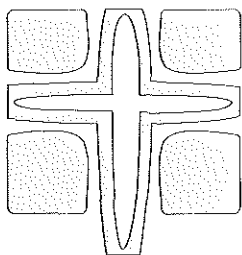


The **MAST** *Journal*

The Journal
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in Scripture
and Theology

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Praying in the Spirit of Mercy

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This issue of *The MAST Journal* represents a spiritual and historical highpoint in our evolution as Institute. "Praying in the Spirit of Mercy" is a collection of articles ably planned and edited by Katherine Doyle, R.S.M., (Auburn) as commentary on the forthcoming publication of the two-volume set of the Mercy Prayerbook, one of the projects flowing out the Pathways to the Future project. When the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology was founded in 1986, its first stated purpose was: "To act as a collective resource for nurturing spiritual life, theological reflection, and rootedness in Scripture for the entire Institute."

At that time, the Institute had not yet been founded, but the purpose of MAST reflected the hope of unification among all the regional communities and provinces. For the last nine years of publication, three times each year, the *Journal* has steadily fulfilled its commitment to its original vision. It has presented articles by Mercy women who had previously prepared their writing for oral presentation, but never actually published. The *Journal* has also featured the work of women with considerable experience in academic and professional publishing. Contributors include familiar voices, new voices, our associates, coworkers and member of other religious communities. But *The MAST Journal* retains its distinction as being, to our knowledge, the only theological journal in the world published solely by a women's religious community. The summary of the *Journal's* accomplishments are celebrated in the comprehensive index of the first six volumes generously prepared by Anita Talar, R.S.M., (New Jersey).

What do women who take vows share with all other women? Certainly, the experience of physical, cultural, economic, and political distinction from men. Women who are individuals with unique histories resist being rolled into the anonymity of a class. Thus, we reflect varying degrees of consciousness about the historical subordination to men that women, as a world-wide sisterhood, suffer because we were born female rather than male. The commitment to equality and justice embodied in our Direction Statement proceeds from intuitions embodied in female consciousness and our history as a class. They are borne of women's convictions that the inequities suffered by the less articulate, the less privileged and the less powerful must be set right. This is the direction we articulated for ourselves, not because of a command from Rome or invitation from a bishop, but from an inner urgency in our own minds and hearts that these are the things we must do if we are to do anything as women together for God.

That is also the thrust of *The MAST Journal*. Women speak in their own voice, expressing their own consciousness, testing the frontier of what is sayable and what should be said about our spirituality, our ecclesial heritage, our ministries, our community history, our foundress, our own research, and our future. It should be a cause of wonder and gratitude that we have so much to say, that we will never run out of contributors, and that there are so many of us literate enough to speak and write. The future of *The MAST Journal* is assured, not because its funding base is secure (it is not yet), but because there are so many women of prayer committed to sustain the rich heritage of the Church's spiritual tradition by thinking, writing, teaching, and communicating about it, as we do here for the entire Institute.



Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.

Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M.
Editor

From *The Little Companion of the Sisters of Mercy* to *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy*

Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M.

WHY WOULD ANYONE TRY TO develop another prayer book, given the abundance of resources on every convent shelf and in any Catholic bookstore? This essay attempts to answer that question and to record some of the principles used in the development of *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy* and its companion book, *Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley*.

The project grew out of a perceived need to strengthen the experience of our common life in Mercy. In our post-Vatican II renewal, we discarded many symbols and customs which were outmoded, irrelevant to contemporary life, or even psychologically and spiritually harmful. With respect to our practices of community prayer, we moved away from an inflexible *horarium*, from assembling in a common place even for private prayer (e.g., meditation), from the choral recitation of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Latin, and from oral recitation of various litanies and traditional prayers. We moved toward individual freedom in the style and time of our personal prayer and toward the communal recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours in English. As years went on, we enriched our communal experience

with new styles of prayer, new music, rituals, scriptural translations, and spiritual writings. A contemporary flowering of research and publication about Catherine McAuley and our Mercy charism and tradition provided new resources for our common prayer. (There have

sometimes seems daunting. Busy people may lack the time or energy to search out scriptural texts, readings from our Mercy heritage, psalm translations that are inclusive, suitable music, etc. The attention to individual preferences in prayer styles can militate against a common expression;

The discarded symbols and customs of yesteryear have left a vacuum that has not yet been filled by practices that are relevant to our day and responsive to our needs.

probably been more studies of Catherine McAuley in the last twenty-five years than in the previous 125.) Our growing feminist awareness made inclusive language an imperative.

There have been both gain and loss in this evolution. On the positive side, our common prayer has been enriched by the fruits of the liturgical and scriptural renewals, by sharing with the laity (e.g., associates and co-ministers), by the abundance of resources available to us, and by our own initiative and creativity. On the negative side, the effort required to create an experience of communal prayer each day from the resources available

every time there is a change in membership in a local community, the style of prayer may need to be re-negotiated. On a larger scale, there is very little that can be said about the community's prayer that applies to the Institute as a whole.

At the same time, we need expressions of our common identity now more than ever. The discarded symbols and customs of yesteryear have left a vacuum that has not yet been filled by practices that are relevant to our day and responsive to our needs. These practices can strengthen the bonds of unity among us, reveal to onlookers what it means to be a Sister of Mercy,

us with the faithful throughout the world, as well as with one another. Furthermore, the church's day is structured around morning and evening prayer, as are the prayer texts in our volume. The words of sacred Scripture provide privileged texts for the church's prayer. Accordingly, we have included scriptural readings for each morning and evening, as well as for supplementary daytime and night prayers, so that there are a wide variety of selections from which to choose.

based on the words
y and on documents
Mercy life.

**2. Incorporating the
Resources of our Mercy
Tradition**

Many prayer texts are based on the words of Catherine McAuley and on documents central to Mercy life. Every Sister of Mercy will recognize phrases such as "may our hearts be centered in you for whom alone we go forward or stay

whom Catherine names in the original Rule as the special patrons of the Institute. The book also includes a rich selection of Mercy readings, writings by and about Catherine McAuley, and reflections on the charism of Mercy.

**3. Respecting the
Values of Inclusive
Language and
Scriptural Integrity**

Gender-inclusive language is used in all original texts. The psalms and canticles, which are translated and published by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL), also employ inclusive language throughout. Other scriptural texts are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, which remains a standard for scholarly excellence. With the permission of the publishers, we have adapted the texts slightly to enhance their inclusivity.

**4. Providing a
Framework for Prayer
which Can Be Adapted
to Various Needs and
Circumstances**

The framework chosen is that of the cathedral office, an an

reading, intercessions, and prayer—which offer a variety of themes and intentions for prayer. In some cases, the intercessions and prayer echo the theme of the psalm; in other cases, of the reading. In every case, there is sufficient richness to satisfy a variety of needs. In selecting feasts to be included, care has been taken to include those representative of areas other than Europe and North America.

This new version of *Morning and Evening Prayer* is not intended to impose a rigid structure on our common prayer; but rather, to provide a useful template within which a variety of elements can be imaginatively combined. There are suggestions in the book for the use of music, ritual, and other resources to enhance our prayer experience.

In addition to these four principles, the editorial committee worked out of three other informal assumptions or goals. The first was that this would be a cooperative effort, drawing on the gifts of many Sisters. Realistically, if it were to be done, it would have to be done by busy people on an ad hoc and part-time basis. Therefore, there is a variety of styles of expression in the text which a stronger editorial hand might have eliminated. We chose to regard this variation as a positive fruit of our collaboration. Moreover, some readers may perceive variations in the quality of expression—in theological perspective and rhetorical grace—which result from the

lack of professional direction and the press of time available for the project. Perhaps future editions will supply what is lacking.

A second assumption was that we wanted to create something which would not be trendy, but which would serve us for a considerable period of time. The large investment of resources required to prepare the books dictated that we try to prepare something which would still be useful decades from now. Therefore, in drafting intercessions and prayers,

that it would be a welcome resource for Sisters of Mercy throughout our Institute and beyond. To effect this goal, we sought bids from several publishers who might wish to collaborate with us in the design and production of the book. We chose Liturgy Training Publications in Chicago, and we have been very pleased with the artistry, professional expertise, and commitment to excellence which they have brought to the project.

The preceding reflections on volume 1 also apply, with

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we tried to make references to social problems and to human needs which would be contemporary, but not so specific that they might make the book seem outdated in a few years. The choice of language was a similar issue. We tried to avoid expressions which are part of our current jargon, but which might date the book too quickly. Only time will tell how successful we have been in this effort.

A third assumption was that use of this resource could never be mandated. Therefore, our goal was to make it as attractive in its content and presentation as possible, so

modifications, to volume 2. *Praying In the Spirit of Catherine McAuley* is designed to serve a different use, but with the same attention to authenticity and excellence which we have tried to bring to *Morning and Evening Prayer*. The following is a description of the contents and a bit of a rationale for this book. It will be a much smaller, paperback book—less than a hundred pages—and much less expensive. It is divided into four sections. Part 1 includes prayers inspired by those of Catherine McAuley, but in contemporary idiom, e.g., the Suscipe, a morning

offering, a prayer before meditation, The Psalter of Jesus, etc. Part 2 includes a variety of prayers suitable for special occasions and needs within the life of Mercy; e.g., prayers for the renewal of vows, for a Sister preparing for profession, for a new ministry, the novena for the feast of Our Lady of Mercy, etc. These selections were either specifically composed for this collection or were drawn from prayers that have long been part of our Mercy prayer heritage.

Part 3 contains three rituals marking the death of a Sister. They are meant to supplement the rituals provided in

the Rite of Christian Burial. Each may be used as designed or adapted to suit local circumstances. Part 4, prepared by Mary C. Sullivan, R.S.M., is an annotated and historically accurate collection of the prayers used by Catherine McAuley. These original prayers of Catherine and prayers which she frequently prayed are included for use in personal prayer or in research. Reflection on them helps us to enter into the mind and heart of Catherine and of the early Mercy community.

These two new books stand within a long tradition of Mercy prayer books, including many choir manuals, such

as one I noticed recently in the archives of the Auburn Regional Community titled *The Little Companion of the Sisters of Mercy* (Dublin: 1859). It contains numerous acts and litanies as well as the "Officium Parvum Beatae Mariae Virginis." Throughout our history, developments in theology and new insights in spirituality have prompted us to adapt our common prayer to new realities. The editorial committee which shaped these new resources offers its work in the hope that they will nourish our common life and mission in the years to come.



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The Nature of the Cathedral Office

Sheila Browne, R.S.M.

These gatherings were indeed gatherings of the people: the faithful sang "morning psalms" and "evening psalms" which did not vary and which they knew by heart; to these were added, especially in the morning biblical and even non-biblical canticles; in some Churches there was a sermon almost every day; the ceremony ended with intercessions and a collect pronounced by the bishop or a priest.

