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75

PRAYING THE PSALMS
This Bulletin is primarily pastoral in scope, and is prepared for members of parish liturgy committees, readers, musicians, singers, teachers, religious, seminarians, and clergy, and for all who are involved in preparing and celebrating the community liturgy.

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The psalms have been called the prayer book of the Jewish temple and of the Christian Church. Countless generations of Jews have used them in temple and synagogue, and in personal and family prayer. Christians too have prayed them at home and in church.

Bulletin 75 looks at the way psalms have been prayed by Christ, and now by the Christian Church in the eucharist, in the other sacraments and rites, and particularly in the office or liturgy of the hours.

This Bulletin seeks to help you to pray the psalms better in the liturgy of the hours, and in your personal and family prayer.

The Fathers of the Church call Christ the new song to the Father, and the singer of psalms. May our Lord lead us to join him in giving perfect and unending praise to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit and the Church, now and for ever. Amen! Alleluia!
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"OUR HEARTS WERE BURNING"

Two disciples, trudging along the road to Emmaus, met a stranger. In their dispirited state, they told him briefly what had happened to their master a few days before; he had been their hope for the salvation of their land, but he was put to death by the occupying troops in a most shameful way. Though they had heard reports that his body was no longer in the grave, they dismissed these rumors of visions: their hopes had been dashed by the overwhelming idea of a suffering Messiah.

In masterful strokes, Luke's gospel portrays Jesus' answer. He explained what the scriptures — the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms — said about him: the Messiah had to suffer in order to enter into his glory. (See Lk. 24: 13-35, 44-49; Phil. 2: 6-11.)

During his public ministry, Jesus applied the psalms to himself and to his mission. The apostles and the early Church recognized Christ in the psalms; many New Testament references to the psalter show us the importance of the psalms in the first years of Christianity.

**Constant use:** The Church has continued to use the psalms in its prayer. By the fourth century, the psalms were accepted as an important part of the liturgy — as songs, reflections, and (at times) as readings. From that time on, the Christian Church has sung and prayed the psalms in the eucharist, liturgy of the hours, sacramental celebrations, and other rites.

**Important today:** The psalms continue to be important today. All major Christian Churches use the psalter in their worship. Since the psalms are prayed both by Jews and by Christians, we may share in the prayerful studies made by many scholars and spiritual leaders. The Spirit has inspired these prayers, and continues to help us to pray them well.

**Catholic renewal:** In the past decade, the Roman Catholic Church has given the psalms a more important place in its worship. The responsorial psalm has been restored to the liturgy of the word during the eucharist. In the liturgy of the hours, the psalms are used as Christian prayer. Psalms are also used in sacramental celebrations and other rites. Gradually, the psalms are being sung once more in the Catholic liturgy.

**Need of instruction and study:** The Second Vatican Council recognized that we need to be taught more about the psalms if we are going to use them more fruitfully in our prayer: *intensive instruction* is needed (Liturgy constitution, no. 90). A first step is provided by this Bulletin, as well as by the other references contained on pages 187-189, and in the footnotes throughout this issue.

*Blessed are you, God our Father, ruler of the universe:*
*you have called us as your people of praise,*
*and you have given us your Spirit to guide our prayer.*
*Teach us to give you glory*
*by singing the psalms in your honor*
*and by living each day in your love.*

*Blessed are you, God our Father,*
*now and for evermore.  Amen!*
BOOK OF PSALMS

The first two articles (pages 148-158) are on the Hebrew psalter as written, understood, sung, and prayed by the Jewish people under their covenant. The articles on pages 159-165 show how Christians have adopted the psalter for their prayer in the new covenant.

MEETING THE PSALTER ANEW

Countless books and articles have been written on every aspect of the psalter. In a simple way, this issue of the Bulletin opens a few doors and helps us to meet the psalms in a fresh and prayerful manner.

Book of Praise

What are the psalms? In Hebrew, they are called tehillim, songs of praise. The Greeks called them psalmoi, songs to be accompanied by the psalter or harp.

The psalms are poems or songs of praise which are centered on God. Their principal concern is his glory; the welfare of the one who is praying and of the people of God comes in second place. Like any other collection of writings, the psalms have various literary forms: see pages 154-158. On the psalms as poetry, see pages 178-180.

Use: The Jewish people sang the psalms in their temple sacrifices and worship; in their synagogues when they gathered for their services of readings, instruction, and prayers; and in individual and family prayer.

God of the psalter: The God of the covenant — loving, merciful, powerful, angry, just — is the God whom we praise and approach in the psalms. As a people and as individuals, both Israelites and Christians approach God with trust and love, for he is our God and we are his people.

The titles and qualities attributed to God in the psalms are many. A quick glance at the first five psalms\(^1\) shows some of the variety of ways that we can see God:

- **Psalm 1:** he guards the just in their lives and judges the wicked.
- **Psalm 2:** he is in heaven
  - laughs at the plots of evildoers
  - angry at their evil
  - has established his Messiah, Son, king
  - gives him the nations and the earth
  - we are to serve God with awe
  - we are to place our trust in him.
- **Psalm 3:** God is the help and shield (protector) of the just
  - he lifts us up
  - he answers our prayer
  - he saves us

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\(^1\) In this Bulletin, the references to psalms follow the numbering of the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), the "Common Bible," An Ecumenical Edition (1973 Collins/Fontana, New York, Glasgow, Toronto).
he strikes our enemies
and blesses his people.

• Psalm 4: he has mercy on us
  he gives favors to the people he loves
  hears us each time we speak to him
  lets his light shine on us
  gives us great joy
  he gives us peace.

• Psalm 5: God does not love evil
  hates those who do evil
  judges the wicked who defy him
  and gives joy to all who love his name
  he blesses the just with his favor.

If we read each of the 150 psalms carefully and prayerfully, we will find many facets of God’s infinite goodness and glory mentioned. As we pray individual psalms, we should try to take our time, so that we may listen to what God is saying to us, and be able to appreciate what we are saying to God and about him.

A view of the human person: The psalms also contain an *anthropology* or picture of us as humans. Again, a few examples will serve to open up the wide variety of images used in the psalter to describe man and woman:

• We are:
  free to choose good and evil
  protected by God
  a little less than the angels (gods)
  desolated when God seems to abandon us
  worms
  cared for by God from the beginning
  led by God through troubles to peace
  pilgrims or sojourners

  Ps. 1
  Ps. 4: 8
  Ps. 8: 5
  Ps. 22: 1-2
  Ps. 22: 6
  Ps. 22: 9-10
  Ps. 139: 13
  Ps. 23: 1-6
  Ps. 39: 12

• We:
  worship God
  sing to God for joy
  give thanks
  rule over creation, to the glory of God
  turn to the Lord in our need
  move from mourning to dancing
  can be seasick

  Ps. 5: 3, 7
  Ps. 5: 11
  Ps. 7: 17; 9: 1
  Ps. 8: 6-9
  Ps. 13: 3-6; 17: 1
  Ps. 30: 5, 11
  Ps. 107: 25-30

• Other notes:
  People taunt us when we are in need
  All nations will worship God
  Some qualities of a good person
  We are taught and led by God
  We are forgiven by God
  Our lives are like grass

  Ps. 22: 7-8
  Ps. 22: 27-28
  Ps. 1: 1-2; 15: 2-5
  Ps. 24: 4
  Ps. 25: 4-5, 8-10
  Ps. 25: 6-7, 11
  Ps. 90: 4-5
Sickness: Prayers which express vividly the feelings and distress of a sick person include Psalms 6, 22, 32, 38, 39, 41, 88, and 102. Of these, Psalms 6, 32, 38, and 102 are included in the penitential psalms (see page 185). See also Exploring sickness, in Bulletin 57, pages 5-7, on the anthropology of sickness; and Pastoral Care of the Sick and Rite of Anointing, nos. 1-4.

Many more insights into human nature may be found by a careful, prayerful reading of the psalms.

150 Psalms in Five Books

Five books: The present psalter or book of psalms contains several collections of psalms, edited and revised over a period of centuries. Scholars now see five collections (with some duplications) in the book of psalms as we have it printed in our bibles today:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Psalms</th>
<th>Concluding Doxology</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1-41</td>
<td>Ps. 41: 13</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>42-72</td>
<td>Ps. 72: 18-19</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Ps. 89: 52</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>90-106</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>107-150</td>
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Texts and versions: There are several ancient versions of the psalms that have come down to us from the past. These are the basis of our current English translations.

Hebrew: The Hebrew text that has come down to us in the Masoretic (“traditional”) text (MT). Biblical Hebrew was written in consonants only; vowel sounds were supplied by the person who read the text aloud. From the sixth and seventh centuries AD, markings to indicate the vowels were developed in Syria, and used or modified in other countries.

The Dead Sea scrolls discovered at Qumran have provided texts for some 30 psalms (in whole or in part, from Ps. 92 to the end of the psalter, and some psalms which are not included in the canon of scripture): see further references on page 153.

Greek: As early as 300 years before Christ, Greek translations of portions of the Hebrew scriptures were in circulation. The Septuagint (LXX) was the Greek version of the scriptures used by the early Christians as they preached their faith to the pagan world, where Greek was the common language.

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2 Doxology: This word means a song or prayer of praise to the Holy Trinity. It is derived from the Greek words doxa (glory, praise) and logos (word). The Glory to the Father and Glory to God in the highest are doxologies; further examples are given in Sunday Mass Book, page 1291. See also Bulletin 68, page 73; no. 54, page 138; and page 164, below.

3 A similar system is still used in Pitman shorthand today. Developed by Isaac Pitman in 1837, this system uses various strokes for consonants, and adds vowel signs where necessary for comprehension. Thus br plus ih could stand for breath, breathe, or broth; kt could mean cat, Kate, kit, kite, cot, caught, coat, cut, or cute; the vowel sign is added only where the context does not provide a clear indication of what the correct word should be.

4 Septuagint (LXX): The legend behind this name tells us that a Greek version of the Jewish scriptures was prepared for the library of Alexandria by 72 translators in 70 days in the third century before Christ. Septuagint comes from the Latin for seventy; LXX is the Roman numeral for 70.
This Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures was basically faithful to the original, although it varies at times in its style, provides variant texts, and adds new material. This additional material is known as the deuterocanonical books; since the canon of scripture was agreed on at the end of the fourth century, the Catholic Church has considered these to be among the inspired books of the Bible. During the first Christian centuries, the Greek text was revised a number of times; around 396, Jerome mentions three common traditions of the Septuagint in use.5

- **Latin:** As Greek was giving way to Latin in the Roman liturgy, Jerome was asked by Pope Damasus (366-384) to prepare a new Latin translation of the scriptures to replace the “Old Latin” version then current. Jerome did several versions, first from the Old Latin and the Septuagint, and then from the Hebrew.6 Today, most translators go directly to the Hebrew and Greek.

**Numbering:** Today, our bibles contain 150 psalms in the Book of Psalms. A closer look, however, shows that this convenient arrangement is not realistic:

- **Duplication:** Some psalms are duplicates, since they came into the psalter from different collections (see Ps. 70 in book 2 and Ps. 40: 13-17 in book 1, for example).

- **Combination:** In some cases, two distinct psalms are combined (see Hebrew Psalms 114 and 115, and LXX or Vulgate Ps. 113A-113B).

- **Division:** Ps. 9 (LXX or Vulgate) was divided into two psalms in Hebrew, but is now printed as one psalm (9-10) in JB, and as two in RSV.

Today the Jewish people, Anglicans, Protestants, and modern bibles7 use the Hebrew numbers. In the past few years, ICEL texts8 have begun to use the Hebrew numbers exclusively. The LXX or Vulgate numbers are still used in official Latin texts for the Roman rite, but they are gradually falling into disuse in the English-language versions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew numbers</th>
<th>LXX or Vulgate numbers</th>
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<td>Ps. 1-8</td>
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<td>Ps. 9-10</td>
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<td>Ps. 11-113</td>
<td>Ps. 10-112</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps. 114-115</td>
<td>Ps. 113A-B</td>
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<td>Ps. 116</td>
<td>Ps. 114-115</td>
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<td>Ps. 117-146</td>
<td>Ps. 116-145</td>
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<td>Ps. 147</td>
<td>Ps. 146-147</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ps. 148-150</td>
<td>Ps. 148-150</td>
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8 ICEL: The International Commission for English in the Liturgy was founded in 1963 to provide common translations of the liturgical texts for the English-speaking nations. It is now a joint commission of Catholic Bishops’ conferences, serving 26 episcopal conferences. The present address of ICEL is 1234 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005, U.S.A.

