

Liturgy of the Hours

A Message from Edith Napoleon, Friends of the Atrium Co-Chair

“I’ll be right back, I’m going to pray”, a Muslim colleague at the hospital grabbed her bag and slipped out of the room. I sat staring at where she had gone out. It is unusual to hear a mention of faith or religion at work.

With nothing more than a small rug and the corner of her office, my colleague was following Salah, or ritual prayers required of Muslims five times per day.

I wanted to say that! I loved how open and confident she was, to have set times of the day to stop everything for prayer, right in the busyness of the ER.

I was unaware that as Catholics we have the same tradition, which is accessible to us at ANY time. This is the **Liturgy of the Hours**.

The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office, is the daily prayer of the Church, marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer.

While required for priests and members of religious communities, laypersons can take any one of these daily prayers and join the entire church.

Each of the seven canonical Hours includes selections from the Psalms that culminate in a scriptural proclamation. These are:

Office of Readings (formerly called matins) – 3am

Lauds or Morning Prayer – 6am

Terce or Midmorning Prayer – 9am

Sext or Midday Prayer – 12 noon

None or Midafternoon Prayer – 3pm

Vespers or Evening Prayer – 6pm

Compline or Night Prayer – 9pm

You can find all of these at divineoffice.org. Each one takes about 15 minutes to pray.

Q&A with Sister Theresa Josephine

I spoke to our Catechist Sr Theresa Josephine about her experience with the Liturgy of the Hours.

Q: How does your community pray the Hours, is this in group or individually?

A: As a Dominican, one of our four pillars is prayer, it is a central part of the community. We meet together three times a day in the chapel, for Lauds, Vespers, and Compline. We sing parts of the Hours and, due to the structure of our Chapel, we sit facing each other and have a call and response format. It is wonderful! We chant and sing, if one person's voice is weak, the one next to her is all the louder. We carry each other.

If ever I am unable to join the larger group, for example due to illness, I pray alone in my room.

Q: What is the meaning of the Hours in your community?

A: We pray this on behalf of the church and for the church, for her people. It is our responsibility to God's people, it is a joy. I often remember the Rule of St Augustine regarding prayer: "When you pray to God in psalms and hymns, entertain your heart with what your lips are reciting."

Q: What effect do these prayers have on your life personally?

It is joy for me to sing and to be with my community. It is an honor to pray on behalf of God's people. This is first.