



LITURGY OF THE HOURS And THE PSALMS

A Year of Study and Reflection 2026 -2027

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere and “that in every place the eyes of the Lord are watching the good and the wicked” (Prov. 15:3). But beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office.

RB 19:1-2

Oblates
St Scholastica Monastery
Kevin Chears, Editor

With gratitude and thanks to Sr Susan Barber OSB who graciously shared her material from the June Monastic Retreat



The Liturgy of the Hours

“Bound to the Eucharist, whose light it prolongs, the Liturgy of the Hours sanctifies the time of our daily lives, in the morning, we begin the day with faith and gratitude; at midday, we ask for the strength to remain faithful amidst our labours; in the evening, once our work is done, Vespers accompany the moment of sunset; at night, we fall asleep entrusting ourselves to God’s peace. Each Hour is an act of hope.”

Pope Leo General Audience August 5, 2026

The plan for the year is simple; the Liturgy of the Hours and the psalms will be our course of study for the 2026-2027 year. Each month we will look at one of the hours spending time with the psalms associated with that hour. There are reflection questions to sit with for the month. These questions in turn will be the focus of the discussion at the monthly chapter meetings. Each month you will receive information about the hour and the associated psalms for the next month.

Here is the schedule for the year:

Month	Hour	Month	Hour
November	Vigils/Lauds	March	Terce
December	Advent gathering	April	Sext
January	Prime	May	None
February	Spring gathering February 21, 2026	June	Vespers/Compline

You are invited to do two things first to be intentional in praying the hour as it falls throughout the day and to personalize this experience by using a psalm translation that speaks to your heart. It is okay if we all use different translations. It may serve to enrich our experience. Part of the joy of engaging the psalms is the how they speak uniquely to each of us. There are suggested translations on the references page to choose from, or you may prefer one that not listed. If you find yourself reading psalms other than the ones suggested that is okay too. This is our year to walk together through the psalms sharing what we have found.

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

The Liturgy of the Hours offers us a different rhythm of living one that is attuned to the presence of God as we move from evening rest to daily activities and back to rest again. Each hour of the day offers us an opportunity to experience God as our partner, guide and friend.

While each hour offers us an opportunity to experience God as our partner, guide and friend there are a few themes that we can recognize and link to passages from the Rule:

- * Living with intention, consecrating our day and our work to God. “Let Them prefer nothing whatever to Christ RB 72: 11.”
- * Thanking God for another opportunity to be of service. “Clothed then with faith and the performance of good works , let us set out on the way.” RB Prologue: 21
- * Allowing our lives to be lived in continual prayer to God. “ Prayer should be therefore short and pure, unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace.” RB 20:4 “ Let us consider , then, how we ought to behave in the presence of God and his angles, and let us stand to sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices.” RB 19:6-7

Each hour has its own gift

Hour	Chronos (Approx)	Gift of the hour
Vigils Lauds	Overnight into predawn	we awake in gratitude for God's gift of a new day
Prime	6am	we begin our day knowing God is with us
Terce	9 am	we join God in celebrating what we have begun
Sext	Noon	we recommit to the work God placed in our hands
None	3pm	we let go of the work of the day as God calls us to rest
Vespers	6pm	we share in the peace of God thankful for another day to be of service
Compline	Before bed	we surrender ourselves in faith as we close our day resting God's love and protection

Vigils/Lauds or Morning Prayer and Vespers or Evening prayer are considered major times of communal prayer and anchors of the day.

The other hours are considered minor or little prayers and are shorter in structure

The following outlines of the structure of the Morning and Evening prayer has been taken from the Liturgy of the Hours from the Benedictine Sisters of Erie

Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
* Call to Worship	* Call to Worship
* Hymn	* Hymn
* Antiphon	* Antiphon
* Psalm	* Psalm
* Canticle	* Psalm
* Psalm	* Psalm
* Doxology	* Doxology

* Antiphon	* Antiphon
* Reading	* Reading
* Response	* Response
* Benedictus Antiphon	* Magnificat Antiphon

Example of possible prayer formats for the minor hours

Small Prayers (Terce, Sext, None)

- * Call to Worship
- * Psalm
- * Scripture.
- * Intercession: Pray for others, the lost, work, and community needs.
- Closing: Recite the Lord's Prayer and a short concluding prayer.