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Today, ecumenically-minded Catholics are beginning to change to the Hebrew numbers for the psalms.

Verse numbers are also confusing in modern translations. The difference goes back to the LXX and Masoretic texts, which numbered the verses differently.

Ps. 3 is the first psalm to contain a title or superscription (JB: “Psalm Of David When he was escaping from his son Absalom”). Modern versions treat this in differing ways:

- The Jerusalem Bible: Uses it as a subtitle, and does not include it in the verse numbering. Verse one contains two lines.
- Revised Standard Version (“Common Bible”): Prints it as the title of the psalm, and excludes it from the verse numbers. Verse one contains two lines, as above.
- New English Bible: Omits the title, and numbers the first two lines as verse one.
- Good News Bible (Today’s English Version): Gives the Hebrew title in a footnote, and excludes it from the verse numbers. Verse one contains the first two lines.
- New American Bible: Prints the title in smaller type, but numbers it as verse one. Verse two contains the first two lines — the ones marked as verse one in the other versions.

In this Bulletin, the verse numbers are as found in RSV, except as noted on pages 172-173.

Psalms As Jewish Prayer

Psalms are prayers: In the midst of this technical information about the psalter, we must always keep in mind that the psalms are prayers: they are written to be prayed!

Inspired by God: The psalms are part of the scriptures, and are inspired by God. He who designed us and made us has given us these prayers, which are able to express what lies deep within our hearts. The psalms teach us the greatness of God our creator and the mercy of God our savior.

Temple songs: The psalms were used in the temple worship of the Jewish people, both in the first and second temples. Singers or cantors were appointed by David for temple worship: see, for example, 1 Chron. 6: 16-32; 16: 4-42; 25: 1-31; 2 Chron. 5: 11-14.

Synagogue: Originally, “synagogue” meant the people of a community gathered for prayer and instruction. The word was gradually transferred from the assembly to mean the place where they met. (See Bulletin 74, page 104.)

Synagogues are meeting places for instruction, reading of the law, and prayer; no sacrifices were offered there, since these were reserved for the one temple in Jerusalem. Synagogues were in existence for some time before Christ both in Palestine
and in many pagan areas where Jewish people had settled. After Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed by Titus in the year 70, the synagogues preserved the Jewish faith, continuing to this day.

Today: The psalms continue to be a major part of synagogue worship, both on weekdays and on the Sabbath.  

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**DEAD SEA SCROLLS**

The first Qumran scrolls were discovered in 1947. Some of the material found there contained psalm texts; others included some writings in a form similar to the psalms.

**Helpful reading:**


MANY TYPES OF PRAYER

**Literary types:** When we read a newspaper, we look at different parts in different ways. We read the front page and news stories as *facts*. Editorials and columns by well-known writers are seen as *informed opinion*. Letters to the editor are expressions of individual or *private opinion*, with varying amounts of balance and truth. The comics are understood as *fiction and humor*: no one would take them in the same way as the news stories or editorials. Advertisements may be considered as a form of seductive entrapment or *fictional allurement*.

**Different types of psalms:** In the psalms we find many different forms and types of prayer. These *literary types* or *genres* help us to recognize the kind of psalm we are praying, and thus guide us to better prayer. These are described briefly in this article, and are summarized once more on page 166.

**Hymns**

These psalms are purely *songs of praise*. They contain reasons why we give God our praise: he is so great, he has done and is doing wonderful works. These psalms praise God, and do not ask for anything.

**Examples:** Experts agree on many hymns in the psalter, and others add further examples or subdivisions. For example, we may consider these psalms as pure hymns:

- Psalms 8, 19 (includes two hymns: verses 1-6; 7-14); 29, 33, 100; 103, 104, 111, 113, 114, 117; 135, 136, 145-150.

**Further subdivisions** may include these psalms:

- Psalms proclaiming that *Yahweh is king*: see Psalms 47, 93, 96-99.
- Psalms which are *canticles of Zion*: see Psalms 46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122.
- *The Jerusalem Bible* adds Psalms 105 and 106 as hymns (see “Teaching psalms” on page 157).

A glance at Ps. 8: This psalm praises God for his majesty and for giving the human race such a share in his greatness. Ps. 8 has been called a *cosmic hymn of praise*. Like Ps. 19A (verses 1-6), this psalm shows that our human race is one of God’s creative gifts. Ps. 8 is a hymn of praise, reflecting on the creation narrative in Gen. 1: 1 — 2: 4.\(^1\)

A brief look at Ps. 8 shows its structure:

Beginning and ending with an expression or acclamation of praise (verses 1, 9), the psalm simply lists the wonderful things God has done:

- His praise is sung by all, even babies (verses 1-2).
- He overcomes all his enemies (2).
- He made the heavens and the moon and stars (3).

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\(^1\) In the Roman rite at present, this reading is used in the Easter vigil, but it ends at Gen. 2: 2. Ps. 104 or Ps. 33 is sung as the responsorial psalm.
• He also thinks of our lowly estate (4), and has made us glorious (5), the lord of creation (6), ruler over the land (6), the animals (7), birds (8), and fish (8).

When we take the trouble to check and read the cross-references suggested in the margins of The Jerusalem Bible, we begin to appreciate the context in which this psalm may be used by Christians to hymn the praise of God, our Father.

**Hymn structure:** A simple outline of a hymn contains these sections. Verse references are to Ps. 8.
- **Invitation:** We are invited to give our praise to God (verse 1).
- **Reasons for our praise:** We remember God's wonderful works in his creation (3), in nature (6-8), in the story of the human race (4-6), and especially in his saving love for his beloved people (4).
- **Conclusion:** We repeat our praise to God (9).

**Psalms of Confidence**

Another literary family within the psalter contains psalms of trust and confidence.

**Examples:** These psalms may be subdivided into individual and community psalms of confidence in God.

- **An individual's confidence** is expressed in Psalms 3, 4, 11, 16, 23, 27, 67, 121, and 131.
  - Ps. 3 is appropriate for morning prayer.
  - In his *Rule* (chapter 18), St. Benedict recommends Ps. 4 for compline. It is still used in the current Roman office for night prayer on Saturday.

- **Community confidence** is expressed in Psalms 115, 125, and 129. The community easily translates individual psalms of confidence into common prayer.

**Thanksgiving**

Like a hymn, this type of psalm praises God, but it also adds the thanks of the one who is praying it. We thank God for his action for us, and thus give him praise.

**Elements in a psalm of thanksgiving:**

- **An introduction:** The psalm may begin in various ways: praising God, stating our intention to thank him, or saying where we will give him our thanks.

- **Body of the psalm:** The psalm speaks of the danger from which God has freed the one who is praying. We may thank the Lord for freeing us from the punishment we deserve for our sins, or for delivering us from the wickedness of others.

**Thanksgiving by individuals:** These psalms include Psalms 9-10, 30, 34, 40; 92, 116, and 138.
Community psalms of thanksgiving: These psalms often contain references to the sacrifices and other rites celebrated in the temple. They include Psalms 65, 66, 67, 68, 107, 118, and 124.

When God grants a favor to any member of his people, who are bound to him by his covenant, the whole community is blessed. (See 1 Cor. 13: 26: "When one member is given honor, all rejoice.") For this reason, the community is able to pray individual psalms of thanksgiving in its public prayer.

Entreaties

Some authors call these "lamentations," but this may seem misleading to those who speak English. *The Jerusalem Bible* provides the term "entreaties" as a more useful one.

Elements: This type of psalm includes several elements:

- Calling on God's name.
- A brief cry for help.
- Body of the psalm: We tell God our problems. This section includes various complaints and supplications, and an expression of our trust in God.
- Ending: Some entreaties end with an expression of trust or thanks, or with a blessing.

Examples of individual entreaties: See Psalms 5, 6, 7, 13, 17; 25, 26, 28, 31, 35; 38, 39, 42-43, 51; 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61; 64, 69, 70, 71, 86, 88; 102, 109, 120, 130; 140, 141, 142, 143. Psalms which are sometimes placed in other types are Psalms 22, 36, and 63.

Community entreaties are similar to those of individuals, but are usually concerned with problems and troubles facing the entire national community. These psalms were probably used in liturgical celebrations on days of fasting, penance, and prayer.

- Examples: See Psalms 44, 60, 74, 79, 80; 85, 90, 123, and 137.
- Others may include Psalms 12, 77, 82, 83; 94, 106, 108, and 126.

Other Types of Psalms

Various authors have discerned other types of psalms. These include:

Royal psalms: In the Old Testament, the king represented his people Israel before God. Royal psalms are about the King of Israel, whose rule is related to the kingship of God: the human king is Yahweh's delegated leader of his people. These psalms refer to the Kings of Israel before the exile (597-538 BC) and include various events in their lives as successors of David:

- Enthronement: Psalms 2, 72, 101, and 110.
- Wedding of the king: Ps. 45.
- His triumph in battle: Psalms 18, 20, 21, and 144.
- Anniversary of David's sanctuary: Ps. 132.
- See also Psalms 61, 63.
Teaching psalms: These didactic psalms seek to teach us about God, his love, and his plans for us. There are several kinds of these psalms:

- **Wisdom psalms:** These psalms reflect on God's law, and on how he rewards the good and punishes the wicked. Wisdom psalms include Psalms 1, 37, 49, 112; 119, 127, 128, and 133; some authors mention Psalms 73, 91, and 139 in this category.

- **Psalms which teach:** These psalms praise God for his wonderful deeds in saving us (salvation history): see Psalms 78, 105, and 106. (Various authors list other psalms under this heading; see also GILH, no. 130.)

- **Exhortations:** These psalms teach us about God's acts and show us what he expects of us in return. This class includes Psalms 14, 50, 52, 53; 75, 81, and 94.

- **Psalms referring to liturgies:** These include entrance psalms describing the person who is free to enter the temple (Psalms 15 and 24), and a blessing from a vigil service during the night (Ps. 134).

* * *

Value of understanding literary styles: When we begin to recognize and understand the varying literary styles of the psalms, we will be able to pray them with more feeling as we enter into their spirit more fully (see GILH,2 no. 106). Recognition of the category of the psalm will also help us to determine the psalms we choose on particular occasions, and the kind of musical setting or psalm tone we choose for a psalm.

Other Groups of Psalms

Jewish tradition has grouped certain psalms because of their use in prayer.

- **Hallel psalms:** These songs of praise (Psalms 113-118) are named from the word hallelujah (praise to the Lord!). Jewish people also call Ps. 136 the great hallel; sometimes Psalms 146-148 are also referred to as hallel psalms. Psalms 113-118 were used during the major feasts of pilgrimage — Pesach (Passover),3 Shavuoth (feast of Weeks, or Pentecost), and Sukkoth (feast of Tents or Tabernacles) — and on other feasts.4 They continue to be used by the Jewish people today.5

- **Pilgrim psalms:** In Psalms 120-134, we have a series of 15 psalms which seem to be intended for pilgrims to sing as they make their way to Jerusalem and its temple. As they move up to Jerusalem, these psalms would be a source of inspiration and prayer, reflecting the devotion of the people on their pilgrimage: see also Ps. 84.

2 GILH: The General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours is a pastoral introduction and explanation of the office today. It is found at the beginning of Liturgy of the Hours (1975, Catholic Book, New York), vol. I, pages 21-98.

3 See Mt. 26: 30 and Mk. 14: 26, where Jesus and his apostles concluded the last supper — by singing psalms or songs of praise: these would be the hallel psalms.

4 On the pilgrimage feasts, see Bulletin 58, pages 69-70; no. 47, pages 8-10. Jewish feasts are described in the pastoral notes of Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy: in the 1979-1980 edition, see note 29, pages 46-47.

Ps. 122 expresses the spirit of the pilgrim psalms. The strong feelings of the exiled captives in Ps. 137 leads to the euphoria of the liberated in Ps. 126.

The pilgrim psalms are definitely linked to the temple and Jerusalem. The house of the Lord is mentioned in Psalms 134 and 135, and Jerusalem or Zion in Psalms 122, 125, 126, 128, 129, 132, 133, and 134. The surrounding mountains are in Psalms 121 and 125, and the ark of the covenant in Ps. 132.

Other titles used for these psalms reflect their nature: “songs of ascent/ascents” (as the pilgrims climb up toward Jerusalem); “gradual psalms” or “psalms of degrees/steps” (based on the Latin word gradus for step, or stage of a journey). These psalms reflect the piety of the ordinary members of the people of Israel in the Old Testament.

The pilgrim psalms are of various literary types: they may be found in the lists earlier in this article.