THUS A. G. MARTIMORT describes the Cathedral Office as it was celebrated in the fifth and sixth centuries.¹ Taking shape in the post-Apostolic era of the Christian church, this office was prayed not only in cathedrals but in local churches, and was led by the bishop, the local clergy, or the lay people themselves. It was quite popular; that is, it was attended by great numbers of people. In the last hundred years, there has been a renewal of interest in the Cathedral Office. Indeed, it is this style of praying the office that is used in the *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy*. In the following essay, we will examine the history and content of Cathedral Morning and Evening Prayer, its spirit and theology. We will conclude with some comments on our Mercy Office.

Rooted in the daily prayer of the Hebrew people, the Ap-

ostolic and post-Apostolic Church engaged in daily prayer. Cyprian of Carthage, in the third century, taught:

We must pray in the morning in order that our prayer may celebrate the resurrection of the Lord. So too when the sun sets and day is ending, we must pray again. Christ is the true Sun, the real Day. At the moment when the sun and day of this world disappear, we pray that light may nonetheless be ours. We ask for the coming of Christ and the gracious manifestation of eternal light . . . Christ is the true Sun, the real Day.²

The late fourth-century document Apostolic Constitutions [c. 380] says:

day gather together in the morning and evening singing and praying in the Lord's house, in the morning saying Psalm 62 [63] and in the evening Psalm 140 [141].³

We can surmise that these were the morning and evening prayers that were not to be missed!

Morning and Evening Prayer, Cathedral Style.

The historic Cathedral Morning Prayer praised Christ, the true Light, the sun of Justice who has come into the world. The image of the morning light has several other meanings: praise of and thanksgiving for

In the last hundred years, there has been a renewal of interest in the Cathedral Office. Indeed, it is this style of praying the office that is used in the *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy*.

When you instruct the people, O Bishop, command and exhort them to make it a practice to come daily to the church in the morning and evening, and on no account to cease doing so, but to assemble together continually . . . nor should you place the needs of this life before the word of God; rather each

the resurrection; our redemption, which has brought us from darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son; and the coming of that new day, which will break upon us in eternity.⁴ In general, the order of this prayer employed opening psalms (Psalm 51 and/or Psalm 63) which express a need for

purification and an ardent longing for God. These were followed by an Old Testament canticle, a hymn concerning light, an oblation of incense during the singing of the New Testament canticle (the Benedictus), psalms of praise (Psalm 148-150) and the Prayers of Supplication or the Gloria in Excelsis. The contemporary scholar Juan Mateos considers the psalms of praise to be central to the office, setting the tone of praise of God, not merely our human praise, but the praise of God by all creation.

After all we can say or do, the aim of our life is to unite all creation with ourselves in the loving praise of the Father. Morning praise fortifies us for the day, it gives us the strength of the spirit and fills our hearts with the joy of the Spirit: 'Rejoice in the Lord always' (Phil. 4:4). This Christian joy is important in today's world. It not only

ment, "to act in harmony and interdependence with all Creation."

The Cathedral Evening Office usually began with a lamp-lighting service accompanied by a psalm or hymn. The reason for this service seems to have been both practical and theological: the office was celebrated at nightfall, thus a ceremonial lighting of lamps; it was also celebrated in praise of Christ, the Light who overcomes darkness.⁶ There was a vesper psalm (the vesper psalm par excellence was considered to be Psalm 141, "My prayers rise like incense; my hands like an evening offering"), the oblation of incense (done with Psalm 141 and/or the Magnificat), the New Testament canticle (the Magnificat), and the evening intercessions for the church and for the whole world. The

to be a few missing pieces from these descriptions of the office! There are only one or two psalms for each office, no psalm prayers, no reading or responsory. On the plus side, we note that it was usually sung, and used lighted candles and incense. There was often a homily and, if catechumens were present, they were blessed and dismissed before the baptized.

In time, this office was subsumed by the monastic office, with its multiplicity of hours and reading of Scripture.⁷ Two focal points of the monastic round of prayer were edification, thus the addition of lengthy selections from Scripture, and personal prayer; and so the psalm-prayer and long silences. The scriptural injunction to "pray always" was interpreted to mean length of time at prayer, and so as many as twelve psalms were used at the principal hours. In some places, psalms were recited in their biblical order, with no reference to the hour, the day, or the season. One author goes so far as to say of these new forms of prayer that they "were not forms of corporate worship, but forms of private prayer to be practiced in common."⁸

In contrast, elements of the cathedral style of prayer are these: it is relatively simple, clearly situated in morning and evening, psalms are selected according to the hour of day, hymns and psalms are sung by cantors and the assembly, the whole person is

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gives hope to a world which is very conscious of its brokenness and loneliness, but also prepares us for the daily struggles of our own Christian work of love.⁵

It is remarkable that the spirit of this comment is so connected to our Direction State-

themes for this evening office were thanksgiving to God for the graces of the day and asking forgiveness for the sins of the day.

Those accustomed to praying the Liturgy of the Hours will notice what seems

appealed to in the use of ritual elements (candle lighting, change of posture, incense), and it emphasizes praise and intercession.

Issues Beneath the Surface

There are deeper issues, however, that form the basis of our prayer. The Cathedral Office is the great prayer of praise, both historically and in its modern translation.⁹ The psalms, even those that begin with woes and despair, usually end in words of praise. We conclude each psalm with the words of "Glory be" to the Trinity. Also, we believe that Christ is truly present with the church when it gathers to pray and sing.¹⁰ Each time we come together for the prayer of the hours, as a community large or small, we actualize not just the Institute of Mercy, we actualize the church. We sing, and pray, and respond together; the intercessions express our common concerns. We need each other to do this well. Christ is present with us and is praying in us, through us, and for us; our prayer becomes his prayer, and his prayer becomes our prayer.¹¹ We might enlarge upon this and consider that the spirits of Catherine McAuley, Frances Warde, and all our founding mothers are present with us as we pray together. However, we do not pray for ourselves alone. (How can we be Mercy and do that!) Our concerns, then, need to be outward looking and related to the world. Thinking

globally includes praying globally. Our intercessions should be focused not only upon our own needs, but upon the needs of the whole world for which Christ died and which he desires to be saved. It is part of our stewardship of creation that we offer the sacrifice of praise on its behalf, and part of our responsibility for the salvation of all humankind that we intercede for the world.¹² One of the stated purposes of praying the hours is the "sanctification of time." By this is meant that a liturgy suggests at the specified times of the day what the quality of all times should be: an experience of time which is sacramental or revelatory of the mystery of Christ, of his dying and rising, and a means of union with God in Christ.¹³ Also, at prayer together, we can actualize that union and charity which is our inheritance from Catherine. After all, are not our small annoyances and pet peeves driven out by our presence to each other in prayer, with Christ present in our midst?

The Mercy Office

What now can we say about the Mercy Office, a prayer in the Cathedral tradition? We have

noted that the theme of longing for God pervades each day's psalms and antiphons at Morning Prayer. We have Psalm 63 with its antiphon "I long for you, O God. You are my heart's desire" for Sunday Morning Prayer, Week I. Other expressions of yearning for God and the dawning day continue through the four week cycle of the Psalter. For Sunday Evening Prayer I, we pray Psalm 141, with its classic antiphon: "Let my prayer rise like incense before you," and at Evening Prayer II, Psalm 27: "The Lord is my saving light." The closing prayer is directed to Christ, our light, and asks that he will "illumine our minds that we may see you in our sisters and brothers," a prayer wider than ourselves. Very often it is the antiphon which gives the seasonal texture to a psalm. In Advent, we have the antiphon "We are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ," and at Christmas, the lovely "Astounding mystery at the heart of our faith: Emmanuel God with us!" In addition to the single psalm that appears for each hour, others may be selected from a listing of supplementary psalms. In making this selection, it would be important to keep in mind any special

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day that is being celebrated, the time of day—morning or evening—as well as the length of time the group has for the whole prayer. It would be bet-

rooms, classrooms, and storefronts to pray Office together. We gather in groups large and small, in chapels, living rooms, and parish churches,

Catherine McAuley reminds us: “our hearts can always be centered on God, for whom alone we go forward, or stay back.”

ter to do less, and do it better, than to do more hurriedly, or with less attention and care. We noted above that Scripture was not always a part of the Cathedral Office as it is now. There is still room however, to substitute other readings. A selection of Mercy Readings is provided, listed according to theme, for those occasions when such a selection is desired.

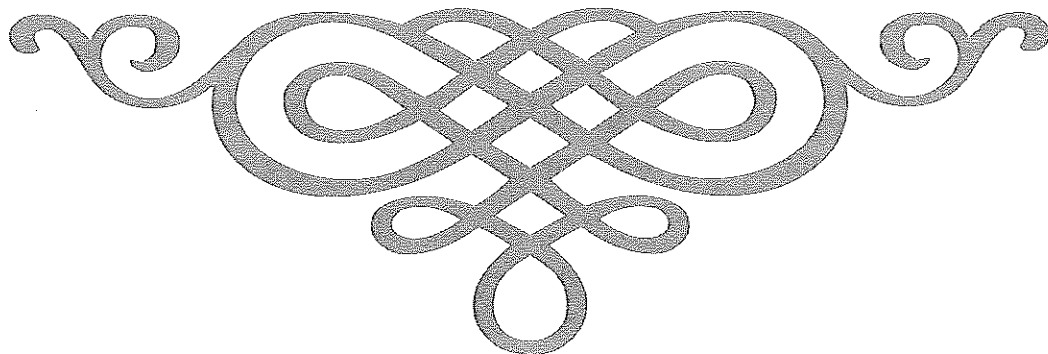
On December 20, 1840, in a letter to Sister M. deSales White, Catherine McAuley reminds us: “our hearts can always be centered on God, for whom alone we go forward, or stay back.”¹⁴ In these late days of the twentieth century, we come from hospitals, board

and in the midst of our tripping about, we renew our praise of God and make intercession for the world. We know, as Catherine told us, that our hearts are centered on God, and together we can go forward, and not stay back!



Notes

- 1 A. G. Martimort, *The Church At Prayer*, vol. 4, *The Liturgy and Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press) p. 171.
- 2 St. Cyprian, *De dominica oratione* 35 (CSEL 3/1:292–93).
- 3 Juan Mateos, “The Morning and Evening Office,” in
- 4 *Worship* 41 (January, 1968) p. 32.
- 5 Mateos, p. 37.
- 6 W. Jardine Grisbrooke, “The Formative Period. Cathedral and Monastic Offices,” in *The Study of Liturgy*, ed. Jones, Wainwright, Yarnold (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) p. 366. Also, Paul F. Bradshaw, *Two Ways of Praying* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995) p. 20.
- 7 For a discussion of this, see Grisbrooke, “A Contemporary Liturgical Problem: The Divine Office and Public Worship. The Nature and Origins of the Problem” in *Studia Liturgica* 8 (1971–1972) pp. 129–168.
- 8 Grisbrooke, *The Study of Liturgy*, p. 360.
- 9 Bradshaw, p. 19.
- 10 Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, I,7.
- 11 Bradshaw, pp. 59–71.
- 12 Bradshaw, p. 66.
- 13 Stanislaus Campbell, “The Liturgy of the Hours,” in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*, ed. Peter Fink, S.J. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990) pp. 562–576.
- 14 *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley*, ed. Sister M. Angela Bolster (Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy, Dioceses of Cork and Ross, 1989) p. 178.