Night Prayer / Compline

- * Opening: A brief call for God's protection through the night.
- * Confession: A quiet moment of self-examination and repentance
- * Psalm / Reading: A short reassuring psalm of trust (such as Psalm 4 or 91).
- * Closing: The *Nunc Dimittis* (Song of Simeon) and a final prayer for rest.

While the text of psalms and canticles will vary, the prayer format for each of the hours is the same.

It should be noted that psalms and canticles are different . A psalm is one of the 150 psalms found in the Book of Psalms. A canticle is one of the poetic passages or prayers found in other parts of the of the Bible.

The four of the most commonly used canticles are found in Luke:

- The Magnificat (Mary's Song): Found in Luke 1:46–55,
- The Benedictus (Zechariah's Song): Found in Luke 1:68–79
- The Gloria in Excelsis (The Angels' Song): Found in Luke 2:14,
- The Nunc Dimittis (Simeon's Song): Found in Luke 2:29–32,

OTHER VOICES

“I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me.”

C. S. Lewis:

“Hello, sun in my face. Hello you who made the morning and spread it over the fields...Watch, now, how I start the day in happiness, in kindness.”

Mary Oliver

“Any place is sacred ground, for it can become a place of encounter with the divine Presence.”

David Steindl-Rast

“Learn to listen! The voice inviting you is voiceless. Most ancient of all voices! Enticing voice without words! Listen from within the cells of your being. From the marrow of your bones, listen. From the deepest source of your life, listen. A holy vibration, a gentle movement, a persistent tugging—summons you into the deepening places. Learn to go deep! Like waves of the sea you are being pulled back into the depth. Embrace the depths! Deep calls unto Deep! There is a depth in you to which you must return. Most silent of all calls! A voice without words calls you to the deepening places. Learn to abide! Remain in Christ as Christ remains in you. Be like a sponge. Soak up the Word of God. Absorb it. Make the Word your home. Live in the Word! Abide! Dwell! Inhabit! Reside! Trust the deepening places. Learn to be silent! Silent as the leaves that fall, silent as the blossoming flowers, silent as the moment before dawn! You are being summoned into the temple of silence. Practice silence, for this voiceless voice can be heard only in the shrine of silence. You are being chosen for the deepening places.”

Macrina Wiederkehr

From Kathleen Norris

The often-heard lament, “I have so little time,” gives the lie to the delusion that the daily is of little significance. Everyone has exactly the same amount of time, the same twenty—four hours in which many a weary voice has uttered the gospel truth: “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Mt 6:34, KJV). But most of us, most of the time, take for granted what is closest to us and is most universal. The daily round of sunrise and sunset, for example, that marks the coming and passing of each day, is no longer a symbol of human hopes, or of God’s majesty, but a grind, something we must grit our teeth to endure. Our busy schedules, and even urban architecture, which all too often deprives us of a sense of the sky, has diminished our capacity to marvel with the psalmist in the passage of time as an expression of God’s love for us and for all creation: It was God who made the great lights, whose love endures forever; the sun to rule in the day, whose love endures forever; the moon and stars in the night, whose love endures forever. (Ps 136: 7—9, GR)

The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and "Women's Work"

"The desert monks termed acedia 'the noonday demon' because the temptation usually struck during the heat of the day, when the monk was hungry and fatigued, and susceptible to the suggestion that his commitment to a life of prayer was not worth the effort. Acedia has long been considered a peculiarly monastic affliction, and for good reason. It is risky business to train oneself ('training' being a root meaning of asceticism) to embrace a daily routine that mirrors eternity in its changelessness, deliberately removing distractions from one's life in order to enter into a deeper relationship with God. Under these circumstances acedia's assault is not merely an occupational hazard — it is a given. It is also an interfaith phenomenon. When I asked two Zen Buddhist monks how they defined the boredom that is endemic to monastic life, one replied that as her community was founded by an Anglican, they call it acedia. The other was unfamiliar with the Greek term, but readily identified torpor as one of the Five Hindrances to Prayer."

