

THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION ON THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

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Editorial Note		
In <i>The Divine Office</i> the following titles are used:		
Lauds — Morning Prayer		
Vespers — Evening Prayer		
Terce — Before Noon		
Sext — Midday		
None — Afternoon		
Compline — Night Prayer		

THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION ON THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Chapter One

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS OR THE DIVINE OFFICE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

1 The public and communal prayer of the people of God is rightly considered among the first duties of the Church. From the very beginning the baptized ‘remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers’ (Acts 2 :42). Many times the Acts of the Apostles testifies that the Christian community prayed together.¹

The testimony of the early Church shows that individual faithful also devoted themselves to prayer at certain hours. In various areas the practice soon gained ground of devoting special times to prayer in common. These were, for example, at the last hour of the day at dusk when the lamps were lighted, or at the first hour of the day when the rising sun dispelled the last shadow of night.

In the course of time other hours were also sanctified by communal prayer, hours which the Fathers judged were found in the Acts of the Apostles. For in the Acts the disciples are presented as coming together at the third hour.² The prince of apostles ‘went to the housetop at about the sixth hour to pray’ (10:9); ‘Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the prayers at the ninth hour’ (3:1); ‘late that night Paul and Silas were praying and singing God’s praises’ (16 :25).

2 These prayers in common at the different Hours of the day gradually took on a more definite shape, which today we describe as the Liturgy of the Hours, or Divine Office. Enriched with readings, it is principally a prayer of praise and supplication, indeed it is the prayer of the Church with Christ and to Christ.

I The Prayer of Christ

The prayer of Christ to the Father

3 Since he came to give the life of God to men, the Word who is the radiant light proceeding from the Father’s glory, ‘Christ Jesus, high priest of the new and eternal covenant, taking human nature, introduced into this earthly exile that hymn which is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven’.³ Thus in the heart of Christ the praise of God finds expression in human words of adoration, propitiation and intercession; the head of renewed humanity and mediator of God prays to the Father in the name of and for the good of all mankind.

1 Cf Acts 1:14; 4:24; 12:5, 12; cf Eph 5:19–21.

2 Cf Acts 2:1–15.

3 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 83. (English translation: *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by W. M. Abbott, S.J., and Joseph Gallagher.)

4 The Son of God himself ‘who is one with his Father’ (cf John 10:30), who entering the world said, ‘Here I am! I am coming, O God, to obey your will’ (Hebrews 10:9; cf John 6:38), deigned to show us how he prayed. Again and again the Gospels tell us that he prayed: when his mission from the Father is revealed;⁴ before he calls the apostles;⁵ when he blesses God at the multiplication of the loaves;⁶ when he is transfigured on the mountain;⁷ when he heals the deaf-mute;⁸ when he raises Lazarus from the dead;⁹ before he asks Peter’s confession of faith;¹⁰ when he teaches his disciples to pray;¹¹ when the disciples return from their mission;¹² when he blesses little children;¹³ and when he prays for Peter.¹⁴

His daily activity was closely bound up with prayer, and may be said to have flowed from it; we see this when he went into the desert or the hills to pray;¹⁵ we are also told that he rose early in the morning to pray,¹⁶ and that he even spent the night in prayer to God,¹⁷ remaining until the fourth watch.¹⁸

He too, as we well know, took part in the public prayers of the synagogue—when ‘as was his custom’¹⁹ he entered on the Sabbath—and in the prayers of the temple which he called a house of prayer.²⁰ He also said those private prayers which pious Jews were accustomed to say every day. He said the customary blessings over meals, as is expressly narrated in the multiplication of the loaves,²¹ at the Last Supper,²² and at the meal in Emmaus;²³ he likewise sang the psalms with his disciples.²⁴

Even at the very end of his life, as his Passion was approaching,²⁵ at the Last Supper,²⁶ during his agony in the garden,²⁷ and on the cross,²⁸ the divine Master showed that prayer was what animated his messianic ministry and paschal sacrifice. ‘During his life on earth, he offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death, and he submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard’ (Hebrews 5:7), and by virtue of his perfect offering on the altar of the cross, ‘he has achieved the

4 Lk 3:21–22.

5 Lk 6:12.

6 Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 6:41; 8:7; Lk 9:16; John 6:11.

7 Lk 9:28–29.

8 Mk 7:34.

9 John 11:41ff.

10 Lk 9:18.

11 Lk 11:1.

12 Mt 11:25ff; Lk 10:21ff.

13 Mt 19:13.

14 Lk 22:32.

15 Mk 1:35; 6:46; Lk 5:16; cf Mt 4:1 par; Mt 14:23

16 Mk 1:35.

17 Lk 6:12.

18 Mt 14:23, 25; Mk 6:46, 48.

19 Lk 4:16.

20 Mt 21:13 par.

21 Mt 14:19 par, Mt 15:36 par.

22 Mt 26:26 par.

23 Lk 24:30.

24 Mt 25:30 par.

25 John 12:27f.

26 John 17:1–26.

27 Mt 26:36–44 par.

28 Lk 23:34, 46; Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34.

eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying' (Hebrews 10:14). Now raised from the dead, he is living forever to intercede for us all.²⁹

II The Prayer of the Church

The obligation to pray

5 What Jesus himself did, he also commands us to do. He often said, 'Pray', 'Ask', 'Seek',³⁰ 'in my name'.³¹ He gave us the Lord's Prayer to teach us how to pray.³² He instructed us on the necessity of prayer,³³ and told us to be humble,³⁴ watchful,³⁵ persevering and confident in the goodness of the Father,³⁶ pure in intention and worthy of God.³⁷

Throughout their Letters, the apostles give us many prayers, especially of praise and thanksgiving. They enjoin us to offer prayer to God the Father,³⁸ through Christ,³⁹ in the Holy Spirit;⁴⁰ with constancy and perseverance;⁴¹ pointing out its efficacy for our sanctification.⁴² They admonish us to praise⁴³ and thank God,⁴⁴ and to offer petitions⁴⁵ and intercessions for everyone.⁴⁶

The Church continues the prayer of Christ

6 Since man is totally dependent upon God, he must acknowledge and confess the dominion of his creator over him. This is what holy men have done in every age through prayer.

Prayer directed to God should be united with Christ, the Lord of all men, the one mediator,⁴⁷ through whom alone we have access to God.⁴⁸ Christ so unites the whole human family to himself⁴⁹ that there is an intimate and necessary relationship between the prayer of Christ and the prayer of the whole human race. For in Christ alone human religion achieves its redemptive value and purpose.

7 A close and special bond exists between Christ and those whom, through the sacrament of regeneration, he makes members of his body, the Church. All the riches belonging to the Son flow from him as from the head into the whole body: the pouring out of the Spirit, truth, life and a share in his divine sonship, which he revealed to us in all his prayer on earth.

29 Cf Heb 7:25.

30 Mt 5:44; 7:7; 26:41; Mk 13:33; 14:38; Lk 6:28; 10:2; 11:9; 22:40, 46.

31 John 14:13f; 15:16; 16:23f, 26.

32 Mt 6:9–13; Lk 11:2–4.

33 Lk 18:1.

34 Lk 18:9–14.

35 Lk 21:36; Mk 13:33.

36 Lk 11:5–13; 18:1–8; John 14:13; 16:23.

37 Mt 6:5–8; 23:14; Lk 20:47; John 4:23.

38 Heb 13:15.

39 2 Cor 1:20; Col 3:17.

40 Rom 8:15, 26; 1 Cor 12:3; Gal 4:6; Jude 20.

41 Rom 12:12; 1 Cor 7:5; Eph 6:18; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:17; 1 Tim 5:5; 1 Peter 4:7.

42 1 Tim 4:5; James 5:15f; 1 John 3:22; 5:14f.

43 Eph 5:19f; Heb 13:15; Rev 19:5.

44 Col 3:17; Phil 4:6; 1 Thess 5:17; 1 Tim 2:1.

45 Rom 8:26; Phil 4:6.

46 Rom 15:30; 1 Tim 2:1f; Eph 6:18; 1 Thess 5:25; James 5:14, 16.

47 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9–15; 12:24.

48 Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12.

49 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 83.

The whole body of the Church shares in the priesthood of Christ. The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.⁵⁰ They become capable of taking part in the worship of the New Testament, not thanks to themselves, but to the gift and merits of Christ.

‘God could give men no greater gift than to make his Word, through whom he created all things, their head, that they in turn should become his members. The Son of God has become the Son of Man, one God with the Father, one man with men; so that when we speak to God in prayer, the Son is not separated from the Father; when the Body of the Son prays, the head is not separated from the body. It is the one saviour of his body, our Lord Jesus Christ, who prays for us, prays in us, and is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our priest. He prays in us as our head. He is prayed to by us as our God. Let us recognize therefore our voices in him and his voice in us.’⁵¹

Christian prayer draws its dignity from its sharing in the filial relationship of the Only-begotten Son to the Father. The prayer he expressed in his earthly life with his own words in the name of and for the salvation of the entire human race, he continues to address to his Father in the whole Church and in all her members.

The action of the Holy Spirit

8 The unity of the praying Church is brought about by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who is in Christ,⁵² in the whole Church, and in each baptized person. ‘This Spirit comes to help us in our weakness’ and ‘expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words’ (Romans 8:26). As the Spirit of the Son, he breathes into us ‘the spirit of adopted sons, and makes us cry out, “Abba, Father!”’ (Romans 8:15; cf Galatians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Ephesians 5:18; Jude 20). There can be no Christian prayer without the action of the Holy Spirit. He unites the whole Church and leads us through the Son to the Father.

The community character of prayer

9 The example and command of the Lord and his apostles to persevere in continuous prayer are not to be considered a mere legal rule. Prayer expresses the very essence of the Church as a community. When the community of the faithful is first mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, it is described as gathered together in prayer ‘with several women, including Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with his brothers’ (Acts 1: 14). ‘The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul’ (Acts 4:32). Their common brotherhood was based upon the word of God, prayer and the Eucharist.⁵³

The private prayer⁵⁴ of the members of the Church is offered to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit, and as such is always necessary and to be commended.⁵⁵ Community prayer, however, has a special dignity since Christ himself said: ‘Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them’ (Mt 18:20).

50 Second Vatican Council, *Dogm. Const. on the Church, Lumen gentium*, n 10.

51 St Augustine, *Enarrat. In psalm*, 85: 1: CCL 39, 1176.

52 Cf Lk 10:21, when Jesus ‘was filled with joy by the Holy Spirit and said, “I bless you, Father...”’.

53 Cf Acts 2:42 (Greek text).

54 Cf Mt 6:6.

55 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 12.

III The Liturgy of the Hours

The consecration of the course of the day

- 10 Christ told us ‘about the need to pray continually and never lose heart’ (Luke 18:1). The Church has faithfully heeded this exhortation by never ceasing in her prayer and by urging us to pray: ‘Through him (Jesus), let us offer God an unending sacrifice of praise’ (Hebrews 13:15). The Church not only satisfies this precept by celebrating the Eucharist, but also in other different ways, especially by the Liturgy of the Hours. Compared with other liturgical actions, the particular characteristic which ancient tradition has attached to the Liturgy of the Hours is that it should consecrate the course of day and night.⁵⁶
- 11 Because the purpose of the Office is to sanctify the day and all human activity, the traditional sequence of the Hours has been so restored that, as far as possible, they may be genuinely related to the time of the day at which they are prayed. The modern conditions in which daily life has to be lived have also been taken into account.⁵⁷ Consequently, ‘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 clearly corresponds with its true canonical time’.⁵⁸

The relationship between the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours

- 12 The Liturgy of the Hours extends⁵⁹ to the different hours of the day the praise and prayer, the memorial of the mysteries of salvation and the foretaste of heavenly glory, which are offered us in the eucharistic mystery, ‘the centre and culmination of the whole life of the Christian community’.⁶⁰

The Liturgy of the Hours is in itself an excellent preparation for the fruitful celebration of the Eucharist because it fosters those dispositions necessary, such as faith, hope and love, devotion and a spirit of sacrifice.

