately hear in the singing of the psalms the voice of Christ crying out to the Father, or of the Father conversing with the Son; indeed, they also recognized in the psalms the voice of the Church, the apostles and the martyrs. This method of interpretation also flourished in the middle ages; in many manuscripts of the period the Christological meaning of each psalm is set out at its head. A Christological meaning is by no means confined to the recognized messianic psalms but is given also to many others. Some of these interpretations are doubtless Christological only in an accommodated sense, but they have the traditional approval of the Church. On feast days especially, the choice of psalms is often based on their Christological meaning, and antiphons taken from these psalms are frequently used to throw light on this meaning.

## **II. THE ANTIPHONS AND OTHER AIDS TO PRAYING THE PSALMS**

**110.** In the Latin tradition of psalmody three elements have greatly contributed to an understanding of the psalms and their use as Christian prayer: the titles, the psalm-prayers and in particular the antiphons.

**111.** In the psalter of the Liturgy of the Hours a title is added at the head of each psalm to explain its meaning and its human value for the life of faith. These titles are intended only as an aid to prayer. A sentence from the New Testament or the Fathers of the Church is added to foster prayer in the light of Christ's new revelation; it invites one to pray the psalms in their Christological meaning.

**112.** Psalm-prayers for each psalm are given in the supplement to the Liturgy of the Hours, to help in understanding them in a predominantly Christian way. They may be used in the ancient traditional way: after the psalm a period of silence is observed, then the prayer gathers up and rounds off the thoughts and aspirations of those taking part.

**113.** Even when the Liturgy of the Hours is recited, not sung, each psalm retains its own antiphon, which is to be said even in private recitation. The antiphons help to bring out the character of the psalm; they highlight a sentence which may otherwise not attract the attention it deserves; they suggest an individual quality in a psalm, varying with different contexts; indeed, as long as extravagant accommodated meanings are avoided, they are of great value in helping toward an understanding of the typological meaning, or the meaning appropriate to the feast; they can also add pleasure and variety to the recitation of the psalms.

**114.** The antiphons in the psalter have been designed to lend themselves to vernacular translation; they are also constructed for repetition after each strophe, in accordance with no. 125. When the office of Ordinary Time is recited, not sung, the sentences attached to the psalms may be used in place of these antiphons (see no. 111).

**115.** When a psalm may be divided, because of its length, into several sections within one and the same Hour, an antiphon is given for each section. This is to provide variety, especially when the Hour is recited,



not sung, and also to help toward a better understanding of the riches of the psalm. It is permissible to say or sing the whole psalm without interruption, using only the first antiphon.

**116.** Proper antiphons are given for each of the psalms of Morning and Evening Prayer during the Easter triduum, on the days within the octaves of Easter and Christmas, on the Sundays of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, on the weekdays of Holy Week and the Easter season, and from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of December.

**117.** On solemnities proper antiphons are given for the Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, the daytime Hours and Evening Prayer; if not, the antiphons are taken from the Common. On feasts the same applies to the Office of Readings, and Morning and Evening Prayer.

**118.** Any memorials of the saints which have proper antiphons retain them (see no. 235).

**119.** The antiphons for the Canticles of Zechariah and of Mary are taken, during Ordinary Time, from the Proper of Seasons if they are given there; if not, they are taken from the current week and day of the psalter. On solemnities and feasts they are taken from the Proper if they are given there; if not, they are taken from the Common. On memorials without proper antiphons the antiphon may be taken either from the Common or from the current week and day of the psalter.

**120.** During the Easter season **Alleluia** is added to all antiphons unless it would be out of keeping with the meaning of a particular antiphon.

### III. METHODS OF SINGING THE PSALMS

**121.** Different psalms may be sung in different ways, to bring out their spiritual unction and beauty. The choice of ways is dictated by the character or length of each psalm, by the language used, whether Latin or the vernacular, and especially by the kind of celebration, whether individually or with a group or with a congregation. The use of the psalms is not simply to provide a set amount of prayer; consideration has also been given to the need for variety and to the individual character of each psalm.

**122.** The psalms are sung or said in one of three ways, according to the different usages sanctioned by tradition or experience: as a single unit without a break (*in directum*), or with two choirs or sections of the congregation singing alternate verses or strophes, or responsorial.

**123.** The antiphon for each psalm should always be recited at the beginning, as noted in nos. 113-120 above. At the end of the psalm the custom is maintained of concluding with the **Gloria to the Father** and **As it was in the beginning**. This is the fitting conclusion that tradition recommends, and it gives to Old Testament prayer a quality of praise linked to a Christological and Trinitarian interpretation. The antiphon may be repeated at the end of the psalm.

**124.** When longer psalms occur, sections are indicated in the psalter to keep the threefold structure of the Hour, but great care has been taken not to distort the meaning of the psalm.

It is proper to keep this division, especially in a choral celebration in Latin; the **Gloria to the Father** is added at the end of each section.

It is permissible, however, to choose between this traditional way and either pausing between the different sections of the same psalm or reciting the whole psalm, with its antiphon, as a single unit without a break.

**125.** In addition, when the character of a psalm suggests it, the divisions of the strophes are indicated, in order that, especially when the psalm is sung in the vernacular, the antiphons may be repeated after each strophe; in this case the **Gloria to the Father** need be said only at the end of the psalm.

#### IV. THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE PSALMS IN THE OFFICE

**126.** The psalms are arranged in a cycle of four weeks in such a way that very few psalms are omitted while some, traditionally more important, occur more frequently than others; Morning and Evening Prayer as well as Night Prayer have been assigned psalms appropriate to these Hours.

**127.** Since Morning and Evening Prayer are particularly designed for celebration with a congregation, the psalms chosen for them are those more suitable for this purpose.