Alphabetical psalms: This category describes the way certain psalms have been composed. Psalms 9-10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145 begin each verse or strophe with a Hebrew letter, in alphabetical order (aleph, beth, ghimel . . .). The most elaborate of this type is Ps. 119, a poem expressing devotion to God’s law. Other examples of this format are Prov. 31: 10-31; Lamentations 1: 1 — 4: 22; and Nahum 1: 2-8.

Conclusion: The psalter is an inspired book of songs of praise by which the Jewish people express their deep faith in God. This spirit is reflected in other aspects of their prayer life:

Attitudes of praise and thanks: The basic attitude of Jewish worship is praise and thanks to the Lord for his mighty works, especially as shown toward his people Israel. A common prayer form is the berakah, a prayer in which God is praised, especially for a particular work, and is asked to be faithful to his promises by continuing to do such works for his people today. It closes with another doxology or expression of praise.

Attitudes toward creation: The people of Israel saw the world as made by God and as belonging to him (Ps. 24: 1). He lets his people use it in his service. Creation is good (see Gen. 1: 31) because God made it. The universe is called to give him glory (Ps. 19), and all nations are invited to sing his praises (Ps. 117). See Attitudes toward creation, in Bulletin 50, pages 262-264.

Hymns of praise: The tradition of writing hymns of praise similar to the psalms continued at Qumran, as the Dead Sea scrolls witness: see page 153, above.

Helpful reading: These are particularly helpful on the literary types of the psalms:

The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning, by Leopold Sabourin, SJ.

“Introduction to the Book of Psalms,” in The Jerusalem Bible.

The Psalms: Singing Version (Gelineau).

Full references are given on pages 187-189, below.
PSALMS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Hebrew bible — which we Christians know as the Old Testament — looks forward to the coming of the Messiah: God's anointed one is to come and save his people, and is to lead them into God's promised kingdom.

Inspired by God: Our Lord, the apostles, and the early Church were one with the Jewish people in accepting the Hebrew scriptures as God’s inspired word: see, for example, 2 Tim. 3: 15-17; in the gospels, Jesus quotes and explains these scriptures as God’s own word.

Jesus uses the psalms: Some of the many examples in the gospel may be mentioned:

- In his prayer: As a pious Jew, Jesus would join in the praying of the psalms in synagogue and temple services (see Lk. 4: 16). After the last supper, Jesus and his apostles sang a hymn — probably a hallel psalm (see page 157): Mt. 26: 30. On the cross, he prays Ps. 22 (see Mk. 15: 34): when we pray this psalm in the light of the passion narratives, we can see how appropriate it is as Christ's dying prayer of pain and trust. When he entrusts his spirit to the Father, he quotes Ps. 31: 5 (see Lk. 23: 46).

- In his teaching: Jesus speaks about the Messiah as the son of David in Mt. 22: 44 and Mt. 26: 64, referring to Ps. 110. During his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he refers to Ps. 8: 1-2 when speaking of the children's shouts (Mt. 21: 16). Several of the beatitudes use phrases from the psalms: see the marginal notes in The Jerusalem Bible on Mt. 5: 3-10. Our Lord applies Ps. 118: 22-23 to himself in Mt. 21: 42. At the last supper, he uses the words of Ps. 41: 9 to describe Judas (Jn. 13: 18).

A Change of Direction

In the Jewish scriptures, the psalms are addressed to Yahweh, Lord and King, ruler of the universe.

Jesus applies the psalms to himself: Our Lord points out that the Old Testament stands as a witness that he is the Messiah (see Jn. 5: 39); Jesus tells us that Moses wrote about him (Jn. 5: 46). The psalms too speak about him, he tells us in Lk. 24: 44.

An example: Our Lord grew up praying Ps. 23, The Lord is my shepherd, to the Father in heaven. In Jn. 10: 1-21, however, he applies these words to himself, and causes definite controversies among those who realize what he is doing (Jn. 10: 19-21).

The Christian Church tends to see the Lord Jesus as the good shepherd in this psalm. Luke's gospel, in its tender chapter 15, speaks of the shepherd who carries the lost sheep home on his shoulders (Lk. 15: 3-7). Jesus spoke of himself as the good shepherd, who not only cared for his sheep, but laid down his life for them (Jn. 10: 1-18). Early Christian art followed ancient modes in portraying Christ as the youthful shepherd.1

A study of Ps. 23 is always beneficial for our personal and our liturgical prayer life.\(^2\)

**New Testament Writings**

**Psalms in the New Testament:** Fr. Leopold Sabourin tells us that there are about 360 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament; of these, 112 are from the psalms.\(^3\) In the Greek New Testament, these texts are generally taken from the Septuagint version (see pages 150-151). A study of these references will show how Christians applied the psalms to Christ as their Lord, savior, and Messiah.

**Christ is the center:** We are able to understand these applications when we realize in faith that Jesus is Lord, the Son of God who became Son of Man, one of us in all things but sin. All things are created through him for him. The Father has placed all things under his rule, and he is head and king until he returns the kingdom to the Father at the end of time. Christians need to read the epistles prayerfully if they are to appreciate what the scriptures say about their Lord and savior.

**Unity of the two Testaments:** St. Augustine reminds us that the New Testament is hidden (*latet*) in the Old, and that the Old Testament is made evident (*patet*) in the New.\(^4\) For Christians, the two Testaments form a unity: both are inspired by the one Spirit for the salvation of all.

**Applying the psalms to Christ:** Following the example of Jesus himself, the New Testament writers applied various psalms and other Old Testament references to Christ. See, for example, 1 Cor. 15: 25 and Ps. 110: 1; Eph. 4: 8 and Ps. 68: 18; compare Ps. 102: 25-27 and Heb. 1: 10-12; Ps. 34: 8 and 1 Pet. 2: 3. Frequent application of the psalms is made in the letter to the Hebrews. The Church continues this practice today in the invitatory psalm (Ps. 95), where the refrain often refers the psalm to Christ: see Bulletin 58, pages 96-99; no. 55, pages 200-204.

- **Peter:** In his Pentecost sermon, Peter quotes Ps. 16: 8-11, and applies this passage to the resurrection of Jesus; he also says that Ps. 110 refers to Christ (see Acts 2: 25-35). See also Ps. 132: 11 and Acts 2: 30.

- **Stephen:** His dying words in Acts 7: 59 echo those of Jesus (Lk. 23: 46) and Ps. 31: 5.

- **Paul:** His sermons to the Jewish people contain references to the psalms. See, for example, references to Psalms 2, 16, and 89 in Acts 13: 17-41. Paul's words in Acts 28: 28 may be compared to Ps. 98: 2-3 and Ps. 67: 2.

**Messianic psalms:** The royal psalms (see page 156) refer to David or one of his successors. The king is closely related to God, and shares in his rule over Israel. God's promises to David about always having a descendant on the throne were kept alive (see 2 Sam. 7: 12-16 and Ps. 132: 11-12).

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\(^3\) See *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning*, by Leopold Sabourin, SJ (1974, Alba House, 2187 Victory Blvd., Staten Island, NY 10314): see no. 16a, pages 164-171, where all these references are listed and described.

\(^4\) The Second Vatican Council refers to this in the Dogmatic constitution on divine revelation, no. 16. A summary of this document is given in Bulletin 56, pages 260-264.
In the gospel, Jesus applies Ps. 110 to himself (Mt. 22: 41-46). The New Testament quotes or refers to this psalm more often than any other.

In the Church today, messianic psalms and the servant songs of Isaiah are seen as the main sources of prophetic sayings about Jesus as the Messiah (the anointed one, the Christ).

Jesus told us that the psalms spoke about him (Lk. 24: 44). Among the messianic psalms the Christian Church includes all or part of Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 35; 40, 41, 45, 68, 69; 72, 89, 97, 102, 110; 118, 119, 132; and the royal psalms (see page 156, above).

**Singing the psalms:** Paul mentions a psalm or *song of praise* at prayer meetings in 1 Cor. 14: 26. Christians are urged to be filled with thanks, and to teach one another by *singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles* (Eph. 5: 18-20; Col. 3: 15-17). The epistle of James tells us to *sing psalms or songs of praise* when we are cheerful (Jas. 5: 13). See also *Psalms are for singing*, pages 181-182.

**Gradual transition:** The first Christians began to see Christ in some of the psalms. By the fourth century, the psalms were accepted as a part of Christian prayer. Over the centuries, Christians have used a variety of means for praying the psalms as Christian prayer: this approach to the psalter is considered in the following article.

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**NEXT ISSUE**

The November-December issue of the Bulletin, no. 76, is entitled: *Worship '80: Eucharist.* It looks at the eucharist with ecumenical perspectives.

- Two talks planned for Worship '80 are given in full: “Eucharist as celebration,” by Rev. Dr. Marion J. Hatchett, and “Eucharistic convergence,” by Rev. Dr. W. Morrison Kelly.

- A full commentary on the April 1980 Instruction on the worship of the eucharistic mystery looks at the positive as well as the negative side of current celebrations.

- Brief reviews of current books in the field of liturgy.


Bulletin 76 will be ready for mailing early in November.
PSALMS AS CHRISTIAN PRAYER

Jewish background: While we Christians consider the psalms as our prayers, we must always remember that the psalms are Jewish prayers in their origin. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the psalms are an integral part of God's word (GILH, no. 102). The Jewish people continue to use the psalms today — as they have for thousands of years — in individual, family, and community prayer.

First Christian century: Jesus, the apostles, and the New Testament authors and editors applied the psalms directly to our Lord himself (see pages 160-161). In this article we look at the ways the Christian people have continued to use the psalms in their prayer.

Development of monastic life: In the third and fourth centuries, what we know as religious or monastic communities began to develop in the desert and in the cities (see Religious: dedicated to ministry, in Bulletin 53, pages 96-98). In the sixth century, St. Benedict's Rule incorporated much of the wisdom of his predecessors. His Rule stipulated that the complete psalter of 150 psalms was to be prayed each week (see chapter 18). Gradually, the simpler “cathedral” or parish office, with its few, selected psalms (such as Ps. 141 for the evening psalm, and Ps. 63 for morning prayer) was replaced by more elaborate structures suited to daily monastic prayer.

Current renewal: In our days there has been a definite renewal of interest in the psalms as prayer. This has been one of the many results of the modern biblical and liturgical movements.

Our desire for authenticity in everything has led us to scrutinize our prayer forms, and to arrive at a fuller appreciation for the psalms, with their realistic, human, down-to-earth approach to God and people. A willingness to let images speak for themselves (see pages 178-179) has also contributed to the increased attention being paid to the psalms by ordinary Christians today.

Teaching us to pray: Composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who teaches God's people how to pray (Rom. 8: 26-27), the psalms are truly a school of prayer. The heights and depths of human desires, feelings, goodness, weakness, wickedness, and need are explored in the psalms (see pages 149-150). The Spirit who designed us reveals to us some of the countless facets of our human nature.

By listening to his words, by prayerful reflection on our own experience and that of others, and by remaining open to Jesus' presence and action among us, we can grow, day by day, in our prayer life as members of the people of God.

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2 See The Psalms: A School of Prayer, by Roland E. Murphy: six cassettes and study guide, nos. A542-A547 (National Catholic Reporter, PO Box 281, Kansas City, MO 64141).
Aids for Christian Prayer

When the revised Liturgy of the Hours was issued in Latin in 1970-1971, its basic purpose was to help the Christian people of God to praise the Father and to plead for the salvation of all people in the world.

At the heart of the liturgy of the hours is the psalter. The Church has adopted the psalms for its official prayer (GILH, no. 109). In order to help Christians to pray the psalms as their own prayer, the Church has gradually developed these aids to Christian prayer:

1. Seeing Christ in the psalms: When Christians pray the psalms, they do so in the "person of Christ" (GILH, no. 108). When two or three of us gather together to pray the psalms, we are aware that he is present among us (Mt. 18: 20). He offers our prayers to the Father, and he intercedes for us (Heb. 7: 25), since we are his body (Col. 1: 24; GILH, nos. 6-7), and sharers in his priesthood and worship (Liturgy constitution, no. 14).

The fuller meaning of the psalms includes their messianic meaning (see pages 160-161). The Church uses these psalms as prayer because it sees Christ in them (see Lk. 24: 44; Mt. 22: 43-45; GILH, nos. 101, 109).

The Fathers of the Church considered that the entire psalter was a prophecy about Christ and his Church (GILH, no. 109). In the psalms, they heard Christ speaking to the Father, or the Father speaking to his Son. In the present format of the liturgy of the hours, the headings or titles, the antiphons, and the psalm prayers continue this Christian application of the psalms. (See GILH, nos. 110-111; pages 163-164, below.)

