



A GUIDE TO USING THE SHORTER CHRISTIAN PRAYER BOOK FOR PRAYING THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is the Liturgy of the Hours? – From *USCCB*, The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office or the Work of God (*Opus Dei*), is the daily prayer of the Church, marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer. The Hours are a meditative dialogue on the mystery of Christ, using scripture and prayer.
2. Why do we say the Liturgy of the Hours? – From *Sacrosanctum Concilium 84*). By tradition going back to early Christian times, the divine office is devised so that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praises of God. From the *General Instructions for the Liturgy of the Hours (GILOH)40*. Morning prayer and evening prayer are therefore to be accorded 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.
3. When do we say the Liturgy of the Hours? - From *Sacrosanctum Concilium 89a*) By the venerable tradition of the universal Church, Lauds as morning prayer and Vespers as evening prayer are the two hinges on which the daily office turns; hence they are to be considered as the chief hours and are to be celebrated as such. *94*). That the day may be truly sanctified, and that the hours themselves may be recited with spiritual advantage, it is best that each of them be prayed at a time which most closely corresponds with its true canonical time.
 - a. Morning Prayer (Lauds) – said at Sunrise (Traditionally between 3am-5am, but now commonly between 5am-9am)
 - b. Evening Prayer (Vespers) – said at Sunset (Traditionally and commonly between 4pm-6pm but can be said later)
 - c. Night Prayer (Compline) – said before going to bed (Traditionally between 7pm-9pm, but any time prior to bed, even if after midnight)

Some web sites give specific times as which the various Hours must be recited. There are no such times. The General Instruction on the Divine Office takes very great care not to specify any. Of course there is nothing to stop you deciding to recite a particular Hour at the same time each day if you want to, but that is entirely up to you. There is nothing magical about the clock. (From *Universalis- The structure of the liturgy*)

4. How do you pray the Liturgy of the Hours using the Shorter Christian Prayer Book?
 - a. Note: there are other sources for praying the LOH:
 - i. The 4 volume “Liturgy of the Hours” (“Breviary”)
 - ii. The 1 volume “Christian Prayer”: there are various versions of this.
 - iii. Various “apps” for smart phones

- iv. Websites such as: <http://divineoffice.org/> or [Universalis](#)
- b. Basic Guidelines for using the Shorter Christian Prayer Book are outlined below:

Step 1). Determine which cycle you are in.

1. There are 5 liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary time) found in the Proper of the Seasons starting on page 356. The 1st week of each season corresponds with week I of the Psalter, and cycles through the other four weeks consecutively.
2. If you are starting out in the middle of a season, there are several ways to find the correct liturgical week: 1. Divide 4 into the week of the season you are on and the remainder is the week. (for example the 11th week in Ordinary time would be calculated as follows: 4 divides into 11, 2 times with a remainder of 3, so we would be on cycle III for that week). The same rule can be used for any season. Note: a remainder of 0= week IV
3. Alternatively, go to the [USCCB web-site](#) and find the Liturgical Calendar online, look at the 1st Monday after Pentecost. It will indicate the start of the cycle for Ordinary Time as follows: (Pss III means you start on Cycle III for that Monday). The next week would be IV and then back to I etc. [Universalis](#) also has an online Calendar with the Psalm week indicated to the right.
4. Note: each Diocese has its own calendar/ordo with specific guidelines on which Saints or solemnities are to take precedence in prayer. (*GILOH 241. The office in choir and in common is to be celebrated according to the proper calendar of the diocese, of the religious family, or of the individual churches. GILOH 243. In private celebration, the calendar of the place or the person's own calendar may be followed, except on proper solemnities and on proper feasts*).
5. There are special feast days and solemnities that have their own prayers and Psalms. These dates are listed on page 6, showing which page to refer to. They take precedence over the usual prayers for that day.

