
AMEN

an occasional publication of the Liturgical Commission of the Diocese of New York
liturgy.diocesen.org ✕ Summer 2002

The Daily Office

The first liturgical instruction to appear in our Prayer Book enjoins our parishes to observe a schedule of worship that transcends the divisions over Morning Prayer and Eucharistic churchmanship that had been the norm for the past century and a half: “The Holy Eucharist, the principal act of Christian worship on the Lord’s Day and other major Feasts, and Daily Morning and Evening Prayer, as set forth in this Book, are the regular services appointed for public worship in this Church.” (BCP, p. 13) By following this pattern, the Episcopal Church conforms to an annual cycle of worship prescribed in the first English Prayer Books and practiced by the earliest Christians.

Nonetheless, the partisan squabbles of the past few generations still manage to cloud the interpretation of this clear, straightforward rubric. For example, many seem to think that all the parishes of our Church are to be “Eucharistic parishes” now that the Prayer Book explicitly states that the Eucharist is the chief service on Sundays and other Holy Days, and that any increase in the frequency of Eucharistic celebration on the said days must necessarily be offset by the decrease of Morning and Evening Prayer. This is simply not true. The Prayer Book’s mandate that the Holy Eucharist be the *principal* act of worship on certain prescribed days does not make the celebration of the Sacrament the *only* act of worship on those days. Similarly, on the remaining days of the year, recitation of the Offices is by no means a less catholic way to worship than a celebration of the Eucharist. For proof, one need only look at the Eastern Orthodox Churches, where the Sunday Divine Liturgy (preceded by Mattins) is normally the only Eucharist celebrated during the week, and weekday Vespers and Saturday vigil services are commonplace.

As a result of these misconceptions, parishes often over-concentrate their aesthetic efforts on the main Sunday Eucharist and pass up the literally dozens of opportunities that the Prayer Book affords them during any given month to vary the look and feel of their public worship. This issue of *AMEN!* will suggest ways in which parishes can use the Daily Offices

for the enrichment of their liturgical life, from trying other styles of *son et lumière*, to education and outreach (through Bible studies based on Scripture read at the Offices, meditations, lectures, etc.) and practical matters of parish life, such as using mandatory attendance at Morning Prayer as a way to ensure that your acolytes show up on time for the Sunday Eucharist. By encouraging more frequent recitation of the Daily Offices, we hope to alert the faithful to the riches of our Church’s liturgy and help them find new ways to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
—Douglas Hayes

Some Suggestions for the Daily Office

We present some suggestions on celebrating the Divine Office — not because we want to diminish the importance of the Eucharist — but because we recognize the importance of the Divine Office. If, as Jeffrey Lee has written in *Opening the Prayer Book*, we think of Baptism and the Eucharist as the heart of the Prayer Book, then might we not look at the Divine Office as its soul? The Divine Office complements the celebration of the Eucharist. It gives the faithful an opportunity to sanctify their day. It can be the means by which we are reminded that we live in the presence of our Triune God. Whether in the setting of our parish church or at home or anywhere, we are united with all those who seek to observe this liturgy of the hours.
—Joseph Costa

Jill Burnett reports that St. Bart’s Manhattan has the Office on its regular daily schedule. Large parishes in urban settings are not the only ones that can find willing volunteers to lead the Office: Jean Campbell has shared Zion, Wappingers Falls’ ministry named in honor of Saint Benedict, in which members of the congregation commit to officiating at the Office on a regular basis, so that at least one Office is offered publicly in the church every day.

Some additional ideas, in no particular order:

- Use the Office of Morning Prayer as the Liturgy of the Word from time to time. Tobias Haller notes that at Saint James Fordham in the Bronx this happens on every “fifth Sunday” in a month, which is also designated as Youth Sunday. Young people from the congregation read the lessons and serve as ushers, and older members get to sing the canticles they remember so fondly from their childhood.
- Gather your acolytes half an hour before the Eucharist and use Morning Prayer as a way to focus and establish a prayerful atmosphere.
- When a rota of officiants is established, consider appointing two people for each office, as “congregant” and possible backup

- Encourage people to say the Office privately, but with an intention for awareness of the unity of the Church.
- Make use of the Office as an opening for weekday Bible study, seasonally or year-round. An open discussion or reflection can be incorporated into the Office following the readings, in place of a homily.

These suggestions just scratch the surface of possibilities. If you have any other thoughts, other things you do in your parish, share them with us. Write to The Rev. Tobias S. Haller, BSG, Chair, Liturgical Commission, Saint James Fordham, 2500 Jerome Avenue, Bronx NY 10468.

On the Prayers of the People

at Baptism and Confirmation

Many parishes are familiar with the “liturgical hiccup” that happens when, after the Peace at Baptism or Confirmation the congregation moves into the Prayers of the People. Because the congregation has already joined in the Prayers for the Candidates, this can sometimes produce a feeling of *déjà vu*. We would like to offer the following suggestions for addressing this situation.

First, the Prayer Book clearly permits the omission of the Prayers of the People at Baptism and Confirmation (pages 310 and 419). This may be the simplest and preferred option.

However, if it is desired to include the Prayers of the People, some transition from the Peace into the Prayers would be helpful. Even in places where the passing of the Peace is observed without great to-do, this moment is a “hinge” in the liturgy, and while the Offertory Sentence exists to help refocus the congregation’s attention when moving into the Offertory, the Prayers of the People would benefit, in this case, from a similar transitional introduction.

Although few parishes if any observe the ancient custom of dismissing baptismal candidates before the prayers begin, at Baptism this will be the first time that a person will join in the Prayers *as a baptized person*. This is, without doubt, why the provision for retaining the Prayers at this point exists. It would therefore be appropriate for the deacon or celebrant, or person leading the prayers, to say, prior to the Prayers of the People, some brief introductory sentence, such as, “And now, joining with the newly baptized, let us offer our prayers of intercession and thanksgiving.” This would greatly ease the transition from the Peace into the Prayers. To deal with the absence of the expected Peace at the *end* of the Prayers, the Celebrant may wish to be prepared to make use of the Offertory Sentence, if announcements do not come at that time.

September 11, 2002

The first anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon will soon be upon us. Resources for observing this day will be made available on the Liturgy Commission website. Until then, we offer this Collect:

Almighty God, you have brought us to this day through a year of suffering and conflict: Help us to turn our hands from the urge for vengeance to the works of justice, and to turn the voice of mourning to the proclamation of your peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

Liturgical Leaders List

Please help us gather information on Liturgical Leadership in the Diocese of New York. This would include organists, choir directors, clergy or lay assistants or associates who have specific responsibility, skills, or interest in liturgy or liturgical planning. Please fill in the following form and send it to Br. Thomas Mark Liotta, Convention Office, Diocese of New York, 1047 Amsterdam Avenue, New York NY 10025, for inclusion in the Diocesan Leadership Database. This will also ensure that liturgical leaders will be added to the mailing list for this publication. Thank you.

Parish Name

Parish Place

Liturgical Leaders and Resource People (other than member of clergy in charge of the congregation)

Name

Position or role

Address

.....

Name

Position or role

Address

.....

(If additional space is needed please use a separate sheet.)

This document is available in Adobe Acrobat PDF (Portable Document Format) from the Diocesan Liturgical Commission website (liturgy.dioceseny.org).