

USING THE SAINT GREGORY'S PRAYER BOOK

Brand, Clinton A., Editor, *Saint Gregory's Prayer Book*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2019.

In his First Letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter Five, Verse 16, Saint Paul tells us to "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing..." That great Anglican Poet and Divine George Herbert (1593-1632) puts that same injunction in the third verse of his famous hymn, "King of Glory, King of Peace":

Sev'n whole days, not one in sev'n,
I will praise Thee;
In my my heart, though not in heav'n,
I can raise Thee.
Small it is in this poort sort
To enroll Thee:
E'en eternity's too short
To extol Thee.

The Saint Gregory Prayer book is the result of a number of years worth of labour on the part of an international team among the three Personal Ordinariates. Their aim was to create a book of prayers for everyone in the Ordinariates and beyond, that would express that arm of the English Patrimony which aims to help us follow the aim of praying without ceasing. A particular concern for them was that this book not be just for the clergy, and religious, but primarily for the laity. Thus, everyone is encouraged to use these prayers regardless of their state in life.

Generally speaking, as noted in the Preface, the liturgical life that we have inherited in our tradition is one of sobriety, decency, and is rather, on the whole, restrained. The Divine Office, Mattins and Evensong, are beautiful expressions and acts of worship of Almighty God. They are well-ordered, and contain in themselves means for sanctifying the day. There is no greater prayer, of course, than the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Primarily these three great hinges of the daily round of the Church's prayer are very much public. Their nature demands community. The whole of our prayer lives, flowing from and returning to the Eucharist, and guided by the Divine Office's instruction, however, require an unceasing work of prayer. The Church, too, enjoins us to make our lives an act of prayer, because prayer *is* our relationship with God. That is where this devotional book helps us.

We pray with our whole being: through our bodily posture, in our emotions, with our heart and mind, and with our whole soul. Primarily, though, what we require is that food of thought, habits, words, understandings, that form us in prayer. If prayer is our relationship with God, then there are certain words that may be said over and over again. Just as one says, "I love you", not once, but endlessly, in our close human relationships, so too, one may repeat over and over those kinds of loving phrases and words that express our prayer. Our Lord himself gave us a form of address to God in the Our Father. The Archangel Gabriel gives us the form of address to Our Lady. Jesus demonstrates intercessory prayer when he says, "I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail." St Paul and the Synoptic Gospels, for instance, all recall the words used to consecrate the Eucharist. Within the New Testament we find traces of the earliest prayers, even in the introductions St Paul makes - "Blessed be the God..." "Grace and peace to you..." and so on. So we have ample reason to trust that forms of words may be used as prayer, remembering always that such prayers are not magic - they don't put God in debt to us - they aren't talismans to ward off evil - they aren't, of themselves, enough. The forms of words we use require the simultaneous movement of our heart and that we have intention behind them. This combination we more familiarly term, "DEVOTION." So, now to the book itself. Let's go through the contents, and I will use the titles in the Contents page. Remember: "*De gustibus non est disputandum!*"

OUTLINE OF THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

Mostly lists - Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, Sacraments, Precepts of the Church, etc - and a good outline of what prayer is

COMMON FORMS OF PRAYER & PROFESSIONS OF FAITH

These are all the standard Catholic prayers in English and also the main ones are given additionally in Latin (the official language of the Catholic Church) - the Our Father, Hail Mary, etc, but at the end of this section is Grace before and after Meals, also in both English and Latin which is really useful

VARIOUS PRAYERS & INTERCESSIONS

These are redolent with the English Patrimony, especially featuring many pre-Reformation ones. There's a little section in this called Arrow Prayers, which are short statement-like prayers for urgent or simple use at various times and circumstances - short enough to memorise, thus raising the mind and heart to God quickly when circumstances need us to do so.

DEVOTIONS FOR THE DAYS OF THE WEEK & THE HOURS OF THE DAY (MORNING, MIDDAY, EVENING)

We sanctify time by our prayers, and sometimes that is more explicit - such as in this section. The Days of the Week prayers might be said before your Lectio Divina, or your time of contemplative prayer, or when attending Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, or even perhaps joined with Grace Before Meals! The times of day prayers are the sort of prayers you might include before saying the Divine Office, but they are not necessarily linked. Some of them are actually said in the Divine Office - for instance the Collects of the Little Hours (Terce, Sext, and None) are given. Notable among these is that An Order of Compline is given in its entirety. As a devotional practice, rather than a public celebration of the Hour, it is most suitable just before going to bed. There are, however, other prayers also for waking and sleeping as well. It is after this order of Compline that you will find the Marian Anthems, the Alma Redemptoris Mater, the Ave Regina Caelorum, the Regina Caeli, and the Salve Regina. These were originally what were referred to in the Book of Common Prayer's famous rubric: "in quires and places where they sing..."

