

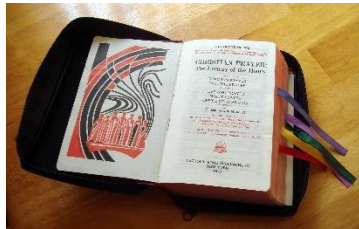
Grace Notes for Friday, February 26, 2021

Dear Friends,

As we start cautiously to reopen our churches, people have commented about how good it feels to be able to gather again – even if it is apart; many have felt very sad about the separation from their fellow worshippers. When the school chaplains met with Bishop Crosby at the beginning of the school year, he acknowledged that many would struggle with our being unable to celebrate Mass but encouraged us to try to help people to find other ways of praying together, such as the Liturgy of the Hours. I am currently taking a course through Notre Dame's McGrath Institute on the Liturgy of the Hours, and the prevailing questions are why we, as Catholic Christians, aren't better informed about this prayer form and why we don't use it more.

When we hear the term “the prayer of the universal Church”, we may think first of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We know that this is the source and summit of our Christian Life, and we recognise that, regardless of the country or language, we shall feel at home with the familiar structure of the liturgy. Being deprived of attendance at Mass has been very difficult for many people and they hunger to be able to return to the Eucharist. However, the Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office, the Breviary and sometimes by the individual prayer times, such as Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer is also recognised as the Prayer of the Universal Church. Many people think that this type of prayer is only for the ordained and religious orders; however, the **General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours**, published in 1974, although requiring clergy and members of mandated religious orders to pray this every day, invites all members of the Body of Christ, including the Laity and families, to enter into this prayer to the degree that they can. What was once a very demanding and complicated way to pray – including prayers in the middle of the night, was simplified during Vatican II. It now consists of five “hours”: The Office of Readings – which can be celebrated at any time of day; Morning Prayer (Lauds); Daytime Prayer, which includes Mid-morning Prayer, Mid-day Prayer and Mid-afternoon

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Prayer, with only one of these being required of those canonically bound to pray the hours; Evening Prayer or Vespers; and, Night Prayer, also known as Compline. Morning and Evening Prayer (now actually celebrated in the morning and evening) are considered the “hinges” on which the others hang, and, if lay people are able, they are encouraged to pray one of these. Unlike many personal devotions, the LOH is highly structured, consisting of an invitatory, hymns, psalms, readings, prayer for the universal Church. What makes the prayer “universal” is that, no matter the hour of the clock, even someone praying this alone in their room is praying in communion with people all around the world.

Much of the prayer is centred on the psalms, with all 150 psalms of the Psalter being prayed every month. Of interest is that the rosary

initially consisted of a body of 150 Hail Mary’s and was a way for those who were illiterate or couldn’t afford a prayer book to pray in parallel. The books (available as a single, concise volume or a four-volume set) are still fairly

expensive; you may find it easier to follow the LOH by using an on-line resource such as <https://divineoffice.org/> or

<https://universalis.com/> Many hymnals contain an Order for Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, and some churches do occasionally offer Evening Prayer as an opportunity for people to pray in a

different way. Also, in many missalettes there is a simplified form to use with the family. Lent may be a good time to try this form of prayer. Learn more at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z3qhAd0K_I or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUr5r9zZ9ZQ>

Before I started writing this today, I listened again to Bishop Robert Barron’s sermon for last Sunday, in which he speaks of “Three Habits to Get the Most Out of Lent”

I found his words very down-to-earth, focused on very practical ways of making a difference. He speaks about Lent being “activity-based” and puts more stress on actions than some of the other Lenten reflections to which we are exposed. He reinforces his thoughts by saying “Do something this Lent: Pray, fast, give alms.” I won’t repeat his words but suggest you may find listening to this to be fifteen minutes well spent.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezZxL5xoEq8>

May yours be a very blessed Lent!

Gillian