**128.** Night Prayer follows the norms given in no. 88.

**129.** For Sundays, including also the Office of Readings and Daytime Prayer, the psalms chosen are those which are traditionally important as expressions of the paschal mystery. Certain psalms of a penitential character or connected with the Passion are assigned to Friday.

**130.** Three psalms (78, 105 and 106) are reserved for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, as they throw a special light on the history of salvation in the Old Testament as the forerunner of its fulfillment in the New.

**131.** Three psalms (58, 83 and 109) are omitted from the psalter cycle as heavily imprecatory in character. In the same way, some verses are omitted from certain psalms, as noted at the head of each. These texts are omitted because of the difficulty they can cause because of their psychology, even though the psalms of imprecation are used as prayer in the New Testament, for example, Revelation 6:10, and their purpose is in no sense to encourage cursing.

**132.** Psalms too long to be included in one Hour of the Office are assigned to the same Hour on different days so that they may be recited in full by those who do not usually say other Hours. Thus psalm 119 is divided up in keeping with its own internal structure and spread over twenty-two days during Daytime Prayer because of its traditional association with the day Hours.

**133.** The four week cycle of the psalter is linked with the liturgical year in this way: the first week is resumed (omitting any other week) on the First Sunday of Advent, the First Sunday of Ordinary Time, the First Sunday of Lent, and Easter Sunday.

After Pentecost, when the psalter cycle follows the series of weeks in Ordinary Time, it begins with the week indicated in the Proper of Seasons at the beginning of the appropriate week in Ordinary Time.

**134.** On solemnities and feasts, during the Easter triduum, and on the days within the octaves of Easter and Christmas, proper psalms are assigned to the Office of Readings from those in traditional use at these times, and their appropriateness is generally highlighted by the choice of antiphon. This is also the case at Daytime Prayer on certain solemnities of the Lord and during the octave of Easter. At Morning Prayer the psalms and canticle are taken from the Sunday of the first week of the psalter. On solemnities the psalms at Evening Prayer 1 are taken from the **Laudate** psalms, following an ancient custom. At Evening Prayer 2 on solemnities and at Evening Prayer on feasts the psalms and canticle are proper. At Daytime Prayer on solemnities (except those mentioned above and those falling on Sunday) the psalms are taken from the gradual psalms; at Daytime Prayer on feasts the psalms are those of the current week and day of the psalter.

**135.** In all other cases the psalms are taken from the current week and day of the psalter, unless there are proper antiphons or proper psalms.

#### V. THE CANTICLES FROM THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

**136.** At Morning Prayer there is inserted between the first and second psalm a canticle from the Old Testament, in accordance with custom. In addition to the series handed down from the ancient Roman tradition and the other series introduced into the Breviary by Saint Pius X, a number of other canticles

have been added to the psalter from different books of the Old Testament, in order that each weekday of the four week cycle may have its own proper canticle, and each Sunday one of two sections of the Canticum of the Three Children, used alternately.

**137.** At Evening Prayer, after the two psalms, there is inserted a canticle from the New Testament, taken from the Letters or the Book of Revelation. Seven canticles are given for each week of the four week cycle, one for each day. On the Sundays of Lent, however, in place of the Alleluia Canticum from the Book of Revelation, a canticle from the First Letter of Peter is used. In addition, on the solemnity of the Epiphany and the feast of the Transfiguration there is a canticle from the First Letter to Timothy; this is given in the appropriate places.

**138.** The gospel canticles of Zechariah, of Mary and of Simeon are to be treated with the same solemnity and dignity as are customary at the proclamation of the gospel.

**139.** Both psalmody and readings are arranged in keeping with the traditional rule that the Old Testament is read first, then the writings of the apostles, and finally the gospel.

## **VI. THE READINGS FROM SACRED SCRIPTURE**

### **a) The Reading of Sacred Scripture in General**

**140.** The reading of Sacred Scripture, which, following an ancient tradition, takes place publicly in the liturgy, is to be held in the highest respect by all Christians, not only in the celebration of the Eucharist but also in the Divine Office. This reading is not the result of individual choice or devotion but is the planned decision of the Church itself, in order that in the course of the year the bride of Christ may unfold the mystery of Christ "from incarnation and nativity to ascension, Pentecost and expectation of the blessed hope and coming of the Lord." In addition, in liturgical celebration the reading of Sacred Scripture is always accompanied by prayer in order that the reading may yield greater fruit, and prayer – especially prayer of the psalms – may in its turn gain fuller understanding and become more fervent and devout.

**141.** In the Liturgy of the Hours there is a longer reading of Sacred Scripture and a shorter reading.

**142.** The longer reading, optional at Morning and Evening Prayer, is described above in no. 46.

### **b) The Cycle of Scripture Readings in the Office of Readings**

**143.** In the cycle of readings from Sacred Scripture in the Office of Readings, account has been taken of those sacred seasons during which by an ancient tradition particular books are to be read, as well as of the cycle of readings at Mass. The Liturgy of the Hours has therefore been related to the Mass in this way, that the scriptural readings in the Office are complementary to the readings at Mass, and so provide a conspectus of the whole history of salvation.

**144.** Without prejudice to the exception noted in no. 73, there are no readings from the gospels in the Liturgy of the Hours, since they are read as a whole each year at Mass.

**145.** There are two cycles of biblical readings. The first is a one year cycle and is incorporated in the Liturgy of the Hours; the second is a two year cycle, like the cycle of readings at weekday Masses in Ordinary Time, and is given for optional use in a supplement.