Step 2). Familiarize yourself with the following sections of the book: (Shown on pages 5-6)

1. The Ordinary (pages 18-34) This section contains the complete phrases used to begin Morning and Evening prayer, the Invitatory Psalm (page 22), and the Conclusion prayer (pages 29-30)
2. The Four Week Psalter (pages 37-329 red edge) This is the section with the cycles of each day and week for Morning and Evening prayers.
3. Night Prayer (pages 330-353) Used for saying Night prayers which follow a simple 1 week cycle.
4. Proper of Seasons (pages 356-540) Used for Sunday prayers and prayers during the periods of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter.
5. Proper of Saints (pages 543-558) Used when celebrating specific Saints Days
6. Office for the Dead (pages 559-569) It is the proper reading on All Souls' Day (normally November 2) for all souls in Purgatory, and can be a votive office on other days when said for a particular deceased.
7. Memorial for the Blessed Virgin Mary (pages 570-575) Used on Saturdays in Ordinary time when an optional Memorial to Our Lady is permitted. The hymns selected for use in the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary are sung on Marian Feast Days and Our Lady's optional Memorial on Saturdays. (A new Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church has been established on the Monday after Pentecost. There is a [new prayer](#) added to the Psalter for that day).
8. Hymns (pages 583-663) The hymn options to be sung or recited at the start of prayer will be indicated in red as part of the instructions for that day and time.

9. Morning Canticle of Zechariah (Inside Front Cover or on page 27), Evening Canticle of Mary (Inside back cover or on page 31).

Step 3.) Become familiar with the short cuts and instructions for each set of prayers.

1. Lord open my lips – Is intended to be completed with the phrase: “and my mouth will proclaim your praise”.
2. God, come to my assistance. – It is intended to be completed with the phrase: “Lord make haste to help me”
3. Glory to the Father. – Is a shortcut for the full phrase: “Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.”
4. As it was in the beginning. – Is a shortcut for the full phrase: As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen (Alleluia) (Note the difference in the ending underlined from the typical Glory Be).
5. In the Responsory, the final prayer is a shortcut for repeating the 1st stanza. (i.e. Glory to the Father... - At daybreak, be... (page 246) would be “Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.” – “At daybreak, be merciful to me.”
6. Our Father... - Is a shortcut for the full prayer of the Our Father.

Step 4.) Become familiar with the order of the Psalms, Antiphons, and Canticles in each prayer set. (Go to page 242 Friday, Week III for this example.)

1. Invitatory – If this is the 1st prayer of your day you start here. It begins with the prayer, “Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will proclaim your praise.”
2. Invitatory Psalm is said (page 22) – It is optional if you are praying by yourself to repeat the antiphon after each strophe (set of stanzas)
3. Invitatory Psalm – the last strophe is the Glory be... which is followed by a repeat of the antiphon said at the beginning.
4. Morning Prayer – (see instructions in red regarding the 1st verse when starting with the Invitatory) Otherwise, begin with the “God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me” followed by the “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.”
5. Morning Prayer – Select one of the hymn options listed (7 or 131 in our example) If you know the hymn sing it and if not it can be recited.
6. Morning Prayer – Say the antiphon 1, then read the Psalm (Psalm 51, page 243. The italicized portion is there to help with your meditation and is not read aloud) At the conclusion of the Psalm say the “Glory to the Father...”
7. Morning Prayer – If the Psalm is followed by a Psalm prayer (page 244), say that now. Then repeat the opening antiphon 1. If there is no Psalm prayer you repeat the opening antiphon after the “Glory to the Father...”
8. Morning Prayer – Then say the next antiphon 2 (page 244), the Psalm, the Glory to the Father..., repeat antiphon 2. Then say the next antiphon 3 (page 245), the Psalm, the Glory to the Father..., the Psalm prayer (page 246), repeat antiphon 3.
9. Morning Prayer – Next comes the Reading (page 246). Typically followed by a period of silent meditation (*GILOH 201. An opportunity for silence should therefore be provided in the celebration of the liturgy of the hours.*) This is followed by the Responsory prayers.
10. Morning Prayer – Say the antiphon for the Canticle (page 246). Then turn to the inside front cover (or page 27) and say the Canticle. Then say the Glory to the Father..., and repeat the antiphon.
11. Morning Prayer – Next pray the Intercessions. The italicized section is said and can be repeated after each strophe or just at the beginning (It is commonly omitted). You can add your own personal intercessions at the

end of the list. (*GILOH188. It is permissible, however, to include particular intentions at both Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.*) (*GILOH 186. In the intercessions at evening prayer the last intention is always for the dead.*)