Living What We Pray, Praying What We Live

Katherine Doyle, R.S.M.

FORMATIVE PRAYER IS AN evocative concept rich with possibilities and potentialities. How do we embrace a way of prayer that is shaped by our beliefs at the same time that our belief is deepened and shaped by our prayer? What happens when our prayer words, gestures, and expression fail to authentically give voice to whom we are together, to whom God is for us, to the nature of our relationships with people and creation? These questions invite us to explore the ancient concept of *lex orandi, lex credendi*. In the pivotal understanding that the rule of prayer shapes faith and faith shapes the way of prayer, we can find the motivation and prompting which give birth to *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy* and its companion volume *Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley*.

The prayer resource that has been developed and is offered to the Institute is one which seeks to embody a spirituality of Mercy. It emerges from our self-understanding as women of Mercy, women of the church, women called to the service of those who are poor, sick, and ignorant. It is communal, ecclesial, steeped in the sources of Scripture and Mercy tradition, rich in intercessory focus, global in its in-

tent. Using the Spirit-inspired psalms of the Hebrew Scriptures, the new prayer resource of the Institute challenges the one who prays it to move beyond individualist prayer to prayer in the corporate Christ. Designed for adaptation and flexibility, it encourages an ongoing dialogue with the culture and concerns of the times.

pretending that every true participation in the liturgical action necessarily involves a knowledge and an experience of divine things, which are properly mystical in the sense in which writers on the spiritual life speak of the mystical, it is still undeniable that the liturgy is directed to a communication and penetration of divine things that is more experiential than simply conceptual.¹

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The Nature of *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*

The nature of *lex orandi, lex credendi* involves an interplay of doctrinal concepts, religious imagination and sentiment, and bodily expression. Prayer is holistic, engaging all dimensions of the human person. Dom Cyprian Vagaggini, O.S.B., puts it this way:

It could be said that the total proper efficacy of the liturgy, even as teaching, derives from the fact that, rather than "teaching," it causes doctrine to be lived. Without

The prayer that we embrace and the beliefs that shape our prayer are succinctly outlined in our *Constitutions*:

Through prayer we adore God as the Merciful One; we seek to discover God's movement in us and in our world; we learn how to forgive and we intercede for ourselves and for others.

Our vocation calls us further to regular communal prayer, to the celebration of significant events of our lives, in the Institute and in the church, to the remembrance of the legacy of love and service of our Sisters who have died. Gathering for

communal prayer, especially in the morning and evening, in the spirit of the prayer of the church assists us to grow in responsiveness to the conflicts and sufferings of the world. Rooted in God, we are drawn into deeper bonds of friendship and reconciliation and are empowered for mission.²

The accomplishment of these lofty ideals demands their embodiment in the way prayer is shared.

The formulation of a uniquely Mercy form of the Liturgy of the Hours requires fidelity to the elements set forth in the *Constitutions*. Any resource offered to nurture the spirit of Mercy among us must reflect not only contemporary understandings and faith experience but also the spiritual

standing rooted in our relationship to Christ Jesus, to our celebration of the life of the Spirit among and within us. It must be the prayer of the people we are—a communion of women bound together through a commitment to consecrated life and mission. As such, its language, imagery, intercessory themes, and inclusive festal cycle carry the obligation of fostering unity amidst diversity.

Honoring the place of Mercy within the context of the church, *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy* follows the rhythms of the liturgical seasons and sacred time. The shorter format of the Cathedral Office provides enhanced opportunity for the communal celebration to inte-

but also our relationships with God. This shaping occurs on both the conscious and unconscious levels of experience. A similar dynamic is active in our selection of readings for meditation, ritual gestures and movements, and the emotional tones of our prayer. Each element of the new prayer book has been included with this reality in mind.

In *Counsels of Mother Mary Catherine McAuley*, we find the admonition: "Your whole life should be a continual act of praise and prayer; often in the day raising your heart to God and begging the grace to spend that day, at least, in His service."³ This blend of contemplative/active experience is reflected in the three-fold structure of the prayer book itself.

Mercy prayer is not privatized, but grows out of a faith understanding rooted in our relationship to Christ Jesus, to our celebration of the life of the Spirit among and within us.

insight and understanding of Catherine McAuley. To feed the spirit of Mercy to which we are called, it has to be evocative of devotion, passionate in its cry for mercy and justice, and true to the heart of Mercy today. It cannot simply be one more collection of prayers or prayer formats that can be added to our already cluttered shelves of resource books. Mercy prayer is not privatized, but grows out of a faith under-

grate reflection, silence, and faith-sharing into the daily pattern of prayer. Not only the words, but the manner of celebration comprise the context of transformative prayer.

Few would dispute the formative impact that exclusively patriarchal God language has had on the religious experience of women and men throughout the ages. The words with which we addressed God shaped not only our own religious identity

The Three-Fold Movement of Morning and Evening Prayer

The psalms of the daily prayer cycle express the traditional modalities of prayer: praise, adoration, thanksgiving, petition, and repentance. Morning psalms are more explicitly focused on the elements of praise and adoration while the evening lends itself to petition and repentance. This first movement speaks of our relationship to God. In the words of our *Constitutions*, we cry out to "God as the Merciful One." The attitudes of trust, gratitude, and longing are dropped upon the heart like the soft rains of spring—no floods, just gentle soaking.

The readings, whether from scripture or from our Mercy sources, call the prayer community to transformation in Christ Jesus, to live the life worthy of the vocation one has received. It is this movement of receptivity and listening that constitutes the second movement. The importance of the Word as a formative element in Christian life involves the impulse to act for the sake of justice. Mary Collins reflects: "Only against the backdrop of biblical proclamation of covenanted relationships among God, God's chosen, the earth and the whole cosmos can we understand and develop appropriate social consciences."⁴

The general intercessions, the third movement, flow from our confidence that the God who saves will act and bring forth the reign of justice. When the vision of the praying person is expanded in the context of the living Word, then the obligations of interdependence, solidarity, and justice become more than concepts. They become imperatives for action and for prayer. The attitude and action of intercessory prayer is integral to Mercy life. One of the spiritual works of Mercy, it brings before God the needs of self, others, and the world. It gives voice to the sufferings of God's people in the same manner that Mary at Cana brought the absence of wine to the attention of her son.

The attitude of intercessory prayer is a willingness to enter into God's prayer in us, the caring love of God for

ourselves, for others. In this place of prayer, as we become sensitized to God's unique invitations to us as participants in that love, we may be called to let go of some of our vested interests and our traditional ways of caring for other people . . . As that prayer becomes realized in the community, old norms for community disappear. A new dynamism shows itself which can be nei-

These intentions speak to the urgencies of our time and society. Their repetition over time opens a consciousness within us to see what we sometimes do not see, to feel the pain which we sometimes fail to feel. The broader the intercessory intentions, the broader our vision of the world and our inter-relatedness to all life and peoples.

Repetition over time opens a consciousness within us to see what we sometimes do not see, to feel the pain which we sometimes fail to feel.

ther predicted nor controlled by those involved. Hearts are freed for an authentic love which embraces all of creation.⁵

A few examples garnered from the text of the prayer book amplify this dynamic. The intercessions for evening prayer on Ash Wednesday ask:

O God, you ask of us repentance and conversion of life. At the beginning of this holy season, may we embrace the fullness of our life in Christ Jesus:

Create in us new hearts, O God. In a world of violence and denial of basic human dignity, may we be lights in the darkness . . .

In a world of abundance which allows children to go hungry, may we work to banish famine and malnutrition . . .

In a world which place ambition and the quest for wealth and power above the values of family and faith, may we stand as witnesses that you are the source of all true happiness

Being Stretched by the Psalms

For some persons today, praying the psalms is problematic. Crying out:

*Catch them off guard,
snare them in their own trap.
Let them fall to their ruin."*⁶

seems rather harsh to the modern Christian who strives to be forgiving. The same can hold true when one's heart is filled with happiness and excitement and finds that the evening psalm is a lament. At such times, we experience the tension between our prayer as an individual and our prayer that is the voice of the living Body of Christ among us.

The wedding of psalms and intercessory petitions draws the person at prayer into a particular stance of inter-relatedness with others,

pressed, hungry, homeless, and tortured. In the midst of my pain, I am assured that there is a joy beyond my suffering, light beyond my darkness. This is not easy prayer. It is a prayer that emerges from the Spirit that prays within us.

Findings emerging from the Pathways process indicate a longing within the Institute for a more integrated spirituality. "There is an urgency to deepen the connection of faith and life, developing a spirituality that

g from the Pathways a longing within the Integrated spirituality.

moves our faith to action."⁸ The three-fold movement of *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy* provides a mode of prayer which brings together our belief and our life. The prayer themes of the book encompass the full range of human need and human desire. While this is most evident in the intercessory prayers and psalms, it is also reflected in the revised festal calendar which brings a more global perspective to our prayer.

August, we are invited to remember not only familiar saints such as, John Vianney, Clare, Bartholomew, Monica and Augustine but also Cayetano of Argentina, Maximilian Kolbe, Alberto Hurtado of Chile, Rose of Lima, and the Day of Prayer for the native peoples of the Americas. Saints of the Mercy calendar represent both diversity and unity. Many of the saints selected were specially known for their practice of spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Also included are the patron saints of the Order named in our original Rule.

Another aspect of Mercy tradition that is highlighted in the new prayer book is our recognition of Mary as "Mother of Mercy and our model of faith."⁹ Over twenty feasts of Mary are included in the festal calendar. The feasts of Mary honored in both Europe and the United States have been expanded to include those special feasts of Mary dear to the peoples of Central and South America as well as the Philippines and Guam. We acknowledge Mary as Our Lady of Peace, Our Lady of the Triumph of the Cross, Our Lady, Mother of Divine Providence. While special offices are not

been called to further the reign of God upon earth. In this context, we pray as church; but there is a further delineation which shapes our prayer. We also come as those called in a special way to manifest the mercy of God to our brothers and sisters. This charism which has been entrusted to us is one which we daily appropriate more fully. We share this charism with others, our associates, collaborators in ministry, persons we may never meet who seek to witness the mercy of God through their words and actions.

