



# NewsLetter

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## ***The Divine Office Hymnal: Introduction to the Hymns of the Liturgy of the Hours***

As part of its work in preparing the English translation of the *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition*, the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) spent several years not only translating the nearly 300 Latin hymns of the Divine Office but also proposing melodies suited to the texts. The translations were approved by the USCCB in November 2019 and confirmed six months later by the then-Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Permission was also granted to publish the body of hymns even in advance of the completion of the rest of the breviary (see the May-June 2020 *Newsletter*).

The USCCB originally intended to publish the material prepared by ICEL, but the closure of USCCB Communications in 2022 required an alternate plan for publication. After soliciting proposals from several accomplished publishers of liturgical music and texts, the USCCB decided to work with GIA Publications, Inc. for the project. Accordingly, GIA will publish a complete hymnal for the *Liturgy of the Hours*, to be titled *The Divine Office Hymnal*, along with an accompaniment book. Publication is expected for summer 2023, and the *Newsletter* will provide additional details in the coming months.

## **Hymnody in the Liturgy of the Hours**

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy boldly asserts: “The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art” (no. 112). Hymns are an important example of this musical tradition, and they constitute an integral part of the *Liturgy of the Hours*. They are human compositions, and their inspiration can come from a variety of sources, including Sacred Scripture, the lives of the saints, the mysteries of the faith, or poetic reflection on the cycle of days, feasts, and seasons.

In the Divine Office, each Hour begins with a hymn, and this hymn often provides the most direct expression of the time of day or of the liturgical season, and thereby sets the tone for the prayer that follows. This is emphasized more than once in the *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*:

The purpose of the hymn is to provide a setting for the Hour or the feast, and especially in celebrations with a congregation, to form a simple and pleasant introduction to prayer. (no. 42)

Different hymns and prayers are given for each of the Hours so that they may, in keeping with tradition, correspond to the time of day and thus sanctify it in a more appropriate way. (no. 80)

[Hymns] generally have an immediate effect in creating the particular quality of the Hour or individual feast, more so than other parts of the Office, and are able to move the mind and heart to devotion, a power frequently enhanced by their beauty of style. In the Office the hymns are the chief poetic element contributed by the Church. (no. 173)

In many cases, the hymns of the Divine Office have been part of the liturgical patrimony of the Church for centuries. Some were even written by saints, including Ambrose, Gregory the Great, Bede the Venerable, Peter Damian, and Thomas Aquinas. More recent additions to the liturgical calendar have necessitated newer compositions as well. In the post-conciliar liturgical reform, for example, a number of hymns for the *Liturgy of the Hours* were written by Anselmo Lentini, OSB, a twentieth-century Italian monk.

### ***The Divine Office Hymnal***

In preparing *The Divine Office Hymnal*, the USCCB relied on the technical expertise of ICEL. Working with a group of musicians from various countries, ICEL prepared two styles of music for each hymn.

First, ICEL applied or adapted the Gregorian chant melodies of the *Liber hymnarius* to the English texts. The *Liber hymnarius*, published by the monks of Solesmes Abbey in France with the approval of the Holy See, provides plainsong melodies for the hymns and certain other texts of the *Liturgy of the Hours*. Second, ICEL chose appropriate public-domain metrical tunes that can be assigned to these hymns. Some are quite well-known in the United States, while others may be new to many congregations. The hymnal will make use of the melodies prepared and proposed by ICEL, so each hymn will be presented with both metrical and plainsong settings. In general, *The Divine Office Hymnal* will follow the logic of the *Liber hymnarius*, although there will be some differences.

Sixty years ago, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council expressed an earnest desire that the entire Church – not only the clergy – join in offering praise to God in the Divine Office. The Council encouraged prayer in common whenever possible, prayer that is expressed with music, and prayer that is carried out with understanding as well as devotion. It is fervently hoped that *The Divine Office Hymnal* will contribute to a renewal in this most beautiful and powerful prayer of the Church.

## **DDWDS Clarifies Role of Dispensations from *Traditionis custodes***

The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued a rescript on February 20, 2023 confirming the decision of Pope Francis on the role of the Holy See in the act of dispensing from certain provisions of the 2021 Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Traditionis custodes* (TC) regulating the Roman Rite liturgy in use prior to the reforms after the Second Vatican Council.