The exercise of Christ’s priestly office in the Liturgy of the Hours

- 13 Christ accomplishes ‘the work of redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God’⁶¹ in the Holy Spirit through the Church not only when the Eucharist is celebrated and the sacraments administered, but also in other ways, especially by praying the Liturgy of the Hours.⁶² Christ is present when his community comes together, when the word of God is proclaimed and ‘when the Church prays and sings’.⁶³

The sanctification of man

- 14 The sanctification of man and the worship of God is achieved⁶⁴ in the Liturgy of the Hours by the setting up of a dialogue between God and man, so that ‘God speaks to his people... and the people reply to God both by song and by prayer’.⁶⁵

56 Cf *Ibid*, nn 83–84.

57 Cf *Ibid*, n. 88.

58 Cf *Ibid*, n. 94.

59 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 5.

60 Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Bishop’s Pastoral Office in the Church, Christus Dominus*, n. 30.

61 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium* n. 5.

62 Cf *Ibid*, nn 83 & 98.

63 *Ibid*, n. 7.

64 Cf *ibid*, n. 10.

65 *Ibid*, n. 33.

The saving word of God has great importance in the Liturgy of the Hours, and should be of enormous spiritual benefit for those taking part. From sacred scripture the readings are chosen; the words of God in the psalms are sung in his presence; and the other prayers and liturgical chants draw their inspiration from the same source.⁶⁶

‘Not only when things are read “which have been written for our instruction” (Romans 15:4), but also when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished and their minds are raised to God, so that they may offer him the worship which reason requires and more copiously receive his grace.’⁶⁷

The praise given to God, in union with the Church in heaven

- 15 In the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church exercises the priestly office of her head and constantly⁶⁸ offers God a sacrifice of praise, ‘a verbal sacrifice that is offered every time we acknowledge his name’.⁶⁹ This prayer is ‘the voice of the bride addressing her bridegroom; it is the very prayer which Christ himself, together with his Body, addresses to the Father’.⁷⁰ ‘Hence all who perform this service are not only fulfilling the duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honour accorded to Christ’s spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God’s throne in the name of the Church their Mother.’⁷¹
- 16 By offering praise to God in the Hours, the Church joins in singing that canticle of praise which is sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven;⁷² it is a foretaste of the heavenly praise sung unceasingly before the throne of God and the Lamb, as described by John in Revelation. Our intimate union with the Church in heaven is put into effect when ‘with common rejoicing we celebrate together the praise of the divine Majesty; then all those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (cf Revelation 5 :9) who have been redeemed the blood of Christ and gathered together into one Church, with one song of praise magnify the one and triune God’.⁷³

This heavenly liturgy was seen by the prophets as a victory of day over night, of light over darkness: ‘no more will the sun give you daylight, nor moonlight shine on you, but the Lord will be your everlasting light, your God will be your splendour’ (Isaiah 60:19; cf Revelation 21:23, 25). ‘It will be a day of wonder—the Lord knows it—with no alternation of day and night; in the evening it will be light’ (Zechariah 14:7). ‘The final age of the world has already come upon us (cf I Corinthians 10:11). The renovation of the world has been irrevocably decreed and in this age is already anticipated in some real way.’⁷⁴ Therefore our faith teaches us the meaning of our earthly existence, so that we may await with every creature the revelation of the sons of God.⁷⁵ In the Liturgy of the Hours we proclaim this faith, we express and nurture this hope, and we share the joy of giving unceasing praise in the day which knows no end.

66 Cf *Ibid*, n 24.

67 *Ibid*, n 33.

68 Cf 1 Thess 5:17

69 Heb 13:15

70 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 84.

71 *Ibid*, n 85.

72 Cf *Ibid*, n 83.

73 Second Vatican Council, *Dogm. Const. on the Church, Lumen gentium*, n 50; cf *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 8 & 104.

74 Second Vatican Council, *Dogm. Const. on the Church, Lumen gentium*, n 48.

75 Cf Rom 8:19.

Supplication and Intercession

17 As well as praising God, the Church's liturgy expresses the hopes and prayers of all the Christian faithful and intercedes before Christ and through him before the Father for the salvation of the whole world.⁷⁶ This voice is not only of the Church but of Christ. It is in the name of Christ that she prays, that is, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord,' and so the Church continues to offer that prayer and entreaty which Christ offered during his life on earth,⁷⁷ and which therefore has a unique effectiveness. Thus the Church community exercises a true motherhood towards souls who are to be led to Christ, not only by charity, example and works of penance, but also by prayer.⁷⁸

These things pertain above all to those who by special mandate are deputed to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours, namely: bishops and priests, who by reason of their office pray for those entrusted to them and for the whole people of God,⁷⁹ other sacred ministers, and religious.⁸⁰

The culmination and source of pastoral activity

18 Whoever takes part in the Liturgy of the Hours makes the Lord's people grow by imparting to them a hidden apostolic fruitfulness.⁸¹ 'For the goal of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in her sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper.'⁸² The faithful thus express in their lives and manifest to others 'the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both... visible and yet invisibly endowed, eager to act and yet devoted to contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it.'⁸³

The readings and prayers of the Liturgy of the Hours constitute in turn a wellspring of the Christian life. From the table of sacred scripture and the words of the saints this life is nourished, and by prayer it is strengthened. The Lord alone, without whom we can do nothing,⁸⁴ can when we ask him give fruitfulness and increase to the works in which we are engaged.⁸⁵ Day by day we are built into the Temple of God in the Spirit⁸⁶ until Christ's full stature is achieved⁸⁷ and we are strengthened to preach Christ to those who are outside.⁸⁸

Heart and voice are one

19 Those taking part in this prayer should make it their own so that it becomes a source of devotion, abundant grace and nourishment for personal prayer and apostolic activity. In praying it worthily, attentively and with devotion, they must attune their minds to their

76 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 83.

77 Cf Heb 5:7.

78 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis*, n 6.

79 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Dogm. Const. on the Church, Lumen gentium*, n 41.

80 Cf below, n 24.

81 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Renewal of Religious Life, Perfectæ Caritatis*, n 7.

82 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 10.

83 *Ibid*, n 2.

84 Cf John 15:5.

85 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 86.

86 Cf Eph 2:21–22.

87 Cf Eph 4:13.

88 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 2.

voices.⁸⁹ If the grace of God is not to be fruitless in them, they must wholeheartedly cooperate with it. They must seek God and penetrate ever more deeply through prayer into the mystery of Christ.⁹⁰ With that same mind which was in our Redeemer, they should praise God and pray to him.

IV Those Who Celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours

a *Celebration in Common*

- 20 The Liturgy of the Hours, like the other liturgical services, is not a private function, but pertains to the whole body of the Church. It manifests the Church and has an effect upon it.⁹¹ Its ecclesial celebration is best seen and especially recommended when it is performed together with the bishop surrounded by his priests and ministers⁹² by the local Church, ‘in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative’.⁹³ Even when the bishop is absent and it is celebrated by the chapter of canons or by other priests, the genuine relationship of the Hours to the time of day should be maintained and as far as possible it should be with the people taking part. The same should be said of collegiate chapters.
- 21 Among other groups of the faithful, parishes—which could be called cells of the diocese—set up locally under a pastor who takes the place of the bishop are most important, and ‘in a certain way they represent the visible Church as it is established throughout the world’.⁹⁴ Wherever possible the more important hours could be celebrated in common at the church.
- 22 If the faithful come together and unite their hearts and Voices in the Liturgy of the Hours, they manifest the Church celebrating the mystery of Christ.⁹⁵
- 23 The task of those who are in sacred orders or who have a special canonical mission⁹⁶ is to direct and preside over the prayer of the community; ‘they should devote their labour to this end, that all those committed to their care may be of one mind in prayer’.⁹⁷ Pastors of souls should see to it that the faithful are invited and helped by requisite instruction to celebrate the chief Hours in common, especially on Sundays and feasts.⁹⁸ They should teach them to draw sincere prayer from this⁹⁹ and help them to understand the psalms in a Christian way so that they may gradually come to use and appreciate the prayer of the Church more fully.¹⁰⁰
- 24 Communities of canons, monks, nuns and other religious, who by virtue of their rule or constitution celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours either wholly or in part according to the common or a special rite, represent the Church at prayer in a special way. As the exemplar

89 Cf *Ibid*, n 90; St Benedict, *Regula monasteriorum*, c 19.

90 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis*, n 14; *Decree on Priestly Formation, Optatum totius*, n 8.

91 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 26.

92 Cf *Ibid*, n 42.

93 Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church, Christus Dominus*, n 11.

94 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 42: cf *Decree on Apostolate of the Laity, Apostolicam actuositatem*, n 10.

95 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn 26 & 84

96 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Church's Missionary Activity, Ad gentes*, n 17.

97 Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church, Christus Dominus*, n 15.

98 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Church's Missionary Activity, Ad gentes*, n 100.

99 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis*, n 5.

100 Cf below, nn 100–109.

of the Church which unceasingly praises God with one voice, they more fully show and fulfil the duty of working, especially by prayer, for ‘the building up and increasing of the whole mystical Body of Christ and the good of the particular Churches’.¹⁰¹ This is especially true of those engaged in the contemplative life.

- 25 Sacred ministers and all clerics, not otherwise bound to common celebration, who live together or assemble for any purpose, should try to say at least some part of the Liturgy of the Hours in common, particularly Lauds in the morning and Vespers in the evening.¹⁰²
- 26 Even religious of both sexes, who are not obliged to celebration in common, and members of any Institution dedicated to acquiring perfection are strongly recommended to gather together by themselves or with the people to celebrate this Liturgy or part of it.
- 27 Wherever groups of the laity are gathered and whatever the reason which has brought them together, such as prayer or the apostolate, they are encouraged to recite the Church’s Office, by celebrating part of the Liturgy of the Hours.¹⁰³ For they should learn to adore God the Father in spirit and in truth¹⁰⁴ especially through liturgical worship; they must remember that by public worship and prayer they can have an impact on all men and contribute to the salvation of the whole world.¹⁰⁵

Finally, it is fitting that the family, as the domestic sanctuary of the Church, should not only offer common prayer to God but also say certain parts of the Liturgy of the Hours, in this way uniting themselves more closely to the Church.¹⁰⁶

b The Mandate of Celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours

- 28 The Liturgy of the Hours is entrusted to sacred ministers in a special way so that it is to be recited by each of them—with the necessary adaptations—even when the people are not present. The Church deposes them to say the Liturgy of the Hours in order that at least through them the duty of the whole community may be constantly and continuously fulfilled and the prayer of Christ may persevere unceasingly in the Church.¹⁰⁷

The bishop represents the person of Christ in an eminent and visible way and is the high priest of his flock. In a certain sense it is from him that the faithful who are under his care derive and maintain their life in Christ.¹⁰⁸ Therefore the bishop should be the first in prayer among the members of his Church. When he recites the Liturgy of the Hours he always does so in the name of and on behalf of the Church committed to his care.¹⁰⁹

101 Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Bishop’s Pastoral Office in the Church, Christus Dominus*, n 33; *Decree on Renewal of Religious Life, Perfectæ caritatis*, nn 6, 7, 15; *Decree on Church’s Missionary Activity, Ad gentes*, n 15.

102 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 99.

103 Cf *Ibid*, n 100.

104 Cf John 4:23.

105 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum educationis*, n 2; *Decree on Apostolate of the Laity, Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n 16.

106 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Apostolate of the Laity, Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n 11.

107 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis*, n 13.

108 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 41; *Dogm. Const. on the Church, Lumen gentium*, n 21.

109 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Dogm. Const. on the Church, Lumen gentium*, n 26; *Decree on the Bishop’s Pastoral Office in the Church, Christus Dominus*, n 15.

Priests, united to the bishop and the whole presbyterium, also represent the person of Christ the priest in a special way.¹¹⁰ They share the same duty of praying to God on behalf of all the people entrusted to them and indeed for the whole world.¹¹¹

All these fulfil the ministry of the Good Shepherd, who asks for his own that they may have life and that they may be completely one.¹¹² In the Liturgy of the Hours, presented to them by the Church, they not only find a source of devotion and nourishment for personal prayer,¹¹³ but also a wealth of contemplation to feed and foster their pastoral and missionary activities, to the joy of the whole Church of God.¹¹⁴

- 29 Bishops and priests, therefore, and deacons aspiring to the priesthood, who have received from the Church the mandate to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours (cf n 17), are bound by the obligation of reciting the whole sequence of Hours each day,¹¹⁵ preserving as far as possible the genuine relationship of the Hours to the time of day.