2. Praying in the name of the Church: Psalms are not private prayers. When Christians pray the psalms in the liturgy, they do so in the name of Jesus Christ and in the name of his Church, for the Church has "adopted the psalter for its official prayer" (GILH, no. 109).

We unite with the Church throughout the world in our prayer. Although we may be joyful, we are able to be in tune with a psalm of sorrow because we know that there are Christians being persecuted in open or subtle ways in many countries of the world; a psalm of rejoicing helps us to unite ourselves with Christ in his ultimate victory, with members of his body who are celebrating joys (such as baptisms, weddings, reconciliation, ordinations, vows, dedication of new churches) around the world, and with the saints and angels of heaven (Liturgy constitution, no. 8; see also the prefaces of the eucharistic prayers).

When we try to be in harmony with the feelings of the psalms in this way, we are able to pray with the people of God on earth and in heaven. (See Rom. 12: 15; GILH, nos. 16, 108-109.)

3. Title: In the current editions of Liturgy of the Hours and Christian Prayer, the psalms begin with a brief title or heading. The heading is one of the ways of helping us to understand the psalms and to make them prayers that Christians can offer. The heading for each psalm helps each Christian who prays the psalter to appreciate the meaning and value of this psalm in his or her daily life, as well as in the life of the Church today. (See GILH, nos. 110-111.)
4. **Initial sentence:** After the title or heading, the renewed offices provide a sentence taken from the New Testament or from the writings of the Fathers of the Church. This phrase helps to make the psalms prayers for Christians by showing us a further dimension resulting from God’s revelation of Christ to the world. These christological notes are found in many manuscripts of the middle ages. During ordinary time, these sentences may be used as the antiphon or refrain. (See GILH, nos. 109, 111, 114.)

5. **Refrain or antiphon:** Perhaps more than any of the other elements, the antiphons or refrains help us to use the psalms as Christian prayer. The antiphon accents a particular aspect of the psalms, helping us to reflect on the current season or feast as we pray this psalm. The refrain may be used after each verse or strophe, as in the invitatory. The acclamation *Alleluia!* (Praise to the Lord!) is added to the antiphons throughout the Easter season; in ordinary time, the sentence from the New Testament or the Fathers may replace the assigned antiphon. On feasts, the antiphon is often chosen from the psalm text to show how the psalm speaks of Christ. (See GILH, nos. 109-110, 113-118, 120, 123, 125.)

6. **Trinitarian doxology:** A doxology is a brief prayer of praise which concludes a prayer or blessing. The *Glory to the Father* is a doxology offering praise to the Trinity. Since the fourth century, this has been used as a fitting conclusion to each psalm. The doxology reminds us that we pray the psalm as Christians: we are children of the Father, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, temples of the Spirit. (See GILH, nos. 123-125.)

It is customary to bow during the first part of the doxology, in adoration of the Holy Trinity: see Bulletin 72, page 43.

7. **Psalm prayer:** After the doxology, the community pauses for a moment of silent reflection. Then the one who is presiding sums up the community’s prayer in the psalm prayer, enabling them to see and interpret the psalm as Christian prayer. The use of the psalm prayers dates back to the 400s (see Bulletin 58, page 98).

Those who preside over community prayer are invited to pray the psalm prayer; they may use those given in *Liturgy of the Hours* and *Christian Prayer,* or they may compose their own.³ (See GILH, nos. 110, 112, 202.)

8. **Psalms in several sections:** Longer psalms are divided into several sections, and may be prayed in different ways:

- **In one hour:** Some psalms are divided into two or three parts, and are prayed during a single liturgical hour. By giving a different antiphon to each section of the psalm, and concluding them with the doxology, the Church underlines the varied riches in the psalm.

- **Over several days:** Long psalms may be divided and prayed on several days. Ps. 119, the longest psalm in the psalter, is prayed over a period of 22 days in the four-week cycle.

The Christian value of these psalms is brought out by the antiphons, headings, doxology, and psalm prayers. (See GILH, nos. 115, 124, 132, 110.)

9. Omission of curses: Christians are invited to give blessings rather than anger or revenge; in this way, they will inherit God's blessing (see Mt. 5: 38-48; 1 Pet. 3: 9). In the recent reform of the liturgy of the hours, the Roman rite no longer uses three "cursing psalms" in its daily prayer; Ps. 58, Ps. 83, and Ps. 109 are not used in our public prayer today because of the psychological shock they may bring, and because of our inability to identify with their sentiments.

Certain verses of other psalms are also omitted for similar reasons: an example is Ps. 137: 7-9, where we would find it hard to rejoice because someone is bashing Babylonian babies' heads against the rock.

These psalms remain in the bible, for they are the inspired word of God. (See GILH, no. 131; Bulletin 58, page 99.) See also pages 172-173, below.

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Helpful reading:

Bulletin 58, Day by Day We Give Him Praise: pages 96-100. Many other helpful references are given throughout Bulletin 58.


BULLETINS FOR THIS YEAR

It is still not too late to subscribe to the 1980 issues of the National Bulletin on Liturgy. Bulletins 72-76 look at these practical topics in a pastoral way:

- No. 72: Music in Our Liturgy
- No. 73: Baptizing Children
- No. 74: House of the Church
- No. 75: Praying the Psalms
- No. 76: Worship '80: Eucharist

Subscriptions for 1980, for nos. 72-76, are $6.00 in Canada; $8.00 (U.S. funds) in other countries; airmail to other countries, $4.00 extra (U.S. funds). Send your cheque or money order today to Publications Service, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1 Canada.
The psalms have an important place in the Church’s liturgy today. Individuals and families are being encouraged to use the psalms in their prayer. In the following articles, we explore the ways in which we may pray the psalms with greater benefit.

ACCORDING TO THEIR TYPES

Psalms should be sung and prayed according to their nature. It makes no more sense to start at Ps. 1 and work our way through to Ps. 150 than it does to take a hymnal, and sing the first five hymns this Sunday, the next five next week, and so on until we finish the repertoire.

As described in Many types of prayer (pages 154-158), there are different types of psalms. It is important for us to recognize these varieties both in our personal prayer, in our liturgical celebrations, and in any other celebrations where we choose particular psalms. The various types of psalms are listed here in summary form as a convenience to those who want to plan their prayer and liturgies well.

Hymns (pages 154-155): These are songs of praise of God.

Psalms of confidence (page 155): We express our trust in God.

Thanksgiving (pages 155-156): We thank God for what he has done for us.

Entreaties: (page 156): We tell God our problems, and ask him for help.

Other types of psalms:

○ Royal psalms (page 156): Songs about Israel’s king are often applied to the Messiah.

○ Teaching psalms (page 157): These teach us about God, his love, and his plans for us.

○ Hallel psalms (page 157): Alleluia psalms of praise.

○ Pilgrim psalms (pages 157-158): Songs expressing the devotion of the people of God on pilgrimage.

○ Messianic psalms (pages 160-161): The Church sees these psalms as the main sources of sayings about Jesus as the Messiah.

○ Penitential psalms (page 185): Psalms which are appropriate for use in times of repentance.

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When we understand the nature of a particular psalm, it is easier for us to pray it well, or to use it more fruitfully in a prayer service or celebration (see GILH, no. 106).
PSALMS IN THE EUCHARIST

Since the early centuries of the Christian era, the psalms have been an important element in the celebration of the eucharist in the Western Church.

Introductory Rites

In the first centuries, the Mass began — presumably after a deacon's call to order — with the readings: Justin describes the Sunday eucharist in Rome around 150 in this way. An opening prayer (collect) was in evidence by the time of Leo the Great (440-461). By the 500s, an entrance song was sung in papal ceremonies at Rome. This gradually developed into the introit chant, and now is replaced by the entrance song, which may be a psalm. The history of the introductory rites is described in Bulletin 54, \textit{Story of the Mass}, pages 132-139; a description of the Mass in the early centuries is given in Bulletin 55, pages 241-247.

Liturgy of the Word

Responsorial psalm: After the first reading is proclaimed, the community pauses for a moment of silent reflection and prayer. Then a cantor stands for the responsorial psalm. The cantor sings the refrain, and the community repeats it. Then the cantor sings the psalm, with all singing the refrain after each verse (see Bulletin 72, page 25).

- History: A psalm was sung between the readings in the East, and Augustine mentions a psalm between the first reading and the gospel. The use of the responsorial psalm in the Roman eucharist seems to date back to about the early 700s. At that time, it was called a response. Later, it was known as a gradual psalm or tract. When the Latin \textit{Lectionary for Mass} was issued in 1969, the responsorial psalm was provided in order that the community might reflect on the word of God proclaimed in the first reading.

- Purpose: In the present renewal, this psalm is used as a response to the first reading, which in turn reflects on or contrasts with the Sunday gospel. The psalm provides the community with the opportunity of meditating on God's word, and of preparing for the proclamation of the gospel and for the liturgy of the eucharist.

- Restoration: The responsorial psalm has been restored in the revised liturgy in order to provide more time for reflection and prayer.

- Excerpts: In the present Roman lectionary, issued in 1969, the responsorial psalms are mostly three to four verses long, with a refrain repeated after each stanza. Except for the shortest psalms, they are usually excerpts from a psalm. As our experience grows with singing the responsorial psalm, communities may begin to ask themselves if they are ready to have the cantor sing a few additional and appropriate verses from the appointed psalm.

- Singing the psalms: Since the psalms are taken from the scriptures, the cantor may sing them from the lectern or another suitable place (see GI, nos. 272, 36): see the discussion in Bulletin 74, pages 129-131. It is permitted to sing the responsorial psalm straight through without a refrain (GI, no. 36), although this seems less suitable today.
○ *Common psalms*: A few psalms have been chosen in the lectionary as common or seasonal psalms. These may be sung throughout a season, replacing the appointed responsorial psalm. These permit a community to become familiar with a few responsorial psalms, and thus be able to sing a psalm each Sunday. Gradually, they are then able to go further and learn others. See *Catholic Book of Worship II*, no. 85; CBW I, nos. 172-200; lectionary, nos. 174-175; GI,1 no. 36.

**Psalms are not considered as readings**: Although psalms were used as readings in the time of Augustine (who died in 430), they soon lost this characteristic in the Roman liturgy. In the current liturgical renewal, the psalms are not proclaimed as readings to the community during Mass or the liturgy of the hours (GILH, no. 103).

### Other Psalms in the Eucharist

**Preparation of the gifts**: St. Augustine notes that the practice of singing a psalm at this point began in Carthage in his time. In today's Mass, a suitable psalm or hymn may be sung during the preparation of the gifts: this may be a psalm. Guidelines for singing at this moment — it is not an "offering" song — are given in CBW II, no. 90. The "offertory antiphon" mentioned in GI, no. 50 was not included in the 1970 *Missale Romanum*, and hence is also omitted from the current sacramentary.

**Communion procession**: Augustine tells us that Ps. 34 was sung during communion. The song during the procession helps to unify the people in their joy (GI, no. 56i). A psalm or other hymn may be used. A psalm with a simple refrain for the people helps them to participate in the procession without the need for books in their hands. See the guidelines for music in CBW II, no. 99.

**After communion**, all may pause for a period of prayer in silence. A psalm or hymn of praise may be sung by everyone (GI, no. 56i): see CBW II, no. 99; Bulletin 65, pages 224-225; and pages 154-155, above.

**Recessional**: No mention of a recessional hymn is made in GI, nos. 57, 125-126, or in the order of Mass. If singing is desired, a psalm or other hymn may be sung: see CBW II, no. 103.

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The psalms used in our eucharistic worship will approach their full meaning only when we are praying them in our community liturgy of the hours and in our personal prayer and study. As we steep ourselves in the prayer of the psalms, we will begin to absorb the spirit of the psalter more fully.

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1 GI: The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* is a pastoral introduction and explanation of the rites of the Mass. It is found at the beginning of the sacramentary (pages 11-54 in the Canadian edition).
LITURGY OF THE HOURS

In the Christian tradition, believers have come together for common prayer at particular times of the day. The format of prayer is one of praise and petition, and of listening to God's word. Through this form of prayer, which is known as the liturgy of the hours, the Church prays with the Lord Jesus and also prays to him. (See GILH,1 no. 2.)