Acedia and Me



THE PSALMS

If the psalm prays, pray; If it grieves, grieve;
 If it is happy, rejoice;
 If it hopes, hope;
 And if it fears, be afraid.

For everything that is written here is a mirror in which we see ourselves.
 (St. Augustine, *Commentary on Psalm 31*)

No one knows how old the Psalms are or who actually wrote them. The Psalms are one of the seven books of the Catholic Bible that are collectively called The Wisdom Books. The others are Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Songs, Wisdom and Sirach. “Wisdom in this setting is the ability to perceive the order of the universe and to live in accord with it.” (Hiesberger, 1995). Growing out of Israel’s wisdom tradition each of these books takes a very human perspective of life and how each of our experiences offers an opportunity to know God and ourselves better.

The 150 individual psalms are divided into five books

- * Book One: Psalms 1–41
 - * : Mostly attributed to David, focusing on personal human struggles, laments, and God's nearness. It concludes with Psalm 41:13
- *
- *

- * Book Two: Psalms 42–72

- * Features psalms from the sons of Korah* and David, frequently using the divine name *Elohim* and reflecting on deliverance from distress. It concludes with Psalm 72:18–19.

- * Book Three: Psalms 73–89

- * Composed largely by Asaph* and the sons of Korah*, often grappling with national crisis, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the seeming absence of God. It concludes with Psalm 89:52.

- * Book Four: Psalms 90–106

- * : Begins with a prayer of Moses (Psalm 90) and shifts perspective toward God's eternal reign and sovereign comfort during times of exile. It concludes with Psalm 106:48.

- * Book Five: Psalms 107–150

- * Celebrates return, restoration, and thanksgiving, housing the Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120–134)** used by pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem, and ending with a grand crescendo of praise. It concludes with Psalm 150, which serves as a final burst of praise for the entire collection.

*The Korahites became doorkeepers and custodians for the tabernacle ([1 Chronicles 9:19–21](#); [1 Chronicles 2](#).) One group of Korahites ([1 Chronicles 12:6](#)) joined King David in various military exploits and won the reputation of being expert warriors. However, the most remarkable thing to note about the sons of Korah is that during the time of King David, they became the great leaders in choral and orchestral music in the tabernacle. Heman the Korahite had a place of great importance as a singer, along with Asaph (a Gershonite) and Ethan or Jeduthan (a Merarite). These individuals played an important role in the thanksgiving services and pageantry when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem. David formed an elaborate organization for song, instrumental music, and prophesying through these men.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/sons-of-Korah.html>

**** Ascent in both the physical and spiritual sense ... climbing the hill to get to Jerusalem and to grow closer to God**

The Psalms can be further cataloged by type based upon the focus of the encounter with God. They are:

- **Lament:** These are cries or prayers to God asking for help during times of deep personal or national distress, sickness, or threat from enemies. They make up the largest portion of the Psalter. Laments can strengthen our ties to others who suffer encouraging a deeper commitment to justice and peace. (Hiesberger, 1995)

Psalm 137 1-3

¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion.

² There on the poplars
we hung our harps,

³ for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

- **Hymns of Praise:** These joyful songs celebrate God's supreme character, majesty, power, and role as Creator. They invite us to become responsible stewards of the treasures of creation. (Hiesberger, 1995)

Psalm 148 1-6

¹ Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.

² Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

³Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.
⁴Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.
⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for at his command they were created,
⁶and he established them for ever and ever—
he issued a decree that will never pass away.

- **Thanksgiving:** These are personal or communal expressions of gratitude offered *after* God has answered a prayer, rescued the speaker, or brought them through a crisis . They help us to remember the gifts that God has given us encouraging us to be generous with others. (Hiesberger, 1995)

Psalm 30: 1- 3

A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple Of David.

