

THE DIVINE OFFICE

revised by decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical
Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI

THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

According to the Roman Rite

Approved by the Episcopal Conferences
of The Antilles, Bangladesh, Burma, Canada,
of the Pacific CEPAC (Fiji Islands, Rarotonga,
Samoa and Tokelau, Tonga), Ghana, India, New Zealand,
Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and The Solomons,
The Philippines, Rhodesia, South Africa, Sri Lanka,
Tanzania, Uganda, and the United States of America
for use in their dioceses
and Confirmed by the Apostolic See

I

ADVENT SEASON



CHRISTMAS SEASON

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GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

CHAPTER I

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

1. Public and common prayer by the people of God is rightly considered to be among the primary duties of the Church. From the very beginning those who were baptized “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the community, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers” (Acts 2:42). The Acts of the Apostles give frequent testimony to the fact that the Christian community prayed with one accord.¹

The witness of the early Church teaches us that individual Christians devoted themselves to prayer at fixed times. Then, in different places, the custom soon grew of assigning special times to common prayer, for example, the last hour of the day, when evening draws on and the lamp is lighted, or the first hour, when night draws to a close with the rising of the daystar.

In the course of time other hours came to be sanctified by common prayer. These were seen by the Fathers as foreshadowed in the Acts of the Apostles. There we read of the disciples gathered together at the third hour.² The prince of the apostles “went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour” (10:9); “Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour” (3:1); “about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (16:25).

¹See Acts 1:14; 4:24; 12:5, 12; see Ephesians 5:19-21.

²See Acts 2:1-15.

22 General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours

2. This kind of common prayer gradually took shape in the form of an ordered round of Hours. This Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office, enriched by readings, is principally a prayer of praise and petition. In fact, it is the prayer of the Church with Christ and to Christ.

I. THE PRAYER OF CHRIST

Christ the Intercessor with the Father

3. When he came to give men and women a share in God's life, the Word proceeding from the Father as the splendor of his glory, "Christ Jesus, the high priest of the new and eternal Covenant, took our human nature and introduced into the world of our exile that hymn of praise which is sung in the heavenly places throughout all ages."³ From then on the praise of God wells up from the heart of Christ in human words of adoration, propitiation and intercession, presented to the Father by the head of the new humanity, the mediator between God and mankind, in the name of all and for the good of all.

4. In his goodness the Son of God, who is one with his Father (see John 10:30), and who said on entering the world: "Here I am! I come, God, to do your will" (Hebrews 10:9; see John 6:38), has left us testimony to his own prayer. The gospels very frequently show us Christ at prayer: when his mission is revealed by the Father,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,⁹ before he asks for Peter's confession of

³Second Vatican Council, constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 83.

⁴Luke 3:21-22.

⁵Luke 6:12.

⁶Matthew 14:19; 15:36; Mark 6:41; 8:7; Luke 9:16; John 6:11.

⁷Luke 9:28-29.

⁸Mark 7:34.

⁹John 11:41ff.

SATURDAY

Office of Readings

The Lord proclaims his word to Jacob.
—His laws and decrees to Israel.

FIRST READING

From the book of the prophet Isaiah 29:1-8
God's judgment on Jerusalem

Woe to Ariel, Ariel,
the city where David encamped!
Add year to year,
let the feasts come round.
But I will bring distress upon Ariel,
with mourning and grief.
You shall be to me like Ariel,
I will encamp like David against you;
I will encircle you with outposts
and set up siege works against you.
Prostrate you shall speak from the earth,
and from the base dust your words shall come.
Your voice shall be like a ghost's from the earth,
and your words like chirping from the dust.
The horde of your arrogant shall be like fine dust,
the horde of the tyrants like flying chaff.
Then suddenly, in an instant,
you shall be visited by the Lord of hosts,
With thunder, earthquake, and great noise,
whirlwind, storm, and the flame of consuming fire.
Then like a dream,
a vision in the night,
Shall be the horde of all the nations
who war against Ariel
with all the earthworks of her besiegers.

As when a hungry man dreams he is eating
 and awakens with an empty stomach,
 Or when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking
 and awakens faint and dry,
 So shall the horde of all the nations be,
 who make war against Zion.

RESPONSORY

Isaiah 54:4; 29:5, 6, 7

Jerusalem, fear not; you shall not be put to shame;
 —for the Lord of hosts will come to visit you.

The passing multitudes of all nations, which have
 struggled against you,
 will be like flying dust.

—For the Lord . . .

SECOND READING

From a sermon by Blessed Isaac of Stella, abbot

(Sermo 51: PL 194, 1862-1863, 1865)

Mary and the Church

The Son of God is the firstborn of many brothers. Although by nature he is the only-begotten, by grace he has joined many to himself and made them one with him. For to those who receive him *he has given the power to become the sons of God.*

He became the Son of man and made many men sons of God, uniting them to himself by his love and power, so that they became as one. In themselves they are many by reason of their human descent, but in him they are one by divine rebirth.

The whole Christ and the unique Christ—the body and the head—are one: one because born of the same God in heaven, and of the same mother on earth. They are many sons, yet one son. Head and members are one