**146.** The two year cycle of readings for the Liturgy of the Hours is so arranged that each year nearly all the books of Sacred Scripture may be read, in addition to longer and more difficult texts only rarely suitable for use at Mass. The New Testament as a whole is read each year, partly at Mass, partly from the Liturgy of the Hours; but a selection has been made of those parts of the Old Testament that are of greater importance for the understanding of the history of salvation and for deepening devotion. The principle of complementarity between the readings in the Liturgy of the Hours and at Mass, far from assigning the same texts to the same days or the same books indiscriminately to the same seasons (for

this would leave the Liturgy of the Hours with the less important passages, and disturb the continuity of the texts), demands only that the same book should be used at Mass and in the Liturgy of the Hours in alternate years, or at least after an interval if it is read in the same year.

**147.** During Advent, following an ancient tradition, passages are read from Isaiah in semi-continuous sequence, alternating in a two year cycle. In addition, the Book of Ruth and certain prophecies from Micah are read. Since there are special readings from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of December (both dates included), readings for the third week of Advent which fall on these dates are omitted.

**148.** From the 29<sup>th</sup> of December until the 5<sup>th</sup> of January the readings for the first year are taken from the Letter to the Colossians (which considers the incarnation of the Lord within the context of the whole history of salvation), and the readings for the second year are taken from the Song of Songs (which foreshadows the union of God and man in Christ: "God the Father prepared a wedding feast for God his Son when he united him with human nature in the womb of the Virgin, when before the ages God willed that his Son should become man at the end of the ages").

**149.** From the 7<sup>th</sup> of January until the Saturday after the Epiphany eschatological texts, from Isaiah 60-66 and Baruch, are read. Readings remaining unused are omitted for that year.

**150.** During Lent, the readings for the first year are passages from Deuteronomy and the Letter to the Hebrews. Those for the second year provide a conspectus of the history of salvation from Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. The Letter to the Hebrews interprets the Old Covenant in the light of the paschal mystery of Christ. A passage from the same letter, on Christ's sacrifice (9:11-28), is read on Good Friday; another, on the Lord's rest (4:1-16), is read on Holy Saturday. On the other days of Holy Week the readings for the first year are the third and fourth Songs of the Servant of the Lord and extracts from the Lamentations; in the second year the prophet Jeremiah is read, as a type of Christ in his Passion.

**151.** During the Easter season, apart from the First and Second Sundays of Easter and the solemnities of the Ascension and Pentecost, there are the traditional readings from the First Letter of Peter, the Book of Revelation and the Letters of John (for the first year), and from the Acts of the Apostles (for the second year).

**152.** From the Monday after the feast of the Baptism of the Lord until Lent, and from the Monday after Pentecost until Advent, there is a continuous series of thirty-four weeks in Ordinary Time. This series is interrupted from Ash Wednesday until Pentecost. On the Monday after Pentecost Sunday the cycle of readings in Ordinary Time is resumed, beginning with the week after the one interrupted because of Lent, and omitting the reading assigned to the Sunday.

In years with only thirty-three weeks in Ordinary Time, the week immediately following Pentecost is dropped, so that the readings of the last weeks, which are eschatological in character, may not be omitted.

The books of the Old Testament are arranged so as to follow the history of salvation. God reveals himself in the history of his people as he leads and enlightens them in progressive stages. The prophets are therefore read along with the historical books, taking into account the times in which they lived and taught. Hence, the cycle of readings from the Old Testament contains, in the first year, the historical books and prophetic utterances from the book of Joshua as far as, and including, the time of the exile. In the second year, after the readings from Genesis (read before Lent) the history of salvation is resumed after the exile up to the time of the Maccabees. The same year includes the later prophets, the wisdom literature and the narrative books of Esther, Tobit and Judith.

Those letters of the apostles that are not read at special times are arranged in a way that takes account of the readings at Mass and of the chronological order in which these letters were written.

**153.** The one year cycle is a shortened selection of passages from Sacred Scripture, taking account of the two year cycle of readings at Mass, to which it is intended to be complementary.

**154.** On solemnities and feasts proper readings are given; otherwise, the readings are taken from the appropriate Common.

**155.** Individual readings maintain, as far as possible, a certain unity; to strike a balance in length (otherwise difficult to achieve in view of the different literary styles represented) some verses are occasionally omitted, though omissions are always noted. One may laudably read them in full from an approved text.

### **c) The Short Readings**

**156.** The short readings or “chapters” (*capitula*) are referred to in no. 45, which describes their role in the Liturgy of the Hours. They are chosen to give brief and precise expression to a reflection or exhortation. Care has also been taken to provide variety.

**157.** Accordingly, the psalter provides four one week cycles of short readings in Ordinary Time, so that there may be variety for each day of the four weeks. In addition, there are one week cycles for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. There are also proper short readings for solemnities and feasts, and for certain memorials, as well as a one week cycle for Night Prayer.

**158.** The choice of short readings is based on these principles:

(a) the gospels have been excluded in accordance with tradition;

(b) the special character of Sunday, of Friday and of the individual Hours, has as far as possible been respected;

(c) the readings at Evening Prayer, following as they do a New Testament Cantic, have been chosen from the New Testament only.

## **VII. THE READINGS FROM THE FATHERS AND CHURCH WRITERS**

**159.** In accordance with the tradition of the Roman Church the Office of Readings provides, after the biblical reading, a reading from the Fathers or Church writers, with a responsorial unless there is to be a reading relating to a saint (see nos. 228-239).

**160.** Texts for this reading are given from the writings of the Fathers and doctors of the Church, and from other Church writers of the Eastern and Western Church. Pride of place is given to the Fathers of the Church who enjoy special authority in the Church.

**161.** Besides the readings assigned to each day in the Liturgy of the Hours there is an optional lectionary with a larger selection of readings, in order that the treasures of the Church’s tradition may be more widely available to those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours. Everyone has permission to take the second reading either from the Liturgy of the Hours or from the optional lectionary.