The living into what it means to be women of Mercy takes a lifetime of reflection and experience. The new prayerbook provides a treasury of Mercy readings and reflections which assist us in knowing ourselves more fully as women of Mercy. This section draws from the writings of Catherine McAuley as well as writings about her. They challenge us to be faithful to the original insight given to Catherine and to take that wisdom and apply it to the realities of our time. Once more, the rhythm and pace of the prayerbook call those gathered to pray to reflection and assimilation of the prayer words rather than a simple voicing of these texts. The words of the Mercy readings echoing in the greetings, antiphons, and blessings that are taken from Catherine's writings or patterned on her words permeate the entire body of the text just as mercy permeates the totality of our lives.

Honoring Sacred Time

When our *Constitutions* speak of "Gathering for communal prayer, especially morning and evening, in the spirit of the prayer of the Church,"¹⁰ it honors the understanding of sacred time. The notion of marking time by praying at morning and evening calls the person to acknowledge the sacred within each day, each hour having its own quality of sacred time. There is a harmony with the

at the close of this day remind me of the love you have shown to me. I have seen you, heard you and touched you in your people. How have I loved you or failed to love you in return?"¹² The theme of confident trust is repeated in the sponsory taken from Catherine's *Suscipe*. Cumulatively, the impact invites us to surrender our lives to God at the close of the day. The other hours of the Mercy prayerbook have a similar internal consistency and in-

The examen of night prayer invites the members of the praying community to see their lives in the context of God's presence in life.

sentiments of heart that are natural to the pace of the day. This is seen clearly in the format for night prayer. The prayer resounds with the sense of trust and surrender. The greeting sets that tone saying: "O God, as night gathers and all the earth grows still, we lift our hearts to you in grateful trust."¹¹ The psalm picks up the same theme leading into the traditional night examen.

The examen of night prayer invites the members of the praying community to see their lives in the context of God's presence in life. Drawing from Catherine's insight into Matthew 25, the focus of the examen is discerning and responding to the manifestation of God in each day. "O God of forgiveness and mercy,

tentionality in observing the tone and mood of the day. Enhanced celebrative elements such as the lighting of the evening lights at Vespers, use of incense, and musical accompaniment add to this expression.

Giving Expression to the Community's Self-understanding

One might question how praying a particular format or formulation at times of communal prayer differs from any other occasion for group prayer. To put it another way, "How is praying the Liturgy of Hours different from prayer that is designed by the group or an individual in the group?" Perhaps the distinction is rooted in our

understanding that the public prayer of the church, the public prayer of the Institute, expresses more than our personal theological or devotional stance. It expresses the common faith-vision of the whole. Kathleen Hughes refers to this when she speaks of liturgy as "first theology."

To speak of liturgy as "first theology" is to speak of evocative and performative language that gives expression to the community's

our personal and communal prayer. It is devotional in nature and tone. The prayers included give us a window into the prayer of Catherine by making accessible to us the prayers as she prayed them or composed them, as well as reformulations of these prayers to suit the temper of our times. Like the Mercy readings found in volume 1, the collection offered in this book invites both recitation and meditation. The format includes special

when one is discerning a call to membership, preparing for profession, called to leadership. We also experience support for mission as we pray for new ministries, for our many benefactors, or for the poor. At a time when many members of the Institute live alone or are separated geographically from the Sisters of their regional communities in order to serve the poor and marginalized, there is a sense of inter-relatedness and communion that can be fostered by common prayer words and a unity in our way of prayer.

Will the new prayer resources offered to us succeed in fostering communion among us, feeding our spirits and providing us with prayer language and images to share together? No one can answer that for us. We will have to discover the answer in the praying of the book. If it is received as a possible resource for prayer valued for its poetry and style, it will stir some, be neutral to others, and fail to satisfy still others. If it is received as an articulation of our relationship with God, each other, and the world, it will challenge us to make it our own. There is always the potential that we limit ourselves to receiving the book on its surface dimension and miss the underlying roots from which it springs. We have a familiarity with other scriptural translations, prayer formats, and texts that have carried us into the God encounter. They are holy for us. Changing to new translations, a more

The experience of using the same words to express the prayer of our heart helps us to see better our connectedness throughout Mercy.

self-understanding; its relationship with God, the demands of that relationship, the community's desires and hopes and fears on its journey as collaborators with Christ in the establishment of the reign of God . . . Liturgy mediates God's claim upon the human community and invites the community to full and mature encounter with the divine, an encounter that both expresses and continues to enlarge the community's faith.¹³

What we are about is more than our own expression of devotion. We are about entering into prayer that expresses and constitutes who we are and what we hold to be true as ecclesial women in Mercy.

Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley provides a different type of resource for

resources to help us respond to the *Constitutions'* call "to the remembrance of the legacy of love and service of our Sisters who have died."¹⁴ The resource provides not only additional ritual celebrations at the death of a Sister, but a litany of Mercy founders and prayers for the critically ill.

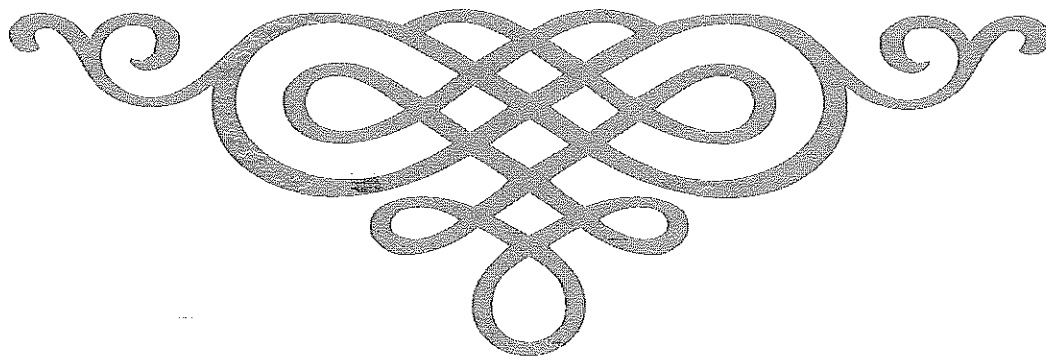
The prayer resources provided in the section of the book, "Prayers in the Mercy Spirit," encourage a sense of union at special times in the lives of our members and associates. The experience of using the same words to express the prayer of our heart helps us to see better our connectedness throughout Mercy. It reinforces that we are called to be with and for each other at critical times in our lives . . .

repetitious format, and reformulated prayers is daunting. This is particularly true if the images and theological understandings stretch us beyond our present concepts. Embracing the full meaning of the psalms as our prayer, listening to the call to conversion given voice in the readings, and holding the suffering of the world up in our intercessory prayer demands the fusion of action and contemplation in our lives.

Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas and *Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley* are not perfect. They are the product of human hands and give up their riches slowly. They were conceived as a means to tap into the core faith vision that is ours as Sisters of Mercy. Only in the praying will their promise be realized or fall short.

Notes:

- 1 Vagaggini, Cyprian, O.S.B., *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1976) p. 518.
- 2 *Constitutions*, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. #10 and #17.
- 3 *Counsels of Our Beloved Foundress Mother Mary Catherine McAuley from her life, letters and the annals of the Institute* (Burlingame, CA: Sisters of Mercy, 1940) p. 24.
- 4 Collins, Mary O.S.B., "Devotions and Renewal Movements: Spiritual Cousins of the Liturgy," in *Called to Prayer Liturgical Spirituality Today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986) p. 66.
- 5 Dougherty, Rose Mary S.S.N.D., *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment* (New York: Paulist, 1995) p. 14.
- 6 *The Psalter* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1994) Ps 35:8.
- 7 *General Instruction on The Liturgy of the Hours* (Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1971) #108.
- 8 *Pathways, Phase II Summary Report*, p. 44.
- 9 *Constitutions*, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, #15.
- 10 *Ibid.*, #17.
- 11 *Night Prayer, Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas*, draft text.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 Hughes, H. Kathleen, R.S.C.J., "The Voice of the Church at Prayer," in *Living No Longer for Ourselves* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991) p. 102.
- 14 *Constitutions*, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, #17.



An Introduction to the Translation of the Book of Psalms¹

Mary Collins, O.S.B.

THIS TRANSLATION OF THE Book of Psalms is a liturgical Psalter, one intended for communal singing or recitation in public prayer. Prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, it can be distinguished in its style from other English language translations. Other English versions (the Grail version, the King James, the Jerusalem Bi-

and giving voice to the experience of God's presence and God's absence? The poet's skepticism was a challenge: How do we get beyond well-loved but conventional turns of phrase to unleash the energy of the ancient Hebrew poems? How do we reveal in our contemporary English-speaking cultures the psalmist's keen awareness of

these ancient religious poems in parts rather than wholes, primarily through what is presented Sunday by Sunday as the responsorial psalm. Responsorial psalms, in most instances, excerpt selected phrases or verses from the biblical poems; the verses are then assigned to the liturgical day or the season because of their power to focus spiritual meaning. There is both gain and loss in this selected use of the psalms in our liturgical books. The gain is that the particular lines give the church heightened language to voice joy, confidence, grief, or hope with an intensity appropriate to the liturgical occasion—funeral, ordinary time, or paschal rejoicing. With such words regularly placed on our lips at prayer, corresponding sentiments form gradually in our hearts. In this way, the psalm phrases become primer and tutor, expanding and guiding our religious sensibilities.

But concern for the integrity of the poetry confirmed the judgment that the whole psalm, not the shorter sections found in some of the liturgical books, was the unit for translation in this liturgical Psalter. Whole psalms yield a certain surplus of religious meaning not available in separated

The goal of this translation into modern English language poetry is to expose in our vernacular the power of the ancient Psalter.

ble or the Frost Psalter, for example) have their own integrity, and there was no reason to prepare a translation that would imitate any one of them. The goal of this translation into modern English language poetry is to expose in our vernacular the power of the ancient Psalter as a primer for contemporary prayer.

At an early stage of the work, a published poet among the collaborators wondered whether the honed and polished idiom of much biblical translation could ever be effectively cracked open. Could a translation ever recover for English speakers the original Semitic metaphors rising from

divine presence and judgment in ordinary human experience? The comfort of familiar religious idiom and cadence is well known, but familiarity also has the effect of concealing as much as it reveals about the mystery of the divine-human encounter. Could a new translation of the psalms as religious poetry surprise us again into recognition?

Catholic Use of the Psalter

Each psalm is a poem. Whole psalms, complete poems, are used in the Liturgy of the Hours. But the majority of Catholic worshipers know

lines and verses, because the poems frequently mix a range of religious feelings. Their complexity alerts us to the infinite mystery of the presence we see, within which we dwell, with which we wrestle. The whole psalm, with whatever shifts of sensibility, mood, and purpose, and whatever changes of speaker and addressee it registers, is the font of the discrete sentiments presented in excerpted antiphons and verses in liturgical books. Recovery of the spiritual power of any part of this ancient religious poetry is intimately tied to unlocking the energy of the whole.

