

# **A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS**

## **(For Private/Individual Recitation)**

taken in part from <http://www.cis.upenn.edu/~dchiang/catholic/hours.html>

**Names:** LOH, Divine Office, “The Office,” “The Breviary”

### **Brief History**

Jewish practice:

- Ps. 119:164: "Seven times a day I praise you"
- perhaps originating in the Babylonian Exile (6<sup>th</sup> cent. BC): “sacrifice of praise.”
- Perhaps older: synagogues
- Temple use after the Exile:
  - Morning and Evening Prayer and at the Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours

Early Christians continued

- Acts 3: 1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.
- Acts 10:9: The next day, as they were on their journey and coming near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

Mass of the Catechumens

Monastic Use

Current Canonical Use: clerics, religious and laity

### **Liturgical nature:**

- “why”: the prayer of the Church
- “norm”: public recitation, with rubrics, etc.
  - chanted

### **Instructions:**

- General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours
- Rubrics
- “Saint Joseph Guide for the Liturgy of the Hours”

### **Sources used to pray the liturgy of the hours, either:**

- the 4 volume “Liturgy of the Hours” (“**Breviary**”)
- the 1 volume “Christian Prayer”: there are various versions of this.
- various “apps” for smartphones and websites as well (e.g.: <http://divineoffice.org/>).

**When: The “Hours”** (Note: each is also called an “office”, that is “duty”)

There are seven “hours”—or each day:

1. Office of Readings [OR] or “Matins”: can be any time of day, but traditionally first
  2. Morning Prayer [MP] or “Lauds”
  3. Daytime Prayers [DP]: priests are required to pray only one of the three
    3. Midmorning or “Terce”
    4. Midday or “Sext”
    5. Midafternoon or “None”
  - 4/6. Evening Prayer [EP] or “Vespers”
  - 5/7. Night Prayer [NP] or “Compline
- *The Invitatory*: not an hour but always stuck to the front of the first hour (Office of Readings or Morning Prayer). It may be omitted when it comes before Morning Prayer.

## **WORKING WITH THE BREVIARY (“How”)**

### **The Breviary**

There are five main sections in the breviary:

1. **The Proper of Seasons** (p. 82) goes through the liturgical seasons (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time, plus special days tied to the seasons, and is arranged chronologically.
  - Note:** The seasons and certain days of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter have special rank with relation to the rest of the year. They are too complicated to cover here, but the instructions are usually found at the beginning of the seasons and/or of the days and should be followed carefully.
2. **The Ordinary** (p. 689) is the master plan; it contains the rubrics (instructions written in red in some copies) and the prayers that are repeated every day.
3. **The Psalter** (p. 82) (sometimes called “**the weekday**”) contains:
  - **A four-week cycle** for all the hours but Night Prayer.
    - The Proper of Seasons will tell you what week to use (see Sunday).
    - The **general rule** is:
      - 1) the current number of week of the current season (e.g., 15<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time),
      - 2) from that, subtract the highest multiple of 4 that you can (e.g., 3 x 4 =12; 15 – 12 = 3)
      - 3) the difference is the current week of the Psalter (e.g., Psalter week 3).
  - **A one-week cycle for Night Prayer** (p. 1034).
  - **Complementary Psalmody**, used when you say more than 1 of the 3 DP hours.
4. **The Proper of Saints** (p. 1341): prayers for feasts of the saints in chronological order.

- Usually the Proper of the Saint of the day includes only 2 things: the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading for the OR, and the Concluding Prayer.
  - Different saint's days (and other special days, e.g. Christmas) have different "ranks" of importance, which are noted in either the Proper of Seasons or the Proper of Saints.
  - Rank often determines where you will find the psalms, antiphons, etc.
    - if there is no specific instruction in the Propers you may use the Psalms, prayers, etc. of the day as found in the Psalter.
  - From highest to lowest importance:
    - **Solemnities** (e.g., Christmas and Holy Days): almost always have proper psalms, prayers etc. or refer to the Commons; never use the Psalter of the day (e.g., Monday Week II).
    - **Feasts**: same as Solemnities
    - **Memorials** (e.g., most saints' days): may choose to use the psalms, prayers, etc., from the Psalter of the day, or from the Commons, unless otherwise indicated
    - **Optional Memorial**: If no rank is indicated its celebration is optional, i.e., you may use the Memorial or ignore it.
5. **The Commons** (p. 1414): psalms, prayers, etc., shared by various types of saints' offices
- Common of the Blessed Virgin, Apostles, Martyrs, Pastors, Doctors, Virgins, etc.
  - Can and sometimes must replace the Psalter.