**162.** In addition, conferences of bishops may prepare additional texts, adapted to the traditions and mentality of their own region, for inclusion in the optional lectionary as a supplement. These texts should be taken from the works of Catholic writers, outstanding for their teaching and holiness of life.

**163.** The purpose of the second reading is principally to provide a meditation on the word of God as received by the Church in its tradition. The Church has always been convinced of the necessity of teaching the word of God authentically to the faithful, so that “the line of interpretation in regard to the prophets and apostles may follow the norm of ecclesiastical and catholic understanding.

**164.** By constant use of the writings handed down by the universal tradition of the Church those who read them are led to a deeper reflection on Sacred Scripture, and a relish and love for it. The writings of the

Fathers are an outstanding witness to the contemplation of the word of God over the centuries by the bride of the incarnate Word: the Church, "cherishing within her the counsel and spirit of her bridegroom and God," is always seeking to attain a more profound understanding of the Sacred Scriptures.

**165.** The reading of the Fathers leads Christians to an understanding also of the liturgical seasons and feasts. In addition, it gives them access to the priceless spiritual treasures which form the unique patrimony of the Church and provide a firm foundation for the spiritual life and a rich diet for devotion. Preachers of God's word have thus at hand a daily course of the finest examples of sacred preaching.

## **VIII. THE READINGS IN HONOR OF SAINTS**

**166.** The "hagiographical" readings or readings in honor of saints are either texts from a Father of the Church or other Church writer which refer specifically to the saint who is being commemorated or are rightly applied to him or her, or texts from his or her own writings or an account of his or her life.

**167.** In preparing individual Propers for saints care must be taken to insure historical accuracy as well as genuine spiritual benefit for those who will read or hear the readings in their honor. Anything that merely feeds the imagination should be carefully avoided. Emphasis should be given to the individual spiritual characteristics of the saints, in a way suited to modern conditions; stress should also be laid on their contribution to the life and spirituality of the Church.

**168.** A short biographical note, giving merely historical facts and a brief sketch of the saint's life, is provided at the head of the reading. This is for information only and is not for reading aloud.

## **IX. THE RESPONSORIES**

**169.** The biblical reading in the Office of Readings is followed by its own responsorial. The text of this responsorial, drawn from traditional sources or freshly composed, is intended to throw new light on the passage just read, to put it in the context of the history of salvation, to lead from the Old Testament to the New, to turn what has been read into prayer and contemplation, or to provide pleasant variety by its poetic beauty.

**170.** In a similar way the second reading is followed by a responsorial, less closely connected with the text of the reading and allowing therefore a greater freedom in regard to meditation.

**171.** The responsorial, therefore, with their individual parts, which should be said even in private recitation, retain their value. The part that is usually repeated may be omitted if it is not sung, unless the meaning requires it.

**172.** In a similar but simpler way, the responsorial at Morning, Evening and Night Prayer (see nos. 49 and 89 above), and the verse at Daytime Prayer, are linked to the short reading as a kind of acclamation, enabling God's word to sink deeper into the mind and heart.

## **X. THE HYMNS AND OTHER NON-BIBLICAL SONGS**

**173.** Hymns have formed part of the Office from very early times and still retain their place in it. As their name implies, they are designed for God's praise because of their musical and poetic character; they also provide participation for the people. Indeed, they generally have an immediate effect in creating the particular quality of the Hour or individual feast, more so than other parts of the Office, and are able to move mind and heart to devotion, a power frequently enhanced by their beauty of style. In the Office the hymns are the chief poetic element contributed by the Church.

**174.** A hymn follows the traditional rule by ending with a doxology, usually addressed to the same divine person as the hymn itself.

**175.** In the Office for Ordinary Time, in the interests of variety, a twofold cycle of hymns is given for each Hour, for use in alternate weeks.

**176.** In addition, a twofold cycle of hymns has been introduced into the Office of Readings for Ordinary Time, one for use at night, the other for use during the day.

**177.** New hymns can be sung to traditional melodies of the same rhythm and meter.

**178.** For vernacular celebrations, conferences of bishops may adapt the Latin hymns to suit the character of their own language and introduce fresh compositions, provided that these are in complete harmony with the spirit of the Hour, season or feast. Great care must be taken not to allow popular “songs” which have no artistic merit and are not in true conformity with the dignity of the liturgy.

## **XI. THE INTERCESSIONS, THE LORD’S PRAYER AND THE CONCLUDING PRAYER**

### **a) The Prayers or Intercessions at Morning and Evening Prayer**

**179.** The Liturgy of the Hours is a celebration in praise of God. Jewish and Christian tradition does not separate prayer of petition from praise of God; often enough, praise turns somehow to petition. The apostle Paul exhorts us to offer “prayers, petitions, intercessions and thanksgiving for all men: for kings and all in authority, so that we may be able to live quiet and peaceful lives in the full practice of religion and of morality, for this is good and acceptable before God our Savior, who wishes all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-4). The Fathers of the Church frequently explained this as an exhortation to offer prayer in the morning and in the evening.

**180.** The intercessions, restored in the Mass of the Roman rite, have their place also at Evening Prayer, though in a different form, as will be explained below.

**181.** Since there is also a tradition of Morning Prayer that commends the whole day to God, there are invocations at Morning Prayer for the purpose of commending or consecrating the day to God.

**182.** The word *preces* covers both the intercessions at Evening Prayer and the invocations for dedicating the day to God at Morning Prayer.

**183.** In the interests of variety, and especially to give fuller expression to the many needs of the Church and of mankind in relation to different states, groups, persons, circumstances and seasons, different formulas are given for each day of the four week psalter in Ordinary Time and for the sacred seasons of the liturgical year, as well as for certain feasts.

**184.** In addition, conferences of bishops have the right to adapt the formulas given in the Liturgy of the Hours and also to approve new formulas, in accordance with the norms that follow.