They are to give due importance to the Hours which are the two hinges on which this Liturgy turns, that is, Lauds as morning prayer and Vespers; let them take care not to omit these Hours, unless for a serious reason.

They are also to carry out faithfully the Office of Readings, which is above all the liturgical celebration of the word of God. Thus they will carry out daily that duty of welcoming into themselves the word of God. This makes them more perfect disciples of the Lord and wins them a deeper knowledge of the unfathomable riches of Christ.¹¹⁶

That the day may be completely sanctified, they will desire to recite the middle Hour and Compline, thus commending themselves to God and completing the entire 'Opus Dei' before going to bed.

- 30 Permanent deacons, to whom the mandate of the Church also applies should recite some part of the Liturgy of the Hours each day as determined by the Episcopal Conference.¹¹⁷

- 31 a) Cathedral and collegiate chapters are bound to recite those parts of the Liturgy of the Hours in choir which are imposed upon them by general or particular law.

Besides the Hours which are to be recited by all sacred ministers, each member of these chapters is obliged to recite individually those Hours to which his chapter is bound.¹¹⁸

b) Religious communities, and the individual members of these communities, bound to recite the Liturgy of the Hours, are to celebrate the Hours in accordance with their particular law, Regarding those in sacred orders the norms of n 2.9 also obtain.

- 32 Other religious communities and their individual members are to be encouraged, according to the circumstances in which they find themselves, to celebrate some part of the

110 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis*, n 13.

111 Cf *Ibid* n 5.

112 Cf John 10:11; 17:20, 23.

113 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 90.

114 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Dogm. Const. on the Church, Lumen gentium*, n 41.

115 CIC, can 276, §2, 3° and can. 1174, §1.

116 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Dogm. Const. on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum*, n 25; *Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum ordinis*, n 13.

117 Cf CIC, can. 276, §2, 3°. Paul VI, *Motu proprio, Sacrum Diaconatus ordinem*, 18 June 1967, n 27: *AAS* 59 (1967), p 703.

118 Cf S. Congregation of Rites, *Instruction Inter Oecumenici*, 26 September 1964, n 78 b: *AAS* 56 (1964), p 895.

Liturgy of the Hours which is the prayer of the Church, so that Christians everywhere are united heart and soul.¹¹⁹

The same encouragement is to be given to the laity.¹²⁰

c The Structure of the Celebration

33 In a special way the Liturgy of the Hours combines those elements which are found in other Christian celebrations. It is arranged as follows: the opening hymn; psalmody; a shorter or longer reading of sacred scriptures; prayers.

Whether it is celebrated in common or in private, the essential structure of this Liturgy is a dialogue between God and man. Celebration in common shows more clearly the ecclesial nature of the Liturgy of the Hours. It fosters the active participation of all according to their individual circumstances through acclamations, dialogues, alternating psalmody and other things of this kind, and takes into account various forms of expression.¹²¹ As often as the communal celebration may take place with the presence and active participation of the faithful, it is to be preferred to individual and quasi-private celebration.¹²² It is fitting that the Office both in choir and in common be sung, when this is possible, in accordance with the nature of each of its parts and the function of each participant.

In this way the wish of the Apostle is fulfilled: 'Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God' (Colossians 3:16; cf Ephesians 5:19-20).

119 Cf Acts 4:32.

120 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 100.

121 Cf *Ibid*, nn 26, 28-30.

122 Cf *Ibid*, n 27.

Chapter Two

THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE DAY —THE VARIOUS LITURGICAL HOURS

I The Introduction to the Whole Office

34 The whole Office is normally begun with an invitatory. This consists in the verse *Lord, open our lips: And we shall praise your name*, and Psalm 94 with its antiphon. This invitatory verse and psalm daily invite the faithful to sing the praises of God, hear his voice and look forward to the ‘Rest of the Lord’.¹²³

If desired, Ps 99, Ps 66 or Ps 23 may be used in place of Ps 94.

As indicated elsewhere, it is fitting that the invitatory psalm be said in responsorial fashion, that is, with its antiphon said first, repeated, and taken up again after each verse of the psalm.

35 The invitatory should begin the whole sequence of daily prayer; thus it begins Lauds or the Office of Readings depending on which of these liturgical actions begins the day. If so desired, however, the psalm with its antiphon may be omitted when it comes before Lauds.

36 The way of varying the invitatory antiphon, according to the different liturgical days, is indicated in its proper place.

II Lauds and Vespers

37 ‘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.’¹²⁴

38 Lauds is designed to sanctify the morning, as is clear from many of its parts. Saint Basil the Great excellently described its character as morning prayer in these words: ‘Matins consecrates to God the first movements of our minds and hearts; no other care should engage us before we have been moved with the thought of God, as it is written, “I thought of God and sighed” (Ps 76:4), nor should the body undertake any work before we have done what is said, “I say this prayer to you, Lord, for at daybreak you listen for my voice; and at dawn I hold myself in readiness for you, I watch for you” (Ps 5 :4–5).’¹²⁵

This Hour, recited as the light of a new day dawns, recalls the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the true light, enlightening every man (cf John 1:9), ‘the Sun of Justice’ (Malachi 4:2), ‘arising on high’ (Luke 1 :78). Thus the remark of Saint Cyprian may be well understood: ‘We should pray in the morning to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord with morning prayer.’¹²⁶

39 Vespers is celebrated in the evening when the day is drawing to a close, so that ‘we may give thanks for what has been given us during the day, or for the things we have done well during it’.¹²⁷ We also call to mind our redemption, through the prayer we offer ‘like incense in the sight of the Lord’, and in which ‘the raising up of our hands’ becomes ‘an evening

123 Cf Heb 3:7–4:16.

124 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 89 a; cf *Ibid*, n 100.

125 St Basil the Great, *Regule fusius tractatae, Resp. 37*, 3: PG 31, 1014.

126 St Cyprian, *De oratione dominica*, 35: PL 4, 561.

127 St Basil the Great, *op cit*, PG 31, 1015.

sacrifice'.¹²⁸ This 'evening sacrifice' 'may be more fully understood as that true evening sacrifice which was given in the evening by our Lord and Saviour when he instituted the most holy mysteries of the Church at supper with his apostles; or which on the following day he offered for all time to his Father by the raising up of his hands for the salvation of the whole world.'¹²⁹ Placing our hope in that Sun which never sets, 'we pray and beg that his light may shine on us again; we pray that Christ may come bringing the grace of eternal light'.¹³⁰ Finally, in this Hour, we join with the Eastern Churches and invoke 'blessed Jesus Christ, the Light of our Heavenly Father's sacred and eternal glory; as the sun sets we behold the evening light and sing to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit...'

40 In the prayer of the Christian community, Lauds and Vespers are of the highest importance. Their public and common celebration should be encouraged especially among those who lead a common life. The recitation of these prayers is also recommended for the individual faithful who are not able to participate in a common celebration.

41 Lauds and Vespers begin with the introductory verse *O God, come to our aid: O Lord, make haste to help us*. The *Glory be to the Father* with *Alleluia* follows. The *Alleluia* is omitted during Lent. This form of introduction is not used when the invitatory immediately precedes Lauds.

42 A suitable hymn is then said. The hymn should be composed so as to express the particular characteristic of each Hour or feast. It makes an easy and pleasant opening to the prayer, especially in celebrations with the people.

43 The psalmody follows the hymn, in accordance with the norms of nn 121–125. The psalmody of Lauds consists of one morning psalm, followed by an Old Testament canticle, and a second psalm which traditionally is one of praise.

The psalmody of Vespers consists of two psalms or two sections of longer psalms, well suited to the Hour and to celebration with the people, followed by a canticle from the Epistles or Revelation.

44 There is a short or long reading after the psalmody.

45 A short reading is given according to the liturgical day, season or feast. It is to be read and heard as the true proclamation of the word of God; it emphasizes certain short passages which may receive less attention in the continuous reading of the scriptures.

The short readings vary according to the daily arrangement of the psalmody.

46 A longer scripture reading may be chosen, especially for celebrations with the people. It may be taken from the Office of Readings or from the passage read at Mass, and especially from those texts left unread for various reasons. On occasion, there is no reason why a more suitable reading may not be chosen in accordance with the norms of nn 248–249, 251.

47 In celebrations with the people, a brief homily may be added to explain the reading.

48 After the reading or homily, there may be a silent pause.

49 In response to the word of God, there may be a responsorial song, or short responsory. This may be omitted if so desired.

128 Cf Ps 140:2

129 Cassian, *De institutione coenob.*, lib 3, c. 3: PL 49, 124, 125.

130 St Cyprian, *De oratione dominica*, 35: PL 4, 560.

Other songs of the same type and for the same purpose may replace the responsory, provided that these are duly approved by the Episcopal Conference.

- 50 A Gospel canticle is then solemnly recited with its antiphon; at Lauds it is the *Benedictus*, the Canticle of Zechariah; at Vespers the *Magnificat*, the Canticle of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These canticles express praise and thanksgiving for our redemption and have been in popular use for centuries in the Roman Church. The antiphons for the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat* vary according to the liturgical day, season or feast.
- 51 After the canticle: at Lauds, intercessions consecrate the day and its work to God; at Vespers there are petitions (cf nn 179–93).
- 52 After the intercessions or petitions, the Lord’s Prayer is said by all.
- 53 A concluding prayer follows immediately: for ordinary ferial days it is found in the psalter; for other days in the Proper.
- 54 If a priest or deacon is present, he dismisses the people as at Mass with the greeting *The Lord be with you*, and a blessing; then follows the invitation *Go in the peace of Christ: Thanks be to God*. Otherwise the celebration is concluded with *The Lord bless us*, etc.

III The Office of Readings

- 55 The purpose of the Office of Readings is to present to the people of God, and particularly to those who are consecrated to God in a special way, a more extensive meditation on sacred scripture and on the best writings of spiritual authors. Even though a more ample series of scripture readings is read daily at Mass, the treasures of revelation and tradition contained in the Office of Readings greatly assist spiritual progress. Priests especially should explore these riches. They will then be able to teach everyone the word of God they themselves have received and their doctrine ‘the food of the people of God’.¹³¹
- 56 Prayer should accompany the reading of sacred scripture to make it a conversation between God and man; ‘we speak to him when we pray, we hear him when we read the divine words’.¹³² Thus the Office of Readings consists in psalms, a hymn, a concluding prayer and other formulas, and has the character of true prayer.
- 57 According to the Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Office of Readings, ‘although it should retain the character of nocturnal praise when celebrated in choir, should be adapted so that it may be recited at any hour of the day; it is to be made up of fewer psalms and longer readings’.¹³³
- 58 Those who by reason of their particular law must preserve the character of nocturnal praise in the Office of Readings, and who praiseworthy wish to do so—whether they say it at night or very early in the morning before Lauds—should select the appropriate hymn where an alternative is given. For Sundays, solemnities and certain feasts, nn 70–73 concerning Vigils should be taken into account.
- 59 Excepting the cases just mentioned, the Office of Readings may be recited at any hour of the day, or even in the night hours of the preceding day, after Vespers.

131 *Pontificale Romanum, De Ordinatione presbyterorum*, n 14.

132 St Ambrose, *De officiis ministrorum* I, 20, 88: PL 16, 50. Second Vatican Council, Dogm. *Const. on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum*, n 25.

133 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 89c.