Liturgy of time: The liturgy of the hours is a liturgy of time: by it, we “sanctify the day” (Liturgy constitution, no. 88).2 We dedicate our lives — which are so short and fleeting in comparison with God's eternal, unending life (see Ps. 90: 1-10) — to the service of God. Each morning, we offer our life to him, and ask his help to live as his children should; each evening, we thank him for what he has accomplished in us by his grace, and ask his forgiveness for our weaknesses and failures. Always we pray with and through Jesus, our Lord and our brother.

Prayer of the community: The liturgy of the hours celebrated by the believing community is the norm: it is the public prayer proper to the whole Christian people, joining with Christ in his unending priestly prayer to the Father (Constitution on the liturgy, nos. 83, 90, 99). Individuals who celebrate the liturgy of the hours should try to celebrate with a community; in their prayer, they are invited to observe the norms of community celebration, including silent reflection (GILH, no. 203).

Historical development: As the liturgy of the hours developed over the early centuries it seems that the psalms were originally a distinct monastic rite that became attached to the cathedral office (see Bulletin 58, pages 79-95). Gradually, the psalmody became the first part of the public or cathedral liturgy of the hours.3

Quality, not quantity: It would be mistaken to think that the psalms in the current liturgy of the hours are merely fillers. The present Roman arrangement is not based on quantity; rather, it tries to take into consideration the individual character of the hour and of the psalms used in prayer. (See GILH, no. 121.)

Key Hours of Prayer

Morning and evening prayer — lauds and vespers, or the traditional form of the Church's prayer at the beginning and end of the day — form a substantial part of our public prayer. They are the key or hinge hours of Christian prayer (see Liturgy constitution, no. 89a). St. Augustine tells us that his mother Monica prayed every day in church in the morning and at sunset.

Morning prayer: At the beginning of the day, we turn to God, and give our day to him. We dedicate our hearts — our thoughts and our feelings, our work and our prayer — to our Father. Morning prayer is the first important act in our day's work.

1 GILH: see note 2 on page 157, above.
2 On the sanctification of time, see Worship, vol. 51, no. 4 (July 1977), pages 308-311.
As the new day begins, we recall the rising of the Lord Jesus, and give our praise and thanks to our Father. The invocations at morning prayer help us to consecrate the new day to God. (See GILH, nos. 38, 40.) The beginning of a new day is like a new act of creation. We recognize God's many gifts to us, and praise him both by word and by full and good use of his gifts, talents, and created goods.

○ **Psalms in morning prayer:** The present form of morning prayer in the Roman Catholic Church contains a psalm, an Old Testament canticle, and a psalm of praise. Thus, for Sunday in week 1,\(^4\) we pray Ps. 63: 1-8; Dan. 3: 57-88, 56; Ps. 149. When the invitatory is included in morning prayer, one of four psalms (95, 100, 67, or 24) is prayed at the beginning of the hours.

Some appropriate psalms for praying in the morning are listed on pages 172-173, 183.

**Evening prayer:** As the day is coming to an end, we turn to God our Father, and thank him for all that he has done for us today and for all that we have done well with the help of his grace.

As we raise our hands and let our prayers rise like incense before our Father (see Ps. 141: 2), we recall that he — in his great love for us — sent his Son to save us by his dying and rising. We remember our Lord's last supper with the apostles, and his evening sacrifice on the cross.

We place our trust and hope in Jesus Christ, sun of justice and light of the world, and ask him to bring us into the everlasting light and joy of the heavenly liturgy. With our Lord and all the Church of God, we offer unending praise to the Father. (See GILH, no. 39.)

○ **Psalms in evening prayer:** The present form of evening prayer includes two psalms and a New Testament canticle. Evening prayer I (Saturday evening) for Sunday in the first week includes Ps. 141: 1-9; Ps. 142; and Phil. 2: 6-11. Evening prayer II on Sunday contains Ps. 110: 1-5, 7; Ps. 114; and a canticle distilled from Rev. 19: 1-7; in Lent, this is replaced by 1 Pet. 2: 21-24.

Some appropriate psalms for praying in the evening are listed on pages 172-173, 183.

When the Second Vatican Council pointed out that morning and evening prayer are the most important hours of prayer for Christians, whether gathered in community or as individuals (Liturgy constitution, nos. 89a, 100), it was not coming up with a new idea. These ideas are based on St. Cyprian (Bishop of Carthage, 249-258), St. Basil the Great (c. 329-379), Cassian (c. 360-432/435), and rest on the tradition witnessed to by Hippolytus (c. 170-235/236), Tertullian (c. 160-c. 220), and others.

**Other Hours**

Other hours contain three psalms, or psalms divided into several sections (see pages 164-165, above). Examples of the distribution of psalms is taken from Sunday in week 1 in ordinary time:

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\(^4\) The psalms are distributed over a period of four weeks. Appropriate psalms are used for morning and evening prayer, and for night prayer. See GILH, nos. 126-130.
Office of readings (formerly matins): invitatory psalm (95, 100, 67, 24); Ps. 1; Ps. 2; Ps. 3.

Daytime prayer: This hour is prayed at midmorning, midday, or midafternoon; it compares to one of terce, sext, and none in former days: Ps. 118: 1-9; 10-18; 19-29.

If other hours are prayed, additional psalmody is provided from the pilgrim psalms (see pages 157-158):

- **Midmorning**: Ps. 120; Ps. 121; Ps. 122.
- **Midday**: Ps. 123; Ps. 124; Ps. 125.
- **Midafternoon**: Ps. 126; Ps. 127; Ps. 128.

Night prayer (formerly compline): One or two psalms are prayed: on Saturday night, Ps. 4 and Ps. 134; on Sunday, Ps. 91. These three psalms were recommended for compline each night by St. Benedict in the sixth century (see references in footnote 1 on page 162, above).

How the psalms are prayed: In each hour of community prayer, the Church recommends that each psalm be prayed in this way:

- **Antiphon or refrain**: See page 164, above.

- **Psalm**: The psalm may be sung or said by all together; the community may divide into two groups, and alternate stanzas; or a cantor may sing or say the psalm while the rest sing (say) the refrain after each stanza, as in the invitatory psalm: see GILH, no. 122.

- **Doxology**: This completes the psalm by a prayer of praise to the Trinity. It may be sung even when the psalm is said: see page 164, above.

- **Silent prayer**: A moment of silent prayer by all at the end of the psalm is necessary if the benefits of this time of prayer are to be received by each individual in the community: see pages 164 and 185.

- **Psalm prayer**: See page 164, above.

When the liturgy of the hours is prayed by a family or by one person alone: see pages 183-186, below.

A Practical Liturgical Psalter

For several years now, the study group on the liturgy of the hours of the North American Academy of Liturgy has been working on the idea of a liturgical psalter. This is an attempt to promote the use of the psalms in our worship by selecting the ones most suitable for morning and evening prayer, and identifying those that various traditions attach to a particular season or time of day.

It is the hope of the study group that communities will become familiar with these psalms, and sing them in their daily prayer. It is also hoped that various settings of these psalms may be gathered together, and that new ones will be composed for them.
Morning prayer: Psalms 5, 36, 51; 63, 67, 95, 100, 148, 149, 150.

Evening prayer: Psalms 4, 91, 104, 111, 114; 130, 132, 134, 141.

Sunday:
- Morning prayer: Psalms 30, 118.
- Evening prayer: Psalms 110, 114.
- Either morning or evening: Psalms 66, 136.

Friday:
- Morning prayer: Ps. 51.
- Evening prayer: Psalms 22, 69.

Advent:
- Morning prayer: Psalms 24, 25, 85.
- Evening prayer: Ps. 80.

Christmas season:
- Morning prayer: Psalms 19, 24, 96, 98.
- Evening prayer: Psalms 72, 110, 130.
- Either morning or evening: Psalms 2, 45, 89.

Lent:
- Evening prayer: Psalms 32, 103, 130.

Easter triduum:
- Morning prayer: Psalms 24, 30.
- Evening prayer: Psalms 16, 22, 69, 88.
- Either morning or evening: Psalms 2, 40.

Easter season:
- Morning prayer: Psalms 3, 24, 68, 118.
- Evening prayer: Psalms 110, 114.
- Either morning or evening: Psalms 1, 2, 104, 136.

5 In the psalms whose number is given in boldface, it is suggested that certain verses be omitted for liturgical use. The list of verses to retain is given in the box on page 173. Three columns are given because there are three different systems for numbering some of the verses in the Revised Standard Version, The Jerusalem Bible, and in the psalter in The Book of Common Prayer and The Lutheran Book of Worship. Full references are given below on pages 187-188.
Other favorite psalms: The study group added these because they are frequently used by Christians in their personal and community prayer:

- **Morning prayer:** Ps. 8.
- **Evening prayer:** Psalms 18, 23, 27, 121, 138.
- **Either morning or evening:** Psalms 34, 42, 46, 84; 117, 122, 133, 137.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm</th>
<th>RSV</th>
<th>JB</th>
<th>BCP/LBW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 25</td>
<td>This psalm could be prayed in two parts: 1-15; 15-22</td>
<td>1-15; 15-21</td>
<td>1-14; 14-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 40</td>
<td>1-13</td>
<td>1-13</td>
<td>1-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 63</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 68</td>
<td>1-20, 24-35</td>
<td>1-20, 24-35</td>
<td>1-20, 24-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The first part of the psalm could be prayed as an independent section: 1-20</td>
<td>1-19 or 1-20.</td>
<td>1-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 69</td>
<td>1-21, 29-36</td>
<td>1-21, 29-36</td>
<td>1-23, 31-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 89</td>
<td>1-37, 52</td>
<td>1-37, 51t</td>
<td>1-37, 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 95</td>
<td>1-11 or 1-7</td>
<td>1-11 or 1-7abc</td>
<td>1-11 or 1-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 110</td>
<td>1-6a</td>
<td>1-4 or 1-5 or 1-5a</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 118</td>
<td>Verses 19-24 in all three versions could be used as a separate psalm.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 136</td>
<td>1-18, 21-26</td>
<td>1-18, 21-26</td>
<td>1-18, 21-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 137</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 141</td>
<td>1-5, 8 or 1-5, 8-9</td>
<td>1-5, 8 or 1-5, 8-9</td>
<td>1-5, 8 or 1-5, 8-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps. 149</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members of the study group would welcome further comments on these choices for a popular liturgical psalter. Letters may be sent to the secretary of this group, Rev. Patrick Byrne, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1, Canada.

* * *

**Psalms in the seminary:** Seminarians should have a good experience of celebrating the hours, and also understand the teaching of the faith which is presented in GILH. They need to understand the psalms as seen by the New Testament and by Christian traditions; seminarians also need to learn about the literary forms of the psalms. In these ways, they will be able to recognize the mystery of Jesus Christ in them, and be able to use the psalms to nourish their personal prayer.6

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6 *Liturgical Formation in Seminaries,* by the Congregation for Catholic Education (June 3, 1979), reprinted in *Origins,* vol. 9, no. 16 (October 4, 1979, USCC, 1312 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005: pages 249-256. See paragraphs 31 and 46.
Further reading:

- GILH, nos. 100-135.
- Bulletin 58, *Day by Day We Sing His Praise*: see especially pages 96-120.
- Bulletin 63, pages 87-89, 69; no. 66, pages 262-265; no. 70, page 177.
- Bulletin 72, pages 30-33, 35-43.
- Other references are given in Bulletin 61, pages 314-315.
- Studies on the liturgy of the hours and on its use of psalms are contained in the reports of the meetings of the North American Academy of Liturgy. See the following issues of *Worship* (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321):
  - vol. 50, no. 4 (July 1976): pages 329-336;
  - vol. 51, no. 4 (July 1977): pages 307-315;
  - vol. 52, no. 4 (July 1978): pages 342-348;
  - vol. 54, no. 4 (July 1980).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

These publications are now available from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops:

- **Eucharist**: The letter of Pope John Paul II on the mystery and worship of the holy eucharist (Feb. 24, 1980): 56 pages. $1.00 a copy, plus postage. (Also available in French.)

- **Unemployment: The Human Costs** — Social message from the Administrative Board of the CCCB (January 1980): 19 pages. 35¢ a copy, plus postage. (Also available in French.)

- **Easter Season**: a liturgical leaflet for distribution in parishes and communities: $3.00 a 100 copies, plus postage.

- **Mother of Our Lord**: a liturgical leaflet for distribution in parishes and communities: $3.00 a 100 copies, plus postage.

- **Music at Your Wedding**: a liturgical leaflet for distribution in parishes, especially for couples preparing for marriage and for their families: $3.00 a 100 copies, plus postage.

- **Instruction “Inaestimabile Donum” on Certain Norms Concerning Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery**, by the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship (April 3, 1980): 60¢, plus postage. This is also available in French at the same price.