**185.** As in the Lord’s Prayer, petitions should be linked with praise of God and acknowledgement of his glory or with a reference to the history of salvation.

**186.** In the intercessions at Evening Prayer the last intention is always for the dead.

**187.** Since the Liturgy of the Hours is above all the prayer of the whole Church for the whole Church, indeed for the salvation of the whole world, universal intentions should take precedence over all others: the Church and its ministers; secular authorities; the poor, the sick and the sorrowful; the needs of the whole world, that is, peace and other intentions of this kind.

**188.** It is, however, permissible to include particular intentions at both Morning and Evening Prayer.

**189.** The intercessions in the Office are so arranged that they can be adapted for celebration with a congregation or in a small community or for private recitation.

**190.** Thus, the intercessions in a celebration with a congregation or in common are introduced by a brief invitation, given by the priest or minister and including the response to be made by the congregation after each petition.

**191.** Further, the intentions are addressed directly to God, so as to be suitable for both common celebration and private recitation.

**192.** Each intention consists of two parts; the second may be used as an alternate response.

**193.** Different methods can therefore be used for the intercessions. The priest or minister may say both parts of the intention and the congregation respond with a uniform response or a silent pause, or the priest or minister may say only the first part of the intention and the congregation respond with the second part.

#### **b) The Lord's Prayer**

**194.** Following an ancient tradition, the Lord's Prayer is given a place in keeping with its dignity at the more frequented Hours of Morning and Evening Prayer, after the intercessions.

**195.** In future, therefore, the Lord's Prayer will be said with solemnity on three occasions during the day: at Mass, and at Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.

**196.** The Lord's Prayer is said by all, after a brief introduction if this seems opportune.

#### **c) The Concluding Prayer**

**197.** At the end of the whole Hour the concluding prayer is said to round it off. In a celebration in public and with the people, it belongs to a priest or deacon, in accordance with tradition, to say this prayer.

**198.** In the Office of Readings this prayer is normally the prayer proper to the day. At Night Prayer the prayer is always the prayer given in that Hour.

**199.** At Morning and Evening Prayer the concluding prayer is taken from the Proper on Sundays, on the weekdays of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, and on solemnities, feasts and memorials. On weekdays in Ordinary Time the prayer is the one given in the four week psalter to express the character of the appropriate Hour.

**200.** At Daytime Prayer the concluding prayer is taken from the Proper on Sundays, on the weekdays of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, and on solemnities and feasts. On other days the prayers are those that express the character of each Hour. These are given in the four week psalter.

## **XII. SACRED SILENCE**

**201.** It is a general principle that care should be taken in liturgical actions to see that "a sacred silence is observed at its proper time." An opportunity for silence should therefore be provided in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours.

**202.** In order to receive in our hearts the full resonance of the voice of the Holy Spirit and to unite our personal prayer more closely with the word of God and the public voice of the Church, it is permissible, as occasion offers and prudence suggests, to have an interval of silence, either after the repetition of the antiphon at the end of the psalm, in the traditional way, especially if the psalm-prayer (see no. 112) is to be said after the pause, or after the short or longer readings, before or after the responsory.



Care must be taken to avoid the kind of silence that would disturb the structure of the Office, or embarrass and weary those taking part.

**203.** In individual recitation there is greater freedom to pause in meditation on some text that moves the spirit, and the Office does not on this account lose its public character.

## CHAPTER IV

### VARIOUS CELEBRATIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

#### I. THE MYSTERIES OF THE LORD

##### a) Sunday

**204.** The Office of Sunday begins with Evening Prayer I. It is taken entirely from the four week psalter, except those parts that are marked as proper.

**205.** When a feast of the Lord is celebrated on Sunday, it has a proper Evening Prayer I.

**206.** The celebration of Sunday vigils, where desired, is discussed in no. 73 above.

**207.** It is fitting to celebrate at least Evening Prayer with the faithful, where this is possible, in accordance with a very ancient custom.

##### b) The Easter Triduum

**208.** In the Easter Triduum the Office is celebrated in the way described in the Proper of Seasons.

**209.** Those who take part in the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, or the celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, do not say Evening Prayer on Thursday or Friday respectively.

**210.** On Good Friday and Holy Saturday a public celebration of the Office of Readings with the people should take place before Morning Prayer, as far as this is possible.

**211.** Night Prayer for Holy Saturday is said only by those who are not present at the Easter Vigil.

**212.** The Easter Vigil takes the place of the Office of Readings. Those not present at the solemn celebration of the Vigil should therefore choose from it at least four readings with the chants and prayers. It is desirable that these readings should be from Exodus, from Ezekiel, from Saint Paul and from the gospel. The **Te Deum** follows, with the prayer of the day.

**213.** Morning Prayer for Easter Sunday is said by all. It is fitting that Evening Prayer should be celebrated in a more solemn way, to mark the ending of so holy a day and to commemorate the occasions when the Lord showed himself to his disciples. Great care should be taken to maintain, where it exists, the particular tradition on Easter Sunday of celebrating Evening Prayer in honor of baptism, when there is a procession to the font as the psalms are being sung.

##### c) Easter Season

**214.** The Liturgy of the Hours takes on a paschal character from the acclamation **Alleluia**, added to most antiphons (see no. 120); from the hymns, antiphons and special intercessions and from the proper readings for each Hour.

#### **d) Christmas Season**

**215.** On Christmas night it is fitting that a solemn vigil, using the Office of Readings, should be celebrated before Mass. Night Prayer is not said by those who are present at this vigil.

**216.** Morning Prayer on Christmas Day is normally said before the Mass at Dawn.

#### **e) Other Solemnities and Feasts of the Lord**

**217.** In arranging the Office for solemnities and feasts of the Lord, what is said in Nos. 225-233 below should be observed, with any necessary changes.