How to Translate a Poem

However distinctive this translation is as poetry, it is biblical translation and not paraphrase. Skilled translators, working from the Masoretic Hebrew text at all stages of the project, consulted the Septuagint and other major ancient versions. They drew on current research into ancient north-west Semitic philology, which has opened up new understandings of Biblical Hebrew. But translation is an art, not an exact science. Translation can be informed by more than one set of principles for negotiating the moves from an ancient language to a modern one.

"Dynamic equivalence" and "formal equivalence" are two approaches to translation; they have the same goals: to give an accurate rendering of the original Hebrew text and

to make complete sense in English, the "receptor language." But translators are always faced with the need to make judgments, because there is no perfect match between any two languages, and certainly no possibility of a perfect match between ancient Hebrew and contemporary English.

Formal equivalence seeks to honor the distinctive characteristics of the original language (e.g., grammatical constructions, word order, tense, number and gender markers, and so on). Faced with the differences in languages, the

not identical. A formal equivalence translation will seek to reproduce the Hebrew poetic form as closely as possible (for example, the celebrated parallelism of Hebrew poetry). This approach to translation will yield an Englished Hebrew poem, but not necessarily contemporary English poetry. A dynamic equivalence translation, by contrast, will move forward only those elements of the ancient poetic form that are congruent with contemporary English poetry; Semitic parallelism will not make the linguistic crossing. Instead, the translator will em-

Skilled translators, working from the Masoretic Hebrew text at all stages of the project, consulted the Septuagint and other major ancient versions.

translator aiming for formal equivalence is prepared to accept whatever awkwardness results from putting the receptor language, English, to work in ways not suited to it. Dynamic equivalence, the approach used in this translation, shifts the weight in the other direction, preferring to honor the idiom of the receptor language, in this case English.

When the texts being translated are poetry, the need for judgement as to whether to seek formal or dynamic equivalence is heightened. Modern English poetry has many features in common with ancient Hebrew poetry, but the two poetic styles are

ploy equivalent English poetic strategies. The yield will be contemporary English poetry.

Some characteristics of this translation of the Psalter for liturgical use can be noted briefly. First, while English is a complex language with a richly mixed ancestry, translators discovered that monosyllabic Anglo-Saxon English was more effective than polysyllabic English that had a Norman or Latinate lineage. Anglo-Saxon vocabulary best captured the direct and concise quality of the original Hebrew. It also served the unadorned directness of modern English poetry. So this version of Psalm 78 says in part:

*The people stuffed their mouths,
God satisfied their greed.
But while they gorged themselves,
cramming down their food,
God's anger flared against them,
destroying their sturdiest,
striking down Israel's youth.*

The language used in the familiar Grail version is more muted:

*So they ate and had their fill
for he gave them all they craved.
But before they had sated their
craving,
while the food was still in their
mouth,
God's anger rose against them.
He slew the strongest among
them,
struck down the flower of Israel.*

Compare “gorged themselves” and “sated their craving”; either is intelligible English idiom and each is a possible translation of the Hebrew. But the two phrases come from different ancestral lines of contemporary English, and their meanings are hardly identical.

This liturgical Psalter is intended for communal singing or oral recitation, not for silent reading or for study.

The same passage from Psalm 78 points up a second characteristic of the English style of this translation. The poetic energy and immediacy found in the Hebrew verbs has been captured in the English verbs. Compare the cumulative effect of the words *stuffed*, *satisfied*, *gorged*, *cramming*, *flared*, *destroying*, and *striking down* with the combination of verbs *ate*, *had*, *gave*, *craved*, *had sated*, *was*,

rose, *slew*, *struck down*. They sound in different registers.

A third characteristic of this translation comes from the ambiguity and flexibility of Hebrew tenses relative to the English language tense system. Many Hebrew verbs commonly translated in the past tense have legitimately been rendered in the present tense. This gives greater immediacy to the psalms as prayer. Ps 33:9 reads, “God speaks: the world is” as an alternative to the more familiar “By the Lord’s word, the heavens were made.” Theological truth is also served in this particular treatment of tense.

Psalms for Singing and Saying

This liturgical Psalter is intended for communal singing or oral recitation, not for silent reading or for study. In oral literature, the sounds of

sing as prayers, to make them memorable for praying communities. If the translation is to accomplish its purpose, the texts will need composers from the wide variety of cultural and social backgrounds that constitute the English-speaking church.

The distinctive style of this Psalter—fewer, terser words expressing heightened meaning, and ideas that move forward without providing for a pause at the end of every line—will challenge the familiar expectations of composers and of communities faithful to daily choral recitation in other translations. These psalms have a firm rhythmic structure (the musicians who worked throughout the project saw to that), but the number of unaccented syllables in each line of poetry has been deliberately reduced. As contemporary English poetry, this language is spare. One consequence is that many available psalm tones—those for use with the Grail texts, for example, that assume a proportionately higher ratio of unaccented to accented syllables—will be a poor fit for the new texts. Composers will need to write simpler tones. Racing choirs used to gliding on frequent unaccented syllables will be required to change their gait.

But composers will want to write more than new chant tones. The various poetic genres found in the Psalter—hymns of praise, laments, litanies, historical narratives, songs of thanksgiving, didactic acrostics, dramatic liturgies,

words and their sequences matter, both poetically and musically, and they contribute to the meaning. This translation presumes musical performance as the norm, although choral recitation will undoubtedly be widespread in groups that pray the psalms daily in the Liturgy of the Hours. But musicians are encouraged to use their musical genius to make these texts

and so on—invite different musical treatments and even expanded liturgical use. For example, where a liturgical book designates the use of selected psalm verses for a responsorial psalm (e.g., verses from Psalm 22 on Good Friday), the creative composer may engage an assembly, its choir, and its cantors in singing the whole.

Gender in the Psalter

The psalm translators also have attended to the ongoing developments in English gender usage and to contemporary theological discussion about gender in traditional religious language. Such attention involved, first of all, a commitment to overcome conventional lapses into what has been called “translator’s bias,” the unexamined preference for male pronouns and male-centered images and metaphors even when these were not warranted by the original text. Principles of either formal or dynamic equivalence would have required this much.

Translation according to principles of dynamic equivalence raised other questions about gendered language in the Psalter. Where do women stand in the story of salvation? Were the women of Israel parties to covenant blessing? Were they fully present to events recounted in the biblical story of salvation, even while the language used later to recount Israel’s meeting with the living God concealed them? Was it

God or the story-telling men of the Hebrew peoples who marginalized women at Sinai? Who is the mysterious God whose name, made known to Moses, could not be pronounced, and to whom Israel’s leaders gave other names and titles now canonized with the biblical text?

Because there are not yet any sustained models for gender-sensitive Bible translation, principles for dealing with gender issues in the translation evolved as translators faced particular textual challenges. Judgments—theological, historical, socio-cultural, linguistic, and literary—were made again and again and reconsidered again and again as the identity of the human subjects of the Psalter and the identity of God both came under scrutiny.

The treatment of some texts was self-evident. Psalm 45 assumes the existence of certain historic social institutions:

*Your sons will inherit
the throne your fathers held*

The translators let that stand. They made no effort to rewrite either history or the psalm. Moreover, where the feminine personification of Zion (and the accompanying implicit feminization of the chosen people relative to a divine masculine) is integral to the imagery of a poem, as in Psalm 87, translators worked with the poem’s

own operative convention of making the city feminine, so “Zion mothered each and every one.” Without the metaphor, there is no poem.

Such historic institutions and conventional metaphors do not dominate all genres of the psalms. A more typical feature of many psalms is their presumptive male world. The poems’ identification of worshipers or plaintiffs as the men of Israel is predicated on the bond of male covenant membership sealed by circumcision. This in turn was the basis for participation in the Temple cult, for which the biblical book of 150 psalms was collected and edited over many generations.

That Temple-based perspective conceals the memory, recorded many places elsewhere in the Bible, that women of Israel were also song writers and leaders of song. Miriam comes to mind (Exod 15:20–21), as do Hannah (1 Sam 2:1–10) and Judith (16:1–17). Commentators on the Book of Exodus tell us the song fragment attributed to Miriam is perhaps the most ancient of all the songs of Israel. Women sang praise and thanks, voiced trust, lamented the people’s sufferings and their own. They honored wisdom and celebrated salvation in song, and they were credited with doing so.

The translators made no effort to rewrite
either history or the psalm.

On the basis of this internal evidence from the biblical tradition, this translation makes the judgment that the psalms are Hebrew prayers composed and sung by women and men alike, even though that is not immediately evident in the Psalter as it has come to us. If the broader truth about Israel's songs had been forgotten in the course of the collecting and editing and handing on of Israel's psalms as "the Psalms of David" in the service of the Jerusalem Tem-

historical expressions of the human reception of divine revelation, it is not possible to excise the human social reality of patriarchy from the world of the psalms and still claim to be translating these ancient texts. Something else is possible: to deal with the large set of heretofore unexamined conventions in biblical translation that have made praying the psalms different for people newly convinced that men and women can and must worship together in spirit and in truth.

then, was *Adonai* to be translated?

This Psalter used "God" and "Lord" interchangeably in the English translations, except where context clearly requires one or the other. This flexibility is warranted by the Hebrew text itself, which often uses the two words as synonymous in parallel lines. The flexibility was required by the concise literary style; frequent uses of the phrase "the Lord" had metrical consequences.

Because the connotative freight of the words "lord" and "Lord" has been the subject of extended discussion in many communities of biblical faith, the use of both "God" and "Lord" was reconsidered multiple times. At one stage, the translators explored the possibility of using only "God." The solution was justifiable on internal textual grounds. It is a fact well known to scholars that a subcollection within the Book of Psalms (42–83) has been edited for religious reasons in some unremembered past, so that "Lord" had been suppressed and "Elohim" or "God" stands as the now-forgotten editor's name of choice. Should this ancient editorial work of suppressing *Adonai* for religious reasons have been brought to completion? After repeated reconsideration, that path was not taken.

Is "Lord," as a name for divine mystery, wholly unacceptable to that part of the praying church that is consciously struggling to become a discipleship of equals? Does "Lord," as a divine name,

It is not possible to excise the human social reality of patriarchy from the world of the psalms and still claim to be translating these ancient texts.

ple cult, and if the Hebrew employs language conventions like the exclusive use of masculine pronouns, the translators became responsible for appropriate critical handling of texts in this dynamic equivalence translation for contemporary prayer.

Sometimes inclusive translations of the ancient texts came easily. Depending on the internal dynamics of particular texts, each with its own organizing metaphors and shifts of voice and number, the translators may have rendered a non-specific "he" as an "I" or "we," or a "you" or "they," or even a "whoever."