- **Catholic Book of Worship II**: see page 180, below.

Postage is to be added to all orders: 10% for orders under $10.00; 5% for orders $10.00 and more.

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Ottawa, Ontario
K1N 7B1

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PSALMS IN OTHER RITES

With the reform of the liturgical year in 1969, the *Lectionary for Mass* was issued to provide texts for many celebrations of the Christian people. These include the sacraments, funerals, blessings, and other liturgical rites.

**Basic uses of psalms:** Within these and other rites, the psalms may be used in several ways:

- **In processions:** A psalm may be sung during a procession, while the ministers or people are moving from place to place.
- **Responsorial psalm:** In any liturgy of the word, a psalm may be sung as a reflective response after a reading from scripture.
- **Prayer:** A psalm may be sung or said as a prayer by the community.
- **Acclamation:** A short psalm (e.g., Ps. 117) or selected verses from a psalm may be sung as an acclamation of praise.

**Sacraments:** Each of the revised rites suggest a list of psalms which are suitable for use in these celebrations.

- **Preparation:** Use of the psalms and readings during the period of preparation will help candidates for any sacrament to enter more fully into the spirit of the sacrament they are to receive.
- **Celebration:** When they are familiar with the psalms to be sung during the celebration, parishioners and candidates will benefit more fully from the celebration.
- **Sacrament of reconciliation:** There are many opportunities for using the psalms in the revised rites. [Numbers in this paragraph refer to the 1973 *Rite of Penance.*] In community celebrations, psalms may be used as the entrance song (no. 48), responsorial psalm (51), proclamation of praise (56, 206), and concluding song; when general absolution is given, the act of penance or satisfaction (60) may be a psalm. In the reconciliation of an individual, both priest and penitent may pray one or more psalms as they prepare (15). The invitation to trust in God (42), reading from his word (43), act of satisfaction (6c, 44), prayer of sorrow (45, 85, 86), and proclamation of praise (47, 206) may be chosen from the psalm. Suitable psalms are listed in the *Rite,* nos. 133-147, and 206.

Psalms need not be used in all these instances, of course, but the opportunities are there to be explored. An occasional praying of the penitential psalms (see page 185) helps us to retain an abiding sorrow for our sins.

**Teaching catechumens to pray:** As well as using the psalms in the liturgy of initiation, the local Church should see the psalms as an important element in the prayer life of the catechumens. During the extended time of their formation and growth in the Catholic faith, they should be taught to pray many of the psalms in their personal and group prayer. Psalms of praise and thanks, seasonal psalms (see page 177), penitential psalms (see page 185), and traditional favorites (such as Ps. 8, Ps. 23, Ps. 95) should be among those which the catechumens and catechists sing and pray during the time of formation. (See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults,* no. 19: 1-3.)
**Rites for the dying**: Psalms 25, 91, 116, and 121 are recommended for use with those who are dying.

**Funerals**: The Roman pastoral introduction of the *Rite of Funerals* (no. 12) notes that the Church uses the psalms in its rites for the dead in order that we may both express our grief and strengthen our hope. For this reason, pastors are to teach their people to understand and be familiar with the main psalms used in the Church’s funeral liturgies.

These include Psalms 23, 25, 42, 51, 93; Ps. 115: 1-13; Psalms 116, 118, 121, 122, 123; Psalms 130, 132, 134. In the funerals of children, Psalms 23, 25, 42-43, and 148 are used as responsorial psalms.

**Bible services** were restored to the Catholic liturgy by the Second Vatican Council (Liturgy constitution, no. 35: 4). They may be celebrated on many occasions, including ecumenical services, wake celebrations, eucharistic devotions, and penance celebrations (see Bulletin 72, pages 33-34). Suitable psalms may be chosen for processions, responses, and prayers.

**Blessings**: Many suggestions for designing blessings are included in Bulletin 49, pages 159-163. Psalms may be used in processions, as responses to God’s word, as hymns of praise, and as prayers.

**Helpful reading:**


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**CANTICLES**

A canticle is a scriptural song similar to the psalms. The name comes from the Latin for “little song.” The renewed liturgy of the hours uses many canticles to enrich our prayer:

- **Old Testament canticles**: Some 40 canticles are used in the current liturgy of the hours. In morning prayer, the place of the second psalm is always taken by a canticle. Some examples from week I are: Dan. 3: 57-88, 56; I Chron. 29: 10-13; Tobit 13: 1-8; Judith 16: 2-3a, 13-15; Jer. 31: 10-14; Is. 45: 15-25; and Exod. 15: 1-4a, 8-13, 17-18.

- **New Testament canticles**: Nine canticles are used in place of the final psalm at evening prayer: these include: Eph. 1: 3-10; Phil. 2: 6-11; Col. 1: 12-20, 1 Tim. 3: 16; and 1 Pet. 2: 21-24. Others are taken from the book of Revelation: Rev. 4: 11 and 5: 9, 10, 12; Rev. 11: 17-18 and 12: 10b-12a; Rev. 15: 3-4; and Rev. 19: 1-7.

- **Gospel canticles**: The Church uses the canticles of Zechariah (Lk. 1: 68-79) at the climax of morning prayer; the canticle of Mary (Lk. 1: 46-55) at evening prayer; and the canticle of Simeon (Lk. 2: 29-32) in night prayer.

Canticles are sung in the same way that psalms are sung, and — with the exception of Dan. 3: 57-88, 56 — are concluded with the *Glory to the Father*.
PSALMS DURING THE LITURGICAL YEAR

As the liturgical year developed rapidly in the fourth century (see Bulletin 47), the Church began to use certain psalms as more appropriate for particular seasons. In the 380s, Egeria frequently referred to the practice of the Church at Jerusalem, which always chose readings and psalms that fit the event being commemorated, especially during Holy Week (see Resources on the psalms, page 189).

Current practice: After the Second Vatican Council, worldwide co-operation among Catholic liturgists led to the issuing of the Lectionary for Mass by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1969. Since then, other Churches have begun to use adapted versions of our Sunday lectionary.

The lectionary provides three scripture readings for each Sunday (prophet, apostle, gospel), with a responsorial psalm following the first reading. In ordinary time, the gospel follows one of the three synoptic evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke (see Bulletin 56, pages 293-295); the first reading is always related to the gospel, and the responsorial psalm reflects the first reading.

Advent: For a full picture of the interrelationship of the scriptures during the Advent season, see the Sunday readings in the lectionary, nos. 1-12. The responsorial psalms are arranged in this way for Advent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Year A (Matthew)</th>
<th>Year B (Mark)</th>
<th>Year C (Luke)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>Ps. 122</td>
<td>Ps. 80</td>
<td>Ps. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Ps. 72</td>
<td>Ps. 85</td>
<td>Ps. 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>Ps. 146</td>
<td>Lk. 1</td>
<td>Is. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>Ps. 24</td>
<td>Ps. 89</td>
<td>Ps. 80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two psalms marked in boldface have been chosen as seasonal psalms.

Seasonal psalms: At the end of the Sunday readings the lectionary lists a number of seasonal psalms, whose purpose is to help people to sing them (Lectionary, nos. 174-175; Introduction, no. 9; GI, no. 36). These psalms are also included with music at the beginning of each season in the Sunday section of Catholic Book of Worship II:

- Advent: Ps. 25, Ps. 85;
- Christmas: Ps. 98; Epiphany: Ps. 72;
- Lent: Ps. 51, Ps. 91, Ps. 130; Holy Week: Ps. 22; Easter vigil: Ps. 136;
- Easter season: Ps. 118, Ps. 66; Ascension: Ps. 47; Pentecost: Ps. 104;
- Ordinary time: Ps. 19, Ps. 27, Ps. 34, Ps. 63, Ps. 95, Ps. 100, Ps. 103, Ps. 145; during the final week of the liturgical year: Ps. 122.

We may pray the psalms with the Church by using the seasonal psalms or the other responsorial psalms from the Sunday or weekday lectionary.
To understand the psalms fully, we have to be able to appreciate their nature both as poetry (pages 178-180) and as songs meant to be sung (pages 181-182).

**Psalms Are Poetry**

When they were composed in Hebrew, the psalms were written as poetry. Those who do not understand Hebrew have to read the psalms in translation. To translate from the genius of one language and culture to another is difficult; to translate poetry is even a greater problem. When we add the distance of time (around 2500 years), of culture, and of religion, we can find the psalms a most challenging area for the modern teams of translators. It is not an arena for amateurs.

Poetry, thank God, is not prosaic: it goes in quite another direction from prose. Poetry is not hidebound or useful: it flutters and flits about like a butterfly on its day off. Poetry doesn't do what has to be done: rather, it says what needs to be said, but softly, looking at the truth from various and even unusual angles.

Anglo-Saxon prose gets you there like train tracks; poetry encourages you to sail leisurely, darting or drifting in and out, and arriving there eventually, but happily. Prose is clock watching; poetry is stargazing.

**Parallelism:** One feature of the poetry in the psalms that strikes the English-speaking reader is that of parallel ideas: one line repeats the thought of the previous line, but in different words. Some examples are found in the opening verse of Psalms 89, 92, 93, 95, 99, and 102. The logical Anglo-Saxon mind, which can tend to be too efficient, but plodding and unpoetic, may feel that a thought should be expressed clearly, pragmatically, and only once. On the contrary, the Hebrew poets of the psalter say something, turn it around, taste it again, and look at it from still another point of view: it is the difference between a peck and a loving kiss. The use of parallels enriches our prayer, and should give us time to reflect on and taste our words of praise and petition. The psalms are poetry, not prose.

**Rhythm:** Most translations today present the psalms in a form of blank verse. Unlike English poetry, which favors a regular beat (“A mighty fortress is our God”), Hebrew rhythm is based on important words: the accent is on meaning rather than on sound or beat. Couplets (two lines) containing three significant words are common; other forms have three and two stresses, or two and two. In Hebrew, irregular verses and interweaving patterns of stresses are as common as varying rhyme schemes in English poetry and song.

Father Joseph Gelineau, SJ, has developed a system of music which takes into account the varying rhythms of Hebrew poetry.¹ Six basic arrangements are provided for the psalm tones according to the varying number of stresses in the lines and of lines in the stanzas.

**Poetic prayer:** The psalms are poetry, and are to be prayed and sung as poetry — with emotion and feeling, with heart as well as head, with warmth and color, with movement and gesture, with clapping and dancing.

Poets are touched by the Spirit with a particular form of inspiration, insight, and genius. For example, it is only during the past 15 years that we have been able to see the earth from outer space; yet, when we read prayers like Ps. 8; Ps. 19: 1-6; Ps. 24: 1-2; Ps. 104; and Ps. 148, we can recognize the cosmic picture without difficulty — even though it was painted twenty-five centuries ago!

**Imagery beyond compare:** A few references portray the vivid imagery\(^2\) of metaphor and simile in the psalms:

- **Nature:** The universe and our earth are portrayed vividly in Psalms 104 and 8. We move from calm waters to stormy seas and stomach-heaving sickness, and then back to peaceful waters in Ps. 107: 23-30.
- **Our human race:** The despair and resistance of the exiled Jews are portrayed in Ps. 137; in Ps. 126, we are elated with the euphoria of the released captives.
- **Brief is our life:** Human life — 70 and even 80 years long (Ps. 90: 10) — is a day in comparison to our eternal God (Ps. 90: 4; see 2 Pet. 3: 8). Our lifespan is like grass, here and gone in a day (Ps. 103: 15-16; 90: 5-6; 102: 11); it is like a sigh or a puff of breath (Ps. 90: 9; Ps. 39: 5).
- **Easily wounded:** We are fragile. We feel our weakness (Ps. 6: 2-3) and defencelessness (Ps. 12: 1; Ps. 14: 4). At times we are lonely as an owl, or a bird on the rooftop (Ps. 102: 6-7). We are wounded when we are betrayed by those close to us (Ps. 41: 9; see Jn. 13: 18).
- **Sorrow and conversion:** By the loving grace of God, we are able to see our sins and be repentant. Ps. 51 is the act of contrition in the Old Testament. We confess our sins to God and ask him to forgive his people in Ps. 106. *(The penitential psalms are discussed on page 185.)*
- **Humble simplicity:** Our true situation in God's sight is described clearly in Ps. 131: we are simple and humble in the presence of our creator. This psalm is a childlike prayer that the children of God address to their Father.
- **Thanks:** As God's beloved children we give our thanks to our loving Father. Ps. 136 is a fine example of how we may remember what God has done for us, and give him our praise in the form of a litany. *(See also the references on the berakah prayer in Bulletin 49, pages 152-153, 164-168; no. 68, pages 73-74; Sunday Mass Book, page 1318.)*
- **God:** The psalms are about God, and about our relations with him. He is the eternal Lord, who blesses the good (Ps. 1), and who laughs at and punishes the wicked (Ps. 2, Ps. 1). Wrapped in light as his cloak (Ps. 104: 2), God is above and beyond us, and yet he is always with us (Ps. 139). He is faithful to his covenant-promise, and accepts our prayers which rise to him like incense (Ps. 141: 2). We praise him for his loving concern for us (Ps. 139), and thank him for his many gifts to his beloved people (Ps. 136). Further notes on the God of the psalter are given on pages 148-149.