Regarding the use of parish churches or the erection of personal parishes for the celebration of Mass according to the 1962 *Missale Romanum* (TC, art. 3 §2) and the granting of permission for priests ordained after July 16, 2021 to celebrate the antecedent liturgy (TC, art. 4), the rescript notes that these dispensations are specially reserved to the Dicastery, which exercises the Holy See's authority regarding implementation of the Pope's *motu proprio* (TC, art. 7). In addition, the Holy Father confirmed the *Responsa ad dubia* and its explanatory notes issued by the Dicastery in December 2021 to questions about *Traditionis custodes*.

The rescript is available on the Dicastery's website: [CultoDivino.va/content/cultodivino/it/documenti/notificazioni/rescriptum-ex-audientia-ss-mi---21-02-2023.html](https://cultodivino.va/content/cultodivino/it/documenti/notificazioni/rescriptum-ex-audientia-ss-mi---21-02-2023.html).

## The Role of the Deacon in the Order of Reconciling Several Penitents

Chapter II of the *Order of Penance*, Reconciling Several Penitents with Individual Confession and Absolution, consists of four parts: the Introductory Rites, the Celebration of the Word of God, the Rite of Reconciliation, and the Concluding Rites. In the third part, the Rite of Reconciliation, the congregation together makes a general confession of sins, which is a kind of communal Act of Contrition, and then individual confession and absolution take place. At first glance, the role of the deacon in the general confession may seem odd. While a priest always presides at this rite, it is the deacon, or in his absence, a lay minister, who gives the invitation to the general formula for confession (e.g., “I confess to almighty God”), the invitation to the litany, and the invitation to the Lord’s Prayer. In other liturgies, these invitations are normally given by the one who presides. Why is the general confession of sins structured in this way?

In the general confession of sins, the deacon is not exercising a presidential role but a ministerial one. According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the deacon “guides the faithful people by giving appropriate instructions” (no. 171d). As the community makes a communal “Prayer of the Penitent,” the deacon instructs the community to carry out each prayer. Before the general formula for confession, he says: “confess your sins and pray for one another.” Before the litany: “let us humbly beseech the Lord of mercies.” And before the Our Father, “let us now ask God our Father to forgive us our trespasses and deliver us from all evil.” While the presiding minister normally gives these invitations in other liturgies, the structure here is different and yet entirely consistent with the liturgical ministry of the deacon.

Even though the priest is not giving these instructions, he continues to preside. This fact is most clearly seen in the concluding oration. After the deacon has led the congregation through the general confession, it is the priest who brings this action to a close in the concluding oration. In a certain sense, he seals the preceding action with a prayer, to which all respond, “Amen.” This structure mirrors that of the Solemn Intercessions on Good Friday. The deacon, or in his absence, a lay minister, proclaims the invitation to prayer: “Let us pray, dearly beloved, for the holy Church of God,” etc. The entire congregation prays in silence, and the priest seals that silent prayer with a concluding oration, to which all respond “Amen.”

But what is one to make of the deacon giving the invitation to the Lord’s Prayer? That he makes this invitation is fitting because the Lord’s Prayer functions differently in this rite than in others. Here, the prayer serves as a general confession of sins: “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” The gestures of the rite also make this clear: neither the deacon who makes the invitation nor the priest who presides extend their hands for this prayer. In the liturgies of Christian Initiation or the Eucharist, the Our Father is the prayer of those who have received the spirit of adoption. Were it placed after individual confession and absolution, as a part of the Proclamation of Praise for God’s Mercy or the Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving, it might have this sense. But here it is an expression of repentance which leads to individual confession and absolution.

The careful consideration of the function of the Lord’s Prayer in this rite vis-à-vis other rites leads to additional insights. The Our Father, the prayer that Christians pray by virtue of Baptism, leads them to the renewal of baptismal grace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Through this same sacrament, Christians are restored to this prayer or renewed to express it more fully. For baptized Christians, there is always a continual movement from Our Father to Penance to Our Father.

Additionally, this analysis of the deacon’s liturgical role may serve as a starting point for understanding his role in the Church’s ministry of Penance understood more broadly. While only a priest administers the sacrament (*Code of Canon Law*, canon 965), the deacon’s liturgical role manifests that, in his pastoral ministry, he plays an important role in leading the baptized to the sacrament and assisting them in stirring up contrition for sins and resolve to lead a new life.