Yet, the fact is there to be wrestled with as vigorously as Jacob ever wrestled with God: Insofar as the biblical texts are

Speaking of God in Prayer

Naming God in the psalms introduced additional challenges for the translators. The Hebrew texts offer *Elohim* (God) and *Adonai* (Lord). For two reasons, translators ruled out simply restoring the concealed divine name YHWH (I Am Who Am) that lies behind the Hebrew *Adonai*. First, it would have been incongruous to introduce into the translation an archaism that would need extensive explanation for those using this Psalter for communal prayer. Second, such a solution failed to regard the religious sensibilities of Jews who, out of reverence, do not pronounce the ancient name in their prayer. But how,

inevitably divinize maleness and patriarchal relationships? In the United States "lord" has no secular currency whatsoever in the local culture. For Catholics, the word operates as part of the religious vocabulary of a community that officially recognizes only male leadership and nonparticipatory governance as "the will of the Lord."

Other English speakers in the North Atlantic who were involved in the translation work and will be involved in the praying of these psalms reported that "lord" carries less freight with them because the word gets more varied use. For example, the honorific "Lord Mayor" is used for women holding that public office in Scotland, England, and Ireland. In the socio-cultural world of these praying communities, "lord" denotes and connotes public office held by either males or females that involves public participation in its exercise.

The translators knew also that the National Council of Churches of North America had faced the question of the religious and secular connotations and denotations of "Lord" earlier in its preparation of its inclusive language lectionary. Voices from the historical African-American churches dissented from the early proposal in that project to eliminate "Lord" in public proclamation. They dissented on the basis of their own social history. Oppression and oppressors they knew well enough, but the oppressor

they endured had not been the one they called "Lord." While lording it over others was white people's sin, "Lord Jesus" and "King Jesus" had kept black people's hopes alive. So in these churches, the psalms sing of a Lordship that transcended the oppression of their white, church-going slave masters and mistresses. In the vocabulary of African-American Christians, "Lord" has strong christological overtones and speaks concretely of deliverance from oppressors.

So what's in a L(l)ord? The "Lord" of the psalms and the psalmists was also re-

skulls of the guilty." Divine play and destruction are anthropomorphic, but neither play nor destruction are gender based. The divine mystery is personal; yet here is another mystery: personhood that is not gendered.

Other psalm texts also disclose divine gender-fullness in conventional terms. The poet of Psalm 17 can imagine the "Lord" as maternal, and asks:

*Guard me under your wings,
hide me from those who attack,
from predators who surround me.*

Later, the same psalmist speaks of the mystery of the Lord God reflected in the

The psalms reveal the mystery of a personal "God who acts," one caught up by choice in human history.

flected on, and the poems themselves give complex witness. The disclosure is regularly in the Hebrew verbs, which are vividly anthropomorphic. They reveal the mystery of a personal "God who acts," one caught up by choice in the history of the human race. But this mystery is divine: personal existence that embraces and transcends gendered human existence, and yet is open to being imaged in all human actions. In Psalm 68, for example, a playful God "rides the clouds" and "blew kings about like snow on Mount Zalmon." But then in the same hymn turned destructive and "smashed the heads of the enemies, the

bonding moment that modern developmental psychologists see as the basis for all human trust, mother and child locked in the intimate gaze that foreshadows all future human intimacy. The poet, anticipating such intimacy with God, writes:

*I will then be justified,
will wake to see your face,
and be filled with your presence*

In Psalm 68, the writer credits the "Lord" with social services we usually relegate to women, with work not considered "manly" by our contemporary social and political standards.

Further, this odd warrior "Lord" who has power to set straight persistent social

disorder does not depend exclusively on male collaborators:

*God speaks a word;
a company of women
spreads the good news.*

Psalm 68, like Psalm 17, sings of a Lord unafraid of female form and female companions in undertaking saving deeds.

But in Psalm 89, a cultic celebration of the Davidic covenant, King David's vision of God bypasses these "unconventional" womanly experiences of divine-human intimacy in favor of a more manly one. In this song, the psalmist depicts God narrating a first-person experience of forming a covenant relationship with David:

*He calls out to me: "My father,
my God, my rock of safety!"
I respond: "My firstborn,
noblest of kings."*

David's man-to-man experience of God is certainly part of the memory of divine-human intimacy recorded in the psalms, but it is not the whole.

The anthropomorphic God of the psalms uncovered in this new English translation is worthy of sustained attention on the part of both biblical theologians and praying communities interested in relief from gender reductionism. If the language for God in any single psalm or in all of them together fails to meet every human expectation, this translation may be onto something. No single image or metaphor taken in isolation reveals the mystery of the di-

vine celebrated in the psalms; the only true name of God is one we are forbidden to say. Language collapses before the mystery of divine fullness. YHWH's identity is like nothing in the heavens above or on the earth below. The "one who is" will be "who will be," causing to be whatever comes to be!

Still, it must be acknowledged that the final text of this Psalter is a skin only three-quarters full of new wine. Once the project had been completed, ICEL forwarded the Psalter to the Catholic Bishops' Committee on Doctrine for the imprimatur, which that body gives for biblical translations being published in the United States. The Committee on Doctrine reported back that it had decided earlier "in principle" that it would not give the imprimatur to any biblical translation, however successful, that had avoided calling God "he." The principle at issue, presumably theological but perhaps more mundane, was not elaborated. Anticlimactically, the translators returned to undo some of their original work. The version published here is the result: All involved wanted to get this Psalter in circulation, even in a compromised form. But this liturgical Psalter is published as a study text, inviting your comments. Those who pray these psalms may want to enter deeply into prayerful reflection on the

gender issues that challenge the church today. A second edition may finally present the text that was intended for publication now.

An Old Christian Tradition

Christians adopted the Psalter as a primer for prayer in the second and third centuries. In company with the Gospels, the psalms have formed the religious sensibilities of countless Christian generations since then. This translation aims to keep that tradition alive into the twenty-first century. Strong images received and savored in prayer will lead to insight; and religious insight brings with it an invitation to repentance and conversion, to praise and gratitude, to gracious service of the poor in search of justice, and to humble acceptance of unavoidable and unfathomable suffering. With the help of the musicians who will set these texts for use in common prayer, this Psalter may sing the church into new recognition of the mystery of God, which is also the mystery of Christ, at work in ordinary life.



Notes

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Journeys and Seasons—What about the Psalms?

Ann Marie Caron, R.S.M.

THE BIBLICAL PSALMS HAVE not merely survived through three thousand years, they continue to be the “prayer-book of a cloud of witnesses.”¹ These “magnificent songs,” “composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,” have “great power to raise the mind to God, to inspire devotion, to evoke gratitude in times of favor, and to bring consolation and courage in times of trial” (GILH 100). The Liturgy of the Hours can be a framework in which the authentic dimensions of Christian prayer are apprehended, practiced, and made one’s own.² Even with the value and high regard placed on the psalms, the General Instruction did not fail to recognize difficulties experienced in making this inspired poetry our own prayer” (GILH 101).

In this regard, contemporary translations of the psalms, as well as new musical compositions using psalm settings, have been very welcome. The Instruction also recognized that “study of the Bible, especially the psalms,” is necessary, not only for “personal knowledge,” but to understand how and by what method the “psalms can become real prayer” (GILH 102). What are they saying today about the Book of Psalms and the prayer-ways of the psalms?

The Shape of the Book of Psalms

The Book of Psalms is a collection of 150 prayer poems that are divided into five books: Psalms 1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, and 107–150. The last psalm of each book concludes with a doxology; for example, Ps 41:13 (“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlast-

is derived from the Septuagint and the New Testament (see Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33, 35).

Psalms 1–2 form an introduction to the entire Book of Psalms. Psalm 1 provides an attitude that seeks to motivate the reading and praying of the subsequent psalms.⁴ The first psalm in the Psalter is really intended to keep Israel in touch with her God, so that the

The Liturgy of the Hours can be a framework in which the authentic dimensions of Christian prayer are apprehended, practiced, and made one’s own.

ing. Amen and Amen) and Ps 89:52 (“Blessed be the Lord forever, Amen and Amen”). Psalm 150 seems to serve as the concluding doxology for Book 5 and the entire Psalter. “Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! (Ps 150:6) This call to praise highlights the Book of Psalms as the repertoire of praise.³ From the Hebrew word, *tehillum*, meaning “praises” to the Greek transliteration, *psalmoi*, suggesting songs sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments, comes the title Psalms in the English Bible. The title Psalms

whole Book of Psalms is a form of instruction.”⁵ Instruction or Torah is written tradition that is authoritative for the people of God. Thus, Torah is Scripture to be studied, heeded, and absorbed.⁶

In Psalm 2, we hear the voice of the anointed king. This psalm, like other royal psalms, is a prayer related to the Davidic dynasty. It celebrates the type of the true king.⁷ Even after the sixth century, when there was no longer a Davidic king, Israel continued to pray psalms such as Psalm 2. Craghan sees in this, and in the placement of Psalm 2 in the

arrangement of the Psalter, Israel's hope that eventually there would be another royal presence in her midst.⁸

As a collection of religious poems, the Book of Psalms is sometimes spoken of as "the hymnbook of the Second Temple."⁹ Although the liturgy of the second temple is unknown, scholars conjecture that perhaps the five divisions of the Psalter suited the liturgical calendar of this sixth-century temple.¹⁰ While they cannot specifically give dates for the composition of most of the psalms, the probable time frame is the preexilic periods

instruments. A Psalm of David; or Psalm 73 "A Psalm of Asaph"; Psalm 90 "A Prayer of Moses the man of God." These examples suffice to illustrate that many of the superscriptions include identification; some also give information about musical performance. What is important to heed is that superscriptions indicate a creative interpretation. They are no longer viewed as historical attribution. Scholars have not been able to verify the data given in the superscriptions. Nor do they know the meanings of many of the terms.

As collections of psalms became a book of Scripture, the understanding of language and purpose of the psalms did not remain identical with their original meaning in Israel's cult or liturgy.

of David and Solomon (tenth century BCE) or even earlier. More important than specific dates is recognizing the link between the psalms and the history of God's dealings with God's people.¹¹

Superscriptions

Two literary features, also clues to the theological intentionality of the editors of the psalms, need to be mentioned: the use of superscriptions and preferred names for God. Groups of psalms carry superscriptions, e.g., Psalm 4 "To the leader: with stringed

One common example is the word *selah* (71 times in 39 psalms). In the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, this term is explained as "a liturgical direction; it *may* indicate that there should be an instrumental interlude at this point in the singing of the psalm."¹² What was the intention of these ancient pre-Christian notations? Simply to give a setting for the psalm. Today, scholarship cautions that we be "modest and less specific about the setting." At the same time, the designation of the setting remains a goal of modern scholarship.

Psalms Become Scripture

There is also a growing recognition that the psalms in the Bible are not always in the original form they had in various settings of Israel's religious life. They have been revised and reread in the process of reuse and preservation. Psalm 14, for instance, is repeated as Psalm 53. Or compare Psalm 18 with 2 Samuel 22. These are indications that the prayers contained in the Book of Psalms include rearrangements and elaboration of prayers that circulated prior to their usage by the postexilic community. Again, it bears repeating. The bottom line is that very little is known about the historical details of the composition of the psalms and their dates.

