

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this prayer book is to make the Psalms and the Scripture readings of the lectionary the basis of our own personal prayer, our daily conversation with God.

From the beginning the Bible has been the prayer book of the church. The Psalms were its first hymnbook, and readings from the other books its first lectionary. In the course of time, the church saw fit to rearrange the order of the Psalms to fit the prayer life of the monastery in the Divine Office, and to select and arrange passages from the Scriptures for the official Lectionary to be read to the people throughout the Liturgical Year.

In our day that Lectionary has been greatly revised and expanded to provide a rich feast for the faithful. Since it was a cooperative effort of a number of churches it is also an extraordinary instrument of ecumenical reconciliation. It remains for us to make it more available to the people.

The present situation with the Psalms is not as favorable. Obviously, reciting the entire 150 Psalms each week as the monks still do in the Divine Office is out of the question for the ordinary Christian. This prayer book attempts to remedy that by distributing them over a thirteen week cycle, so the entire Psalter is read each of the four seasons of the year rather than each week.

Thus this prayer book remains faithful to the basic structure of traditional Christian prayer. But instead of nine monastic hours, it has two: a longer morning prayer and a short evening prayer. The longer prayer has two basic parts: the Psalms and the Scripture readings, followed by prayers that flow from them. And all is arranged to follow the feasts and seasons of the Christian Calendar, the liturgical year.

Happily, that calendar divides itself naturally into four seasonal quarters, or

two quarters and a half. The first or Winter quarter, the Advent-Christmas season, begins with December. The second or Spring quarter, the Lenten-Easter season, usually begins about March, depending on the date of Easter. The rest of the year of about 26 weeks, the Summer and Fall quarters, begins about June with the feast of Pentecost. A calendar in the Appendix serves as a guide for the years ahead.

The Arrangement in Detail

The prayer for each weekday is laid out on facing pages. Sundays require an additional page because of the length and variety of the Sunday readings. The longer morning prayer can be used at any time of the day that is convenient. A brief explanation of each section follows.

I. THE PSALMS

- I chose seven of the shorter Psalms (Psalm 95, the traditional “invitatory” Psalm used every day in the Office, and six similar Psalms) to be recited each day of the week as “Morning Psalms”.
- I chose seven more short Psalms (Psalm 23, Psalm 4, and five of the shorter “penitential” Psalms) to be recited each day as “Evening Psalms”.
- I added to the Evening Prayer seven psalm-like hymns from the New Testament: the Canticles of Mary, Zachary, and Simeon from the Gospel of Luke; three early Christian hymns from the Epistles of Paul, and one song from the Book of Revelation.
- The Psalms traditionally associated with the great feasts and Sundays, for example, Psalm 104 on Pentecost and Psalm 96 on Christmas, were then placed on those days.
- The rest of the Psalms were distributed over the 13 week cycle in roughly sequential order, from 1 to

150, but with these provisos in mind: we tried to place the Psalms of joy and gratitude on Mondays and Thursdays; the laments, community and individual, on Tuesdays and Fridays; and the wisdom and historical Psalms on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Of course, the Psalms are not so easily classified, nor do they come in the right numbers for that, but it worked often enough to give each day a special character. One gets about 50 verses of the Psalms a day.

II. THE READINGS & PRAYERS

- You will need your Bible to use this prayer book because you will find here only the references to the readings for each day. That solved the problems of having an enormous unwieldy book and of choosing among the many translations. It also enables you to use your own familiar and preferred translation. Moreover, it reminds us that the readings are only selections from the Bible, made by the church and scholars, but still a selection, and that they have a context. With the readings, I have included new translations of the ancient hymns that the church includes in the liturgy of the great feasts.

- I tried to assist the reader by providing for each day’s readings:

- 1) a suggested focus taken from the readings as a whole;
- 2) a short statement highlighting the content of each reading; and,
- 3) the brief beginning of a prayer.

These are not intended to take the place of the readings or the readers’ prayers, but only to invite them to go further.

- The prayers, based on the readings, and done in the style of the Psalms, are intended only to initiate the readers own thoughts and prayers. Nor should the personal prayers of a

lifetime be abandoned, when they can be integrated with the Psalms and readings of the Christian Year. After the Psalms and the Scriptures, my morning meditation and evening prayer still end with prayers our family said for many years, even before I was born.

- The material provided for one day should never be thought of as an “Office”, an obligation that has to be performed in its entirety to be effective, even at breakneck speed, as some used to do with the Office. Rather, it is a menu from which you may select according to your time and taste, what appeals, what serves. One Psalm, one reading, and the Lord’s Prayer would work; or the Psalms alone; or, if you have the appetite and time, the whole menu is a possibility. It provides a full and balanced meal.

The Translation of the Psalms

This arrangement of Psalms and readings could have used existing translations. But the character of the available translations of the Psalms made the creation of a new translation desirable. In fact, this prayer book began as a study and translation of the Psalms.

It is not useful here in a prayer book to go into a critique of existing translations, or a discussion of the issues involved, scholarly and literary, ecclesiastical and liturgical. But it may be helpful to the reader for me to state my basic principles and purposes.

First, every effort was made to produce a faithful, accurate translation, acceptable to scholars. It is not a paraphrase of the Psalms, not hymns or poems based on the Psalms, or inspired by them, but a translation of them.

Second, I used the traditional formats of poetry: regular lines and stanzas, meter, rhyme, and structure, so that the result is a poem or hymn

that can be read aloud or sung to contemporary music composed for it.

