

ORATIO
OR - 'OUGHT - SEE - OH

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RHYTHMS OF PRAYER
FROM THE
HEART OF CHRISTENDOM

DILLON E. BARKER,
GENERAL EDITOR



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ORATIO: Rhythms of Prayer

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The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain **rhythms of praying** intended to nourish continual prayer. Some are daily, such as morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours. Sundays, centered on the Eucharist, are kept holy primarily by prayer. The cycle of the liturgical year and its great feasts are also basic rhythms of the Christian's life of prayer.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

¶ 2698

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“For prayer is nothing else
than being on terms of friendship
with God.”

St. Teresa of Avila

FOREWORD

The man who prays is fully alive. Whether it is in solitude or in community, the very essence of prayer draws one into the mystery of the Divine. When St. Paul urges us to “pray without ceasing” in his first letter to the Thessalonians, he presents a lofty goal that is also the deepest desire of every human heart — to converse and be in intimate union with God Himself.

While prayer that flows gracefully from the heart is a great gift, most people willingly admit their dependency on the spiritual giants of ages past. With its long and rich history, Christendom has preserved a treasury of prayers that has passed through the generations. The hymns, liturgies, and devotions in the pages that follow are straight from the heart of this treasury — gathered in one place to help the reader develop a rhythm of unceasing prayer.

In an address to young people in 1979, Blessed John Paul II spoke of prayer as the very strength of the Christian. He said that by lifting our minds and hearts to great ideals, “prayer gives light by which to see and to judge from God's perspective and from eternity.” Without it, the Christian cannot nourish the Life that is within him.

Entering into the sanctuary of one's heart is an act of great faith, for faith is belief in that which we cannot see. With regular disciplines (like the daily “Angelus” depicted on the front cover), prayer can become the very nourishment that draws the human soul into the depths of Trinitarian Love. By placing every moment of the day in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, life becomes a sacrifice of praise and prayer becomes the very rhythm of our heartbeat.

THE PUBLISHER

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

A.D. 2011

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The Church, in her heart, knows *why* we must pray: God is worthy of our prayer. The Church is the Bride of Christ, and her heart yearns for the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, with such great love and devotion that her words cannot help but escape her lips without ceasing.

The Church, through her prudence, knows *when* to pray: in the cycles of human life; in celebration of the lives of the saints; in remembering the great works of God as He brought about salvation through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Church, in her millennia of experience, knows *what* to pray: she has collected the best prayers of her saints from throughout the ages and recommended them to the Christian faithful as sure paths to perfect adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

This book has been assembled to help you pray without ceasing – using the rhythms of prayer that the Bride of Christ, His Church, has always proposed to those who wish to know God, love God, and serve God with their whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Within, you will find:

HYMNODY. The book begins with adoration and praise of God through a collection of sacred hymns drawn from the Tradition of the Church. Many of them are translated into English from ancient languages, particularly Latin, the universal language of Christendom.

LITURGY OF THE HOURS: NIGHT PRAYER. In addition to the rhythms introduced to the faithful by the Sacraments themselves, the Church sanctifies the whole of every day through prayers associated with the rising and setting of the sun. Here, we feature the last prayer of each day: the Office of Compline, or Night Prayer. This short, simple liturgical prayer is the voice of the Bride of Christ calling out to her Bridegroom for safety, rest, and protection

as she descends beneath the gloomy shadows of sleep (recalling death), in joyful expectation of rising at the dawn of the new day (anticipating the resurrection to glory).

PRAYERS FOR DAILY USE. Besides the Liturgy of the Hours, of which only a sample is included here, there have always been short prayers used by the faithful at certain times of the day: prayers said first thing in the morning; prayers said at sunset; prayers said before bed. There are some prayers that are so basic, that every Christian should know them by heart. Here, we recall the petition that Jesus gave us in the Lord's Prayer, "give us this day our daily bread," and we hunger for a deeper knowledge of our Lord and God.

PRAYERS FOR THE SACRAMENTS & ADORATION. Here the Church's perfect prayers, the Sacraments given by our Lord Himself, offer us a model of how to approach God. We can prepare for Mass and give thanks afterward; examine our conscience and make a good Confession; encounter the Body and Blood of Jesus in

the Eucharist and sing His praises; sing the hymns and songs of the Church's sacred liturgy; and confess, through the Creeds, the one, true Faith.

DEVOTIONS. There are some prayers which have developed for so long, that they have acquired a special way of saying them: the Rosary, the Marian Antiphons, the Litanies, the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, the Stations of the Cross, and others. Each one of these prayers unlocks a beautiful aspect of God's mercy and love to his faithful. These prayers teach us what it means to be a devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

BLESSINGS. Prayer is an important part of our everyday lives, but it also marks the milestones. And so we ask God to bless our travel, our food, our birthdays, and our sickness.

As this rhythm develops, our very lives become a prayer as we sanctify the most ordinary moments — from time spent on work and with family to rest and recreation.

With joyful excellence and pure intention,
everything can become an opportunity for
prayer.

I will always remember hearing St. Paul's call
to unceasing prayer for the first time. I will
remember that I didn't know why to pray,
when to pray, or what to pray. And, thanks be
to God, I will always remember the night God
brought me home to His Holy Church, giving
me a treasury and rhythm of prayer that, by
God's grace, I will keep for all eternity.

DILLON E. BARKER

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

A.D. 2010

Setting the Rhythm

If you're going to pray without ceasing, you're going to have to pray at specific times. It seems like an obvious statement — but it's one of those things that needs to be said. To begin following a regular rhythm of prayer, set aside specific times to spend a few moments with God every day. These don't have to be particularly long periods, but they do need to be serious moments where the only thing you're doing is offering God adoration, confession, thanksgiving, or supplication.

If you are a beginner, it's important that you take a realistic approach to acquiring a rhythm of prayer. If learning to sing or play an instrument, you wouldn't pick up a Stradivarius violin and expect to play the first chair's part in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in one week; neither should you expect — or attempt, if you are a beginner — to take on everything suggested here in one fell swoop. Instead, try beginning with two or three of

the disciplines, be faithful to them for a few weeks, and then try adding more.

As you grow in fidelity, set aside time every day for mental prayer, engaging in a silent dialogue with God. Start with 5-10 minutes a day. Find somewhere quiet and silently ask the Lord to speak to your heart, using Sacred Scripture and other aids to enlighten your prayer. Consider the words of the Prophet Samuel, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”

And as you begin each day, recall the great tradition that associates each day with some aspect of our Faith: **Sundays** celebrate the Holy Trinity and the Resurrection. **Mondays** remind us to pray for the holy souls in Purgatory. **Tuesdays** help us to give thanks and ask for the intercession of our Guardian Angels. **Wednesdays** are the opportunity to recall St. Joseph, and ask for his prayers for a holy death. **Thursdays** recall the Holy Eucharist and give us the chance to visit the Blessed Sacrament. **Fridays** remind us of the Passion and Death of our Lord, a great opp-

portunity to pray the Stations of the Cross. **Saturdays** recall the Blessed Virgin Mary, a particularly apt time to pray the Rosary or some other Marian devotion.

The love of God is so profound that it demands a response. Let us pray for love of Him, for He is our only hope. *Oratio!*

Suggested Rhythm Check

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Daily | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning Offering• Mass (if possible)• Mental Prayer• Rosary (start with a decade)• Angelus• Spiritual reading• Examination of Conscience |
| Weekly | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sunday Mass |
| Monthly | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confession & Spiritual Direction• Day of Recollection/Prayer |
| Yearly | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retreat |