What is known is that small collections grew into larger ones until the Psalter of 150 psalms was formed. This process was completed at the latest by the late third century BCE. As collections of psalms became the Book of Psalms, and that book a book of Scripture, the understanding of language and purpose of the psalms did not remain identical with their original meaning in Israel's cult or liturgy. In fact, evidence of recontextualization can be found throughout the Bible itself (for example, Matt 1:23 uses Isa 7:14; Mark 1:2-3 uses Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3). In other words, the community living in a new

context understands a biblical message in a manner different than the way it was originally understood.¹³

How the biblical message functioned in the past and might function in the present is an important concern for both scholarship and spirituality. The theory of interpretation known as canonical hermeneutics examines the reinterpretation done by communities of faith as they brought the religious tradition of the past to bear on their own experience.¹⁴ The method of canonical hermeneutics contends that, in the formative

interpreted as a self-standing book of prayers or praises, any more than Proverbs was to be a self-standing collection of wise sayings.¹⁶

Scripture and Liturgy

The psalm poems, then, have a double identity. They are Scripture—one book in the canon of writings that make up the Bible. The psalms may and should be used in all the ways in which Scripture is used. And they are also liturgy. As texts, they are used in the church's service of God through worship. The use of

In the psalms, God is never just God, but always One whose identity is as particular as that of an individual person.

process just as in the interpretive process of the present, a believing community resignifies (gives new meaning to) a religious message born of another time and of other circumstances.

Canonical critics recognize three components to this interpretive method: (1) the biblical text; (2) the new context within which the text is read; and (3) the process of resignification.¹⁵ Each one of these components plays an important role in the process of resignification. It seems that, as the psalms became Scripture, they did so with an interpretive strategy attached. They were not to be in-

the psalms has been most effective when the two identities have been held together.¹⁷ When interpretation of the psalms as Scripture has informed, corrected, and enriched their use as liturgy, and their use as liturgy has given interpretation a vital context and living purpose, then psalmody has been and will be at its best.

Names for God

A distinguishing characteristic of the psalm collections is variation in the preferred name for God. "God is portrayed in the psalms in ways that are not always consistent or even com-

patible with each other. Diversity is the hallmark of conceptions of God in the Book of Psalms.¹⁸ We find both "YHWH," the name transcribed in Hebrew manuscripts, and the name *'elohim*, are translated in our versions of the Bible as Lord or God. The importance of the *name* as identity and representation of the God of the psalms cannot be emphasized too strongly. In the psalms, there are at least four categories of comparisons or analogies for the characterizations of God. The psalmists give voice to an expansive play of poetic ideas of God.

In the psalms, God is never just God, but always One whose identity is as particular as that of an individual person.¹⁹ It is because of God's redemptive work in their midst that the Hebrew people sing and pray the psalms, making God's deeds and words known. Still, "the covenant experiences reported in the psalms simply do not yield a homogeneous portrait of God. The diverse conceptions of God in the psalms reflect the perceptions of the particular psalmists."²⁰

By the name, with metaphor and analogy, the psalm poems point to the God of Israel and to the rest of the Hebrew Bible. This God is a God of the sojourn, the exodus, the land, the exile, and the return. Such is the God of Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Miriam, Deborah, David, Ruth, the psalmists, and the prophets. The essential belief kept in

place by these prayers, then, is that the God of the covenant is One who is with the people. Covenant is a dynamic, ever unfolding experiential ground of conversation with God.

Voice of Our Common Humanity

A full spectrum of the human condition is covered in these prayers. The psalms "present most vividly the perennial dialogue between human beings and God."²¹ As we read, study, and pray the psalms we notice that they record only one-half

neity."²³ Brueggemann's point is that, when we take up the Psalms, we enter into the middle of that voice of humanity and decide to take our stand with that voice.

When a person prays a psalm today, suggests Walter Brueggemann, "our work (liturgy is indeed work) is to let our voices, minds and hearts run back and forth in regular and speedy interplay between the stylized and sometimes too familiar words of Scripture and our experience, which we sense with poignancy. The words of Scripture bring

dynamics of that encounter which is the heart of prayer. As Scripture, the psalms are the inspired Word of God. The Spirit who is their source is the same Spirit who moves us to pray. In praying and singing the psalms, one was to learn how to pray in her or his own way, from where she or he is, without sham or shame."²⁵ So "school of prayer" does not refer to "a collection of prayers to be said."²⁶ Rather it speaks to the motifs, aspirations, fears, and hopes voiced by the psalmist, known in the stirring and cries of our own hearts and lives, and given voice in our assemblies.

So, as Carroll Stuhlmueller²⁷ would remind us, to unlock the riches of the psalms, we need to be formed in the ways of Israelite prayer and in that understanding which St. Paul considered so very necessary: "I will pray with the Spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the Spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also" (1 Cor 14:15).

The psalms "present most vividly the perennial dialogue between human beings and God."

of the conversation. Most often, they express the sentiments of members of the community in dialogue with God. In only a few psalms does God speak (see, for example, the prophetic prayers which incorporate God's voice, such as Psalms 50, 75, 81, 95). This is not a contemporary discovery. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria from 328 CE, is reported to have said that, while most of the Bible speaks to us, the Psalms speak for us.²²

The Psalms are "the voice of our own common humanity—gathered over a long period of time—but a voice that continues to have amazing authenticity and contempora-

power, shape, and authority to what we know about ourselves. Conversely, our experience will bring to the words of Scripture a vitality and immediacy that must always be reasserted within the Psalter."²⁴ This exercise calls to mind why the prayer-ways of the psalms can be experienced as a school of prayer.

School of Prayer

It is less common today to refer to the Psalter as a school of prayer. Yet the meaning behind this concept remains valid. The connotation implied in "school of prayer" is that the psalms teach us the

Prayer Components

What are the components of psalm prayers? They are experience, voice, God, and the language of poetry. The biblical psalms spring primarily from an event or an experience, not from an idea. Behind every psalm, something has happened. The event is the first concern of exegesis, or interpretation.

As we pray the psalms with wholeheartedness of mind and spirit, keeping a journal may be a helpful practice.²⁸ Read the text of the psalm with attentiveness to what it says. Allow yourself to be attentive to the imagined author and life situation. Ask yourself who speaks words like these. From clues in the text itself, imagine an individual or group voicing, singing this prayer. Also, be aware that you are reading and praying the psalm from a place; you bring something to the psalm.

There is an adage that the “world” is known only through the particular perspective of the knower. Through reading, the world of the text is perceived and understood according to the social location of the reader.²⁹ Social location, with all its particularity, can be neither ignored nor minimized today. For, on the one hand, to claim that a reading is neutral is to support the perspective of the dominant status quo. On the other hand, a reading can be liberating in one of two ways: major theological questions arise and are answered from within the actual experience of oppression or a stand in solidarity with the oppressed is taken and theology developed out of that stand.

As you read the psalm poem, be aware of the expressions about God or the human family that catch your attention. What beliefs, attitudes, or practices in the psalm seem especially striking to you? This

exercise helps you to discover the literary and theological features in the psalm text.

Toni Craven likens the poetic patterns in Hebrew psalm prayers to rainbow patterns dancing across the walls of a room as the morning or afternoon sun is reflected though such a crystal hanging in a window. The psalm prayers, she suggests, are like “a catching of sunlight in words that allows us to see in a new way.”³⁰

Both ordinary and extraordinary experiences of life catch the light and bring new perspectives into focus in the prayers of the psalmists.

As you read the psalm poem, be aware of the expressions about God or the human family that catch your attention.

There is elegance, innocence, dignity, and passionate, paradoxical excess in these prayers that calls for notice. The poetry of the psalms allows prayer to escape literal language and to embrace logical opposites—and to see God’s light reflected in and through our lives. Prayer is born of the words of our life-poem. Prayer is the response which comes from the still center of our being. It is there that the Holy Spirit shapes us; it is there that the Holy Spirit prays in us, prays us (Romans 8).

How does your reflection of any psalm intersect with your understanding of God,

self, and community? What prayer or conversation with God arises from your experience? What threads of connection do you see? Begin looking, not for the prayer that fires outward towards God, but the prayer that penetrates through the outer shell to the still point at the center of being.³¹ Take the psalm again, reading it slowly, letting the ideas and images seep into your being. Keep reading until one sentence, one phrase strikes you—touches your center. Now focus on it. Saying it over and over again. Now pray it as your prayer.

Psalm Types

There is still another important question that needs to be addressed, for the answer is important to praying the psalms. This question is: What type of psalm is this? In contemporary psalm study, type is identified by the presence in a psalm of a set of features (elements of composition, expressions, intentions) common to the genre or type of literature to which a particular psalm belongs and the setting in life in which the genre functioned.³²

Each psalm presents a developed structure. Each psalm is a poetic composition. The

form of the psalm is rooted in the exchange between God and the person. Hence, the appeal to God has been set in fixed forms or patterns, giving each psalm a developed structure.³³

The variety of psalm types, or genres, conveys the entire range of human emotions before God: praise, thanksgiving, complaint, confession, resignation, joy, anguish, intercession, trust, and awe. Yet, more simply, the principal structures of all psalms can be classified as praise and lament, corresponding to the rhythm of joy and grief.³⁴ Further, the divi-

life as orientation, disorientation, and reorientation or new orientation.³⁵ He recognizes that the flow of human life characteristically is located either in the actual experience of one of these settings or is in movement from one to another. In suggesting this schema, Brueggemann is pursuing a postcritical reading of the psalms in the service of the church's best, most responsible faith.³⁶ The same schema can be used to roughly group the psalms as poems of orientation, poems of disorientation, and poems of new orientation.

The principal structures of all psalms can be classified as praise and lament, corresponding to the rhythm of joy and grief.

sion into individual and communal psalms corresponds to the essential characteristics of human existence. This brings us back to Brueggemann's important contribution of an adaptable schema. He proposes a schema for understanding the prayer-ways of the psalms and the life of faith.

Patterns of Human Life

Examining the question of how best to adapt the psalms to our own prayer needs, W. Brueggemann takes note of how variable human experience is. He identifies these variable patterns of human

Orientation: Seasons of Well-being

Psalms of Descriptive Praise

Orientation signifies *seasons of well-being* that evoke gratitude for the constancy of blessing. The pattern of orientation is reflected in hymns or psalms of descriptive praise, psalms of trust or confidence, wisdom psalms, and certain royal psalms. These psalms, in a variety of ways, articulate the joy, delight, goodness, coherence, and the steadfast reliability of God, God's creation, and God's self-governing law.

