

The Hours of Prayer

Introduction

After a recent sermon a number of people have requested an outline of the “Hours of Prayer” that was mentioned. The sermon was based on Luke 11:1-13. I highly recommend that you read the passage. The point of the sermon was to offer an ordered way for you to pray throughout your day. Spontaneous prayers are always welcomed by God. God is readily available. However, spiritual growth requires discipline on our part as well. Perhaps as an act of devotion to God, you might schedule time in your day to stop and pray.

I did not invent the “Hours of Prayer.” I adapted this practice from its use in various Christian churches throughout history beginning with the Benedictine Community. Use this method as you wish. Or don’t use it. I offer it merely as a means to remind you of God’s desire to hear and speak with you. These are simply aids to help you on your spiritual journey. Whatever method you follow for prayer may your prayers strengthen you to serve the risen Christ.

Grace and Peace,

Allan

The Hours of Prayer

The First Prayer: When you wake up in the morning.

Give a prayer of thanksgiving for the day ahead naming the ways God is good and worthy to be praise. Name the blessings in your life and give God thanks for them.

This is the day that the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it! – Psalm 118:24

God's true love is surely not ended, God's compassion has not ceased; they are new every morning, as sure as the sunrise. The Lord is all I have; so I wait in patient hope. The Lord is good to those who trust, sending help to all who seek; so it is best to wait patiently- to wait patiently for the Lord to save us. – Lamentations 3:22-26

The Second Prayer: As you begin your day

Think about what lies ahead this day. Review what your schedule is. Consider the challenges or temptations that may come your way. Pray a prayer to prepare you to face the day as you go out in the world. This is a time to ask God to arm you with what you need whether it is humility, courage, strength, compassion, or a listening heart.

Ask and it will be given to you.... Luke 11:9

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

- From "St. Patrick's Breastplate."

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

Amen. - Prayer of St. Francis

The Third Prayer: Noon

This is a time of prayer for intercession. At this hour you will be asking God to intervene in the situations you've encountered already today and/or to intervene in the lives of others who are on your mind and heart. Mainly this is a prayer for what your neighbor (family, friends, strangers, enemy) needs. When we pray for others, our love for them will increase.

Let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them. – Psalm 32:6

Do not worry about anything, but in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:6-7

The Fourth Prayer: Afternoon

This prayer is for later in the afternoon. It is a prayer asking God to take over what you are worried about. Place your anxieties or fears, troubles or challenging situations, before God and entrust them to God's providence. This is a prayer of surrender, of letting go.

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

- Romans 8:26-27

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
trusting that He will make all things right

if I surrender to His Will;
so that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
forever and ever in the next.

Amen. – Reinhold Niebuhr “Serenity Prayer”

The Fifth Prayer: Early evening

The day is done. You reflect upon how your day. How did you allow prayer to shape the pattern of your day? How do you allow God to work in your life and through the lives of those around you? This is an opportunity to repent, to turn and return to God for the times and ways you have sinned, or fallen short of the calling of Christ today. The measure for us is the way of Jesus. How has his way been operative in your thoughts, actions and words today? We learn through confession and repentance.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Psalm 139:23

We know that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:39

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

-1 John 1:8-9

Merciful God for the things I've done that I regret, forgive me.

For the things I have failed to do that I regret, forgive me.

For all the times I have acted without love, forgive me.

For all the times I reacted without thought, forgive me.

For all the times I withdrew care, forgive me.

For all the times I failed to forgive, forgive me.

For hurtful words said and helpful words unsaid, for unfinished tasks and unfulfilled hopes, God of all time, forgive me and help me to lay down my burden of regret.

Amen.¹

¹ The Worship Sourcebook (Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2004), 96

The Final Prayer: At Bedtime

This is a prayer for peace through the night and a prayer of entrusting oneself to God.

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

– Psalm 121:5-8

O Lord, support us all the daylong of this troublous life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then Lord, in your mercy, grant us safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at last; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Book of Common Prayer

I am now going into the sleep, be it that I in health shall waken; if death be to me in the death-sleep, be it that on Thine own arm, O God of Grace, I in peace shall waken; be it on Thine own Beloved arm, O God of Grace, that I in peace shall waken.

- Carmina Gadelica