## The Transforming Power of the Liturgy: *Fons, Culmen, Vita*

Devoted participation in the liturgy transforms the Christian faithful, and, having been transformed, they become capable of transforming the world. This truth is expressed at every Mass, especially in the Prayer after Communion and the Dismissal. In the Prayer after Communion, the Church “turns to God to thank him for having shared the banquet and to ask that what was received may transform our lives.”<sup>1</sup> In the Dismissal, the deacon invites the Church to live out the Prayer after Communion by going forth. That Eucharistic call to go forth manifests “the relationship between the Mass just celebrated and the mission of Christians in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

This year, the *Newsletter* begins a seven-part series exploring the liturgy’s transforming power, in particular, its power to transform us into people who care for the sick and dying; who cherish and cultivate vocations to Holy Orders and the Consecrated Life; who go forth with the Gospel to those on the margins and peripheries of society; who uphold the dignity of all races and ethnicities; who care for our common home; and who gladly receive migrants, refugees, and the poor. Each article in the series will examine the theme’s theological foundations, explore its connection to the liturgy, and offer some recommendations for action.

At the outset, it is important to understand more fully the relationship between liturgical celebrations and the Church’s life and mission. Paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council aptly describe this relationship. No. 9 begins: “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church.” This sentence echoes Venerable Pius XII’s address to the Assisi Congress: “The liturgy is the work of the whole Church. But we must add: the liturgy is not, however, *the whole Church*; it does not exhaust the scope of her activities.”<sup>3</sup> In particular, Pope Pius has in mind the Church’s duties of teaching, governing, and pastoral care. These activities of the Church, while related to the liturgy, extend beyond it. It would be inappropriate to confuse these distinct acts with the liturgical one or for one to absorb the other.

In what way is the liturgy related to these actions that extend beyond the liturgical sphere? Even though the liturgy does not exhaust the action of the Church, it nevertheless “is the summit (*culmen*) toward which the activity (*actio*) of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font (*fons*) from which all her power flows” (no. 10). The footnotes of this paragraph in earlier drafts of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* make clear that the language of “summit” and “font” is derived from the Church’s teaching about the relationship between the sacrament of the Eucharist and the other sacraments. The Eucharist is the font from which the other sacraments flow, and the other sacraments are ordered to the Eucharist as to an end or summit. Thus, as the Eucharist is to the other sacraments, so the liturgy, with the Eucharist at its center, is to the action of the Church. The liturgy is not the entire activity of the Church, but the entire activity of the Church flows from the liturgy as from a font and is directed to the liturgy as to a summit.

The Eucharistic “heart” of the liturgy is important to keep in mind. Documents which follow the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy refine its articulation of the liturgy as source and summit. In *Lumen gentium*, Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church: “Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which [sacrifice] is the fount (*fons*) and apex (*culmen*) of the whole Christian life (*vita*), [the faithful] offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It” (no. 11). In *Presbyterorum ordinis*, the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests: “The other sacraments, as well as with every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. [...] In this light, the Eucharist (*Eucharistia*) shows itself as the source (*fons*) and the apex (*culmen*) of the whole work of preaching the Gospel” (no. 5). This refined articulation – citing both *Lumen gentium* and *Presbyterorum ordinis* – is taken up by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in its article on the Eucharist (no. 1324). Yet, there is no contradiction between this refined articulation and its earlier expression in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Indeed, as stated in an explanatory remark of the August 1961 draft of the Schema on the liturgy, “All liturgy is ordered around the eucharistic sacrifice and is derived from it, and the remaining life of the Church is ordered around the liturgy with the eucharistic sacrifice as its natural center and is derived from it.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, March 21, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (2007), no. 51.

<sup>3</sup> *The Assisi Papers: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy, Assisi-Rome, September 18-22, 1956* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 1957), p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> Angelo Lameri, *La “Pontificia Commissio de sacra liturgia praeparatoria Concilii Vaticani II”: Documenti, Testi, Verballi, Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae – Subsidia* 168 (Rome: CLV-Edizioni Liturgiche, 2013), p. 508.