12. Morning Prayer – Pray the Our Father... followed by the Concluding Prayer (page 247). Finally, you finish with the closing prayer found on page 30, “May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.”
13. The order of prayer in the above example will hold true for Evening and Night prayers, etc. Any exceptions will be noted in the red instructions in your breviary.

Step 5.) Become familiar with praying on Saturday Evenings and Sundays

1. Saturday evening prayers are listed as Sunday Evening Prayer I (see page 187 in this example) and begin the next cycle of each week. They follow the normal pattern except that the antiphon for the Cantic of Mary is taken from the Proper of the Seasons. (In this example, page 514)
2. Sunday morning prayers are said following the normal pattern in the Psalter (see page 192-197 in this example) with the exception of the antiphon for the Cantic of Zechariah and the Concluding Prayer which is found in the Proper of the Seasons. (In this example, page 514)
3. Sunday evening prayers are listed as Sunday Evening Prayer II (see pages 197-202 in this example). Again the antiphon for the Cantic of Mary is found in the Proper of the Seasons. (In this example, page 514)

Step 6.) Become familiar with the appropriate posture & gestures. There is some variety upon the common pattern. Some communities, for example, stand for the antiphons and doxology during the Psalter, even when they sit for the Psalms themselves. The general pattern is:

1. Bows –
 - a. The liturgical bow for the Names of the Persons of the Trinity (an incline of the upper body of about 30 degrees) is given throughout the Liturgy of the Hours when called for (Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit ...)
 - b. The bow of the head at the name of Jesus.
2. Stand - (*GILOH 263-265.*)
 - a. The assembly either sits or stands, depending on custom, while the Psalms and other canticles (with their antiphons) are being said.
 - b. Stand for introduction to the office & the introductory verses of each hour; the hymn;
 - c. Stand for the Gospel Cantic (*After the Responsory until the end. GILOH 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 itself.*)
3. Sign of the Cross – (*GILOH 266*)
 - a. All make the sign of the cross, from forehead to breast & from left shoulder to right at:
 - b. The beginning of the hours, when God, come to my assistance is being said;
 - c. The beginning of the gospel, the Canticles of Zechariah, of Mary, and of Simeon.
 - d. The sign of the cross is made on the mouth at the beginning of the invitatory, at Lord, open my lips.

The above instructions will hold true for individual prayer. There are a few variations for Community Prayer or when the Prayer is being led by a priest or deacon as follows:

1. Psalms – The priest or deacon and community may divide the strophes of the psalms into two parts with each alternately reading a strophe.
2. The priest or deacon may give a short homily following the reading
3. The priest or deacon will say the Concluding Blessing (as shown on page 29)

Additional notes:

1. Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter have special rules in relation to the rest of the year. The instructions are normally found at the beginning of the Proper of the Seasons or on the days to be followed.
2. Night Prayer only: A brief examination of conscience can be made, followed by the Confiteor
3. Sometimes a longer Psalm will be split into 2 parts and each will be treated as a separate psalm in the hour. It is optional to combine the 2 parts into 1 uninterrupted recitation and only say the Glory Be and the antiphon at the end.
4. When a strophe continues from one page to the next, that will usually be indicated by a red hyphen/dash at the end of the line. This is useful when alternating strophes in group prayer. (see bottom of page 248 for an example)

Other resources and reference links:

[General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours](#)

<https://divineoffice.org/general-instructions/>

<https://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/breviary.htm>

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgy-of-the-hours/index.cfm>

[*Saint Joseph Guide for the Liturgy of the Hours*](#) – Book