- 60 If the Office of Readings is said before Lauds, it is preceded by the invitatory as indicated above (nn 34–36). Otherwise it begins with the verse *O God, come to our aid* with the *Glory be to the Father*, and (outside of Lent) the *Alleluia*.
- 61 A hymn is then said. Where an alternative is given for night or day use, the appropriate hymn should be chosen (n 58).
- 62 The psalmody follows, consisting of three psalms (or sections of longer psalms). In the Easter Triduum, during the octaves of Easter and Christmas, and on solemnities and feasts, the psalms are proper and have proper antiphons.
- On Sundays and ferial days, the psalms and antiphons are taken from the current psalter. The psalms and antiphons are also taken from the current psalter on the memorias of saints, unless these are proper (cf nn 218ff).
- 63 A versicle is normally said between the psalmody and the readings. In this way the prayer is provided with a transition from the psalmody to listening to the readings.
- 64 There are two readings: the first is from the scriptures, the second is either from the works of the Fathers or Church writers, or is hagiographical.
- 65 A responsory is said after each reading (cf nn 169/172).
- 66 The scripture reading is normally taken from the Proper of the Season, following the norms below, nn 140–155. On solemnities and feasts, this reading is taken from the Proper or from the Common.
- 67 The second reading with its responsory is taken either from The Divine Office, or from the optional Lectionary dealt with in n 161 below. Normally it is from the Proper of the Season.
- On solemnities and feasts, a proper hagiographical reading is used; if this is lacking, the second reading is taken from the respective Common of Saints. On memorias of saints, whose celebration is not impeded, a hagiographical reading is again chosen in place of the current second reading (cf nn 166, 235).
- 68 On Sundays outside of Lent, during the octaves of Easter and Christmas, on solemnities and feasts, the *Te Deum* is said after the second reading with its responsory. This hymn is omitted on memorias and ferial days. The final part of the hymn, i.e. from the verse *Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance*, may be omitted if desired.
- 69 The Office of Readings is concluded with the proper prayer of the day, and, at least in common recitation, with the acclamation *Let us praise the Lord: Thanks be to God*.

IV Vigils

- 70 The Easter Vigil is celebrated by the whole Church, as described in the respective liturgical books. ‘The vigil of this night is so important,’ says Saint Augustine, ‘that it is called The Vigil as if demanding exclusively for itself a term which is common to the rest.’¹³⁴ ‘We spend that night in vigil, the night on which the Lord rose, and began for us in his own flesh that life where there is neither death nor sleep. Therefore, as we sing in our long vigil to him who has risen, so we will reign with him in life without end.’¹³⁵

134 St Augustine, *Sermo Guelferbytanus* 5: PLS 2:550.

135 *Ibid*, PLS 2, 552.

71 From the Easter Vigil the custom grew in different Churches of beginning certain solemnities with a vigil, especially Christmas and Pentecost. This custom is to be preserved and encouraged according to the special traditions of each Church. Wherever it is fitting to celebrate vigils for other solemnities and pilgrimages, the general norms for the celebration of the word of God should be observed.

72 The Fathers and spiritual writers have very often exhorted the faithful, especially those who lead a contemplative life, to pray at night. By this they seek to encourage them to look forward to the Lord's coming; 'At midnight there was a cry, "The bridegroom is here! go out to meet him"' (Matthew 25:6). 'So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep' (Mark 13:35–36). It is therefore praiseworthy to retain the nocturnal character of the Office of Readings.

73 In the Roman Rite, out of consideration especially for those engaged in apostolic work, the Office of Readings is always of the same length. Those who wish to adhere to the tradition of marking the Vigil of a Sunday, solemnity or feast with a more extended celebration should proceed in the following way.

Firstly, the Office of Readings should be celebrated as in *The Divine Office* as far as the readings inclusively. After both readings and before the *Te Deum*, canticles may be added, selected from the appropriate appendix. A Gospel passage is then read, followed if desired by a homily; afterwards the *Te Deum* is sung and the concluding prayer said.

The Gospel on solemnities and feasts is taken from the Lectionary of the Mass; on Sundays it is taken from the series on the paschal mystery found in the Appendix of the book.

V Terce, Sext and None, or the Prayer During the Day

74 In imitation of the Apostolic Church and from the earliest times, Christians in their private devotions have, even in the midst of their work, dedicated various moments to prayer throughout the course of the day. This tradition has been associated in different ways with liturgical celebrations.

75 Liturgical custom in both East and West has especially retained Terce, Sext and None, principally because these hours commemorated the events of our Lord's Passion and the first preaching of the Gospel.

76 The Second Vatican Council laid down that the little Hours of Terce, Sext and None should be preserved in choir.¹³⁶

The liturgical practice of saying these three Hours is retained by those who lead a contemplative life, unless particular law indicates otherwise. This is also recommended for everyone, especially for those who take part in retreats and pastoral gatherings.

77 Outside of choir, however, one or the three Hours corresponding to the time of day may be chosen, unless particular law indicates otherwise.

At least one of the Hours is to be celebrated by those who do not say all three, so as to preserve the tradition of praying during the day's work.

78 The way of saying the Prayer during the Day is drawn up to meet the needs both of those who say only one Hour and of those who must or wish to celebrate all three Hours.

¹³⁶ Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 89 e.

79 Prayer during the Day begins with the introductory verse *O God, come to our aid* with the *Glory be to the Father* and (outside of Lent) the *Alleluia*. Then a hymn is said corresponding to the Hour. After this comes the psalmody, then a short reading followed by a versicle. The Hour is concluded with a prayer, and at least in common recitation, by the acclamation *Let us praise the Lord: Thanks be to God*.

80 The various hymns and concluding prayers put forward for each Hour are so drawn up as to correspond to the time of day at which they are traditionally celebrated, and so as to provide effectively for the sanctification of the day. Those who say only one of the Hours should choose those parts which correspond more suitably with the Hour celebrated.

The short readings and concluding prayers vary according to the liturgical day, season or feast.

81 Two psalmodies are given: one current, the other complementary. Those who say only one Hour use the current psalmody; those who say two or three Hours use the current psalmody for one, and the complementary psalmody for the others.

82 The current psalmody consists of three psalms (or parts of longer psalms) from the Psalter. These psalms have their own antiphons, unless otherwise indicated.

On solemnities, during the Easter Triduum and during the octave of Easter, proper antiphons are said with three psalms to be chosen from the complementary psalms, unless special psalms are to be used, or the celebration of a solemnity occurs on a Sunday, in which case the psalms are taken from Sunday: Week I.

83 The complementary psalmody consists of groups of three psalms, usually chosen from the gradual psalms,

VI Compline

84 Compline is the final prayer of the day to be said before going to bed, even if this is after midnight.

85 Compline, like the other Hours, is begun with the verse *O God, come to our aid*, with the *Glory be to the Father* and (outside of Lent) the *Alleluia*.

86 It is praiseworthy to follow the introductory verse with an examination of conscience. In common recitation it is made in silence or inserted into one of the penitential acts given in the Roman Missal.

87 A suitable hymn is then said.

88 The psalmody: after first Vespers of Sundays—Ps 4 and Ps 133; after second Vespers of Sundays—Ps 90.

Psalms which evoke confidence in God are chosen for the other days. It is always permissible to substitute the Sunday psalms on weekdays; this is particularly helpful for those who may want to recite Compline from memory.

89 After the psalmody, there is a short reading and then the responsory *Into your hands*. Then follows the Gospel canticle with its antiphon—the culmination of the whole Hour.

90 The concluding prayer is said as in the Psalter.

91 After the prayer, the blessing *The Lord grant us a quiet night* is said even in individual recitation.

- 92 Finally one of the antiphons of the Blessed Virgin Mary is said. In Eastertide this is always the *Regina caeli* (*Joy fill your heart, O Queen, most high*). In addition to the antiphons given in *The Divine Office*, others may be approved by the Episcopal Conference.¹³⁷

VII The Way of Joining Hours of the Office with Mass or Among Themselves

- 93 In special cases, if the circumstances require it, a liturgical Hour celebrated in public or in common may be joined more closely with Mass, provided that they are both of the same Office. This should be done in accordance with the norms which follow. Care should be taken to ensure that this is not pastorally harmful, especially on Sundays.

- 94 When Lauds, celebrated in choir or in common, immediately precedes Mass, the liturgical function may begin either with the introductory verse and hymn of Lauds (especially on ferial days), or with the entrance song and procession, and the celebrant's greeting (especially on festive days). When one of these introductory forms is used, the other is omitted.

The psalmody of Lauds is said in the usual way as far as the short reading exclusively. The penitential act of the Mass is omitted, as also the *Kyrie*, if so desired; the *Gloria in excelsis* is then said, if the rubrics require it, and the celebrant says the opening prayer of the Mass. The Liturgy of the Word follows in the usual way.

The Prayer of the Faithful is said at the normal time and in the form customary at Mass. During the morning Mass of a ferial day, however, the intercessions of Lauds may replace the Prayer of the Faithful.

After the communion song, the *Benedictus* is sung with its antiphon, followed by the postcommunion prayer and the remainder of Mass is as normal.

- 95 If the public celebration of the Prayer during the Day immediately precedes Mass, the celebration may begin with the introductory verse and hymn of the Hour (especially on ferial days), or with the entrance song and procession, and celebrant's greeting (especially on festive days). When one of these introductory forms is used, the other is omitted.

The psalmody of the Hour then follows in the usual way as far as the short reading exclusively, omitting the penitential act and if desired the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria in excelsis* is said, if the rubrics require it, and the celebrant says the opening prayer of the Mass.

- 96 Vespers celebrated immediately before Mass is joined with it in the same way as Lauds. First Vespers of solemnities, Sundays and feasts of our Lord occurring on Sundays may not be celebrated until after the Mass of the previous day or the Saturday.

- 97 When the Prayer during the Day or Vespers follows Mass, the Mass is celebrated in the usual way as far as the postcommunion prayer inclusively.

The psalmody of the Hour begins without an introductory verse immediately after the postcommunion prayer. In the Prayer during the Day the short reading is omitted after the psalmody, and the concluding prayer said, followed by a dismissal as at Mass. At Vespers, the *Magnificat* with its antiphon follows immediately after the psalmody—there is no reading, no intercessions and no Lord's Prayer—and then comes the concluding prayer and the blessing of the people.

¹³⁷ Cf *Ibid*, n 38.

- 98 Except in the case of Christmas Night, the joining of Mass with the Office of Readings is usually excluded, since the Mass itself has its own sequence of readings differing from that of the Office of Readings. If on a given occasion it is necessary to do this, then Mass begins immediately after the second reading and responsory of this Office, omitting everything before the *Gloria in excelsis* (if this is to be said) or the opening prayer.
- 99 If the Office of Readings is said immediately before another Hour of the Office, then a hymn fitting to this other Hour may be used to begin the Office of Readings. The prayer and conclusion at the end of the Office of Readings and the introductory verse with the *Glory be to the Father* of the succeeding Hour are omitted.

Chapter Three

THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

I The Psalms and their Close Relationship with Christian Prayer

- 100 In the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church for the most part prays with those beautiful songs composed under the inspiration of the Spirit of God by the sacred authors of the Old Testament. From the beginning they have had the power to raise men's minds to God, to evoke in them holy and wholesome thoughts, to help them to give thanks in time of favour, and to bring consolation and constancy in adversity.
- 101 The psalms offer only a foretaste of the fulness of time revealed in Christ our Lord and from which the prayer of the Church receives its strength; therefore it is not surprising if, even though all Christians agree in having the highest regard for the psalms, difficulty sometimes arises when a person tries to make these songs his own in prayer.
- 102 The Holy Spirit, who inspired the psalmists, is always present with his grace to those believing Christians who with good intention sing and recite these songs. It is necessary, however, for each according to his powers, to have 'more intensive biblical instruction, especially with regard to the psalms',¹³⁸ and be led to see how and in what way he may be able to recite and pray the psalms properly.
- 103 The psalms are not readings nor were they specifically composed as prayers, but as poems of praise. Though sometimes they may be proclaimed like a reading, nevertheless, because of their literary character, they are rightly called in Hebrew *Tehillim*, that is, 'songs of praise', and in Greek *Psalmoi*, 'songs to be sung to the sound of the harp'. In all the psalms there is a certain musical quality which determines the correct way of praying them. Therefore, though a psalm may be recited without being sung even by an individual in silence, its musical character should not be overlooked. Whilst certainly offering a text to our mind, the psalm is more concerned with moving the spirits of those singing and listening, and indeed of those accompanying it with music.
- 104 Whoever sings the psalms properly, meditating as he passes from verse to verse, is always prepared to respond in his heart to the movements of that Spirit who inspired the psalmists and is present to devout men and women ready to accept his grace. Thus the psalmody, though it commands the reverence due to the majesty of God, should be conducted in joy and a spirit of charity, as befits the freedom of the children of God, and is in harmony with divinely inspired poetry and song.
- 105 Often enough the words of the psalm help us to pray easily and fervently: when they express thanksgiving or joyfully bless God, or when they present us with a prayer from the depths of sorrow. On the other hand, especially if the psalm is not addressed to God, we may sometimes find ourselves in difficulties. Because the psalmist is a poet, he often speaks to the people, recalling, for example, the history of Israel; sometimes he addresses others, including those created things which lack the use of reason. He may sometimes write as if God himself and men, and even, as in Ps 2, the enemies of God, are talking to one another. Clearly a psalm has not the same quality of prayer that prayer or collect composed by the Church may possess. Moreover, since the psalms have a musical and poetic character, they are not necessarily addressed to God, but may be sung before God; St Benedict remarked:

¹³⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 90.