A SELECTION OF PSALMS

A very useful collection of Psalms for personal prayer. We all have our favourites, but these ones are especially useful as devotions. The Gradual and the Penitential Psalms are given, and the latter are also used for the Penitential Devotions and so aren't reprinted again in the book, so you come back here for them. The Gradual Psalms are the ones said at Terce, Sext, and None.

DIVINE WORSHIP COLLECTS FOR SUNDAYS, SOLEMNITIES, & FEASTS

These are given so that you can make the Sunday and Holy Day Collects your own, praying with the Church throughout the year.

DEVOTIONS FOR THE CHURCH YEAR

Like the Collects, these are seasonal devotions. It is a great practice to keep "in-sync" with the Church Year like this. When to use them? Up to you. There's all sorts of devotions. The Family devotions around the home Advent wreath, for instance; the devotions for Christmas Eve, including the Visit to the Crib, might help your family focus on the true meaning of the Holy Day. In the Passiontide devotions, there is the canticle from Lamentations that was used at Tenebrae - "How doth the city sit solitary". Psalm 22, used at the stripping of the Altar is given for recitation on Maundy Thursday. A meditation on the Seven Last Words, a treasure of a devotional practice is given for Good Friday. There's the novena for the Coming of the Holy Ghost, which begins on Ascension Day. You might, for instance, use the Prayers on All Souls' Day, as you make a visit to the cemetery where loved ones are buried, or perhaps for those who have no one to pray for them. My suggestion is for those not assigned to particular practices, use them at times like Grace After Meals, or to begin your daily meditation. Notice that there are a few novenas

PENITENTIAL DEVOTIONS & THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

All I will say is that this section is magnificent. Take your Saint Gregory's when you go to Confession. As you sit or kneel in the pew waiting to go in, use it for examining your conscience.

Open it up to the Rite of Penance so that, if you haven't memorised it, you have the Act of Contrition ready to go when the priest asks for it. Then afterwards, before making your penance, use the prayers for offering your penance. Honestly, this is a really useful section when it comes to the sacrament of penance. The material here helps you make a more thorough confession and reap better fruit from it.

DEVOTIONS FOR HOLY COMMUNION: PRAYERS BEFORE & AFTER MASS

These are wonderful, but I particularly love the old Sarum prayers before and after as well as the prayers to Our Lady given here. I am personally familiar with the Bonaventure, Aquinas and other standard Catholic prayers, but the lovely expressions of the English Patrimony really should be savoured in your preparations and thanksgivings at Mass.

PRAYERS AT MASS: PEOPLE'S ORDER OF MASS — *DIVINE WORSHIP THE MISSAL*

Self-explanatory. It does not contain the Prayers at the Foot of the Altar, because they are actually not part of the Order of Mass itself, but rather appear in the Missal as an Appendix for optional use. In taking Communion to the sick or homebound, we really don't need much more than this section of the book, combined with say the Collect of the week.

EUCCHARISTIC DEVOTIONS & VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

A very useful section as we go to having a daily Holy Hour. The order of the Rite is laid out simply. Prayers for visits to the Blessed Sacrament are given, which are wonderful. If you get stuck in your mental prayer before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, then turn to these prayers and redirect your focus to him again.

DEVOTIONS TO THE HOLY TRINITY

The Athanasian Creed is found here, as well as the Trisagion and the Saint Patrick's Breastplate, and a Litany to the Holy Trinity.

DEVOTIONS TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

This is perhaps one area where the English Patrimony becomes most explicitly apparent in the Saint Gregory's Prayer Book. There are Sarum Prayers, Prayers from the English Divines, the Medieval Devotion to the Five Wounds, there are Litanies of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, of the Passion, of the Resurrection, of the Sacred Heart, the traditional Catholic Stations of the Cross, and also Newman's Meditations on the Stations of the Cross. as well as more general prayers to our Redeemer.

DEVOTIONS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Prayers for the gifts of the Holy Spirit - very necessary - and the Litany, as well as the tradition hymns are the primary prayers given, but you can also use the Seasonal Prayers for Pentecost, given earlier in the book for extra devotions to the Holy Spirit.

