

A Time of Prayer — Notes

Introduction

This resource provides a simple, traditional structure which can be used by groups or individuals at any time during the day. Either praying alone or as a small group it unites us in prayer with the Church throughout the world.

In the prayer praise and thanksgiving is given to God for all that he has done for us. Prayer is offered too for the needs of the ourselves and the world.

The structure of the prayer follows the pattern of the Liturgy of the Hours. It has been simplified so that through the repetition of familiar texts these texts can become embedded in people's lives and prayer. This practice reflects an early form of the Prayer of the Church where the community would come together at morning and evening to sing and pray psalms and other texts which did not vary from week to week.

A Celebration of Time

This resource is intended to be used at any time of the day. It is for those who are looking for a daily time of prayer and wish to be united with the wider Church. It can be used as a form of Morning or Evening Prayer. Some will make time on a journey to work or a lunch break.

There are options in the prayer to choose depending on the time of day. When it is prayed in the morning the Canticle of Zechariah, the Benedictus is used; in the evening the Canticle of Mary, the Magnificat. The broader sweep of the time—the liturgical year is marked by the inclusion of a seasonal psalm.

Night Prayer, which is intended for use at the end of the day, is provided on page 7. With its opportunity for reflection on the day it has a different focus than prayer during the day

A Time of Prayer — Structure

For clarity the liturgy has been given three sections: **Introduction**, **Word** and **Prayer**.

Introduction

Opening Responses

At the beginning of the prayer we are invited to join in the praise of God. It is customary to make the Sign of the Cross as we say the Opening Responses.

Hymn

A hymn can be chosen according to the Liturgical Season, the time of day or on a general theme of praise and thanksgiving. Hymns are intended to be sung; if the hymn is not sung it is best omitted.

Word

Psalmody

Psalms are at the heart of the Prayer of the Church. Psalms are poems in praise of God that express a wide variety of emotions. There are a variety of ways of reciting the psalms, a number of which are noted in the section **Praying as a Group**. Above all they should be prayed with open hearts.

During the doxology (Glory be...) it is customary to bow the head.

Two psalms are provided: a psalm of the day and a seasonal psalm.

Seasonal Psalm

A psalm is provided for the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. One is also provided for Solemnities—days of special celebration such as St Peter and St Paul, and one to commemorate the Dead.

This first psalm is optional and may be omitted.

Psalm of the Day

A psalm is provided for every day of the week. It is hoped that through repetition these texts will known by heart.

Scripture Reading

A short text is provided each day.

There are a number of other possibilities.

- To choose one of the readings from the Mass of the day, either the first reading or the Gospel.
- To take the opportunity to reflect on the Sunday readings: in preparation from Thursday to Saturday; in reflection from Monday to Wednesday.
- To follow a systematic reading of a book of the bible.

Reflection

The scripture reading is followed by a period of silent reflection. To reflect on the word that has been heard and to prepare for the intercessions.

Gospel Canticle

In the Morning the Canticle of Zechariah—the *Benedictus* is proclaimed; in the Evening the Canticle of Mary—the *Magnificat*.

In the afternoon the *Magnificat* may be used or the Canticle omitted.

Prayer

Intercessions

In the Liturgy of Hours our prayer is united with the whole Church through Christ. Suggestions are given of themes for prayer. Some may prefer to use other resources such as the *Divine Office*.

Lord's Prayer

The intercessions are concluded by the Lord's Prayer.

Concluding Prayer

A number of final collects are provided. This prayer can be replaced with a prayer from another source such as the *Divine Office*.

Blessing

The time of prayer concludes with a blessing.

Praying by Yourself

A time for prayer has been prepared so that it can be used by individuals as well as groups who wish to join in the prayer of the Church and would appreciate a short, simple format.

First time use

Take time to become familiar with the structure of prayer and the choices that you can make. Though this booklet contains a complete set of texts for use you may decide you want to supplement it with other resources particularly with regard to the scripture reading: e.g. a lectionary or missal, or a bible.

Space

You may wish to prepare a space for your prayer, somewhere you can be comfortable and undisturbed. You may wish to use a visual focus such as an icon, image or candle.

Preparation

Before you begin to pray take a moment's stillness. Recall all the things you wish to praise and thank God for today.

Psalmody

You may wish to vary your ways of praying the psalms by taking time to reflect on a number of verses each day rather than the whole psalm.

Praying as a Group

A time for prayer can be used by a variety of groups. It could provide a form of Morning Prayer for parishes where Mass is not celebrated everyday but people wish to come together to pray. It provides a simple form of prayer for parish meetings or catechetical sessions. For groups reflecting on scripture together it could offer a structure for a session with the discussion following on from the silent reflection.

Preparation

Before praying together the prayer needs to be prepared. Choices about the choices of psalms and hymn; the scripture reading and the form of the intercessions need to be made. People need to be asked to be ministers.

Ministers

When praying together it is good if the different ministries are shared among the group. To celebrate together you will need:

- someone to lead — to open and close the prayer;
- someone to read;
- a musician, if possible.

Space

Where you pray will depend on the circumstances of the group. It may be helpful to provide a focus for prayer: an icon, image or candle.

Posture

It is customary to stand for the Introduction, to sit for the psalms and the scripture reading, to stand for the Gospel Canticle until the end of the prayer.

Music

It is good to sing some of the prayer. A confident cantor can lead the singing of the psalms, the gospel canticle and the hymn.

Psalmody

The psalms can be sung or said in a number of ways. The most familiar way is for those praying to be divided into two groups and each group to recite an alternate verse back and forth. The psalm could be read everyone all together or some groups may value it being read well by just one voice with all joining in the doxology.

Scripture Reading

Where the prayer is being used in place of Mass it would be appropriate to choose one of the readings from the Mass of the day, either the first reading or the Gospel.

Reflection

As noted above after a time of silence the group may wish to share a reflection on the reading.

Intercessions

People can be invited to pray for their need and the needs of the world. It is important that the group's prayer reflects the needs of the wider community.

Blessing

Some groups may wish to end with a sign of peace.

A form of Night Prayer — Notes

This simple form of Night Prayer can be used by individuals and groups. It is intended for single occasions rather than daily use. For more regular use Night Prayer from the Divine Office is recommended.

Structure

For clarity the liturgy has been given three sections: **Introduction**, **Word** and **Prayer**.

Introduction

Opening Responses

At the beginning of the prayer we are invited to join in the praise of God.

Reflection

Night Prayer begins with a reflection on the day.

Hymn

Another hymn may be used in place of the one given. It can be chosen according to the Liturgical Season, the time of day or on a general theme of praise and thanksgiving. Hymns are intended to be sung; if it is not sung it is best omitted.

Word

Psalmody

Psalms are at the heart of the Prayer of the Church. Psalms are poems in praise of God that express a wide variety of emotions. There are a variety of ways of reciting the psalms, a number of which are noted in the section **Praying as a Group** (pg. 35), above all they should be prayed with open hearts.

Scripture Reading

A short text is provided. There are a number of other possibilities are suggested on page 3.

Reflection

The scripture reading is followed by a period of silent reflection.

A short response is provided which can be used when praying as a group.

Gospel Canticle

At Night Prayer the Canticle of Simeon is proclaimed. The antiphon may be used when praying as a group.

Prayer

Concluding Prayer

A final collect is provided.

Blessing

Night Prayer concludes with a blessing.

Praying by Yourself

See the notes on page 5.

Praying as a Group

The notes on page 6 will be useful.