‘Let us consider what we should be in the sight of God and angels; we should stand to sing psalms in such a way that our mind is in accord with our voice.’¹³⁹

106 Whoever sings a psalm opens his heart to those emotions which inspired the psalm, each according to its literary type, whether it be a psalm of lament, confidence, thanksgiving or any other type designated by exegetes.

107 The person praying the psalms is conscious of their importance for Christian living by keeping to their literal meaning

Each psalm was composed in particular circumstances, suggested by the titles which head the psalms in the Hebrew Psalter. But whatever may be said of its historical origin, each psalm has a literal meaning which even in our times cannot be neglected. Though these songs originated many centuries ago in a semitic culture, they express the pain and hope, misery and confidence of men of any age and land, and especially sing of faith in God, his revelation and his redemption.

108 Whoever prays the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours does not say them in his own name so much as in the name of the whole body of Christ, in fact in the person of Christ himself. If he keeps this in mind, difficulties disappear, even if while saying the psalms his own feelings differ from those expressed by the psalmist: for example, if we find ourselves saying a psalm of jubilation, while we are worried or sad, or saying a psalm of lament, when in fact we feel in good spirits. This may easily be avoided in merely private prayer, when a psalm can be chosen to suit our mood. In the Divine Office, however, even someone saying the Hour alone is not praying the psalms privately but recites them in the name of the Church and according to the sequence given in her public prayer. Whoever says them in the name of the Church can always find a reason for joy or sorrow, finding applicable to himself the words of the apostle: ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow’ (Rom 12:15); human weakness and selfishness is thus healed by charity so that the mind and heart may harmonize with the voice.¹⁴⁰

109 Whoever says the psalms in the name of the Church should pay attention to the full meaning of the psalms, especially that messianic understanding which led the Church to adopt the psalter. The messianic meaning is made completely manifest in the New Testament; it is in fact declared by Christ our Lord himself when he said to the apostles: ‘Everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the prophets and in the psalms, has to be fulfilled’ (Luke 24 :44). The most notable example of this is the dialogue, in Matthew, about the Messiah; David’s Son and Lord is understood, in Ps 109, of the Messiah.¹⁴¹

Following this path, the Fathers took the whole psalter and explained it as a prophecy about Christ and his Church; and for this same reason psalms were chosen for the sacred liturgy. Even if certain artificial interpretations were sometimes accepted, generally both the Fathers and the liturgy rightly heard in the psalms Christ calling out to his Father, or the Father speaking to the Son; they even recognized in them the voice of the Church, the apostles and the martyrs. This method of interpretation also flourished in the Middle Ages; in many manuscripts of the psalter written at that time, the christological meaning is explained after the heading of each psalm. This christological interpretation in no way refers only to those psalms which are considered messianic but also extends to many in

139 St Benedict, *Regula monasteriorum*, c 19.

140 Cf St Benedict, *ibid.*

141 Mt 22:44ff

which without doubt there are mere appropriations. Such appropriations, however, have been commended by the tradition of the Church.

Especially in the psalmody of festive days, the psalms are chosen for some christological reason; very often antiphons taken from the psalms themselves are offered to illustrate this.

II The Antiphons and Other Parts which Help in Praying the Psalms

- 110 In the Latin tradition three aids are given which greatly assist us to sing the psalms and to turn them into Christian prayer: namely, the headings, the psalm-prayers, and especially the antiphons.
- 111 In the psalter of the Liturgy of the Hours, a heading is put before each psalm to indicate its meaning and importance in Christian life. These headings are given in *The Divine Office* merely as an aid for the person saying the psalms. To promote prayer in the light of the new revelation, a phrase from the New Testament or Fathers is added as an invitation to pray in a Christian way.
- 112 Psalm-prayers, which help those reciting the psalms to interpret them in a Christian way, are given for each psalm in a Supplement to the book of the Liturgy of the Hours. These are for optional use in accordance with the traditional norm: when the psalm has been completed and a short silence observed, the psalm-prayer sums up the aspirations and emotions of those saying them.
- 113 Even when the Liturgy of the Hours is not sung, each psalm has its own antiphon which is also to be said in individual recitation. The antiphons help to illustrate the literary character of the psalm; turn the psalm into personal prayer; place in better light a phrase worthy of attention which may otherwise be missed; give special colour to a psalm in differing circumstances; while excluding arbitrary accommodations, help considerably in the typological and festive interpreting of the psalm; and can make more attractive and varied the recitation of the psalms.
- 114 The antiphons in the psalter are drawn up in such a way that they may be translated into the vernacular, and be repeated after each strophe of their psalm, as noted in n 125. On the ordinary Sundays and weekdays of the year, if, the Office is not sung, the phrases attached to the psalms may be used instead of these antiphons, if desired (cf. n 111).
- 115 When a psalm is long it may be divided into several parts within one and the same Hour. Each part has its own antiphon for the sake of variety, especially in sung celebration. The antiphon also serves to highlight the riches of the psalm. However, one is allowed to complete the psalm without interruption, using only the first antiphon.
- 116 Proper antiphons are given for each psalm at Lauds and Vespers: in the Easter Triduum, during the octaves of Easter and Christmas, on Sundays of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Eastertide, and also on the ferial days of Holy Week, Eastertide and December 17–24.
- 117 On solemnities, at the Office of Readings, Lauds, Prayer during the Day and Vespers, there are proper antiphons, or, if this is not the case, they are taken from the appropriate Common. On feasts, there are proper antiphons for the Office of Readings, Lauds and Vespers.
- 118 If some memorias of saints have proper antiphons, these are retained (cf n 235).
- 119 The antiphons at the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*, in the Seasonal Office, are taken from the Proper of the Season if there are any, otherwise from the current psalter. On solemnities

ties and feasts, they are taken from the Proper, otherwise from the Common. On memorias which do not have a proper antiphon, the antiphon may be said either from the Common or from the current ferial day.

- 120 In Eastertide, Alleluia is added to every antiphon, unless its addition clashes with the meaning of the antiphon.

III The Way of Praying the Psalms

- 121 The psalms can be recited in various ways taking into account whether they are said in Latin or in the vernacular, and especially whether they are said by an individual or by a group, or recited in a celebration with the people. A way should be chosen to enable those who pray the psalms to appreciate more easily their spiritual and literary flavour. Psalms are not used just to make up a certain quantity of prayer; a consideration of variety and the character of each enters into their choice.

- 122 Psalms are sung or said straight through (*in directum*) with alternate verses or strophes sung or recited by two choirs or two parts of the congregation, or in responsorial fashion—the ways tested by tradition and experience.

- 123 An antiphon is said at the beginning of each psalm (cf nn 113–120). The custom of concluding the psalm with *Glory be to the Father* is retained. Tradition has aptly employed this to attribute to the prayer of the Old Testament a quality of praise and a christological and trinitarian meaning. The antiphon may, if so desired, be repeated after the psalm.

- 124 When a longer psalm is used, it is divided up in the psalter. The divisions are made so that the three-part structure of each Hour's psalmody may be maintained, whilst close attention is paid to the objective meaning of the psalm.

It is best to observe this division, especially in choral celebration in Latin, with the *Glory be to the Father* added at the end of each part.

It is permitted either to retain this traditional way, or to pause between the divided parts of the psalm, or to say the whole psalm with its antiphon straight through.

- 125 The literary character may suggest that the verses of the psalm be indicated and the antiphon repeated after each verse, especially if it is sung in the vernacular. In this case, it is sufficient to put the *Glory be to the Father* at the end of the whole psalm.

IV The Way the Psalms are Distributed in the Office

- 126 The psalms are distributed over a four-week cycle. In this cycle, a very small number of psalms are omitted, while the traditionally more important ones are repeated more frequently. Lauds, Vespers and Compline have psalms corresponding with their respective Hour.¹⁴²

- 127 As Lauds and Vespers are designed for celebration with the people, the psalms more suitable for this purpose are chosen for these Hours.

- 128 At Compline the norm of n 88 should be observed.

- 129 On Sundays, even at the Office of Readings and the Prayer during the Day, psalms are chosen which traditionally express the paschal mystery. Penitential psalms or ones relating to the Passion are assigned to Fridays.

142 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 91

- 130 Ps 77, Ps 104 and Ps 105 more clearly unfold the way the history of salvation in the Old Testament prefigures its outcome in the New Testament. These three psalms are reserved for Advent, Christmas, Lent and Eastertide.
- 131 Three psalms are omitted from the current psalter because of their imprecatory character. These are Ps 57, Ps 82 and Ps 108. For similar reasons verses from several psalms are passed over; these verses are noted at the beginning of the psalm. Such omissions are made because of certain psychological difficulties, even though the imprecatory psalms themselves may be found quoted in the New Testament, e.g. Rev 6 :10, and in no way are intended to be used as curses.
- 132 Psalms too long to be included in one Hour of the Office are assigned to the same Hour over several days, so that they may be said in their entirety by those who do not usually say other Hours. Thus Ps 118, traditional for the day Hours, is used for the Prayer during the Day over twenty-two days, in accordance with its own structure.
- 133 The psalter's four-week cycle is joined to the liturgical year in such a way that the First Sunday of Advent, the First ordinary Sunday of the year, the First Sunday of Lent and Easter Sunday begin the first week of the cycle. Remaining weeks of the cycle before these Sundays are omitted.

After Pentecost, since the cycle of the psalter follows the sequence of weeks, it is taken up from that week of the psalter which is indicated at the beginning of the respective week in the Proper of the Season.

- 134 On solemnities and feasts, during the Easter Triduum and during the octaves of Easter and Christmas, proper psalms are assigned to the Office of Readings. Their choice is hallowed by tradition and their suitability generally illustrated by the antiphon. The same applies to the Prayer during the Day on some solemnities of the Lord and during the octave of Easter. At Lauds, the psalms and canticle of Sunday I of the psalter are used. At first Vespers of solemnities, the psalms, following an old custom, are taken from the *Laudate* series. At second Vespers of solemnities and at Vespers of feasts, the psalms and canticle are proper. At the Prayer during the Day on solemnities, excepting those already mentioned and when not a Sunday, gradual psalms are chosen; at the Prayer during the Day on feasts, the psalms are of the current day.
- 135 In all other cases, the psalms are said from the current Psalter, unless there happen to be proper antiphons or proper psalms.

V The Canticles of the Old and New Testaments

- 136 At Lauds, it is customary to insert a canticle of the Old Testament between the first and second psalm. Besides the series found in ancient Roman tradition, and the second series introduced into the Breviary by Pope Pius X, many other canticles are added to the psalter from various books of the Old Testament, so that each ferial day of the four weeks has its own proper canticle; on Sundays, the two parts of the Canticle of the Three Children are used alternately.
- 137 At Vespers, after the two psalms, a canticle from the Epistles or Revelation of the New Testament is inserted. There are seven such canticles, one for each day of the week. On Sundays of Lent, instead of the Alleluia canticle from Revelation, a canticle from the First Letter of St Peter is said. On the Epiphany and on the feast of the Transfiguration, the canticle is from the First Letter to Timothy.

- 138 The Gospel canticles, the *Benedictus*, the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc dimittis*, should be accorded the same solemnity and dignity as is usual for the hearing of the Gospel.
- 139 The constant rule of tradition is retained in the arrangement of the psalmody and the readings: first the Old Testament, then the Apostle and finally the proclamation of the Gospel.

