

5 Reasons Every Layperson Should Pray the Liturgy of the Hours

Engaging your spiritual life can be hard.

Routines are difficult to start and usually more difficult to maintain. If you find yourself struggling in your prayer life or looking for something more, the Liturgy of the Hours might be your answer!

The built-in schedule within the pages of the Liturgy of the Hours puts you in a position to pray at the same appointed times every day. Routines are an essential part of growth in any particular area of life, and the spiritual life is no exception. The Liturgy of the Hours provides this and much more.

The Liturgy of the Hours is one of the oldest forms of prayer in the Church. It was cultivated by the desert fathers and later developed by St. Benedict in the 5th century. From the earliest institution of this practice, the Liturgy of the Hours has served as means of encountering Christ throughout the day. Following the words of St. Paul to "pray without ceasing," (1 Thes. 5:17) the Church has allotted that the Liturgy of the Hours be divided into five segments, or hours of prayer. These hours include the Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Daytime Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer. However, for the laity, it is sufficient and honorable to pray Morning and Evening prayer.

Here are five reasons every layperson should consider adopting this practice:

1) The Church encourages it!

In the Second Vatican Council document Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Church declared, "the laity...are encouraged to recite the divine office either with priests, or among themselves, or even individually" (IV.100). This humble

recommendation from the council fathers should be contemplated by everyone. The Catechism states, "the Liturgy of the Hours 'is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ Himself together with His Body addresses the Father'" (1174).

In other words, the Liturgy of the hours is the prayer of the Church. All members of the clergy and religious communities are required to pray it. That means that if you pray the divine office, you will be praying in communion with the pope, bishops, priests, deacons, friars, monks, sisters, nuns, etc. Count me in.

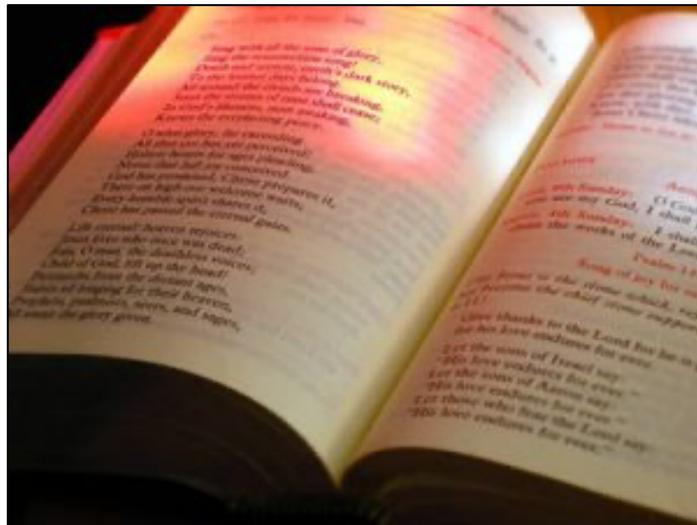
2) It provides a foundation for your prayer life

One of the common stumbling blocks to cultivating a prayer life is the absence of a routine. The Liturgy of the Hours is perfect, because it provides you with a prayer schedule for the day. Morning and Evening prayer offer you a consistent means of sanctifying your day, by praising God in the morning and thanking Him in the evening. This built-in routine guarantees that you spend some time in prayer each day and serves a building block to the rest of your spiritual life.

3) It immerses your prayer in Scripture

St. Jerome once said, "Ignorance of the Scriptures, is ignorance of Christ." In the Scriptures we encounter Jesus Christ who is the Word made flesh. The whole of the Christian life is oriented towards an encounter with Jesus and union with Him. The Liturgy of the Hours is saturated in Scripture.

By praying the Liturgy of the Hours, you will immerse your prayer life in the Psalms and readings from the Old and New Testaments,



improving your knowledge of the Scriptures and Christ.

4) It follows the liturgical year

There are many celebrations throughout the Liturgical Year and the Liturgy of the Hours immerses you in all them. Each of the seasons of the Church focuses intentionally on specific moments in the life of Christ and salvation history.

The Liturgy of the Hours provides us with a means of prayerfully contemplating these particular events.

5) It's great for travel

As I mentioned earlier, routines are important. Whenever I travel, my normal prayer schedule is thrown out the window and replaced by spontaneity and chaos. Prayer often becomes an afterthought. The Liturgy of the Hours is what holds my prayer life together during these joyfully uprooting times. When silent prayer is hard to come by the Liturgy of the Hours provides solace in the midst of a noisy environment. The format of the Liturgy of the Hours enables me to remain prayerful even in a busy setting.

After reading through the reasons to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, I hope that you will take the time to prayerfully contemplate adding this practice to your prayer life. It is guaranteed to help you build and maintain a prayer routine that will draw you closer to Christ. The saints are witness to this.

Convinced? Here are some great resources to get you started:

1. **"Shorter Christian Prayer"** one volume book via Amazon.com

This is the most basic form of the Liturgy of the Hours and is recommended for beginners. This edition includes Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer. Find it on Amazon.

2. **"Liturgy of the Hours"** four volume set via Amazon.com

This is a more comprehensive edition that includes the propers for the various seasons. Find it on Amazon.

3. **Apps – these are convenient in that everything is laid out in order. No page flipping!**
 - a. **Divine Office**, via divineoffice.org
This one is the easiest and has an audio file for each day with which you can pray if you're new
 - b. **iBreviary**, via ibreviary.org/en
This one is more comprehensive with all the possible options for each day.

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