**Finding the Prayers Every Day.** Generally you find the prayers for the day as follows:

- 1) **Begin with the *Ordinary*.** The parts that repeat every time:
  - the opening, the Gospel canticle, the Glory Be and the closing blessing.
  - **after a little experience you will hardly ever use the Ordinary**
- 2) **Go to *the Psalter*.** **REMEMBER: Most days, the rest of the prayers are in the Psalter.**
- 3) **Go to the *Proper Of Saints*** to determine if there are special prayers (that replace the prayers in the Psalter) or instructions for the day.
  - There will always be a Concluding Prayer for the Saint.
  - If there is no Saint for the day, just use the Psalter for everything, except for what is required in the *Proper of Seasons*.
  - Instead of using the Psalter as the main guide for the rest of the prayers you may instead use the prayers etc. laid out in the Common of Saints. Generally, however, you are not required to do this, except on Solemnities and Feasts.
- 4) **Then go to the *Proper of Seasons*** to determine the same thing:
  - most weekdays the only parts included in the Proper of Seasons are from the OR.
  - Sundays will include several prayers for the particular Sunday

5) **Sundays:**

- *EP:* Sundays and solemnities have two EPs: EP I on the evening before (i.e., Saturday evening, like the Sunday vigil Mass) and EP II on the day itself.
- *Night Prayer:* There are also two Sunday Night Prayers, I and II, one for Saturday and one for Sunday.

**Note:** Outside of Ordinary Time, more of the prayers will be found in the Proper of Seasons, as you would expect.

## PRAYING THE L.O.H.

To simplify things tonight, we will only review the praying of MP, EP, and NP, which share an almost identical pattern. **We'll use Friday MP of the Second Week of Advent as our example.**

*Note: first check the Proper of Seasons (p. 83) and the Proper of Saints (p. 1341)*

**Opening (Ordinary, p. 689, or “cheat sheet”):**

*Make the Sign of the Cross in the normal manner while saying:*

God come to my assistance,  
—Lord make haste to help me.  
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

**Note:** The LOH Books show the pattern normally prescribed for public celebration of the Hours. Usually this means dividing prayers into 2 parts, one part said by half of the congregation, the other said (often in response) by the other half of the congregation.

*Night Prayer only: Brief examination of conscience may be made now, followed by the Confiteor*

**THE FIRST PART OF ALL THE HOURS: The Psalms (“Psalmody”).**

*(tonight: Psalter, p. 835)*

For all Hours but Night Prayer there are always 3 “Psalms.”

Each Psalm is recited as follows:

- 1) Pray the antiphon,
- 2) Pray the psalm,
- 3) Pray the Glory Be (with the translation “will be forever”)
- 4) *If* there is a “psalm-prayer” it may be said now, but is optional; it is commonly omitted
- 5) Pray the same antiphon again.
- 6) Go on to the next Psalm with its antiphon

Notes:

- Often a psalm has a title and a quote in front of it. They are not part of the office, and are not read as such.
- Sometimes a larger Psalm will be divided into 2 and the parts will each “count” as a “separate psalm” in the layout of the hour. In this case, you have the option of simply combining the 2 parts into 1 long uninterrupted recitation, and omitting the intervening antiphon and Glory Be and use only the 1<sup>st</sup> antiphon and 1 Glory Be.

- 1) The 1<sup>st</sup> antiphon,
- 2) First psalm,
- 3) Second psalm,
- 4) Glory Be,
- 5) The 1<sup>st</sup> antiphon.

**THE SECOND PART OF THE HOURS (p. 83):**

**Reading**

A Scripture Reading from the Old or New Testament (but not from the Gospel) follows.

**Responsory.** The Responsory always follows the same pattern, although the verses change every day for MP and EP, except for the short “Glory be”

For example:

- <sup>1-A)</sup> Your light will come, Jerusalem; <sup>1-B)</sup> *the Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty.*  
— <sup>1-A)</sup> Your light will come, Jerusalem; <sup>1-B)</sup> *the Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty.*  
<sup>2)</sup> You will see his glory within you;  
— <sup>1-B)</sup> *the Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty.*  
<sup>3)</sup> Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
— <sup>1-A)</sup> Your light will come, Jerusalem; <sup>1-B)</sup> *the Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty.*

**Note:** say only the first part of the “Glory Be,” without the conclusion “as it was in the beginning...”

**Gospel Cantic.** MP, EP and NP each have their own cantic that is the same every day, no matter the feast or season.

- MP: The Cantic of Zechariah (“Benedictus”)
- EP: The Cantic of Mary (“Magnificat”)
- NP: The Cantic of Mary (“Nunc Dimittis”)

**Note:** the LOH Books come with “cheat sheets”, one of which contains the Gospel Cantics

The pattern for praying the Gospel Cantics is the same as for the Psalms:

- 1) Pray the antiphon, (**tonight: p. 82**)
- 2) Pray the Cantic, (**tonight: p. 691, or “cheat sheet”**)
  - *as you pray the first words of the Psalm make the Sign of the Cross.*
- 3) Pray the Glory Be
- 4) Pray the same antiphon again.

**Intercessions (tonight: p. 83).** There is a short introductory; the petitions/intercessions follow.

**Note:** A short italicized antiphon is inserted after the introduction. This may be said or omitted. It may also be repeated after each intercession. It is most commonly omitted.

## **Our Father**

### **(Final/Closing) Prayer**

Taken from the Psalter, the Propers, or the Commons (**tonight: p. 83**)

**Closing Blessing (tonight: p. 693, or “cheat sheet”):** *make the Sign of the Cross as you say:*

- MP and EP: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil,  
and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.
- NP: May the all-powerful Lord grant us a restful night and a peaceful death. Amen.

### ***Night Prayer: Marian Prayer***