VI The Reading of Sacred Scripture

a The Reading of Sacred Scripture in General

- 140 Following ancient tradition, sacred scripture is read publicly in the liturgy not only in the celebration of the Eucharist but also in the Divine Office. This liturgical reading of scripture is of the greatest importance for all Christians because it is offered by the Church herself and not by the decision or whim of a single individual. 'Within the cycle of a year' the mystery of Christ is unfolded by his Bride 'not only from his incarnation and birth until his ascension, but also as reflected in the day of Pentecost, and the expectation of a blessed, hoped-for return of the Lord.'¹⁴³ In liturgical celebrations prayer always accompanies the reading of sacred scripture. In this way the reading may bear greater fruit, and conversely prayer, especially through the psalms, may be more fully developed by the reading and encourage more intense devotion.
- 141 In the Liturgy of the Hours, there may be a longer or a shorter reading of sacred scripture.
- 142 A longer reading is optional for Lauds and Vespers. This has been described above in n 46.

b The arrangement of the Reading of Sacred Scripture in the Office of Readings

- 143 The arrangement for the reading of sacred scripture in the Office of Readings has taken account of both the sacred seasons during which certain books are traditionally read, and the sequence of readings at Mass. The reading of scripture in the Liturgy of the Hours is linked with and completes the reading at Mass; in this way the history of salvation is viewed as a whole.
- 144 With the exception made in n 73, the Gospel is not read in the Liturgy of the Hours. The whole of it is read each year during Mass.
- 145 There is a twofold arrangement for the biblical readings. The first lasts for one year; it is found in The Divine Office. The second, for optional use, is found in the Supplement; this, like the arrangement of first readings in the ordinary ferial Masses, is arranged in a two-year cycle.
- 146 This biennial arrangement, assigned to the Liturgy of the Hours, allows the inclusion every year of nearly all the books of sacred scripture, as also the long and difficult passages which scarcely have a place in the Mass. The whole of the New Testament is read every year, partly at Mass and partly in the Liturgy of the Hours. Passages from the Old Testament books are chosen for their greater importance in the understanding of the history of salvation and for their devotional value.

Due harmony between the readings of the Liturgy of the Hours and the readings of Mass necessarily demands that passages from the same biblical book recur in alternate years in the Missal and in the Office, or at least if read in the same year, there be some space of

143 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 102.

time between the reading at Mass and the reading in the Hours. This is to prevent the same texts occurring on the same days in both, or the same books being distributed over the same time, thus leaving the Liturgy of the Hours with passages of less importance or upsetting the series of texts.

- 147 During Advent, following ancient tradition, passages from the book of Isaiah are read semi-continuously on a two-yearly basis. The book of Ruth is also added and certain prophecies from the book of Micah. Since there are special readings assigned for 17–24 December, the readings of the third week of Advent which remain unused are omitted.
- 148 From 29 December until 5 January: in Year I of the cycle there are readings from the Letter to the Colossians, in which the Incarnation of the Lord is considered in the context of the whole history of salvation; in Year II, it is the Song of Songs, in which is foreshadowed the union of God and man in Christ: ‘God the Father prepared a marriage for God the Son, when he united him with human nature in the Virgin’s womb, when God living before all ages wanted to become man to the end of all ages.’¹⁴⁴
- 149 From 7 January until the Saturday after the Epiphany, eschatological texts from Isaiah 60–66 and Baruch are read; texts remaining unused are omitted that year.
- 150 In Lent: in Year I passages from the book of Deuteronomy and the Letter to the Hebrews are read; in Year II, attention is directed to the history of salvation as found in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.

The Letter to the Hebrews interprets the old covenant in the light of the paschal mystery of Christ. From this Letter, the passage concerning the sacrifice of Christ is read on Good Friday, and the text about God’s place of rest on Holy Saturday.

On the other days of Holy Week: in Year I, the third and fourth songs of the Servant of God and passages from the book of Lamentations are read; in Year II, we hear the prophet Jeremiah, the type of the suffering Christ.

- 151 In Eastertide, except on Sundays I and 2 of Easter and the solemnities of the Ascension and Pentecost: in accordance with tradition, in Year I, the First Letter of St Peter, the Letters of St John and Revelation are read; during Year II, the Acts of the Apostles.
- 152 From the Monday after the Baptism of the Lord until Lent, and from the Monday after Pentecost until Advent, there is a continuous series of thirty-four ordinary weeks of the year.

This series is interrupted from Ash Wednesday until Pentecost Day. On the Monday after Pentecost, the readings are taken up from the week which follows the week interrupted by Lent, omitting the readings assigned to the Sunday of that week.

In years which have only thirty-three ordinary weeks of the year, the week which comes immediately after Pentecost is omitted, so that the readings with an eschatological character set for the final weeks are always heard.

The sequence of Old Testament books follows the history of salvation: God led and enlightened his people step by step revealing himself in the course of its life. Thus the prophets are read in between the historical books, taking into account the time in which they lived and taught. In Year I the series of Old Testament readings offers the historical books together with the prophetic books from the book of Joshua to the time of the Exile inclusively. In Year II readings before Lent are from Genesis, and then the history of salvation is

¹⁴⁴ St Gregory the Great, *Homilia 34 in Evangelia*: PL 76, 1282.

recounted from the Exile until the time of the Maccabees. The later prophets, the wisdom books and the narrative books of Esther, Tobit and Judith have their place in Year II.

The Letters of the Apostles not read at special times are distributed over other periods, taking account of the readings at Mass and the chronological order in which they were written.

- 153 The single-year arrangement is abbreviated in such a way that every year passages are selected complementary to the two-year sequence of scripture readings at Mass.
- 154 Solemnities and feasts have proper readings, otherwise they are taken from the Common of Saints.
- 155 Each passage forms a unity in so far as this is possible. Thus verses are sometimes left out to retain a suitable length, which can vary according to the different literary characters of the books. Omitted verses are always indicated.

c Short Readings

- 156 The importance of short readings or ‘chapters’ in the Liturgy of the Hours has been noted in n 45. They are selected to express briefly and succinctly a biblical phrase, theme or exhortation, and have been chosen with an eye to variety.
- 157 A four-week cycle of short readings for the ordinary time of the year has been introduced into the psalter, so as to vary the reading for four weeks.
- Advent, Christmas, Lent and Eastertide, the variation is on a single-week basis. There are proper short readings for solemnities, feasts and certain memorias, and a single-week series for Compline.
- 158 In the selection of short readings, the following have been kept in mind:
- a) the Gospels have been excluded, as is traditional;
 - b) the character of Sunday, Friday and the Hours themselves has been taken into account;
 - c) the short readings at Vespers are chosen from the New Testament, since they follow a New Testament canticle.

VII The Readings from the Fathers and Church Writers

- 159 According to the tradition of the Roman Church, the biblical passage in the Office of Readings is followed by a reading from the Fathers or Church writers with a responsory, unless a hagiographical reading is to be said (cf nn 228–239).
- 160 In this reading texts are offered from the writings of the Fathers, Doctors and other Church writers from the East and the West. Pride of place is given to the Fathers, who enjoy special authority in the Church.
- 161 Besides the readings assigned to each day in The Divine Office, there is an optional Lectionary. This offers a much larger collection of readings in which the treasures of the Church’s tradition are opened more widely to those praying the Divine Office. One is allowed to take the second reading either from The Divine Office or from the optional Lectionary,
- 162 Episcopal Conferences may prepare other additional texts which are in harmony with the traditions and mentality of their own area; these texts may form a supplement to the

optional Lectionary. They should be taken from the works of Catholic writers outstanding for their teaching and holiness of life.¹⁴⁵

- 163 The purpose of this reading is above all to offer a meditation on the word of God as it has been accepted in the Church's tradition. The Church has always felt it necessary to give the faithful an authentic interpretation of the word of God, so that 'prophetic and apostolic interpretation may be guided in a Catholic and ecclesial way'.¹⁴⁶
- 164 By constant use of writings drawn from the tradition of the universal Church, readers are led to a deeper meditation on sacred scripture and to a more lively appreciation of it. The writings of the Fathers are outstanding witnesses of the reflexion on the word of God which the Church, the Bride of the Incarnate Word, has continued down the centuries. 'She possesses in herself the understanding and spirit of her Bridegroom and God',¹⁴⁷ and daily learns to advance towards a deeper penetration of the sacred scriptures.
- 165 The reading of the Fathers also teaches Christians the meaning of the seasons and feasts. It opens to them the incalculable spiritual riches which constitute the noble heritage of the Church. At the same time it gives foundation to the spiritual life and abundant nourishment to devotion. Thus preachers of the word of God have daily set before them excellent examples of sacred preaching.

VIII The Hagiographical Reading

- 166 The name 'hagiographical reading' refers to either a text of a Father or Church writer who actually speaks of the saint being honoured or says something which may be correctly applied to him or an excerpt from the writings of the saint himself, or an account of his life.
- 167 In composing the special Propers of the Saints, emphasis should be given to historical truth¹⁴⁸ and to the spiritual benefit of those who read or hear the hagiographical reading. Writings which merely seek to impress should be scrupulously avoided. The particular spiritual qualities of the saints should be high-lighted, bearing in mind today's conditions, as also their importance in the life and spirituality of the Church.
- 168 A short biographical note, giving just historical information and describing briefly the saint's life, is placed before each reading. It is for information only, and should not be read out in the celebration.

IX The Responsories

- 169 The biblical reading in the Office of Readings is followed by its own responsory. The text of this response, chosen from traditional material or newly composed, is designed to cast new light on the passage just read, to place the reading within the history of salvation, to draw it from the Old Testament into the New, to turn the reading to prayer and contemplation, or finally to offer further variety and beauty.
- 170 In a similar way a suitable response is given to the second reading. This, however, is not so strictly linked with the text of the reading, and thus favours greater freedom of meditation.

145 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 38.

146 St Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium*, 2: PL 50, 640.

147 St Bernard, *Sermo 3 in vigilia Nativitatis 1*: PL 183 (edit 1879), 94.

148 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 92 c.

- 171 The responsories, with their parts to be repeated, retain their value even in individual recitation. The part usually repeated in the responsory may be omitted if not sung, unless repetition is demanded by its very meaning.
- 172 In a similar but simpler way, the short responsory at Lauds, Vespers and Compline (about which see nn 49 and 89 above), and the versicles at the Prayer during the Day, reply to the short reading. This brief response is a kind of acclamation, and enables the word of God to penetrate more deeply into the mind and heart of the person reciting or listening.

X The Hymns and other Non-Biblical Songs

- 173 Hymns have a place in the Office from very early times, a position they continue to retain.¹⁴⁹ Not only does their lyrical nature make them specially suited to the praise of God, but they constitute a popular part, since nearly always they point more immediately than the other parts of the Office to the individual characteristics of the Hours or of each feast. They help to move the people taking part and draw them into the celebration. Their literary beauty often increases their effectiveness. In the Office, the hymns are the principal poetic part composed by the Church.
- 174 The hymn is traditionally concluded by a doxology, which is usually addressed to the same divine person as the hymn itself.
- 175 For the sake of variety in the Office for the ordinary time of the year, there are two series of hymns for each Hour, to be used on alternate weeks.
- 176 In the Office of Readings, there are two series of hymns for the ordinary time of the year, depending on whether this Office is recited at night or during the day.
- 177 New hymns can be given melodies of the same rhythm and metre as the traditional ones.
- 178 With regard to celebrations in the vernacular, Episcopal Conferences may adapt the Latin hymns to the nature of their own language. They may also introduce new compositions,¹⁵⁰ a provided they suit the spirit of the Hour, season or feast; one should constantly beware of permitting those popular songs which are of no artistic value and completely unworthy of the liturgy.

XI The Intercessions, the Lord's Prayer and the Concluding Prayer

a The Intercessions or Petitions at Lauds and Vespers

- 179 The Liturgy of the Hours celebrates the praises of God. However, neither Jewish nor Christian tradition separates praise of God from prayer of petition, petition often being drawn out of praise. The apostle Paul advises that 'there should be prayers offered for everyone—petitions, intercessions and thanksgiving—and especially for kings and others in authority, so that we may be able to live religious and reverent lives in peace and quiet. To do this is right, and will please God our Saviour: he wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth' (1 Timothy 2:1-4). This exhortation was frequently interpreted by the Fathers in the sense that intercessions should be made morning and evening.¹⁵¹
- 180 The petitions which have been restored to the Mass of the Roman Rite are also found at Vespers, though, as described below, in a different way.

