

## CHAPTER 12

### LITURGY OF THE HOURS

- 12.1.1 The sacrifice of praise (*sacrificium laudis*) is realized above all in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, but it is prepared for and is continued in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. This liturgy, in which the whole Church pours out her praise to God, prolongs the Eucharistic celebration and brings us back to it.<sup>1392</sup>
- 12.1.2 The principal form of the Liturgy of the Hours is the communal recitation, either in a community of clerics or of religious, with the participation of the faithful, however, being very desirable.<sup>1393</sup>
- 12.1.3 The bishop, as the representative of Christ and high priest of his flock, should be the first of all the members of the Church in offering prayer. Whenever possible and especially in the cathedral church, the bishop should celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours together with his priests and ministers with the full and active participation of the people.<sup>1394</sup>
- 12.1.4 Nevertheless, the Liturgy of the Hours, also called the Divine Office or Breviary, in no way lacks efficacy when it is recited alone, or in a certain private manner, because even in this case, “these prayers are realized privately but they do not ask for private things.” These prayers do not constitute a private act but rather form part of the public worship of the Church, in such a way that upon reciting the Hours, the sacred minister fulfills the ecclesial duty to which he committed himself at his ordination: the priest or deacon who in the intimacy of the Church, or of an oratory, or his

---

<sup>1392</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002; cf. GILH 12. USCCA p. 174. “Now that the prayer of Holy Church has been reformed and entirely revised in keeping with its very ancient tradition and in the light of the needs of our day, it is to be hoped above all that the Liturgy of the Hours may pervade and penetrate the whole of Christian prayer, giving it life, direction, and expression and effectively nourishing the spiritual life of the people of God.... This prayer takes its unity from the heart of Christ Himself, for our Redeemer desired ‘that the life He had entered upon in His mortal body with supplications and with His sacrifice should continue without interruption through the ages in His Mystical Body, which is the Church.’ Because of this, the prayer of the Church is at the same time ‘the very prayer that Christ Himself, together with His Body, addresses to the Father.’ As we celebrate the Office, therefore, we must recognize our own voices echoing in Christ, and His voice echoing in us.” Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Laudis canticum* (1970), quoting Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* (1947) 2; SC 84; Saint Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 85, 1.

<sup>1393</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002; cf. GILH 12. USCCA p. 174: “This public prayer of the Church is intended for the whole People of God. All God’s people can participate in it according to their calling and circumstances.”

<sup>1394</sup> CB 187, 190.

- residence, gives himself over to the celebration of the Divine Office effects, even when there may be no one who is accompanying him, an act which is eminently ecclesial in the name of the Church and in favor of all the Church, and inclusive of all humanity.<sup>1395</sup>
- 12.1.5 In the rite of diaconal ordination, the sacred minister asks for and receives from the Church the mandate of the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours, which mandate pertains to the orbit of ministerial responsibilities of the ordained, and goes beyond that of his personal piety. Sacred ministers, along with the bishops, find themselves joined in the ministry of intercession for the People of God who have been entrusted to them, as they were to Moses, to the Apostles, and to the same Jesus Christ “who is at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for us.” Similarly, the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours states: “Those who pray the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours do so not so much in their own name as in the name of the entire Body of Christ.”<sup>1396</sup>
- 12.1.6 Since the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours is truly the liturgy of the Church, pastors are encouraged to invite the faithful to communal recitations of some parts of it in church—for example morning or evening prayer, accompanied by an appropriate catechesis if circumstances so suggest.<sup>1397</sup>
- 12.1.7 Priests as well as deacons aspiring to the priesthood are obliged to fulfill the Liturgy of the Hours daily in accordance with the proper and approved liturgical books. The integral and daily celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours is, for priests and deacons on the way to the priesthood, a substantial part of their ecclesial ministry.<sup>1398</sup>

---

<sup>1395</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002; cf. GILH 12; Gilbertus de Holland, *Sermo XXIII in Canticum Canticatorum*.

<sup>1396</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002; cf. Exodus 17: 8-16; 1 Timothy 2: 1-6; Romans 8: 34; GILH 108. The Response says, “Those who have been ordained are morally bound, in virtue of the same ordination they have received, to the celebration or the entire and daily recitation of the Divine Office such as is canonically established in canon 276 § 2, n. 3 of the CIC, cited previously. This recitation does not have for its part the nature of a private devotion or of a pious exercise realized by the personal will alone of the cleric but rather is an act proper to the sacred ministry and pastoral office.”

<sup>1397</sup> AS 149, cf. SC 99-100. Rev. Edward McNamara, L.C., *Zenit*, 2 December 2008: “[B]efore Vatican II the possibility of realizing a liturgical act depended on having a canonical delegation. For this reason a layperson who prayed the Divine Office technically performed a pious act but not a liturgical one. A nun, who prayed the same text in virtue of a canonical deputation, was deemed as participating in the liturgy. After Vatican II the capacity to act liturgically was no longer grounded canonically but rather on the basis of having received the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. Thus, any Catholic who prays the Liturgy of the Hours as the prayer of the Church acts liturgically.”