¹I will exalt you, LORD,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
²LORD my God, I called to you for help,
and you healed me.
³You, LORD, brought me up from the realm of the dead;
you spared me from going down to the pit.

- **Wisdom:** These are psalms of instruction offering advice, moral lessons, and contrasts between the path of the righteous and the wicked, resembling the Proverbs. (Hiesberger, 1995)

Psalm 1 1- 2

¹Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
²but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

- **Royal:** These psalms remind us that the Lord is in charge and deserving of our devotion. we cannot allow anything wealth, power, national loyalty to the allegiance we have pledged God. (Hiesberger, 1995)

Psalm 89 1-2

*A maskil*of Ethan the Ezrahite***

¹I will sing of the LORD's great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known
through all generations.

²I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself

*Maskil is a Hebrew word translating to contemplation or instruction

** a boy of great wisdom in King David's court

- **Trust (Confidence):** These express calm assurance and profound reliance on God's protection and goodness, even when facing immediate danger or fear. (Hiesberger, 1995)

Psalm 91 1-4

¹Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.^[a]

²I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."

³Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.

⁴He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

- **Pilgrimage / Enthronement:** These Songs of Ascent were often sung by travelers journeying up to Jerusalem for holy festivals or celebrating Yahweh's divine kingship over all creation. They remind us that God is in our midst and yet transcendent (Hiesberger, 1995)

Psalm 122 1-5

A song of ascents. Of David.

¹I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”

²Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.

³Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.

⁴That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the LORD—
to praise the name of the LORD
according to the statute given to Israel.

⁵There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

Category definitions taken from Bible Studies Tools website

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-study/tips/the-genre-of-the-psalms-part-1.html>

Psalms from Bible Gateway <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

“The psalms reflect the whole gamut of human existence. The cry of terror, the groan of pain, the sigh of contentment, the gasp of awe are all expressed in the prayer of the psalms. In laments we complain to God about the fears and tragedies of our lives. We rage. We weep. It is an acknowledgement that left to ourselves, we would lash out against those who hurt us. We trust God to restore goodness to our lives because we know that we cannot.

We must be willing to live with them (the psalms) we must be willing to pray them over and over even when they do not speak to us. It can be useful to take a single image or phrase and chew it for a day , a week , a month”

Irene Nowell O.S.B. (Sutera, 1997)

It is important to remember that while they are religious literature, they are also a means of spiritual transformation. We may not come to the psalms with hearts of praise, thanksgiving or grief but the world mirrored there resonates with our own.

Structure of a psalm

Introductory Cry: Addressing God directly with an invocation or statement of need.

Feeling of the situation: Expressing the raw situation, whether it is deep suffering/lament, confession of sin, or soaring praise.

Remembering/Reflection: Recalling God's past character, historical deliverance, or steadfast love.

Resolution/Rejoicing: Concluding with an expression of trust, hope, or a vow of praise.

<https://amymakechnie.substack.com/p/how-to-write-a-psalm>

Other Voices

“To recognize that the Psalms call us to pray and sing at the intersections of the times--of our time and God's time, of the then, and the now, and the not yet--is to understand how those emotions are to be held within the rhythm of a life lived in God's presence.”

— N.T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms: Why They Are Essential*

The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express the same delight in God which made David dance.

C.S. Lewis

Whenever I felt the beauty of the world in song or story, in the material universe around me, or glimpsed it in human love, I wanted to cry out with joy. The Psalms were an outlet for this enthusiasm of joy or grief.

Dorothy Day

“But it is a dangerous error, surely very widespread among Christians, to think that the heart can pray by itself. For then we confuse wishes, hopes, sighs, laments, rejoicings—all of which the heart can do by itself—with prayer. And we confuse earth and heaven, man and God. Prayer does not mean simply to pour out one’s heart. It means rather to find the way to God and to speak with him, whether the heart is full or empty. No man can do that by himself. For that he needs Jesus Christ.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The psalmist is brutally honest about the explosive joy that he’s feeling and the deep sorrow or confusion, and it’s that that sets the Psalms apart for me. And I often think, gosh, well, why isn’t church music more like that?

