

THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

The rhythmic pattern of monastic life is anchored and nurtured by gathering regularly for liturgical prayer and daily Eucharist. Our prayer streams from the basic human need to pray, to come before God in thanksgiving, in praise, in wonder, and sometimes in sorrow or pain.

The ancient psalms express well this broad range of human emotion before God, and it is the Psalter that we use when we gather morning and evening to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. We pray not just for ourselves but on behalf of the entire People of God and the needs of the world.

Gathering as a community to chant the Psalms is a tradition that goes back to the earliest days of Christian monasticism. It derives from the ancient Jewish practice of gathering to pray at fixed times of the day, a practice that was retained by the first generations of Christians.

Saint Benedict placed a high value on the Liturgy of the Hours, exhorting his monks that “nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God.” Throughout the centuries, the Liturgy of the Hours has remained a defining element of monastic life. We have inherited this tradition, and approach the liturgy as a sacred task and cherished responsibility.

In addition to the Psalms, the readings, responses, antiphons, and canticles of the Liturgy of the Hours draw deeply from the springs of Sacred Scripture, keeping the community continually immersed in the Word of God.

(adapted from the Benedictine Sisters of Cullman, AL)