

PATHWAYS TO PRAYER
NEWS FROM YOUR RIVER PRAYER TEAM
SEPTEMBER 2010

PRAYING WITH THE CHURCH

As you become more familiar with prayer, you may hear the terms “praying the offices” or “praying the hours.” SAY WHAT?!

Also known as “praying with the church”, these are written prayers spoken at specific times during the day. It is part of the tradition of all three Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Yes, when we pray at specified hours happens we participate in one of those traditions. This does not HAVE TO MEAN that we would choose to pray at a set hour each morning and evening, but for some of us it helps us develop a habit and rhythm that reminds us to offer a portion of each day to God. Prayer books, in their earliest forms (think here THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER) assisted people in having a set of prayers to follow...people were not expected to pray extemporaneously. And some believers today still struggle finding a comfortable way to converse with the Lord.

There are many fine books available today; I particularly recommend anything by Phyllis Tickle. All prayer books usually have a time for reflection included, so there is plenty of opportunity to get in those

personal praises and intercessions for others. There are similar components to the different methods of prayer used by different authors and movements. For starters, there are Morning Prayers. Some have Mid-Day Prayers, Evening Prayers and Vespers (the last prayers of the evening). Morning Prayers praise the glory of God. Mid-day prayers are usually short and concise. The Evening Prayers, or Vespers (Latin for “evening star”) are prayers of reflection and gratitude. Some prayer books also include a Compline (Latin for “complete”), which follows the Vespers at which time we surrender to God’s grace for the night. Each prayer time has it’s own schedule (i.e. Morning Prayers are to said on the hour or half hour between 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.). The prayer offerings generally include an Opening Prayer, a Psalm, a short reading, time for reflection, the Lord’s Prayer and a Collect, or closing prayer.

When I first began this practice, I found myself looking forward to picking up my prayer book, like I had a date with the Lord. And I have always found comfort that by “praying with the church” in this manner I am, at any given time, praying

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with millions of believers around the world.

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I know when I don't feel like I have the energy or can't find the words to bring to Him; this form of prayer has been a blessing. And the prayers and readings are always beautiful.

Don't hesitate to speak to me if you have an interest in learning more and/or seeing some prayer books and getting some recommendations.

P.S. EXTRA BONUS!

Praying the hours will help you to be able to know what time it is in the Bible! For example, in Acts when it refers to Peter and John going to pray in their "ninth hour prayer", so we know it is three o'clock.

How?

Rome began the day by ringing the forum bell at 6:00 a.m. The bell struck again at 9:00 a.m. (the third hour); sounded the lunch bell at noon,(the sixth hour); called citizens back to work at 3:00 (the ninth hour) and closed the markets for the day at 6:00 p.m. (the twelfth hour).