

Pray Without Ceasing

Sacred scripture tells us to pray without ceasing. In fact St Paul tells us specifically in his first letter to the Thessalonians (5:16-18) to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

The Rule tells us that by meditation, prayer, reflection on the scriptures, and the teachings of the Church, Vincentians seek to develop their awareness of God, develop their relationship with the poor and bear witness by acts of kindness in the spirit of Christ.

One way that this reflection on scripture can be experienced is by praying the Liturgy of the Hours. It is the official set of prayers marking the hours of each day in prayer and sanctifying the day in prayer. It consists primarily of psalms, supplemented by hymns, readings and other prayers including the “Our Father” prayer.

The Liturgy of the Hours is prayed each day by priests and religious. Even in the ordination rite of a deacon, he promises to pray the hours. Laity, especially if they are involved in ministries in the Church, such as lector, minister of communion, catechists and others are strongly encouraged to take time in prayer each day. The Liturgy of the Hours is a perfect way to do this. In simple form, prayer may be offered in the morning, in the evening. The character of Morning Prayer is that of praise and for Evening Prayer the focus is on thanksgiving.

The Liturgy of the hours is primarily based on the psalms. Praying the psalms opens up a whole new way of approaching God. This often helps people enter the presence of God. The words written are of those who followed God in ancient times. It is their call to God in their time of need, in their time of despair and in their time of joy. The writer asks for the gift of his presence, the gift of God Himself. As one prays the liturgy of the hours, one often finds the words reflect what is happening in one’s own life that very moment.

Most times you would offer the Hours in private, by yourself. Many parishes and especially religious communities offer opportunities to pray the hours together. It can then be offered in a way that the psalms are sung, as they were intended to be, since the Psalms were actually originally Songs.

There is one interesting idea that many do not realize. Since these prayers are offered at various times of the day all around the world, that means that praise and thanksgiving is being given to God constantly. The faithful pray unceasingly.

I encourage you to experience this form of prayer, this way of experiencing God.

The Liturgy of the Hours can be purchased in paper form at your local Catholic Bookstore. It is also a free application from the Apple Computer Software store for your Ipad or Iphone or you can subscribe to certain web sites to view it online on our computer at home.

Through unceasing prayer we acknowledge our continual dependence upon and communion with the Father. This will help us receive the graces we need to serve Christ in the poor.

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