**Metrical psalms:** Another approach to psalms in English is the use of metrical psalms, which recast the words of the psalms in verse form. *(An example is the paraphrase of Ps. 23, “The Lord's my shepherd” (Crimond: CBW I, no. 402; CBW II, no.\(^2\) See also references to the teaching of the psalms about our human condition, pages 149-150.

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689): the wording comes from the *Scottish Psalter* of 1650.] Metrical psalms are adaptations or paraphrases: see the discussion in Bulletin 65, pages 240-241; see also CBW II, choir edition, no. 85.

* * *

To appreciate the psalms more fully, we have to let our imaginations seize on their imagery, our feelings revel in the emotional plays of the psalter, and our hearts take delight in the joys of the people of the saving and victorious Lord.

The psalms are the glowing prayers of the people of God, who triumphs over death and sin, and who leads his beloved children to eternal joy with Jesus Christ, our brother and our Lord.

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**ANNOUNCING CBW II**

After a gestation period of three and a half years, *Catholic Book of Worship II* is now available. It is the officially approved hymnal for English-speaking Catholics in Canada. Both a participation aid and a hymnal, CBW II is described fully in Bulletin 72, *Music in Our Liturgy*.

There are two editions:

**Choir edition**, for musicians, choir members, and for those who plan the liturgy, including clergy and liturgy committees. This edition comes in two formats:

- Hardbound edition, and
- Spiral-bound edition (lies flat).

**Pew edition**, for members of the congregation.
PSALMS ARE FOR SINGING

Songs to Be Sung

Origins: By their nature, the psalms are intended to be sung. They are songs of praise and prayer, used by the Israelites in personal prayer, in family and community gatherings, in national assemblies, and in their temple worship. The psalms are hymns of praise, and are by their nature designed to be sung. This Jewish practice has been continued by the Christian Church (see Mk. 14: 26; Col. 3: 16-17; Eph. 5: 18-20).

Singing the psalms today: As a result of the liturgical renewal of the past two decades, Catholics are returning to praying the psalms as part of their public worship. Gradually, they are learning to sing the psalms, and thus are beginning to appreciate them more fully.

- In the eucharist: The responsorial psalm is the simplest psalm to sing. A cantor or choir sings the refrain, and the people repeat it. The cantor or choir sings the stanza, and the people repeat the refrain. Responsorial singing of psalms may also be done for the entrance song and during the communion procession.

Common or seasonal psalms are provided in the liturgy in order to help communities begin to sing the responsorial psalm. A full selection is provided in CBW II at the beginning of each season: see also Guidelines for Music in the Mass, no. 85. As well, music for more than 150 refrains is given for the Sundays psalms throughout the year; psalm tones are included in the choir edition. (Bulletin 72, Music in the Liturgy, offers a fuller description of the contents and special features of CBW II.)

- In morning and evening prayer: In the past decade, many communities have returned to their tradition of morning and evening prayer, or have begun to make this part of their prayer life. With a little determination and practice, each celebration of morning and evening prayer can include at least one sung psalm. Seasonal psalms may be used at first until the group gradually builds a larger repertoire of familiar psalms. Some groups use psalm tones, including the Gélineau tones and other methods.

Singing of the psalms in daily prayer is encouraged: see GILH, nos. 103, 104, 115, 125, 277, 278.

- In other celebrations: In bible services, penance celebrations, and other liturgies, psalms may be sung as part of the community's worship, including processional songs, responsorial psalms in response to God's word, and psalms of praise.

In every celebration, those who are planning the liturgy should make an effort to include at least one sung psalm so that the participants may come to experience singing the psalms as a strong form of praise and prayer.

- In family prayer: A family may begin to move toward sung psalmody by singing the refrain together, with one member reading the verse: the psalm used at Sunday Mass or a seasonal psalm may be chosen. A simple one-note tone (recto tono) may be used by the one who leads the psalm. Families with greater musical abilities may explore some of the many settings in CBW II. (See also pages 183-186, below.)
Psalms in CBW II: This hymnal provides many resources for singing the psalms:

- **Responsorial psalms** with music for the refrain and a psalm tone for every Sunday in the year (three cycles), and for major feasts: see nos. 109-337. Psalms for other rites are given in nos. 19-21, 35-36, 52, and 75; extensive references are also provided.

- **Other psalms**: Twenty-nine psalms, with music for the refrain and a psalm tone, or with a metrical setting, are also given in the book. Modern styles are included in the variety of settings.

Developing our community repertoire: The liturgy committee and choir director should work together to increase the community's repertoire gradually over a period of years. Some of the basic psalms that are used in various celebrations may be learned first: Ps. 23, Ps. 51, Ps. 100, Ps. 117, Ps. 136 (a litany), and Ps. 150 have many uses. Seasonal psalms may be used frequently. The morning psalm, Ps. 63 (CBW II, no. 75), and evening psalm, Ps. 141 (no. 65), may be sung often.

Suggestions for teaching people to pray and sing the psalms as Christian prayers are given in Bulletin 63, pages 99-100.

Doing our best for the Lord: It takes more effort to begin to sing the psalms, but community fervor and prayer will grow stronger. When we sing our prayer, we are giving greater glory to God, and are also helping to strengthen our own faith. The spirit of the Christian liturgy is that of generous giving of oneself to God with Christ.

* * *

Helpful reading: See *Singing the psalms today*, in Bulletin 65, pages 239-246.

NATIONAL APPOINTMENT

Most Rev. James L. Doyle, Acting President of the National Liturgical Office, announces the appointment of Rev. W. Regis Halloran as executive director of the Office. This appointment was made by the executive committee of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 1980.

Father Halloran was born in Guysborough, Nova Scotia, and is a priest of the Diocese of Antigonish. Ordained in 1960, he pursued studies at John Carroll University, Cleveland, and holds an M.A. in liturgy from the University of Notre Dame. He served in parishes from 1960 to 1970, and was director of the Gardiner Renewal Center from 1970 to 1975. During the past five years, he has been diocesan director for religious education.

As well as being diocesan director of liturgy, Father Halloran was chairman of the Atlantic Liturgical Conference from 1970 to 1978, and a member of the National Council for Liturgy from 1973 to 1976.
PERSONAL AND FAMILY PRAYER

As well as being sung in the public worship of the Church, the psalms are also intended to be used in personal and family prayer. This article makes some practical suggestions for using the psalms in this way.

Traditional Times for Prayer

The traditional times for Christians to pray individually or in families are morning and evening, mealtimes, and in time of need. A number of basic psalms may be used at these times.

**Morning prayer:** The spirit and the mood of morning prayer are described on pages 169-170. Psalms which are appropriate for the beginning of the day include Psalms 63, 8; 5, 24, 36, 51; 67, 90, 95, 100; 148, 150.

**Evening prayer:** The spirit of evening prayer is outlined on page 170. Appropriate psalms for the end of the day are Psalms 141, 111, 113, and 130.

- **Night prayer:** When writing around the year 540, St. Benedict recommended that Psalms 4, 91, and 134 be used at night prayer (compline) each day (see Rule, chapter 18).

**Meal prayers:** Jewish people blessed or praised God over their food at the beginning of the meal, and again after the meal was over. On special feasts, a more developed form of grace was used at the end of the meal. Known as the *birkat ha-mazon,* this form was structured in this way:

- **Praising:** They praise God and thank him for his benefits.
- **Remembering:** They remember his many works of love, and trust in his promise or covenant to continue his love for us.
- **Asking:** They ask God to bless and restore his people Israel.
- **Praising:** They seal the prayer by praising God once more.

Our Lord used a similar form of prayer during the last supper, which was related to the Passover meal. The gospels also mention times when Jesus blessed bread before it was distributed to the crowds (see Mk. 6: 41 and parallels).

When we are eating or drinking or doing anything else, we should be doing this action for God's glory (see 1 Cor. 10: 31).

- **Before meals:** Prayers before meals should first of all be an act of praising God, and then of asking his blessing on us and the food we have because of his goodness. Psalms of praise (see "Hymns" on pages 154-155) are always appropriate, and may be sung or said before we ask God's blessing.

- **After meals:** We thank God by singing or praying a psalm of thanksgiving (see pages 155-156). It is good to add a prayer for the Church and the world.

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1 The *birkat ha-mazon* is a developed form of the berakah or blessing prayer. Further notes on these prayers are given in Bulletin 49, pages 152-153 and 164-168; no. 68, pages 73-74; Sunday Mass Book, page 1318. The eucharistic prayer is based on this same format: see Bulletin 54, page 158.
Other examples of adapting meal prayers are given in *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 1328-1330.

**Time of need**: Every individual and family experiences times of need, of agony, of sorrow. When these moments come, Christians usually turn to God in prayer, asking him for help and strength. On these occasions, we often use our own words to tell him of our problems.

Knowing that the Spirit can help us in our times of weakness, we can let the Spirit intercede for us, and bring our needs to the Father: *read Rom. 8: 26-27*. At such times, the psalms — which the Spirit has inspired as prayers for ordinary people to use — can help us to pray better.

The entreaties express deep human needs, and we may use these psalms in our prayer. Both in individual and family prayer, it is quite fitting to pause and mention our particular needs and problems. Many individual and community entreaties are listed on page 156.

It is good to read over some of these now, and pick out psalms that seem to express our needs and feelings. Then, in time of need, we will have familiar psalms that we may use to ask for the help and consolation we need.

**Psalms in Our Prayer**

A basic repertoire: Each family could select one or more psalms from the various categories (see pages 154-158). Some suggestions for a start:

- **Hymns**: Psalms 8, 100, 117, 150.
- **Psalms of confidence**: Psalms 3, 23, 125.
- **Thanksgiving**: Psalms 32, 34, 40, 138.
- **Entreaties**: Psalms 13, 51, 80, 130.
- **Wisdom psalms**: Psalms 1, 133, 139; selections from Ps. 119.
- **Exhortations**: Psalms 14, 95.

Parishes should help families by teaching them how to pray the psalms: see Bulletin 63, pages 99-100. Another list of appropriate psalms for the seasons, certain days of the week, and for morning and evening prayer, is given on pages 172-173 and 177, above.

**Praying the psalms**: We may use the psalms in our prayer when we are alone or when we pray with others. We may pray them with others in various ways:

- **Unison**: All pray the psalm together.
- **Alternation**: Two groups alternate stanzas.
- **Responsorial psalm**: One or two persons may sing or read the psalm, and the rest repeat the refrain after each verse. (See GILH, no. 122.)

- **Listening**: All listen as one person sings or reads the psalm. (In celebrating the liturgy of the hours, see GILH, nos. 103 and 279.)
Roles: An interesting approach to psalmody is used in the United Church of Canada. Selections from the psalms are divided among congregation, choir, minister, and a lay reader within the congregation. Families may consider the possibility of sharing parts of familiar psalms in a similar way.

Reflection is necessary: No matter which method we may use in praying the psalms, we need to pause and meditate on what we have said or heard. We must let the Spirit speak to our hearts, and we must accept the graces, insights, and invitations he offers us. After a psalm, we should pray the doxology, Glory to the Father. Then a time of silent prayer is important, whether in personal or group prayer. When we pray a psalm in our personal prayer, it is appropriate to pause and reflect on key phrases and thoughts that touch us. (See GILH, nos. 104, 123, 201-203.)

Concluding a chapter of scripture: After reading a chapter of the gospel or other book of the bible, it is appropriate to reflect in silence, and then to conclude with a suitable psalm. Consider, for example, Mt. 5, 6, or 7 and a selection of verses from Ps. 119; Jn. 10 and Ps. 23; Lk. 6 and Ps. 1; Mk. 15 and Ps. 22. This practice may be used in personal, family, or group prayer.

Singing the psalms: The psalms are made for singing; see pages 181-182, above. Families should try to sing a simple psalm, or at least to sing its refrain while verses are read by one person. The responsorial psalm from Sunday may be used, or a common seasonal psalm, or another one known by the family.

