

Practical Guide for the
LITURGY
OF THE
HOURS



Shirley Sullivan



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PREFACE

ALL people in the Church are invited each day to share in its magnificent prayer, the *Liturgy of the Hours*. In earlier ages this prayer was called the *Divine Office* and constituted a “duty” (*officium*) to be fulfilled by those under religious vows. It was also called the “Breviary.” Thus we often encounter the term “Hours” or “Office” to describe different parts of this prayer. In our time this prayer, available in many languages, has become a privilege for all to share. If we decide to adopt this form of prayer, we find two formats available: *Christian Prayer* (Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 1976), a one-volume version and *The Liturgy of the Hours* (Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 1975), a four-volume version. On examination of either format, however, most people become mystified and enthusiasm for this form of prayer may wane. Questions arise: “Here is a collection of wonderful prayers but how are they arranged? How do I start? Where do I start? What is this large section in the middle called the *Psalter*? What are *Evening Prayer I* and *Evening Prayer II*? What prayers do I say when? Help!”

This reaction is quite common and is entirely to be expected. The *Liturgy of the Hours* possesses a difficult and complicated structure. It has a format of prayers that evolved over two millennia and this format cannot be quickly or easily understood. At first this format may confuse those who approach it. But, once understood, the *Liturgy of the Hours* draws the reader into a world of prayer that possesses great

GUIDELINES

THIS Practical Guide approaches the *Liturgy of the Hours* as follows:

- Since the human mind understands perplexing material best by first grasping its structure, this *Guide* begins its treatment of each *Hour* with an Outline of that *Hour*.
- The next step in understanding complexity is to practice the structure until it becomes familiar. After the Outline, therefore, this *Guide* presents a practice session for each *Hour*.
- **INDIVIDUAL RECITATION:** Simply read through the complete *Hour*, reciting **all** the parts.
- **GROUP RECITATION:** Follow the directions concerning differences in typeface. These are as follows:

LEADER: SAYS WORDS IN BOLD CAPITALS.

Alternate Sides of the Community: Words in Regular Type, lower case.

All the Community: Words in Italic Type, lower case.

- **SUGGESTED METHOD:** Learn fully one *Hour* and practice it for a week or two. Start with *Morning Prayer* and then add *Evening Prayer*.
- Please note the texts that are frequently used including the *Gloria*, the Invitatory Psalms, and the Canticles of Zechariah and Mary are printed on loose inserts that come with *Christian Prayer* (one-volume version) or the four-volume version.

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EVENING PRAYER **Christian Prayer (one-volume version)**

OUTLINE

INDIVIDUAL RECITATION: Recite all parts.

GROUP RECITATION:

LEADER: SAYS WORDS IN BOLD CAPITALS.

Alternate Sides of the Community: Words in Regular Type,
lower case.

All the Community: Words in Italic Type, lower case.

OPENING

O GOD, COME TO MY ASSISTANCE.

O Lord, make haste to help me.

*Gloria: All together. "Glory to the Father, and to the
Son, and to the Holy Spirit,*

*As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.
Amen."*

- This opening is omitted if the Invitatory is said.

HYMN

- Chosen from the back of the Volume, as indicated in the Office.

FIRST PSALM

ANTIPHON 1

[Summary of content of the Psalm in red or bold and italics in Christian Prayer (one-volume version) read silently.]

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NIGHT PRAYER
and
Seasons of the Church Year
Christian Prayer (one-volume version)

OUTLINE

INDIVIDUAL RECITATION: Recite all parts.

GROUP RECITATION:

LEADER: SAYS WORDS IN BOLD CAPITALS.

Alternate Sides of the Community: Words in Regular Type,
lower case.

All the Community: Words in Italic Type, lower case.

OPENING

O GOD, COME TO MY ASSISTANCE.

O Lord, make haste to help me.

*Gloria: All together. "Glory to the Father, and to the
Son, and to the Holy Spirit,*

*As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.
Amen."*

1. Brief examination of conscience followed by a prayer of forgiveness.
2. Hymn.

FIRST PSALM

ANTIPHON 1

[Summary of content of the Psalm in red or bold and italics in Christian Prayer (one-volume version) read silently.]