

Helpful resources:

There are many useful websites that can help parishes delve more deeply into the riches of the Church's fruitful prayer life.

<http://www.universalis.com/readings.htm> - has the full Liturgy of the Hours that you can pray online.

<http://www.liturgyhours.org/> - offers daily Liturgy of the Hours Morning, Daytime, Evening and Night Prayer, plus the Office of Readings. The prayers are offered in Adobe Acrobat formats that print as booklets, display on PCs and mobile devices, and 'Read Out Loud' on PCs. A great site for the parish that would like to pray a particular 'hour' on a special day.

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdwwgilh.htm> - details the full *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*. Every Liturgy Committee should read them!

Books:

Morning and Evening Prayer. A Parish Celebration—by Joyce Zimmerman, CPPS. (82 pages of knowledge which fills out this brief outline).

A Shorter Morning and Evening Prayer—published by Collins. (Morning and evening prayer for the full four week cycle).

Psalms for morning and Evening Prayer—Liturgy Training Publications. (The translation of the Psalms was prepared by the International Commission of English in the Liturgy).

The School of Prayer. An Introduction to THE DIVINE OFFICE for All Christians.—A most inspiring book by John Brook for those who wish to understand more fully the depth of meaning in the 150 Psalms

Attached:

Enclosed with this newsletter is a set a four Sunday evening prayer sheets (from the four week cycle) already prepared for you. Your parish may like to utilise these sheets in order to become confident in this form of prayer.

Diocesan Liturgical Commission Christchurch

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To: Priests and Pastoral Assistants
Parish Liturgy Committees
Parish Councils
Directors of Religious Studies
Religious Houses
Principals - Catholic Schools
All Parishioners



Prayer of the Church

A brief history

From earliest times in the Church, the Daily Prayer followed a simple pattern of a psalm suitable for the time of day, hymns, intercessions, blessing, procession. This prayer developed from traditional Jewish prayer patterns already well in place in the time of Jesus. Made up very largely of the psalms and other texts from scripture, it gives voice to adoration, praise, supplication, intercession, thanksgiving, intimate love, complaint, longing and indeed every emotion of human life.



In time the prayer became the prayer of monks with the whole cycle of the 150 psalms being said over a period of time. Originally St. Benedict established seven short offices throughout the day, and a much longer one during the night. His monks were literally to fulfill the Scripture that says, "Seven times a day do I praise you", and, "At midnight I will rise to give you thanks" (Ps. 119:164, 62). Monastics had the luxury of built-in time to pray, which few outside the monastery could enjoy. Consequently, a full monastic Office (Breviary) would eventually include Matins (very early morning prayer), Lauds (morning prayer at sunrise), Prime (first hour, about 6.00am), Terce (third hour, 9.00am), Sext (sixth hour, noon) Vespers (sundown) and Compline (prayer just before retiring at night).



As this was not suitable for the ordinary people a simpler form of daily prayer arose around the Cathedrals which followed the early pattern of prayer more closely but added the reading from scripture. Throughout the centuries, those who use this prayer have continued to develop the common understanding of it in the light of the prayer of Jesus and of his Body, the Church.

The Second Vatican Council



Held between 1962-5 it brought about many changes in the Church. The revision and implementation of any liturgical rite is a complex process. Pope Paul VI promulgated the revised rite for the Liturgy of the Hours when he issued the Apostolic Constitution *Laudis cantium* on November 1, 1970. His hopes for the revision were eloquently summed up:

Now that the prayer of the holy Church has been reformed and entirely revised in keeping with its very ancient tradition and in light of the needs of our day: it is hoped above all that the Liturgy of the Hours may pervade and penetrate the whole of Christian prayer, giving it life, direction, and expression and effectively nourishing the spiritual life of the people of God (#8).

Later in the same paragraph, Paul VI made explicit the realization that this prayer belongs to the whole Church:

Everyone shares in this prayer, which is proper to the one Body as it offers prayers that give expression to the voice of Christ's beloved Bride.

The official edition of the rite is accompanied by an introduction that helps clarify the rite's intent, theology, structure and celebration. The *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* (<http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdwgilh.htm>) was issued on February 2, 1971. It outlines the basic structure of the Liturgy of the Hours and the way in which the various elements fit together to form an integrated prayer. It provides guidelines and options for adaptation and thus is a valuable tool for successfully implementing the Liturgy of the Hours in a parish or liturgical community.

A good grasp of the principles and implications of the *General Instruction* will give parishes confidence that celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours on a regular basis is not as difficult as it may seem at first.

The Parish setting

The Liturgy of the Hours is above all the prayer of the whole Church in which each one of us participates by reason of our baptism. It is helpful to understand the difference between private prayer and liturgical prayer. In *private prayer* I pray, mostly, for myself and my own affairs. It is the isolated person who stands in the centre of the action, and the prayer is more or less individualized. But in liturgical prayer, and therefore in the Liturgy of the Hours, it is not primarily I who am praying, but the Church, the bride of Christ. The object of her prayer is broader, too: all the needs of God's kingdom here on earth.



In *liturgical prayer*, I feel more like a member of a great community, like a little leaf on the great living tree of the Church. I share her life and her problems. The Church is praying through my mouth, I offer her my tongue to pray with her for all the great objectives of redemption, and for God's honour and glory.

Each praying community must prepare its celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours in a style that will suit its situation and needs. Obviously, the parish council celebrating evening prayer around the council table will pray differently to the community gathered at sunset on Easter Sunday to pray the evening prayer that concludes the Triduum.

One strength of the revised Liturgy of the Hours is its adaptability; it is probably more fluid in its official structure than any other liturgical rite. Parish liturgy groups have a wonderful opportunity to shape the rite in a way that accords with the lifestyle of the praying community and truly draws the assembly into a spirit of praise and petition.

Where can our Parish utilise this great resource?

- Did you know there is a *Prayer of the Hours section* on page 180 of the Mass and Psalm Book (1999 edition) used in many parishes in the Diocese? Why not pray in common 15 minutes before Mass?
- Holy Hours could conclude with evening prayer before Benediction.
- Holy Thursday adoration could conclude with night prayer.
- Easter Sunday (and all the other principal solemnities and feasts days) could conclude with evening prayer of the day.
- A funeral vigil could include the Office of the Dead.