## **II. THE SAINTS**

**218.** The celebrations in honor of the saints are so arranged that they do not take precedence over feast days or sacred seasons commemorating the mysteries of salvation, or continually interrupt the sequence of psalms and biblical readings, or give rise to undue repetitions. At the same time, the legitimate honor paid to each saint is fostered and given suitable opportunity for expression. These are the principles which form the basis for the reform of the Calendar, carried out by order of the Second Vatican Council, and for the regulations governing celebrations in honor of the saints, described in the following paragraphs.

**219.** Celebrations in honor of the saints are either solemnities, feasts or memorials.

**220.** Memorials are either obligatory or, if unspecified, optional. In deciding whether to celebrate an optional memorial in an Office celebrated with the people or in common, account should be taken of the common good or the genuine devotion of the congregation, not simply that of the person presiding.

**221.** If more than one optional memorial falls on the same day, only one may be celebrated; the rest are omitted.

**222.** Solemnities alone are transferred, in accordance with the rubrics.

**223.** The norms which follow apply in the case of saints mentioned in the General Roman Calendar and of those with a place in particular calendars.

**224.** Where proper parts are not given, they are supplied from the appropriate Common.

#### **1) The Office for Solemnities**

**225.** Solemnities begin with Evening Prayer I on the day before.

**226.** At Evening Prayer I and II, the hymn, the antiphons, the reading with its responsorial, and the concluding prayer are proper. Where anything proper is missing, it is supplied from the Common. At Evening Prayer I both psalms are normally taken from the **Laudate** psalms (psalms 113, 117, 135, 146, 147A, 147B), following an ancient tradition. The New Testament canticle is given in its appropriate place. At Evening Prayer II the psalms and canticles are proper; the intercessions are either proper or from the Common.

**227.** At Morning Prayer, the hymn, antiphons, the reading with its responsorial, and the concluding prayer are proper. Where anything proper is missing, it is supplied from the Common. The psalms are to be taken from the Sunday of the first week of the four week psalter; the intercessions are either proper or from the Common.

**228.** In the Office of Readings, everything is proper: the hymn, the antiphons and psalms, the readings and responsorial. The first reading is from Scripture, the second is in honor of the saint. In the case of a saint with a purely local cult and without special texts even in the local Proper, everything is taken from the Common.

At the end of the Office of Readings the **Te Deum** is said, followed by the prayer from the Proper.

**229.** At Daytime Prayer the hymn of the weekday is used, unless other directions are given. The psalms are from the gradual psalms, with a proper antiphon. On Sundays the psalms are taken from the Sunday of the first week of the four week psalter, and the reading and concluding prayer are proper. On certain solemnities of the Lord there are special psalms.

**230.** At Night Prayer everything is said as on Sundays after Evening Prayer I and II respectively.

## **2) The Office for Feasts**

**231.** Feasts have no Evening Prayer I, except those feasts of the Lord which fall on a Sunday. At the Office of Readings and Morning and Evening Prayer, all is done as on solemnities.

**232.** At Daytime Prayer the hymn of the weekday is used, unless other directions are given. The weekday psalms with their antiphons are said, unless a special reason or tradition requires a proper antiphon; this will be indicated at the appropriate place. The reading and concluding prayer are proper.

**233.** Night Prayer is said as on ordinary days.

## **3) The Office for Memorials**

**234.** There is no difference in the arrangement of the Office for obligatory and optional memorials except in the case of optional memorials falling during privileged seasons.

### **a) Memorials during Ordinary Time**

**235** In the Office of Readings and at Morning and Evening Prayer:

a) the psalms and their antiphons are taken from the current week and day, unless there are proper antiphons or proper psalms, as indicated for each such occasion;

b) the antiphon at the invitatory, the hymn, the reading, the antiphons at the Canticles of Zechariah and of Mary, and the intercessions are those of the Saint if these are given in the Proper; otherwise, they are taken either from the Common or from the current week and day.

c) the concluding prayer is from the Office of the saint;

d) in the Office of Readings the Scripture reading with its responsorial is from the current cycle. The second reading is the one in honor of the saint, with a proper responsorial or one taken from the Common; if there is no proper reading, the current patristic reading is used. The **Te Deum** is not said.

**236.** At Daytime Prayer and Night Prayer all is from the weekday, and nothing is from the Office of the saint.

### **b) Memorials during Privileged Seasons**

**237.** On Sundays, solemnities and feasts, on Ash Wednesday, during Holy Week and during the octave of Easter no regard is taken of any memorials that may fall on these days.

**238.** On the weekdays from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, during the octave of Christmas and on the weekdays of Lent, obligatory memorials are not celebrated, even those in particular calendars. If any happen to fall during Lent in a given year, they are treated as optional memorials.

**239.** During these seasons, if it is desired to celebrate the Office of a saint on a day assigned to his memorial:

a) In the Office of Readings, after the patristic reading (with its responsorial) from the Proper of Seasons, a proper reading in honor of the saint (with its responsorial) may follow, with the concluding prayer of the saint;

b) At Morning and Evening Prayer, the ending of the concluding prayer may be omitted and the saint's antiphon (from the Proper or Common) and prayer added.

### **c) Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturday**

**240.** On Saturdays in Ordinary Time, when optional memorials are permitted, and optional memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary may be celebrated in the same way as other memorials, with a proper reading.

## **III. THE CALENDAR AND CHOICE OF OFFICE OR PART OF AN OFFICE**

### **a) The Calendar to Be Followed**

**241.** The Office in choir and in common is to be celebrated according to the proper calendar: of the diocese, of the religious institute or of the individual church. Members of religious institutes join with the community of the local Church in celebrating the dedication of the cathedral and the feasts of the principal patrons of the place, and of the wider region, in which they live.

