



THE ANCIENT PRACTICES SERIES

robert benson

IN CONSTANT PRAYER

FOREWORD BY PHYLLIS TICKLE

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

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All Scripture quotations are the author's paraphrase.

All prayers from the liturgy of the hours have been adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church of America*.

The sample daily office in appendix A is taken from Robert Benson, *Daily Prayer*. Raleigh, NC: Carolina Broadcasting & Publishing, 2006. www.dailyprayerlife.com. Used by permission.

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE OFFICE: MORNING PRAYER

MORNING PRAYER

THE VERSICLE FOR MORNING PRAYER

God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

And God saw that the light was good.

This very day the Lord has acted.

May God’s name be praised.

THE VENITE

Come, let us raise a joyful song,

a shout of triumph to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come into Your presence with thanksgiving,
singing songs of triumph.

For You are a great God, a great king over all gods.

The depths of the earth and the mountains belong to You.

The sea is Yours, for You made it;

and the dry land Your hands fashioned.

Let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the

One Who made us.

For You are our God, and we are the flock that You shepherd.

We will know Your power and presence this day,

if we will but listen for Your voice.

THE COLLECTS FOR THE MORNING

Deliver us, Almighty God, from the service of self alone:

That we may do the work You have given us to do,

in truth and beauty, and for the common good;

for the sake of the One Who comes among us as one

who serves,

the One Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE CANTICLE FOR THE MORNING

Blessed be the One Who made us.

You have turned to Your people and saved us and set us free.

You have raised up for us a strong deliverer, and so

You promised.

Age after age, You proclaimed by the lips of Your holy prophets,

that You would deliver us and deal mercifully with us,

calling to mind Your solemn covenant.

This was the promise that You made: To rescue us and

set us free from fear,

so that we might worship You with a holy worship,
in Your holy presence our whole life long.
In Your tender compassion, the morning sun has risen
upon us,
to shine on us, we who live in darkness,
and to guide our feet into the paths of peace. Amen.

THE PSALTER

[Select a psalm.]

THE SCRIPTURE

[Select a passage.]

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

We Your servants give You humble thanks,
Almighty God,
for all Your gifts so freely bestowed upon us,
and all whom You have made:
We bless You for our creation, preservation,
and all the blessings of life;
above all, for the redemption of the world by our
Lord Jesus Christ,
for the hope of glory and for the means of grace.
We thank You, O Lord.
Grant us such an awareness of Your mercies, we pray,
that with truly thankful hearts, we may give You praise,

not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up ourselves for Your service,
and by walking before You in holiness and righteousness
all our days.

Hear us, O Lord.

THE INTERCESSIONS

We offer prayers for all those with whom we share
the Journey:

those who have been given to us, and to whom we have
been given,

those to whom we promised our faithfulness and prayers,
especially . . .

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy.

We entrust all who are dear to us
to Your never-failing love and care,
for this life and for the life to come;
knowing that You will do for them
far more than we can desire or pray for. Amen.

THE OUR FATHER

With all Your people on earth,
and as our Savior Christ has taught us,
we are bold to say:

Our Father . . .

THE BLESSING

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Thanks be to God—Creator, Redeemer, and Giver of Life.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,

and to live our lives so that those to whom love is a stranger
will find in us generous friends. Amen.

APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

THE JOURNEY IN THE DIRECTION OF THIS ANCIENT WAY OF prayer is best made while surrounded by a great crowd of books as well as by a great cloud of witnesses.

The list includes resources for the office itself, for prayer in general, and for worship.

PRAYER BOOKS AND BREVIARIES

There are dozens of books that one can use; the prayer books and breviaries listed below are simply the ones I have used before and am the most familiar with. They also happen to be the ones I recommend most often.

I hasten to remind people that my liturgical education, such as it is, has come by way of the Methodist and Episcopal communions, and so my knowledge of the prayer books and other liturgical resources available in other communions—Lutherans, Presbyterians, United Churches of Christ, and so forth—is very

limited. If you are a member of those communities or if you know friends or ministers within them, I heartily suggest that you be in touch with them to see if they can suggest resources to you as well.

The things I have listed below can generally be found in Catholic or Episcopal bookstores. Some of the more well-known ones can be found in major bookstore chains. Most, if not all, of them can be ordered for you by your local bookseller. Some can be found online, and I have listed the best Web sites to use.

