



During our Lenten retreat, one of the Knights in our local Area asked me about whether there was a baseline of the prayers and devotions we should all know as Members of the Order. He accurately observed that our Members grew up in different eras and in different parts of the country, and we are a mix of both converts and cradle Catholics.

The answer is, **yes**, the *Regulations and Commentary* provide a menu of devotions and prayers that fit the spirituality of the Order. However, those are spread across the book, and you must compare multiple sections to find the common threads. I would identify those themes as:

1. Confession and Holy Mass
2. Reading the Bible
3. Some form of the Liturgy of the Hours\*
4. The Rosary, the Angelus, celebrating Mary's feast days, and honoring her Immaculate Heart
5. Invoking the saints and blessed of the Order, marking their feast days, and knowing about them
6. Praying for each other
7. Connecting our service in the Order, anything else we do in or for the Church, and even our professions and secular work, to our vocation to be chivalrous, noble, faithful followers of Christ

This may lend itself to some quick action items: go to Confession, learn the Angelus, mark the feasts of the saints of the Order on your calendar, say the Rosary more often. Others are larger commitments, such as integrating the Liturgy of the Hours into your daily life.

If you want to walk through the sections that I looked at in drawing up this list, the best place to start is titled, "Fundamental Consideration for All Members of the Order." This section indicates that some of the duties which apply to all Members are:

- Knowledge of the Word of God through "Regular reading of the Bible."
- Knowledge of the "rules, history, and spirituality of the Order of Malta."
- A spiritual life that is "stamped by a vital relationship with Jesus Christ" and characterized by "regular Confession and frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist." This section notes that developing our own spirituality is prerequisite to, and not the same as, defense of the faith.
- Devotion to the "charitable activities" of the Order through a "personal commitment by every individual, in order to enter into a concrete relationship with those in need... marked by friendship and real respect." This section also notes that every Member should be trained in First Aid to be prepared to carry out this commitment to personal, hands-on service.
- A "way of life" – the obligation to make a personal witness, with "chivalrous candor" and humility, of our Catholic faith; the need to know the social teaching of the Church and exercise our professions in accordance with it; to participate in our local Church; and to act as family with the other Members of the Order.

There are many other great thoughts in these paragraphs, and if you have a copy of the *Regulations and Commentary*, I encourage you to read the whole section.



A subsequent paragraph further addresses “Regulations for Members of the Third Class,” which is directly binding on most of us, and includes:

- “To receive frequently and regularly the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance.”
- “To observe daily prayers,” specifically mentioning **the Prayer of the Order, the Rosary, the Angelus, and if possible, some portion of the Liturgy of the Hours.**
- Praying for fellow Members of the Order, especially those who are ill, in need, or deceased.
- An annual retreat, which should include reflection on “whether the Membership in the Order is given enough importance shaping one’s life.”
- Keeping informed about topics and concerns in the Church.
- Participating in the activities and works of the Association and Area.
- Continuing to carry out our obligations to our families and our country.

For those who take the Promise of Obedience and enter the second class of the Order, the regulations add a further expectation to recite daily the Creed, and an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be, and to “diligently approach the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.”

Finally, the Professed Knights are directed to engage in the following:

- Daily Mass if possible
- The Liturgy of the Hours / Divine Office, at least including Lauds, Vespers, and Compline\*
- Daily examination of conscience and Confession at least monthly
- A half-hour daily of spiritual reading
  - Priority given to Holy Scripture, praying it as *lectio divina*
  - The readings from the Church Fathers that are in the Liturgy of the Hours
  - Classic spiritual works, lives of Saints, Papal encyclicals, and the Rule of Raymond du Puy (alongside relevant parts of the Rules of Saint Augustine, Saint Benedict, and Saint Basil)
- An annual retreat of five days, and a monthly day of recollection
- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- Praying for deceased Members of the Order
- Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, including praying the Rosary daily and celebrating her feasts
- Devotion to the Saints and Blessed of the Order, including marking their feast days
- Devotion to the Holy Cross, including regularly making the Stations of the Cross, on Fridays

\* Many of you already pray at least one or two of the “hours” out of one of the full forms of the Divine Office as used by priests and religious. There are also abbreviated versions which can be used by those not obligated to the whole office, notably the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.

- Many of us received a prayer book from the American Association which contains a version of this specifically for our Order: there is a weekly cycle of Lauds and Vespers, a static version of Compline, and collects to insert in on the feasts of saints and blessed of the Order.
- There are several other approved versions, with slightly different structures:
  - Variations that are based on the modern structure of the Liturgy of the Hours, including one sometimes called the Little Office of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, produced by the English Province of the Carmelite Order, and a more commonly available one usually listed as compiled by Father John Rotelle.



- I know some Members use one of the older versions of the Little Office; for example, to see how previous generations of our Order prayed, find the 1904 edition with English translations by Father Lasance. There are also translations from several publishers that are based on a 1961 edition.

Also, the Plenary Council of Baltimore, a gathering of our US bishops in the late 1800s, authorized a simplified version of the Divine Office for the use of laypeople. Small booklets of individual offices from this version are available from Ancilla Press, and TAN Books has also started publishing the whole set in a bound volume (titled “The Little Office of Baltimore”).

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