149 Cf *Ibid*, n 93.

150 Cf *Ibid*, n 38.

151 For example, St John Chrysostom, *In Epist ad Tim 1, Homilia 6*: PG 62, 530.

- 181 Since traditionally prayer is offered in the morning to commend the whole day to God, invocations are given at Lauds to consecrate the day to him.
- 182 The name ‘Intercessions’ is applied both to the petitions made at Vespers, and to the invocations dedicating the day to God made at Lauds.
- 183 For the sake of variety, but above all that the needs of the Church and mankind may be better expressed according to the different states, groups, persons, conditions and times, different formulas of intercessions are proposed for each day in the arrangement of the psalter and for the sacred seasons of the liturgical year, as also for certain festive celebrations.
- 184 Episcopal Conferences have the right to adapt the formulas of The Divine Office and approve new intercessions,¹⁵² keeping however the following norms.
- 185 As in the Lord’s Prayer, petitions should be linked with praise of God or acknowledgment of his glory, or with the recalling of the history of salvation.
- 186 In the intercessions of Vespers, the final intention is always for the dead.
- 187 Since the Liturgy of the Hours is above all the prayer of the whole Church for the whole Church, indeed for the salvation of the whole world,¹⁵³ general intentions should always have first place, whether the prayer is for the Church and all her members, for the secular authorities, for those who suffer poverty, disease or sorrow, or for the needs of the whole world, namely, for peace and for other things of this kind.
- 188 It is permissible to add special intentions at Lauds and Vespers.
- 189 The intercessions of the Office have a structure adaptable for celebration with the people, for celebration in a small community, or for recitation individually.
- 190 Intercessions for recitation with the people or in common are introduced with a short invitation by the priest or minister. This introduction also includes a phrase or response which the congregation can then repeat after each of the intentions.
- 191 The intentions should be addressed to God in such a way that they can accord with common celebration or individual recitation.
- 192 Each intention consists of two parts, the second of which can be used as a variable response.
- 193 The different methods of saying the intercessions are thus: the priest or minister says both parts of the intention and the congregation adds the invariable response, or pauses for silence; otherwise the priest or minister says only the first part and the congregation the second part of the intention.

b The Lord’s Prayer

- 194 In accordance with tradition, the Lord’s Prayer has the place of honour at the end of the intercessions at the more popular Hours of Lauds and Vespers.
- 195 The Lord’s Prayer will henceforward be solemnly recited three times a day; that is, at Mass, Lauds and Vespers.
- 196 The Lord’s Prayer is said by all, preceded if desired by a brief introduction.

152 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 38.

153 Cf *Ibid*, nn 83 & 89.

c *The Concluding Prayer*

- 197 A concluding prayer completes the whole Hour. In public celebration with the people, it traditionally pertains to the priest or deacon.¹⁵⁴
- 198 This prayer, in the Office of Readings, is normally proper to the day. At Compline it is always from the psalter.
- 199 At Lauds and Vespers, the concluding prayer is taken from the Proper, on Sundays, ferial days of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Eastertide, as also on solemnities, feasts and memorias. On ordinary ferial days, the prayer given in the psalter is said in order to emphasize the particular character of these Hours.
- 200 At the Prayer during the Day, the concluding prayer is taken from the Proper on Sundays, ferial days of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Eastertide, and on solemnities and feasts. On other days concluding prayers are said which express the character of each Hour; these are found in the psalter.

XII The Sacred Silence

- 201 Since as a general rule in liturgical functions, care must be taken that ‘at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence’,¹⁵⁵ opportunity for silence should be given in the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours.
- 202 The purpose of this silence is to allow the voice of the Holy Spirit to be heard more fully in our hearts, and to unite our personal prayer more closely with the word of God and the public voice of the Church. In introducing silence we must use prudence; periods of silence may be inserted in different ways: after the psalm, once its antiphon has been repeated, as was generally the custom, and especially if there is a Psalm-prayer after the silence (cf n 112); after the reading whether long or short; either before or after the responsory.
- Care should be taken that such a silence neither deforms the structure of the Office, nor upsets or bores the participants.
- 203 In individual recitation, we have more opportunity to pause and meditate on a text which strikes us. The Office will not lose its public character because of this.

154 Cf below, n 256.

155 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 30.

Chapter Four

VARIOUS CELEBRATIONS IN THE COURSE OF THE YEAR

I The Celebration of the Mysteries of the Lord

a Sundays

- 204 The Sunday Office begins with first Vespers, in which everything is taken from the psalter, except for those things which are given as proper.
- 205 When a feast of the Lord is celebrated on a Sunday, it has its own first Vespers.
- 206 On the manner of celebrating Sunday Vigils when desired, cf n 73.
- 207 It is especially fitting, where it can be done, that, in accordance with ancient custom, at least Vespers be celebrated with the people.¹⁵⁶

b The Easter Triduum

- 208 During the Easter Triduum, the Office is celebrated as described in the Proper of the season.
- 209 Those who attend the celebration of evening Mass on Holy Thursday or the celebration of the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday, do not say the Vespers of the respective day,
- 210 Before morning Lauds on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, the Office of Readings is, if possible, to be celebrated publicly and with the people taking part.
- 211 The Compline of Holy Saturday is only said by those who are not present at the Easter Vigil.
- 212 The Easter Vigil takes the place of the Office of Readings: those not present at the Vigil should therefore choose from it at least four readings with canticles and prayers. It would be appropriate to choose the readings of Exodus, Ezekiel, the Apostle and the Gospel. The *Te Deum* and the prayer of the day follow.
- 213 On Easter Sunday Lauds are said by all; it is fitting that Vespers should be celebrated in a more solemn manner to mark the close of this holy day and to commemorate the apparitions in which our Lord showed himself to his disciples. Where it is the custom, the tradition of celebrating Baptismal Vespers in which a procession to the font takes place during the singing of the psalms, should be carefully preserved.

c Eastertide

- 214 The Liturgy of the Hours receives its paschal character from the Alleluia acclamation with which most antiphons conclude (cf n 120). This quality is also given by the hymns, antiphons, and special intercessions, and finally by the proper readings assigned to each Hour.

d Christmas

- 215 Before the Midnight Mass of Christmas it is appropriate that a solemn vigil should be celebrated with the Office of Readings. Compline is not said by those who are present at this vigil.
- 216 Lauds on Christmas Day are usually said before the Dawn Mass.

¹⁵⁶ Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 100.

e Other Solemnities and Feasts of Our Lord

217 As regards the arrangement of the Office on solemnities and feasts of our Lord, what is said in nn 225–233 should be observed, with the appropriate changes.

II The Celebration of the Saints

218 The celebrations of the saints are arranged in such a way that they do not take precedence over the mysteries of salvation as commemorated on festive days and during the major seasons of the year,¹⁵⁷ and so that they do not continually interfere with the sequence of the psalms and readings, or give rise to unnecessary repetitions. The purpose of this is also to give everyone ample opportunity for legitimate devotion. The reform of the Liturgical Calendar, undertaken by the Second Vatican Council, is based on these principles, as is the manner of celebrating the saints in the Liturgy of the Hours; this will be described in the following articles.

219 Celebrations of the saints are either solemnities, feasts or memorias.

220 The memorias are either obligatory, or, if nothing to the contrary is indicated, optional. The decision whether or not to celebrate with the faithful or in common the Office of an optional memoria should depend on the common good and devotion of the group and not on the person presiding.

221 If several optional memorias occur on the same day, only one is to be celebrated and the others omitted.

222 Only solemnities are transferable, and this is done in accordance with the rubrics.

223 The norms which follow apply both to the saints of the General Roman Calendar, and to those found in particular calendars.

224 If the Propers are not complete, the Commons of the Saints are used for the parts which are lacking.

1 How the Office is arranged on Solemnities

225 Solemnities have first Vespers on the preceding day.

226 At first and second Vespers, the hymn, antiphons, short reading with its responsory and the concluding prayer are all proper; if the proper is not complete, the common is used for the parts that are lacking.

Both psalms in first Vespers are normally taken from the *Laudate* series (that is, Ps 112, 116, 134, 145, 146, 147), in accordance with ancient tradition. The New Testament canticle is indicated in the appropriate place. In second Vespers the psalms and the canticle are proper. The intercessions are either proper or else from the Common.

227 At Lauds, the hymn, antiphons, short reading with its responsory and the concluding prayer are proper; if the proper is lacking, they are taken from the Common. The psalms, however, are to be taken from Sunday I of the Psalter. The intercessions are either proper or else from the Common.

228 In the Office of Readings, everything is proper: the hymns, antiphons and psalms, the readings and responsories. The first reading is biblical, the second hagiographical. In the Office of a saint whose cult is only local and which does not have special texts even in the local Proper, everything is taken from the Common.

¹⁵⁷ Cf *Ibid.*, n 111.

At the end of the Office of Readings, the *Te Deum* is said and the proper prayer.

229 In the Prayer during the Day, the hymn of the ferial day is said, unless otherwise indicated; the gradual psalms are used with a proper antiphon; on Sundays, the psalms are taken from Sunday I of the psalter, the short reading and the concluding prayer are proper. On certain solemnities of the Lord special psalms are given.

230 At Compline, everything is from the Sunday, after first and second Vespers respectively.

2 *How the Office is arranged on Feasts*

231 Feasts do not have first Vespers, unless they are feasts of the Lord occurring on Sundays. At the Office of Readings, Lauds and Vespers, everything is the same as on a solemnity.

232 In the Prayer during the Day, the hymn of the day is said; the psalms with their antiphons are of the ferial day, unless a special reason or tradition requires that the antiphons be proper. This will be indicated in the appropriate place. The short reading and the concluding prayer are from the Proper.

233 Compline is said as on ordinary days.

3 *How the Office is arranged on the Memorias of Saints*

234 There is no difference in the manner of arranging the Office between an obligatory memoria, and, if it is decided to celebrate it, an optional memoria, except when the optional memoria occurs during the privileged seasons.

a) *Memorias occurring on ordinary days*

235 In the Office of Readings, and at Lauds and Vespers:

a) the psalms with their antiphons are taken from the current ferial day, unless there are proper antiphons or psalms, as will be indicated in each case;

b) if the antiphon for the invitatory, the hymn, short reading, antiphons at the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*, and the intercessions are proper, they are to be taken from the Office of the saint. Otherwise they are taken either from the Common or from the current ferial day;

c) the concluding prayer is to be taken from the Office of the saint;

d) in the Office of Readings, the biblical reading with its responsory is taken from the scripture given for the ferial day. The second reading is hagiographical, with the responsory either proper or from the Common. If this second reading is not proper it is taken from the patristic text for the current ferial day.

The *Te Deum* is not said.

236 At the Prayer during the Day, and at Compline, nothing is taken from the Office of the saint but everything from the ferial day.

b) *Memorias occurring during the privileged seasons*

237 On Sundays, solemnities and feasts, on Ash Wednesday, during Holy Week and during the octave of Easter, no memorias are commemorated should they occur.

238 On the ferial days between 17 and 24 December, during the octave of Christmas and on the ferial days of Lent, no obligatory memorias may be celebrated, not even in particular

calendars. The memorias which happen to occur during Lent are considered optional memorias for that year.

239 If anyone wishes to celebrate the Office of a saint whose memoria occurs during these seasons:

a) in the Office of Readings, after the patristic reading with its responsory from the Proper of the season, he should add the proper hagiographical reading with its responsory and conclude with the prayer of the saint;

b) after the concluding prayer at Lauds and Vespers, he may add the antiphon (proper or else from the Common) and prayer of the saint.

c) *The memoria of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Saturdays*

240 On ordinary Saturdays on which optional memorias are permitted, an optional memoria of the Blessed Virgin Mary with its proper reading may be celebrated in the same way.

III The Use of the Calendar and Choosing an Office or Part of an Office

a *The Use of the Calendar*

241 The Office in choir or in common is celebrated in accordance with a proper calendar, that is, of the diocese, religious family or individual Churches.¹⁵⁸ Members of religious families are to join with the community of the local church in celebrating the dedication of the cathedral church, and the principal patrons of the place and of the region in which they live.¹⁵⁹

242 A cleric or religious bound to the recitation of the Divine Office who takes part in the celebration of the Office in common according to a calendar or rite other than his own, satisfies in this way his obligation for that part of the Office.