Benson, Robert. *Daily Prayer*. Raleigh, NC: Carolina Broadcasting & Publishing, 2006. www.dailyprayerlife.com

Benson, Robert. *Venite*. New York: Tarcher Publishing, 2000. www.amazon.com

Book of Common Prayer, The. New York: Church Publishing Corporation, 1979. www.churchpublishing.org

Carey, George. *Celebrating Common Prayer (Society of St. Francis)*. New York: Continuum, 1999. www.continuumbooks.com

Community of Jesus, The. *The Little Book of Hours*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2003. www.paracletepress.com

Episcopal Church, The. *The Daily Office Book*. New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1986. www.churchpublishing.org

Eslinger, Elise S., ed. *Upper Room Worshipbook*. Nashville, TN:
Upper Room Books, 2006. www.amazon.com

Job, Reuben and Norman Shawchuck. *A Guide to Prayer*.
Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1983.
www.amazon.com

Saint Benedict's Prayer Book for Beginners. Ampleforth Abbey, York,
UK: Ampleforth Abbey Press, 1994. www.amazon.com

Tickle, Phyllis. *The Divine Hours*. New York: Doubleday, 2001.
www.amazon.com

Hour by Hour. Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement
Publications, 2002. www.forwardmovement.org

RECOMMENDED READING

I have read a lot of books about prayer and about the daily office itself over the years. These are the ones that I turn to again and again for information and encouragement, and ones I give away again and again to people who are exploring this way of prayer.

Fry, Timothy, ed. *The Rule of Saint Benedict*. New York:
Random House, 1982. www.randomhouse.com

Guilbert, Charles Mortimer. *Words of Our Worship*. New York:
Church Publishing, 1988. www.churchpublishing.org

Klein, Patricia S. *Worship Without Words*. Brewster, MA:
Paraclete Press, 2007. www.paracletepress.com

Lee, Jeffrey. *Opening the Prayer Book*. Boston: Cowley
Publications, 1999. www.cowley.org

OTHER RESOURCES

- The Academy for Spiritual Formation, contact Jerry Haas,
The Upper Room, 1908 Grand Avenue, Nashville, TN
37202, www.upperroom.org/academy
- Episcopal Booksellers Association, [www.episcopalbook-
sellers.org](http://www.episcopalbooksellers.org)
- Revised Common Lectionary, [http://divinity.library.vander-
bilt.edu/lectionary/](http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/lectionary/)

STUDY GUIDE

IN CONSTANT PRAYER

ROBERT BENSON

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”

JEREMIAH 6:16

CHAPTER 1:

ONE TRUE THING

Before coming to *In Constant Prayer*, were you familiar with the idea of praying the traditional daily office?

What has been the tradition of prayer in your life?

Has brief, spontaneous prayer always been part of your life? What do you expect to change in your life if you follow a goal of regular daily prayer?

CHAPTER 2:

ANCIENT PRAYER FOR THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

Daily liturgical prayer has been a part of the lives of the faithful since Abraham. It shaped lives as well as community. How do you think the twenty-first century church would change if such prayer brought us together again?

In times of persecution and trials, such prayer sustained and encouraged believers. What value does such liturgical prayer have in times of prosperity and blessing? How would the focus of our lives change?

CHAPTER 3:

THE DAILY OF THE DIVINE OFFICE

As you read through the schedule of prayers in this chapter, are you reminded of the busyness of your days, the rush from one task to another? How would a regular liturgical prayer of two, four, or seven times a day fit into your schedule? How would praying for ten minutes at lunch every day change your faith and your focus?

Since so much of the daily office is taken from scripture, do you think it would affect your understanding of God's Word?

CHAPTER 4:

PRAYING UPSIDE DOWN

What do you think about the idea that worship is not about us; it's about God? How does this challenge the idea that a church service should meet with our approval?

In what ways do you think corporate prayer supports our personal prayer time?

What do you think about the analogy that our prayer life is like gardening, requiring time and effort that may not be “fun,” but that brings glorious results?

CHAPTER 5:

THE DIVINE OF THE DAILY OFFICE

If we claim to put God first in our lives, then why have we become a society with an emphasis on the personal? How does the pursuit of personal happiness go against the grain of scriptural teachings of praying constantly and focusing on others?

Why do you think the church turned away from praying the daily office, an act that sustains the faith and binds the community together?