**242.** When any cleric or religious, bound on an title to say the Divine Office, joins in an Office celebrated in common according to a calendar or rite different from his own, he fulfills his obligation in respect of the part of the Office at which he is present.

**243.** In individual celebration, the calendar of the place or one's own calendar may be followed except on proper solemnities and feasts.

### **b) Choice of Office**

**244.** On weekdays when an optional memorial is permitted, for a good reason the Office of a saint named on that day in the Roman Martyrology, or in an approved Appendix to it, may be celebrated in the same way as other memorials (see nos. 234-239).

**245.** For a public reason or out of devotion, except on solemnities, the Sundays of Advent, Lent and Easter, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, the octave of Easter and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, a votive Office may be celebrated, in whole or in part, for example, on the occasion of a pilgrimage, a local feast or the external solemnity of a saint.

### **c) Choice of Texts**

**246.** In particular cases, one may choose for the Office texts different from those given for the day, provided that the general arrangement of the Office is not disturbed and the following rules are observed.

**247.** In the Office for Sundays, solemnities, feasts of the Lord given in the General Calendar, the weekdays of Lent and Holy Week, the days within the octaves of Easter and Christmas, and the weekdays from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of December inclusively, it is never permissible to change the texts that are proper or appropriate to the celebration, such as antiphons, hymns, readings, responsorial, prayers and very often psalms as well.

In place of the Sunday psalms of the current week one may substitute the Sunday psalms of a different week, and even, in the case of an Office celebrated with the people, other psalms especially chosen to lead them step by step to an understanding of the psalms.

**248.** In the Office of Readings, the current cycle of Sacred Scripture must always be held in honor. The desire of the Church “that, within a fixed cycle of years, the more important parts of the Sacred Scriptures may be read to the people” applies also to the Office.

Because of this, the cycle of readings from Scripture that is provided in the Office must not be abandoned during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. During Ordinary Time, however, on a particular day or for a few days in succession, or may, for a good reason, choose readings from those provided on other days, or even other biblical readings, for example, on the occasion of retreats or pastoral gatherings or prayers for Christian unity or other such events.

**249.** When the continuous reading is interrupted because of a solemnity or feast or special celebration, it is permissible during the same week, taking into account the readings for the whole week, either to combine the parts omitted with others or to decide which of the texts are to be preferred.

**250.** In the Office of Readings one may also, for a good reason, choose another reading from the same season, from the Liturgy of the Hours or the optional Lectionary (no. 161), in preference to the second reading appointed for the day. In addition, on weekdays in Ordinary Time and, if it seems opportune, even in the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter, one may choose for quasi-continuous reading the work of a Father of the Church, in harmony with the biblical and liturgical context.

**251.** The readings, prayers, songs and intercessions appointed for the weekdays of a particular season may be used on other weekdays of the same season.

**252.** Although the observance of the complete cycle of the four week psalter should be dear to each one’s heart, one may, for spiritual or pastoral reasons, replace the psalms appointed for a particular day with others from the same Hour of a different day. There are also circumstances occasionally arising when it is permissible to choose suitable psalms or other texts as for a votive Office.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **THE RITES FOR CELEBRATION IN COMMON**

#### **I. THE VARIOUS ROLES**

**253.** In the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, as in all other liturgical actions, “the person, whether minister or member of the faithful, who exercises a role, should perform everything that belongs to him by the nature of his role and the rules governing the liturgy, and nothing else.”

**254.** If a bishop presides, especially in the cathedral, he should be attended by his priests and by ministers, with full and active participation by the people. A priest or deacon should normally preside at every celebration with the people, and ministers should also be present.

**255.** The priest or deacon who presides at a celebration may wear a stole over the alb or surplice; a priest may also wear a cope. On a greater solemnity there is nothing to prevent several priests from wearing copes or several deacons from wearing dalmatics.

**256.** It is for the presiding priest or deacon, from the chair, to open the celebration with the introductory verse, to begin the Lord's Prayer, to say the concluding prayer, to greet the people, bless them and dismiss them.

**257.** Either the priest or a minister may give out the intercessions.

**258.** In the absence of a priest or deacon, the one who presides at the Office is only one among equals; he does not enter the sanctuary, or greet and bless the people.

**259.** Those who act as readers stand in a suitable place to read either the long readings or the short readings.

**260.** The antiphons, psalms and other chants should be sung by a cantor or cantors. With regard to the psalmody, the directions of nos. 121-125 should be observed.

**261.** During the Gospel Canticle at Morning and Evening Prayer the altar, then the priest and the people, may be incensed.

**262.** The obligation of choir applies to the community, not to the place of celebration, which need not be a church, especially in the case of those Hours that are performed without solemnity.

**263.** All taking part stand:

- a) During the introduction to the Office and the introductory verses of each Hour;
- b) During the hymn;
- c) During the Gospel Canticle;
- d) during the intercessions, the Lord's Prayer and the concluding prayer.

**264.** All should sit to listen to the readings, except at the Gospel.

**265.** While the psalms and the other canticles (with their antiphons) are being said, the assembly either sits or stands, according to custom.

**266.** All make the sign of the cross, from forehead to breast and from left shoulder to right:

- a) at the beginning of the Hours, when **God, come to my assistance** is being said;
- b) at the beginning of the Gospel Canticles of Zechariah, of Mary and of Simeon.

The sign of the cross is made on the mouth at the beginning of the invitatory, at the words **Lord, open my lips**.

## **II. SINGING IN THE OFFICE**

**267.** In the rubrics and norms of this Instruction, the words "say," "recite," etc., are to be understood to refer to singing or recitation, in the light of the principles given below.