DEVOTIONS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

This starts off with a full "How to" for the recitation of the Rosary. Great prayers to help you focus on the Mysteries, and so on. For me, the Rosary is primarily personal prayer, so this section is mostly for those who aren't initially so used to saying it, or else, who might find that they are more dry in prayer and in need of some fuel for their contemplation. We then get some standard, and not so standard prayers to Our Lady. I love the Mary the Dawn prayer, which shows the relationship between Mary and Christ beautifully. The Sub Tuum is the oldest known prayer to Our Lady. The Memorare of Saint Bernard is given and is a standard prayer - watch this one, because like the Saint Michael Prayer, it has many variations in public recitation. There is the Litany of the BVM, otherwise known as the Litany of Loreto, but additionally there is the Litany of the Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which harkens back to the Medieval Devotions of pre-Reformation England, there is also a Via Dolorosae Devotion, corresponding to the Via Crucis devotion, and then the Litany of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, which is newer - its Collect provided by St John Henry Newman - and reminds us of Fatima too. There are two versions of the Novena to Our Lady of Walsingham, a Novena to Our Lady of the Atonement -

the church in San Antonio Texas which was previously a Pastoral Provision Parish. There's also then a Litany to Our Lady of the Southern Cross, by our own Fr Ramsay Williams, and a Novena to Our Lady of the Southern Cross by Fr Stephen Hill. If you don't say this at any other time, I would suggest that you start this one on 24th August in the lead up to the Solemnity on 1st September each year.

DEVOTIONS TO THE SAINTS & ANGELS

This section is relatively brief. It has the Litany of the Saints, and the Litany of Saint Joseph, the Litany of the Holy Angels, and some prayers to the Holy Angels this section. Not a lot. I think that this is not too bad a thing. We all have our favourite saints and devotions to them. To try and put a whole lot more into this section would mean that you'd need several volumes. Here is my suggestion for those of us who have particular devotions. I would get a holy card with the devotion on it. Then place it here in this section. Use it together with one of the Litanies given.

DEVOTIONS FOR THE SANCTIFICATION OF SICKNESS & DEATH

This section reminds us of the old Primers of pre-Reformation England. This is perhaps one of the most needed parts of the book. Praying for the sick and dying are great spiritual works of mercy. The Five Wounds devotion appears here too - Prayer of the Five Wounds in Sickness - as a prayer of accepting sickness in union with Christ's Passion. This is a particularly moving prayer. Then there are many prayers for the sick and suffering. I particularly like the prayer for Help to Bear Bereavement for its expressions of hope and trust in the face of loss. There is a beautiful Litany for the Dying, and very usefully, the Commendatory Prayers at Death; the famous prayer "Proficiscere", or "Go forth, O Christian soul," which is referenced in Newman's Dream of Gerontius. There are also some prayers to be said, not just at the bedside of the dying, but also for ourselves personally, for a Holy Death. All these prayers are extremely pastorally useful in circumstances where we may find ourselves having to face these situations. Take your Saint Gregory's on your visits to the sick relative, or when you make a visits to those in need.

DEVOTIONS FOR THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED

It is a spiritual work of mercy to pray for the Faithful Departed, particularly for those souls known only to God alone and who still need our prayers. There's a Nine Days' Prayer for One Deceased, that you might use for the recent departed, or someone you feel might need it. There's also a beautiful prayer for you to say during Mass on behalf of the dead. Then there are various prayers for cleric and lay deceased for you to use according to need.

PRAYERS FOR VARIOUS OCCASIONS & INTENTIONS

This section has many of the prayers that appear in the Draft of the Divine Office in the Ordo. They are really great. From prayers for families, to commemorating an anniversary of Baptism, for the young, the aged, for vocations, for the nation, for the Ordinariate, for the Anglican Patrimony in the Catholic Church, for all sorts and conditions of men, this section is a real "go-to" for times when your thoughts turn to particular needs and you want something appropriate. These prayers are brilliant and they express, as you'd expect, nobly and beautifully, in the linguistic register used in the Ordinariate, our needs to God.

EMERGENCY BAPTISM

This is not, actually, a surprising addition to a prayer book. The laity should know how to administer baptism in the case of an emergency - which means that it is extremely likely that there is a near danger of death for the unbaptised person, and a wish for baptism has been expressed. The instructions are laid out as to what to do, and what to do later in the event that the person survives.

The Saint Gregory's is a brilliant work. I see many of you carry them around with you. I don't think that your copy should be ever very far away from your reach. It is a magnificent expression of our Patrimony, full of treasures old and new. I hope that it comes to be in everyone's possession within the Ordinariate, but also that others may start to use it, as it is not just for us, but for all English-speaking Catholics.