243 In individual celebration, either the calendar of the place or a proper calendar may be used except on solemnities and proper feasts.¹⁶⁰

b *The Choice of an Office*

244 On ferial days which admit the celebration of an optional memoria the Office of a particular saint, who is included for that day in the Roman Martyrology or in its approved Appendix may, for a good reason, be celebrated in the normal way (cf nn 234–239).

245 Except on solemnities, Sundays of Advent, Lent and Eastertide, Ash Wednesday, during Holy Week and during the octave of Easter, and on 2 November, a votive Office may be celebrated either in whole or in part for a public or devotional reason: for example, at the time of a pilgrimage, on a local feast, or during the external solemnity of a saint.

c *The Choice of Texts*

246 Provided that the general arrangement of each Hour is maintained and that the rules which follow are observed, texts other than those found in the Office of the day may be chosen on particular occasions.

158 Cf *Normae universalis de anno liturgico et de calendario*, n 52.

159 Cf *Ibid*, n 52 c.

160 Cf Table of Liturgical Days, nn 4 & 8.

- 247 In the Office of Sundays, solemnities, feasts of the Lord which are in the General Calendar, on ferial days of Lent and Holy Week, during the octaves of Easter and Christmas, and on the ferial days between 17 and 24 December inclusive, it is never permitted to change the texts which are proper or appropriated to the celebration. These include the antiphons, hymns, readings, responsories, concluding prayers, and, very often, the psalms. In place of the Sunday psalms of the current week, the Sunday psalms of another week may be substituted if desired. Especially in the Office with the people, other psalms may be chosen so as gradually to bring the people to a deeper understanding of the psalter.
- 248 In the Office of Readings, the continuous reading of scripture should always be highly regarded. The wish of the Church that ‘a more representative portion of the holy scriptures will be read to the people over a set cycle of years’¹⁶¹ also applies to the Office.
- Therefore, the sequence of scripture readings given in the Office of Readings for Advent, Christmas, Lent and Eastertide should be maintained; during the ordinary time of the year, for a good reason, on a given day or for a few successive days, the readings may be selected from among those given for other days or even from other readings of the scriptures, for example, during retreats, pastoral gatherings, times of prayer for Christian unity and other things of this kind.
- 249 If the continuous readings are interrupted because of a solemnity, feast, or special celebration, in the same week it is permissible, taking into account the sequence for the whole week, either to join the passages to be omitted with the ones remaining, or to decide which texts are to be preferred.
- 250 Likewise in the Office of Readings, instead of the second reading assigned to a particular day, if there is a good reason, another reading may be chosen from the same season, taken either from *The Divine Office* or from the optional Lectionary (n 161). Furthermore, on ordinary ferial days of the year, and if it seems suitable even during Advent, Christmas, Lent and Eastertide, a quasi-continuous reading may be taken from a work of one of the Fathers. This work should be in harmony with the spirit of the bible and the liturgy.
- 251 The readings, concluding prayers, songs and intercessions, given for Lauds, Vespers and the other Hours of ferial days during a particular season, may be said on other ferial days of the same season, except in those cases indicated in n 247.
- 252 Even though everyone should be concerned to observe the four-week cycle of the psalter,¹⁶² for a good spiritual or pastoral reason, instead of the psalms assigned to a particular day other psalms may be said which are found in the same Hour of a different day. Sometimes circumstances arise in which it is permissible to choose suitable psalms and other parts as for a votive Office.

161 Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 51.

162 Cf above, nn 100–109.

Chapter Five

THE RITES TO BE OBSERVED IN COMMUNAL CELEBRATION

I The Various Tasks to be Performed

- 253 In the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours as in other liturgical actions ‘whether as a minister or as one of the faithful, each person should perform his role by doing solely and totally what the nature of things and liturgical norms require of him’.¹⁶³
- 254 When the bishop presides, especially in his cathedral church, it is desirable that his priests and ministers should gather round him, together with the full and active attendance of the faithful. In every celebration with the people, a priest or deacon should normally preside, and there should also be ministers present.
- 255 The priest or deacon who presides at the ceremony may wear a stole over his alb or surplice. The priest can also wear a cope. On the major solemnities there is nothing to prevent several priests wearing copes and the deacons dalmatics.
- 256 It is the role of the presiding priest or deacon, from the seat, to begin the Office with the introductory verse, to begin the Lord’s Prayer, say the concluding prayer, greet, bless and dismiss the people.
- 257 Either a priest or a minister may say the intercessions.
- 258 When there is no priest or deacon, the person who presides is only one among equals; he does not enter the sanctuary, nor does he greet or bless the people.
- 259 The lector should stand in a suitable place to proclaim the readings, whether these are long or short.
- 260 A cantor or cantors should begin the antiphons, psalms and other songs. With regard to the psalmody, the norms of nn 121-125 should be observed.
- 261 During the Gospel canticle at Lauds and Vespers, the altar may be incensed, and then also the priest and people.
- 262 The obligation of choir applies to the community and not to the place of celebration. This need not necessarily be a church, especially if it is a question of those Hours which are recited without solemnity.
- 263 All taking part stand:
- a) during the introduction to the Office and the introductory verse of each Hour;
 - b) during the hymn;
 - c) during the Gospel canticle;
 - d) during the intercessions, Lord’s Prayer and concluding prayer.
- 264 Except during the Gospel, everyone is seated while listening to the readings.
- 265 While the psalms and other songs with their antiphons are being said, the community sits or stands according to custom.
- 266 Everyone makes the sign of the cross from the forehead to the breast and from the left shoulder to the right;

¹⁶³ Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 28.

- a) at the beginning of the Hours, when the *O God, come to our aid* is said;
- b) at the beginning of the Gospel canticles, the *Benedictus*, the *Magnificat*, and the *Nunc Dimittis*

Everyone makes the sign of the cross on the mouth at the beginning of the invitatory, when say the word *Lord, open our lips*.

II Singing in the Office

- 267 In the rubrics and norms of this Instruction, the words ‘say’ and ‘recite’ should be understood as referring to singing or saying in accordance with the principles given below.
- 268 ‘The sung celebration of the Divine Office is the form which best accords with the nature of this prayer. It expresses its solemnity in a fuller way and expresses a deeper union of hearts in performing the praises of God. That is why, in accordance with the wish of the Constitution on the Liturgy, this sung form is strongly recommended to those who celebrate the Office in choir or in common.’¹⁶⁴
- 269 What the Second Vatican Council said with regard to singing in the Liturgy applies to every liturgical action but especially to the Liturgy of the Hours.¹⁶⁵ Although each and every part has been so arranged that it can fruitfully be recited even by an individual, many of the parts, especially the psalms, canticles, hymns and responsories, are of a lyrical nature and are given their full expression only when sung.
- 270 Singing in the Liturgy of the Hours is not to be regarded as something merely ornamental or extrinsic to prayer. It springs from the depths of the person praying and praising God, and fully and perfectly reveals the communal character of Christian worship.
- To be commended therefore are those Christian communities—whatever their character—which endeavour as often as possible to use this form of praying the Office. Clerics, religious and faithful should be given proper instruction and practice in the singing of the Office, so that especially on festive days they will be able to enjoy singing the Hours. However difficult it is to sing the whole Office, the praise of the Church is not to be considered either in its origins or of its nature as the preserve of clerics and monks; it belongs to the whole Christian community. Many principles are to be borne in mind if the singing of the Liturgy of the Hours is to be carried out correctly, and if its value and beauty are to be appreciated.
- 271 It is especially appropriate that singing should be used at least on Sundays and festive days. From this the various degrees of solemnity may be recognized.
- 272 Not all the Hours are of the same importance. Hence it is fitting that the singing of those Hours which form the two hinges of the Office, namely Lauds and Vespers, should be preferred and solemnized more than the others.
- 273 Even if a celebration in which everything is sung is to be commended, provided it is of genuine artistic and spiritual value, sometimes the principle of ‘progressive’ solemnity may be fruitfully employed. This principle may need to be applied for practical reasons, but also because the various parts of the liturgical celebration are not of equal importance. This will mean that each part may again recover its original meaning and purpose. The Liturgy of the Hours should not be looked on as a beautiful monument of a past age, to be preserved

164 S Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam Sacram*, 5 March 1967, n 37: *AAS* 59 (1967), p 310; cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 99.

165 Cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 113.

almost unchanged in order to excite our admiration. On the contrary, it should come to life again with new meaning and grow to become once more the sign of a living community.

Therefore, the principle of 'progressive' solemnity is one which admits several intermediate stages between the singing of the Office in its entirety and the simple recitation of all its parts. This principle offers considerable variety, and thus makes the Office more attractive. The measure of this variety is to be judged according to the quality of the day or Hour which is being celebrated, the purpose of the various parts which make up the Office, the number and character of the community, as well as the number of available singers.

This greater degree of variation will allow the public praise of the Church to be sung more frequently than before, and to be better adapted to differing circumstances. We may confidently hope that new ways and new forms may be found for our own age, as has always happened in the life of the Church.

- 274 In liturgical celebrations sung in Latin, Gregorian Chant, as proper to the Roman Liturgy, should be given pride of place, other things being equal.¹⁶⁶ 'No kind of sacred music is prohibited from liturgical actions by the Church as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its individual parts, and does not hinder the active participation of the people.'¹⁶⁷ In sung Office, if the melody for an antiphon is lacking another antiphon may be taken from the existing repertoire, provided this is in agreement with the norms in nn 113, 121–125.
- 275 Since the Liturgy of the Hours may be celebrated in the vernacular, 'due care should be taken that melodies are prepared which may be used in the singing of the divine Office in the vernacular'.¹⁶⁸
- 276 There is nothing to prevent different parts in one and the same celebration being sung in different languages.¹⁶⁹
- 277 Which parts should especially be sung depends on what is the best way of arranging the liturgical celebration. This demands that the meaning and proper nature of each part and of each song be carefully observed; some parts require to be sung by their very nature.¹⁷⁰ These are above all: the acclamations, the responses to the greetings of the priest and ministers and the intercessions of litany form, and also the antiphons and psalms, refrains or repeated responses, hymns and canticles.¹⁷¹
- 278 Jewish and Christian tradition confirms that the psalms are closely connected with music. To understand many of the psalms fully It helps a great deal to sing them or at least to regard them from a poetic and musical point of view. If possible, this form is to be preferred, at least on the more important days and Hours, while respecting the original character of the psalms.
- 279 The different ways of reciting the psalms are described above, nn 121–123. Variety is introduced not because of external circumstances but on account of the various types of psalms

166 Cf *Ibid*, n 116.

167 S Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam Sacram*, 5 March 1967, n 9: *AAS* 59 (1967), p 303; cf Second Vatican Council, *Const. on Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n 116.

168 S Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam Sacram*, 5 March 1967, n 41; cf nn 54–61: *AAS* 59 (1967), p 312, 316–317.

169 Cf *Ibid*, n 51, p 315.

170 Cf *Ibid*, n 6: p 302.

171 Cf *Ibid*, nn 16a, 38: pp 305, 311.

which occur in anyone celebration. Thus it may be better to say sapiential and historical psalms, while the hymns and psalms of thanksgiving are best sung. It is very important for us to be concerned with the meaning and spirit of what we are doing. The celebration should not be rigid or artificial, nor should we be merely concerned with formalities. Above all, the thing to be achieved is to instil a desire for the authentic prayer of the Church and a delight in celebrating the praise of God (cf Ps 146).

- 280 The hymns, provided that they have doctrinal and artistic value, can also be of benefit to the person reciting the Hours. As far as possible, hymns should be sung in community celebrations as their nature demands.
- 281 The short responsory after the reading at Lauds and at Vespers, cf n 49, is, by its nature, designed to be sung in common.
- 282 The nature and purpose of the responsories in the Office of Readings require that they should be sung. They are so composed, however, that even in individual recitation they retain their value. Singing may be used more often for the responsories which have simpler and easier melodies, than for those which are taken from the liturgical sources.
- 283 The readings, whether they are long or short, are not of themselves intended to be sung. Great care should be taken to proclaim the readings worthily, clearly and distinctly so that they may be easily heard and understood by all. If therefore they are sung, only a form of music which enables them to be better heard and understood may be used.
- 284 It may be fitting for the president to sing the texts which are to be proclaimed by him alone, such as the concluding prayers, especially if these are in Latin. This may be more difficult in certain vernacular languages, unless singing helps everyone to hear the text more clearly.