**268.** "Sung celebration of the Office, because it is more in keeping with the nature of this prayer and is a mark of greater solemnity, and the expression of a deeper union of hearts, in offering praise to God, is earnestly commended to those who perform the Divine Office in choir or in common."

**269.** The declarations of the Second Vatican Council on liturgical singing apply to all liturgical actions but in a special way to the Liturgy of the Hours. Though every part of it has been revised in such a way that

all may be fruitfully recited even by individuals, many of these parts are lyrical in form and do not yield their fuller meaning unless they are sung: above all, the psalms, canticles, hymns and responsorial.

**270.** Hence, in celebrating the liturgy singing is not to be regarded as an extrinsic embellishment to prayer; rather, it wells up from the depths of a soul intent on prayer and the praise of God and reveals in a full and perfect way the community nature of Christian worship.

Christian communities of all kinds seeking to use this form of prayer as frequently as possible deserve our praise. Clerics and religious, as well as members of the faithful, must be trained by suitable instruction and practice to join together in singing the Hours in a spirit of joy, especially on feast days. Since, however, it is no easy task to sing the whole Office, and since too the Church's praise is not to be considered the exclusive possession of clerics and monks either in its origin or by its nature, but belongs to the whole Christian community, several principles must be borne in mind if the sung celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours is to be correctly performed and seen in its true nature and beauty.

**271.** It is particularly appropriate that there should be singing at least on Sundays and feast days, and through its use the different degrees of solemnity come to be recognized.

**272.** In the same way, since not all the Hours are of equal importance, it is desirable that those Hours which are the true hinges of the Office, that is, Morning and Evening Prayer, should receive greater honor by the use of singing.

**273.** A celebration performed entirely with singing is commendable, provided that it has artistic and spiritual excellence; but it may be useful on occasion to apply the principle of "progressive solemnity." There are practical reasons for this; there is also the fact that the various elements of liturgical celebration are not then treated indiscriminately, but each of them can be restored to its original meaning and genuine function. The Liturgy of the Hours is then seen, not as an artistic relic of the past, arousing our admiration only if it is preserved without change, but on the contrary as capable of living and growing in a new environment, and of becoming once again an unmistakable testimony to a community full of vigorous life.

Thus, the principle of "progressive solemnity" is one that recognizes several intermediate stages between the full sung Office and the simple recitation of all its parts. Its application offers the possibility of a rich and pleasing variety; its criteria are the particular day or Hour being celebrated, the character of the individual elements comprising the Office, the size and composition of the community, as well as the number of singers available in the circumstances.

With this increased scope for variation, it will be possible for the public praise of the Church to be sung more frequently and be adapted in a variety of ways to different circumstances. There is great hope that new ways and expressions of public worship may be found for our own age, as has always happened in the life of the Church.

**274.** For liturgical celebrations sung in Latin, Gregorian Chant, as the music proper to the Roman Liturgy, should have pride of place, in normal circumstances, *ceteris paribus*. Nevertheless, "the Church does not exclude from liturgical actions any type of music provided that it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical action itself and the nature of the individual parts, and that it does not prevent the people from taking their due and active part." At a sung Office, if a melody is not available for the given antiphon, another antiphon should be taken from those in the repertoire, provided that it is suitable in terms of nos. 113 and 121-125.

**275.** Since the Liturgy of the Hours may be celebrated in the vernacular, "due care should be taken to provide melodies for use in singing the Divine Office in the vernacular."

**276.** There is, however, nothing to prevent different parts from being sung in different languages at one and the same celebration.

**277.** The choice of parts particularly suited for singing follows from the correct arrangement of a liturgical celebration. This demands that the significance and function of each part and of singing should be carefully respected. Some parts by their nature are for singing: in particular, acclamations, responses to the greeting of the priest and minister, responses in litanies, responses within a psalm, hymns and canticles.

**278.** It is an established fact that the psalms (see nos. 103-120) are closely linked with music, as Jewish and Christian tradition both confirm. Indeed, it is no small contribution to the full appreciation of the psalms if they are sung, or at least are always seen in the perspective of poetry and music. If it is feasible, the sung form is to be preferred, at least on more important days and at the principal Hours, and with respect for the inborn character of the psalms.

**279.** The different methods of reciting the psalms are described above in nos. 121-123. The choice of method should depend not so much on external circumstances as on the different character of the psalms to be recited in the same celebration. Thus, it may be better to read sapiential and historical psalms, whereas psalms of praise and thanksgiving are of their nature designed for singing in common. The overriding consideration is to ensure that the celebration is not inflexible or overelaborate or concerned only with merely formal observance but matches the reality of what is celebrated. One must strive above all to inspire hearts with a desire for genuine prayer and to show that the celebration of God's praise is a thing of joy (see psalm 147).

**280.** Even when the Hours are recited, hymns can nourish prayer, provided that they have doctrinal and artistic excellence; but of their nature they are designed for singing, and so, as far as possible, should be sung at a celebration in common.

**281.** The responsorial after the reading at Morning and Evening Prayer (see no. 49) is of its nature designed for singing, and indeed for singing by the people.

**282.** The responsorial following the readings in the Office of Readings by their very nature and function also demand to be sung. In the Office they are composed in such a way that they can retain their power even in individual and private recitation. Responsorial with simpler and easier melodies will be able to be sung more frequently than those which have come down from liturgical sources.

**283.** The longer readings, and the short readings, are not of themselves designed for singing. When they are recited, great care should be taken that they are read in a fitting manner, and with clarity and distinctness, so as to be properly heard and correctly understood by all. The only acceptable melody is therefore one that enables the words to be more easily heard and the meaning better understood.

**284.** Texts that are said only by the person presiding, as the concluding prayer, can be sung gracefully and appropriately, especially in Latin. This will be more difficult in some languages, unless singing enables the words to be heard more clearly by all.