CHAPTER 6:

THE REAL CURRENCY OF OUR AGE

How we spend our time describes what is important in our lives. If this is true, then what do our daily lives tell us about our spirituality? If we consider our faith important, why do we not have fifteen minutes a day to spend on it?

If you want to add the divine to your daily life, how would you start? What changes would you make? What would your new daily “to-do” list look like?

CHAPTER 7:

LOST BETWEEN THE DAILY AND THE DIVINE

Just as practice can make you a better golfer, musician, or driver, the daily office can help you become a person of prayer. What reminders could you set to help you remember to say them?

In what way can saying liturgical prayers daily lead us to have the faith of a child, open and receiving?

CHAPTER 8:

PRAYING ALONE TOGETHER

You know how wonderful it feels when someone promises to pray for you. How would you feel if you knew the *time* they plan to pray for you? How would you feel when that moment comes around? Can you, in turn, share this blessing with a friend?

Preparing a special place for prayer could be as simple as lighting a special candle or walking the parking lot of your job at the same time each day. How can having a regular place for prayer open your heart and spirit even more to God's presence?

CHAPTER 9: AN INVISIBLE REALITY

There is power in great words, no matter how new or old, no matter how often they are said. How are the words of a powerful prayer similar to the lyrics of a beloved, oft-sung hymn? How do both prepare us for the presence of God?

As we more regularly seek out the presence of God, why is it important that we bring our "bags of sin" to set before him, to seek his forgiveness and prepare our hearts to pray for others in our lives? How does his forgiveness help us deal with anger, jealousy, etc. toward others? In what ways does the daily office help us become more vulnerable before him?

CHAPTER 10:

THE GREAT RIVER OF PRAYER

It is time to turn over the vestments and reveal the Light. It is now your turn to join the Great River of Prayer.

As you finish *In Constant Prayer*, consider carefully the questions at the end and the possibilities that lie ahead if you follow your call to pray the daily office. Engage others in this discipline of devotion and worship. Take the time to journal, daily or weekly, the changes you see in yourself, in your worship of our Creator, in your relationships with those you love.

Words are powerful; even more so in the words of daily prayer.

GLOSSARY

THESE ARE SOME SIMPLE DEFINITIONS I HAVE USED OVER the years for some of the words that were so new to me when I began the journey in the direction of this way of prayer. They are taken largely from two sources, and then I paraphrased them over the years. The people who wrote the books know far more than I do, and I highly recommend their work. One is *Worship Without Words* by Patricia Klein (Paraclete Press, 2007), and the other is *Words of Our Worship* by Charles Mortimer Guilbert (Church Publishing, 1998). Both are available in the ways that you normally buy books.

blessing—In the context of the daily office, it is another word for the benediction said at the end of the office.

breviary—A book that contains the psalms, canticles, lessons, and prayers needed to recite the hours of the daily office.

canticle—A hymn of praise or sacred song taken from Scripture.

collect—A brief prayer, most often a single sentence, that is made up of an address to God, followed by a petition, thanksgiving or intercession, and concluded with a formulaic closing.

community of saints—All the faithful of the Church in communion with one another and with Christ.

confession—The acknowledgment of one's sins before God, made either publicly or privately.

creeds—Statements of the Church's basic beliefs. The two most often used in public worship are the Apostles' Creed, the ancient baptismal creed; and the Nicene Creed, the creed of the universal Church used at the liturgy of the Eucharist.

daily office—A commonly used name for the liturgy of the hours, the ancient way of prayer and praise of the Church. It is also known by various other names: *daily prayer*, *divine office*, *canonical hours*, and so forth.

Great Silence—A name given to the hours of the night, roughly between midnight and dawn, when the last words of night prayer have been said and before the prayer that is offered at the rising of the sun.

lectionary—A cycle of Scripture readings for the Church. The most well-known and widely used such cycle is *The Revised Common Lectionary*.

liturgy—Literally means “the work of the people”; it refers to the written services, rites, and rituals for Christian worship. The liturgy for the Eucharist (Communion) and the liturgy of the hours (daily office) are the two principal worship services of the Church.

Our Father—The Lord's Prayer

prayers of the people—General intercessory prayer for the Church, the nation, the world, the local community, those in need and those who have departed. In this book, it refers specifically to the prayers of intercession and petition that follow the lessons in saying the office.

Psalter—The portion of a prayer book or breviary that incorporates 150 Psalms.