Third, I tried to achieve simplicity and clarity, a transparent style, because these are meant to be the popular songs of the People of God.

Fourth, I chose a language, generally inclusive rather than gendered, to speak to and reflect an emerging consciousness among the people of God. After initially doing the translations in traditional gendered language, that is, using “man” and other such words in their generic sense to refer to all persons of both sexes, and using only male pronouns to refer to God, I decided to try a generally inclusive version, and found that it was not only possible, but often more effective. It reduces the exclusively masculine imagery, and, by switching more often to the second person, as the Psalms frequently do themselves, I was still able to preserve much of their intimacy and warmth.

In these principles my only agenda, my only purpose is this: I want the reader to be prayerful rather than puzzled, to be in a conversation with God, not an argument with the text.

JAMES KRAUS

Week One / MONDAY
MORNING PRAYER

I. THE PSALMS

MORNING PSALM / PS. 24

Let the King of glory in.

PAGE 4

PSALMS OF THE DAY / PSS. 1 & 7

On the justice of God.

PSALM 1 / *The just shall live, the wicked die.*

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| <p>¹How blest the just, those who refuse
 To listen to the wicked lie.
 To walk the way that sinners choose,
 To join the scoffers' hue and cry.</p> | <p>⁴Not so the wicked of the land;
 The winds blow them like chaff away.</p> |
| <p>²Their joy, the study of God's law;
 They contemplate it day and night.
 They are like trees beside the water,
 Yielding fruit, escaping blight.</p> | <p>⁵At judgment they will never stand,
 Among the just they shall not stay.</p> |
| <p>⁶God guards your way, on this rely
 The just shall live; the wicked die.</p> | |

PSALM 7 / *David's plea in his defense.*

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| <p>²O Lord, my God, in you I trust.
 Preserve me from my enemy,
 ³Lest I become the lion's prey,
 Be mauled, with none to rescue me.</p> | <p>¹⁰Arrest the guilty, those at fault.
 Protect the innocent, the just.
 For you who search the mind and heart
 Alone are God, who can, and must.</p> |
| <p>⁴O Lord, if I have done this thing:
 Betrayed a friend with treachery;
 ⁵If there is guilt upon my hands,
 If I abused my enemy,</p> | <p>¹¹My Lord and shield is God most high,
 The savior of the upright heart,
 ¹²A judge who justly punishes
 Those who from God's commands depart.</p> |
| <p>⁶Then let that enemy arise,
 And come to me, as come he must,
 And overcome me, trample me,
 And lay my honor in the dust.</p> | <p>¹³Unless the wicked change their ways,
 Our God will seize a mighty sword,
 ¹⁴Assemble weapons, bend the bow,
 And launch the arrows of the Lord.</p> |
| <p>⁷If not, then rise, O Lord, my God!
 In fury rise against my foe!
 Stand up, O God of majesty;
 A judgment for my cause bestow.</p> | <p>¹⁵Those who conceive iniquity,
 And who are heavy with its plans,
 In time give birth to treachery.
 They fail, and fall into God's hands.</p> |
| <p>⁸So let the court of nations meet,
 And let the judge of all preside.</p> | <p>¹⁶They dig a pit, and make it deep.
 Then fall in it, the pit they made.</p> |
| <p>⁹For God most high is judge of all,
 And justice will for me provide.</p> | <p>¹⁷Upon their heads it all returns:
 The evil of the trap they laid.</p> |

¹⁸I thank the Lord, the ever just;
 All praise God's holy name say I.
 Let people sing, let praise arise,
 From all on earth to God most high.

II. READINGS & PRAYERS

WINTER

MONDAY: 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

We walk by faith:

1. (A) Isaiah 4:2-6.
Let us walk in the light of the Lord.
1. (B,C) Isaiah 2:1-5.
God's glory will be over all.
2. Matthew 8:5-11.
Many will come from east and west.

In darkness Lord,
your light shines through.
We all unworthy trust in you...

SUMMER

MONDAY: 9TH WEEK OF THE YEAR.

Persist in doing good:

- 1a. Tobit 1:1-2, 2:1-9.
Tobit continues to bury the dead.
- 1b. II Peter 1:2-7.
We have all we need to do good.
2. Mark 12:1-12.
The parable of the wicked tenants.

O God, you are our rock, our cornerstone.
In building we rely on your alone...

SPRING

MONDAY: 1ST WEEK OF LENT

The Lord's criteria for judgment:

1. Leviticus 19:1-18.
Be holy; keep my commandments.
2. Matthew 25:31-46.
When I was hungry you gave me food.

You come to us, O Lord, disguised,
We welcome you in any guise...

FALL

MONDAY: 22ND WEEK OF THE YEAR.

The heart of the good news:

- 1a. I Thessalonians 4:13-8.
Fear not for those who have died.
- 1b. I Corinthians 2:1-5.
I preach only Christ crucified.
2. Luke 4:16-30.
Jesus begins his ministry.

Come, let us praise Christ crucified;
For we now live because he died...

Meditation. The Lord's Prayer. Intercessions. Personal Prayers.

EVENING PRAYER

Reflections on the Day. Thanksgiving. Reconciliation.

EVENING PSALM / PS. 4 *I go to sleep in peace.* PAGE 4.

CANTICLE OF ZACHARY / LUKE 1:68-79 *Prepare the way of the Lord.* PAGE 4.

Personal Prayers.