<sup>1398</sup> CIC can. 276 §2 3°. CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002: “Only an impoverished vision would look at this responsibility as a mere fulfilling of a canonical obligation, even though it is such, and not keep in mind that the sacramental ordination confers on the deacon and on the priest a special office to

- 12.1.8 Although they are not bound by universal church law to say the whole of the Liturgy of the Hours every day, permanent deacons should not hold themselves lightly excused from the obligation they have to recite morning and evening prayer.<sup>1399</sup>
- 12.1.9 A serious reason of health, pastoral service in ministry, an act of charity, or fatigue, and not a simple inconvenience, may excuse the partial recitation or even the entire Divine Office, according to the general principle that establishes that a mere ecclesiastical law does not bind when a serious inconvenience is present.<sup>1400</sup>
- 12.1.10 The total or partial omission of the Office due to laziness alone or due to the performance of activities of unnecessary diversion is not licit, and even more so, constitutes an underestimation, according to the gravity of the matter, of the ministerial office and of the positive law of the Church.<sup>1401</sup>
- 12.1.11 To omit the Hours of Morning Prayer (Lauds) and Evening Prayer (Vespers) requires a greater reason still, given that these Hours are the “double hinge of the daily Office.”<sup>1402</sup>
- 12.1.12 If a priest must celebrate Mass several times on the same day or hear confessions for several hours or preach several times on the same day, and this causes him fatigue, he may consider, with tranquility of conscience, that he has a legitimate excuse for omitting a proportionate part of the Office.<sup>1403</sup>
- 12.1.13 The proper ordinary of the priest or deacon can, for a just or serious reason, according to the case, dispense him totally or partially from the recitation of the Divine Office, or commute it to another act of piety (as, for example, the rosary, the Stations of the Cross, a biblical or spiritual reading, a time of mental prayer reasonably prolonged).<sup>1404</sup>

---

lift up to the one and triune God praise for His goodness, for His sovereign beauty, and for his merciful design for our supernatural salvation. Along with praise, priests and deacons present before the Divine Majesty a prayer of intercession so as to worthily respond to the spiritual and temporal necessities of the Church and all humanity.”

<sup>1399</sup> NCCB, Complementary Norm for Canon 276, November 1984, amended September 1985; USCCB, Bishops’ Committee on the Diaconate, National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States, 2004, 90.

<sup>1400</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002.

<sup>1401</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002.

<sup>1402</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002; cf. SC 89.

<sup>1403</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002.

<sup>1404</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002.

- 12.1.14 The Office of Readings does not have a strict time assigned, and may be celebrated at any hour, and it can be omitted if there exists one of the reasons mentioned in 12.1.12. According to custom, the Office of Readings may be celebrated any time beginning with the evening hours or nighttime hours of the previous day, after Evening Prayer (Vespers).<sup>1405</sup>
- 12.1.15 The same holds true for the “intermediate hours,” which, nevertheless, have no set time for their celebration. For their recitation, the time that intervenes between morning and afternoon should be observed. Outside of choir, of the three hours, Mid-Morning Prayer (Tertia), Mid-Day Prayer, (Sexta) and Mid-Afternoon Prayer (Nona), it is fitting to select one of these three, the one that more easily corresponds to the time of day, so that the tradition of praying during the day, in the midst of working, be maintained.<sup>1406</sup>
- 12.1.16 Morning Prayer (Lauds) should be recited during the morning hours and Evening Prayer (Vespers) during the evening hours, as the names of these parts of the Office indicate. If someone cannot recite Morning Prayer (Lauds) in the morning, he has the obligation of reciting it as soon thereafter as possible. In the same way, if Evening Prayer (Vespers) cannot be recited during the evening hours, it must be recited as soon thereafter as possible. In other words, the obstacle, which impedes the observation of the “true time of the hours,” is not by itself a cause that excuses the recitation either of Morning Prayer (Lauds) or of Evening Prayer (Vespers), because it is a question of the “Principal Hours” which “merit the greatest esteem.”<sup>1407</sup>
- 12.1.17 The Order for Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist provides several settings for the Liturgy of the Hours and two Eucharistic Services of Prayer and Praise. These liturgies are designed to “acknowledge Christ’s marvelous presence in the sacrament and invites us to the spiritual union with him that culminates in sacramental Communion.”<sup>1408</sup>
- 12.1.18 Whoever willingly recites the Liturgy of the Hours and endeavors to celebrate the praises of the Creator of the universe with dedication, can at least recite the psalmody of the hour that has been omitted without the hymn and conclude with only a short reading and the prayer.<sup>1409</sup>

---

<sup>1405</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002; cf. GILH 59.

<sup>1406</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002; cf. GILH 77.

<sup>1407</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002; cf. SC 89; GILH 40.

<sup>1408</sup> CDW, Devotions and Eucharistic Adoration; cf. Roman Ritual, Order for Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist (1993) 7; cf. HCWEOM 96.

<sup>1409</sup> CDWDS, Response, in BCLN February 2002.

12.1.19 The priest or deacon who presides at a celebration may wear a cope and stole over the alb or cassock and surplice; a deacon may wear a dalmatic over an alb and stole. On greater solemnities the wearing of the cope by many priests or of the dalmatic by many deacons is permitted.<sup>1410</sup>

---

<sup>1410</sup> GILH 255; CB 192, 209.