

Lauds and Vespers in This Book

These services are meant for families, friends, and parishes. Lauds and Vespers are cathedral liturgy, prayer for the people.

As given here, Lauds and Vespers are not regulated by Church law. This is why the services do not bear the official titles of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. This is why Lauds and Vespers in this book are not intended for individual recitation by monks or clergy. Unlike the official liturgy of the hours, these services are not meant for use by one person, praying alone, or by a group of individuals who use monastic liturgy.

However, the overall structure of Lauds and Vespers coincides with that of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer. It is expressly permitted to choose other Psalms and Canticles, for the benefit of the people who are present. Therefore, it is in accord with the official rite to use a “cathedral” form of these services, with more familiar Psalms and Canticles.

Practical Suggestions

As far as possible, sing the liturgy from beginning to end. The Scripture reading may be recited, of course, as may the blessing and dismissal. Otherwise, singing is most important. The ideal is that the people know the entire liturgy by heart and can readily join in, without even opening the hymnbook. Singing also helps build up a sense of unity in the celebration.

To meet the needs of the people, to sustain a “cathedral” or a “parish” form of prayer, there should be relatively little variety in Lauds and Vespers. It is true that other Psalms may be sung and other prayers used. In this book, however, one set of choices is presented. This is done not to restrict freedom but to develop familiarity. Lauds and Vespers should be as easy for people to pray as the Rosary or the Stations of the Cross. In this way, it will be possible to celebrate the Church’s prayer at home, before family meals or as night prayer, at parish meetings, in community gatherings, and on other occasions.

Priests and other religious leaders will be tempted to increase variety in the service. They should resist this temptation and keep the liturgy much the same. In this way, it will become more and more familiar as the years go on.

Finally, it is fitting for people to stand for the whole service. Since we stand for the Gospel and all during Communion, we know that standing is a position of reverence and attention. Standing also makes singing easier and allows for more freedom in movement.