Bono

To Speak to Bono’s question

A few hymns that are based upon Psalms:

Psalm 23 inspired Shepherd Me O God by Marty Haugen

Psalm 34 Inspired Taste and See

Psalm 91 Inspired On Eagles Wings

Psalm 51 inspired Create in me a Clean Heart

Suggestions for engaging the Liturgy of the Hours and the Psalms

In the morning

As part of morning prayer consider embodying this prayer which has been attributed to Julian of Norwich. It has four simple gestures and intentions

AWAIT (hands at waist, cupped up to receive): Await God's presence, not as you expect, hope, or imagine, but just as it is in this moment.

ALLOW (reach up, hands open, above shoulders if you can): Allow a sense of God's presence (or not) to come and be what it is, without meeting your expectations.

ACCEPT (hands at heart, cupped towards body): Accept as a gift whatever comes or does not come. Accept that you are not in charge. Accept the infinity of God's presence, present whether or not you are aware.

ATTEND (hands outstretched, ready to be responsive): Attend to what you are called to, actions that God invites you to from this stance of openness.

In the evening

The Examination of Conscience is frequently part of compline. There are a variety of ways to do the Examen. One way offered by James Martin, SJ is outlined in Give Us This Day:

GRATITUDE: Begin by thanking God for the specific blessings and gifts of the day. (I like to journal this)

REVIEW: Walk through your day chronologically. Notice the moments when you felt God's presence and when you turned away from opportunities to grow in love.

SORROW: Acknowledge actions or attitudes that you regret.

FORGIVENESS: Ask for God's mercy and consider if you need to reconcile with anyone you have hurt.

GRACE: Look to the day ahead and ask God for the grace and strength you need for tomorrow.

Maybe you could use this format to write a psalm of your own, perhaps one for each month of our year.

CHOOSE A GENRE OR TONE: Decide if your psalm is a hymn of praise, a cry of lament (sadness or struggle), a song of thanksgiving, or a statement of trust.

READ A MODEL PSALM: Pick a short biblical example like Psalm 13 for loneliness or Psalm 23 for comfort to see how the writer moves from pain to hope.

ADDRESS GOD DIRECTLY: Open your writing by naming God or calling out to Him directly (the invocation).

BE COMPLETELY HONEST: Pour out what you are feeling, whether it is joy, anger, confusion, or fear; do not try to make your emotions sound overly formal or sanitized.

USE IMAGERY AND METAPHORS: Describe your feelings using sensory words or personal metaphors drawn from your own daily life.

END WITH TRUST OR PRAISE: Shift your focus at the end to remember past goodness, express confidence, or offer a blessing to God.

What other opportunities can you add to the list ?

Resources

On -line Liturgy of the Hours

Divine Office .org

<https://divineoffice.org/liturgy-of-the-hours/how-to-pray-the-liturgy-of-the-hours/>

Universalis

<https://universalis.com/readings.htm>

Books

Bible

Benedictine Daily Pra. editor, Work of God ; Benedictine Prayer

Shorter Christian Prayer : The Four -Week Psalter of the Liturgy of the Hours
Containing Morning and Evening Prayer

Gregory Polan O.S.B., The Psalms: songs of Faith and Praise : the Revised
Grail Psalter with Commentary and Prayers.

David Steindl-Rast, Music of Silence : A sacred Journey Through the Hours of
the Day.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible

Irene Nowell ,

Sing a New Song: The Psalms in the Sunday Lectionary
Pleading, Cursing, Praising: a conversation with God through the
Psalms

Psalms 1-72: Volume 22 (Volume 22) (New Collegeville Bible
Commentary: Old Testament)

Psalms 73-150: Volume 23 (Volume 23) (New Collegeville Bible
Commentary: Old Testament)

Joan Chittister, O.S.B. *25 Windows into the Soul: Praying with the Psalms*

Kathleen Norris, OSB Oblate *The Psalms*, Riverhead Books, 1997

Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB *Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully Through
the Hours of the Day*, Sorin Books, 2008