Penitential psalms: The Church encourages us to pray for sinners, beginning with ourselves. We may use the penitential psalms in this way. In words inspired by the Holy Spirit, we ask God for his mercy and pardon for ourselves and all the world.

From the sixth century, seven psalms were seen as particularly appropriate for use by penitents: These are Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143. Innocent III (1198-1216) commanded that they should be prayed during Lent. In the reform of the office of St. Pius X, the penitential psalms became part of lenten office for Fridays. They are no longer included in the present form of the liturgy of the hours, but may be considered as suitable for prayer in Lent; during a penance celebration or when preparing for the sacrament of reconciliation; and on days of fast, retreat, or renewal.

Personal copies of the psalms: Practical suggestions on personal and family bibles and on their use are given in A book for God’s people, in Bulletin 63, pages 79-85.

Related to the liturgical season: Certain psalms are traditionally used in particular seasons of the year: see page 177, above. The seasonal responsorial psalms are given at the beginning of each season in Catholic Book of Worship II: for example, see nos. 110-111, for Advent.

Learning more about the psalms: Individuals and families can learn more about the psalms if they wish. This Bulletin opens the door to their meaning and their use. Many references are suggested in the footnotes and “Helpful reading” section of the articles, and in Resources on the psalms, pages 187-189.

Pick up the psalter, and use it in prayer. Take a particular psalm, and pray it. Study it. Read the notes and references about it. Gradually start to understand what makes it tick. Ps. 8 is a good one to start with (see pages 154-155). Then try Ps. 23, or Ps. 1, or Ps. 100.

Parishes should help: The parish community should feel its responsibility for helping its members to grow in prayer; see Prayer life of the parish, in Bulletin 66, pages 262-265; A teacher of prayer, in no. 68, pages 70-71. Ideas which parishes may use in teaching their people to pray some psalms are described in Bulletin 63, pages 99-100; no. 44, page 170.

* * *

The Holy Spirit inspired the psalms. He is within us, ready to help us to sing them and pray them (Rom. 8: 26-27). Let us ask him to teach us to pray the psalms as well as we can.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Many articles on the seasons of Advent and Christmas are contained in past issues of the Bulletin. These references are listed in the index in Bulletin 61, pages 305-307.

Three issues, nos. 36, 41, and 55, have concentrated on Advent and Christmas, and include many practical helps for their preparation and celebration. A second and updated edition of Bulletin 36 was issued in 1977. The spirituality of these seasons is discussed in Bulletin 70, and planning for them in no. 67.

Advent penance celebrations: Outlines and prayers are contained in Bulletins 36, 41, 46, 51, 55, 61, and 66; see also no. 71, page 235.

KEEPING UP TO DATE

How can you keep up to date in liturgy?

Subscribe to the National Bulletin on Liturgy, and read it regularly. Look up the many articles it suggests from past issues, and read some of the books it recommends in reviews and references.

Subscriptions for 1980, for nos. 72-76, are still available: $6.00 in Canada; $8.00 (U.S. funds) in other countries; airmail to other countries, $4.00 extra (U.S. funds). Send your cheque or money order today to Publications Service, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1, Canada.
OTHER NOTES

RESOURCES ON THE PSALMS

As well as the references mentioned in the footnotes and as "Helpful reading" in the articles in this Bulletin, the following publications are most useful to those who want to learn more about praying the psalms.

Bibles

Every complete bible contains the psalter. There are many versions of the book of psalms. Some practical English translations of the psalms are contained in these bibles:

- The Jerusalem Bible (JB)
- The New American Bible (NAB)
- The Revised Standard Version (RSV)
- The New English Bible (NEB)
- Good News Bible (Today's English Version, or TEV). The psalter was reviewed in Bulletin 33, pages 66-67. It is now called The Psalms for Today.

Psalters

The psalters from the above bibles are often printed in separate books, or in combination with the New Testament. Other translations of the psalms are also available:


- "Psalms Selections," in Service Book (1969, United Church of Canada, 85 St. Clair Ave. East, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1M8); see pages 43-202. (See description on page 185 of this Bulletin.)

- Book of Psalms, An Interpretative Version in Measured Rhythm, by Roger Schoenbechler, OSB (1978, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321). This version seeks to keep "some of the rhythmic character and beauty of the original Hebrew text by setting them in lines of measured rhythm."

- The Psalms, translated by Peter Levi, SJ, with an introduction by Nicholas de Lange (1979, Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth, Mdx.).

- The Book of Common Prayer (proposed) . . . Together with The Psalter or Psalms of David According to the Use of The Episcopal Church (1977, The Church Hymnal Corporation, New York; and The Seabury Press, 815 Second Ave., New York, NY 10017). The psalter (pages 581-808) has been translated so that it may be sung easily: it is a careful, modern revision of Coverdale's psalter of 1534-1535. The translators have made a serious effort to avoid discriminatory language: see Ps. 1: "Happy are they" instead of "Blessed is the man."
Lutheran Book of Worship: Minister's Edition (1978, Augsburg Publishing, 426 South Fifth Street, Minneapolis, MN 55415): the psalms are contained on pages 340-440, and are taken from the proposed Book of Common Prayer (above). Psalm prayers are added: see note 3 on page 164, above.


Books and Articles About the Psalms


“Introduction to the Book of Psalms,” in The Jerusalem Bible (1966, Doubleday, Garden City, NY): see pages 779-785; much help is provided in seven carefully written pages.


How to Pray the Psalms, by Gabriel Garrone (1965, Fides, Notre Dame, IN 46446).


The Study of Liturgy, edited by Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, SJ (1978, SPCK, Marylebone Road, London NW1 4DU): see pages 350-402, which provide seven articles on the divine office (liturgy of the hours).


Reaction to God: Man’s Response to God’s Activity in the Psalms, by Leonard Griffith (1979, The Anglican Book Center, 600 Jarvis St., Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2J6).


Cassettes:


The Psalms: A School of Prayer, by Roland E. Murphy: six cassettes and study guide, nos. A542-A547 (National Catholic Reporter, PO Box 281, Kansas City, MO 64141).

Other Books


Egeria’s Travels, by John Wilkinson (1973, SPCK, Marylebone Road, London NW1 4DU).

Dead Sea scrolls: See page 153, above.
**BRIEF BOOK REVIEWS**


The Jewish people have celebrated Passover each spring for some 3,000 years: it is a commemoration of their liberation from slavery in Egypt, celebrated at the time of the barley crop. Christians who want to know more about their own liturgical roots will benefit from this book, since our Easter triduum celebrations have developed within a paschal context. Recommended for parish liturgy committees and catechists.

* * *


This is a balanced book on prayer at the center of our relationship with God. Ten chapters explore prayer in the scriptures and lead us to explore the presence of God, and our response and growth in prayer. Friendship with the Lord Jesus, discernment of spirits, and liturgical celebration are discussed in clear terms, and lead to the final chapter on prayer without ceasing.

Our attitudes toward prayer are shaped by and reveal our attitudes toward God, and our relationship with him; our love, our trust, our faith. Our personal prayer and our communal prayer influence each other deeply.

Fr. Wright gives us a positive book on prayer that should be read carefully by every believer who is serious about Christian worship and personal prayer.

* * *


This practical booklet is intended for lay ministers of the eucharist and for those who form them. Many practical questions are discussed, and the photographs illustrate the text well (except for the strange photo on page 48). A section answering frequent questions is helpful.

Recommended for ministers of communion, parish liturgy committees, and clergy.

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*Decision Making in Your Parish: Effective Ways to Consult the Local Church,* by Leon McKenzie (1980, Twenty-Third Publications, Box 180, West Mystic, CT 06388): paper, photographs. 152 pages. $7.95.

Since Vatican II, conscientious pastors and parish councils have tried to be more sensitive to the ideas, concerns, and feelings of the members of the believing community. Surveys and questionnaires of many kinds were developed locally to find out current needs; they did not always provide the information that was needed.

The author shares his knowledge and experience with parishes that want to ask parishioners about needs and problems. Though it may seem slightly technical at times, the book is worth every moment spent on studying its contents. Recommended to parishes and pastoral councils, and to clergy and catechists.

* * *


This kit contains a series of booklets and folders to be used in organizing a program of renewal through family prayer. Also available is a weekly prayer leaflet, *Let’s Pray Together,* for distribution to each family in the parish. The program is directed by Fr. Patrick Peyton, CSC, assisted by Sr. Theresa Bronner, SFCC, and James Breig.
Like every program, however, the real changes come only through the effort and example of the priest and people in the parish. The program provides helpful tools, but the results depend on the Spirit and the good will of all involved. Further information may be obtained by writing or by phoning Families for Prayer at (518) 462-6450.


This cantata is based on the Russian and Italian legend of a grandmother who was too busy to follow the wise men to Bethlehem, and spent the rest of her life looking for the promised savior. [From a liturgical point of view, one may wonder whether the art form of medieval mystery plays and pageants promotes or distracts from proclamation of the gospel message today.] Singalive! — an earlier work by Swann and Scholey — was reviewed in Bulletin 67, page 47.


This booklet, which is written in Spanish, presents the basics for dialogue within a family, and encourages parents to help their children prepare for the celebration of the sacraments. The publication tries to help each family to benefit from the scriptures in their daily living for Jesus. Recommended.


The renewal that has followed from the Second Vatican Council has helped us to see that the sacraments of Christian initiation — baptism, confirmation, eucharist — are to be celebrated together. Only a person whose theology is based on OPEC principles could link confirmation and the anointing of the sick (chapter 12, pages 77-85); chapter 13 seems to suggest that Mary is one of the sacraments. A good editor could have saved this book from hopeless confusion.


While the title could sound legalistic or rubrical, the contents are not. The author uses canon law to promote a better understanding of the documents which have been involved in the renewal of the liturgy. Fr. Seasoltz reviews the history of liturgical renewal since 1945, and offers frank commentaries on the positive and negative stages in that period. An extensive bibliography of Roman documents, other references (including Bulletins 29, 57, 59, and 64), and a thorough index fill the last 46 pages of the book.

This book helps everyone — young and old — to gain a fuller perspective in liturgical renewal and the legislation that promotes it. Recommended for bishops, clergy, liturgical commissions and committees, and students of liturgy.

Parish Liturgy: An Assessment Program (1980, Worship Office, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 100 East Eighth St., Cincinnati, OH 45202): ii, 16 pages. $3.00 plus 50¢ postage; outside U.S.A., $4.00 plus 50¢ postage; bulk prices available.

This booklet, 8½ by 11 inches in size, provides an efficient tool by which our parish liturgy may be assessed and evaluated. Major areas of worship — initiation, Sunday eucharist, reconciliation, commitment, and sickness and death — are assessed under four headings: catechetical, liturgical, communal, and parish. To each of the statements, those responsible for the liturgy may tick one of five boxes: the overall picture of responses to 267 position statements provides a clear and accurate description of the state of the parish liturgy.

Communities may adapt the booklet, and will benefit from their discussions and from the assessment they make. Recommended for all involved in preparing and celebrating parish liturgies.

Fr. Haering leads us to the biblical meaning of reconciliation as God's initiative. Prayer is an important element in our approach to the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation. The booklet is divided into three sections: basic attitudes and prayers; helps for discovering God's mercy in individual celebration; communal celebration. The twenty-five brief chapters are three or four pages in length, and contain helpful scripture passages and prayers.

Recommended for priests, parishioners, catechists, and liturgy committee members.


Ten helpful and challenging articles on the word of God, its proclamation in the community of faith, and the reader who proclaims the word are contained in this book. One article, on rites of installation and retirement, is adapted from Bulletin 56, pages 298-300.

This book will help readers, clergy, and liturgy committees to explore and recognize more fully the power that flows when God's word is proclaimed and heard in faith. Recommended for every parish and religious community.


This book is a second and revised edition of one published in 1975 (see review in Bulletin 51, pages 332-333). It contains three sections: on ministry, on making music, and on ministering with music. The second section provides much useful material for workshops.

Recommended for musicians, liturgy committees, and clergy.


Books one and two were reviewed in Bulletin 72, page 46. The third book explains the ten commandments from the point of view of children, and tries to summarize the commandments in love, as Jesus did. Recommended for families with children from preschool to 8 or 9 years of age.


The Imitation of Christ is a product of the fourteenth century, a time when the liturgy and the spiritual life of the Church were not in close relationship. This editor has taken the first three books of The Imitation, and provides a concordance of its themes in Latin, along with a list of these themes in English; books one to four are available from the publisher in German. There are no plans for translating it into other languages.