God is the sole subject of the psalms of descriptive praise, or the hymns. With language expressing exuberant joy, the hymn voices what God is like (e.g., "the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness," Ps 33:4) or what God has done (e.g., "One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts" . . . "They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and shall sing aloud of your righteousness," Ps 145:4,7). The hymns sing of what God characteristically does: "The Lord is merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ps 145:8); "He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes . . . He gives the barren wife a home, making her the joyous mother of children" (Ps 113:7-9).

Psalms of descriptive praise have a simple structure. They employ typical elements, the first of which is an introduction expressing the psalmist's intention to praise God or to invite others to join in such praise (e.g., "Praise the Lord! Praise O servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised," Ps 113:1-3). Another example is the introduction of Psalm 100: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with

gladness; come into his presence with singing" (verses 1, 2).

The second element is found in the main section of the psalm which gives the reasons or motives for praise. Again, in Psalm 100, the psalmist sings "Know that Yahweh is God! Yahweh made us, and we belong to God; we are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture . . . Give thanks . . . bless God's name!" Or look at Ps 8:2, 4 ("You, O God, have fashioned praise out of the mouths of children and of babes . . . Who are we that you should be mindful of us, that you should care for us?").

The closing verse of Psalm 8 is a repetition of the opening verse: "O God, our God, how glorious is your name over all the earth!" (Ps 8:1, 9). In the conclusion of the hymn of descriptive praise, the psalmist usually restates elements found in the introduction. By reason of their character and function, hymns are intensely theological—to praise and thank God for God's ongoing providence of the world and of humanity. Such psalms are expressions of creation faith.³⁷

A social function is also present in these psalms, for these poems articulate and maintain the "sacred canopy, under which the community of faith can live out its life with freedom from anxiety." In such an experience, worship is "world-making." But who experiences life this way and who wants most to make these kinds of assertions?

In his typically prophetic stance, Brueggemann always invites the challenging insight. "The religious power of these psalms is considerable *for all sorts and conditions of people*."³⁸ "These psalms can be taken with an eschatological note, acknowledging that the creation of God has not been fully completed, but this community waits with confidence." The eschatological note, he submits, moves the psalm from its function of social construction and maintenance to a broader concern—transformation and new creation. So

role in the composition of the Book of Psalms. Such psalms reflect a phase in the history of psalmody when the strategies and styles of the literature of teaching were combined with those of prayer and praise to teach people at worship.³⁹ The prayer, "Lead me in your truth, and teach me" (Ps 25:5), is given at least a partial answer in the voice of teaching, exhortation, warning, and testimony found in the psalms. Notably, the hallmark of the wisdom psalm is fear of the Lord, meaning an attitude that is rooted in covenant.⁴⁰

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psalms of descriptive praise also signify a healthy, oriented life that is anticipated, even if not yet experienced. In this sense, social control gives way to social anticipation, and social criticism is motivated by the longing and hope for God's justice.

Psalms of Instruction or Wisdom Psalms

Psalms of instruction or wisdom were composed out of a concern to guide and encourage the trust and obedience of worshipers. As mentioned earlier, these psalms play a major

Fear of the Lord is the basic virtue of religion. Many of these psalms begin with "Happy those. . ." In this context, Craven mentions that the Hebrew word *'ashre*, which means "blessed, fortunate, happy," occurs twenty-six times in the psalms and only twenty times elsewhere in the entire Hebrew Bible.⁴¹

Other Literary Types

Beyond these literary genres, there are psalms composed in other literary forms scattered throughout the Psalter. Some, such as Psalms 118 and 24,

reflect ceremonies of procession and entrance. Others, such as Psalms 50 and 82, have the form of speeches made in legal proceedings. There are also songs of ascents (Psalms 120–134), apparently used in connection with visits of pilgrims to Zion.

allows this prayer to work in so many different life settings. Other examples would be Psalms 27, 63, 121, 131. Some prayers of confidence and trust are composed primarily as the voice of the community. They feature recollections of God's ways and work in the

the Psalter about God's way with Israel and the world. There is a close connection, as we have said, between the prayer of trust and confidence and the prayer of lament.

More than a third of the book of Psalms consists of cries for help addressed directly to God.

Psalms of Trust and Confidence

Elements of praise for a specific experience of deliverance are also found in thanksgiving psalms. These songs are close to psalms of declarative praise and to the praise element present in psalms of lament. The typical elements in thanksgiving songs would be: praise addressed to the Lord that rehearses the cry for help in trouble and reports the Lord's response of hearing and help. Next is the summons to a community of worship to join the praise, and testimony to them about the meaning of the deliverance for God's way and for the life of the one saved. Then comes the presentation of praise and/or sacrifice to keep the promises made in the prayer for help. Psalm 23 is likely the most familiar and popular psalm of trust and confidence. The richness of its language

past. In these prayers, we find the following elements:⁴²

- Petitions to hear and help are the defining element.
- Descriptions of trouble speak of God's absence or wrath, the community's humiliation and suffering, and the power and arrogance of enemies.
- There is an appeal to the community's identification with God, and to God's honor and glory which support the petitions.
- In some psalms, the psalmist also asserts trust in the Lord.
- As previously mentioned, the prayer rehearses what God has done in the past history of the community of Israel, even in the creation of the world.
- Praise is promised in gratitude for such help.

These corporate prayers are of theological import. For in their recollections are some of the most important statements in

Disorientation⁴³

The life of faith expressed in the psalms is focused in two decisive moves of faith, moves that are always underway, moves by which we are regularly surprised and which we regularly resist.⁴⁴ One move is out of a settled orientation into a season of disorientation. This move consists of a dismantling. In this season of disorientation, human life consists of anguished intervals of hurt, alienation, suffering, and dying. Such lived experiences evoke rage, resentment, anger, self-pity and sometimes even hatred. Brueggemann speaks to the image of place in the psalms, suggesting that, in different places, one prays different prayers.⁴⁵

The lament psalms, both individual and communal, are "poems and speech-forms that match this season in its ragged, painful disarray." More than a third of the book of Psalms consists of these cries for help addressed directly to God. Like Hannah (1 Sam 1:1–28), grieving over her barrenness,⁴⁶ the speakers in the psalms of lament share their feelings of fear, resentment, despair, and rage with God. They do not wait passively for God to notice their pain and come to their aid. Rather, they cry out as an act of

faith in the steadfast love of the One they confidently trust will not reject them for what they feel or say.⁴⁷

This dismantling move is “a characteristically Jewish move,” evoking strong resistance. One knows that this suffering has to do with God and must be vigorously addressed to God. For the Christian faith, the dismantling move is decisively embodied in Jesus’ crucifixion, “the model for all ‘dying’ that must be done in faith.” Here a classic lament psalm is surely Psalm 22: “My God my God why have you forsaken me?” quoted also in the Matthean and Markan accounts of the passion. The lament of the psalmist in Ps 41:9: “Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted the heel against me” is seen as fulfilled in Jesus’ betrayer: “But it is to fulfill the scripture, ‘The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me’” (John 13:18).

The Psalms and Their Christological Reading

From the days of the early church and the decisive “*pascha* of the Lord,” the psalms have been reread in the light of that event. The literal meaning of the psalms are said to acquire another meaning, a new sense—the fulfillment of sense. Augustine was fond of approaching the psalms in this way. When the church prays a psalm that the Lord prayed before us, the voice of the members become

one with the voice of the Head.

Balthasar Fischer⁴⁸ is the scholar whose research renewed awareness of this tradition in the twentieth century. All 150 psalms somehow gave voice to “the whole Christ, head and members,” Christ suffering and Christ in glory. Mary Collins writes: “[Fischer] would himself be the first to agree, I think, that the tradition of christological interpretation is a living tradition in the Church when believers who know themselves to be incorporated into “the whole

ever, suggest that others should imitate or encourage the attitudes described. And they do not take justice into their own hands. Those who so give voice to depths of their pain also know that God is not bound to act in human-guided ways.

As Craghan reminds us, the prayer of lament is not a “gripe session.” Both individual and communal lament psalms “are protestations rooted in the power of our God to intervene. They also contain an atmosphere of expectation that our God will

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Christ” recognize as they pray the psalms in the liturgical assembly, the mystery of their own personal and communal dying and rising.⁴⁹ The christological reading builds on the literal reading of the text as its fulfillment.

Lament Psalms

In struggling with the literal meaning of many of the psalms of lament, we need to keep in mind that the strong words we find are descriptive rather than prescriptive. They describe human reality and they do so with characteristic boldness, exaggeration, and hyperbole. They do not, how-

hear and act on our behalf.”⁵⁰ The psalmists pray for change. Like the other types of psalms, lament psalms also show a structural movement.

The structure includes:

- Address with an introductory cry for help
- Lament
- Confession of trust or assurance of being heard
- Petition
- Vow of praise

The vow of praise reaches into the past, whereby the people do not belie God’s past favors, but continue to praise them, while looking to them as a basis for the hope of God’s action in the present.

Relationships bonded in the covenant underscore the element of boldness characteristic of these psalms. Covenant is also the dynamic ground for the involvement of the individual or the community in the needs and frustrations of others. Lament psalms are as large as life.

Yet, familiarity and boldness, even vindictiveness with which Israel addressed the Lord, often prove disconcerting, even distasteful to our preferences today, especially when recited aloud. Roland Murphy⁵¹ offers three consid-

Third, the cry of the psalmist serves to make us aware of violence and vengeance lurking in our own hearts, as well as the violence we know so well today in our world and for which we bear some share of responsibility. Such passages, then, can be a mirror of our own spiritual condition, an accusation against our own violence or complacency toward violence. So suggests Murphy: "Instead of judging the psalmist, we judge ourselves: this is more profitable than eliminating such passages."⁵³

of God and of God's relation to the world enter into remembrance and prayer?" While there seems to be place for a fuller use of lament in Christian assemblies, "this requires the courage to let beliefs about God and about providence be questioned."⁵⁴

On the one hand, depriving lament of a place in worship power acknowledges that, "there is no way in which churches can wrestle with God over human suffering, and hence no accepted reaction to suffering other than to endure it with resignation."⁵⁵ On the other hand, the promise of liberation cannot be anesthetized as though it means waiting for God's good time. There needs to be a stronger cry against suffering if the promise of liberation is to have substance.

The psalms of communal lament have immense theological importance. They contain some of the most important statements in the Psalter about God's way with Israel and the world. They are the prayers of a people that knows that its last and best hope lies with the reign of God. Craghan would concur with these concerns expressed by David Power. He does, however, hesitate to specifically identify lament psalms as school of prayer,⁵⁶ especially as these psalms demand that we meet life head-on, avoiding the role of faking and making believe.

The experience of disorientation opens up questions about faith, questions that have to be admitted in order to

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erations for dealing with these texts. First, recognize the perspective of the psalmist. The extravagant imprecations are an indication of how seriously Israel believed in divine justice.⁵² Divine justice needed to be manifested in this life, the only life that Israel knew.

Second, know that the language is deliberately exaggerated. The conflict between good and evil, between righteousness and wickedness, is expressed in cosmic terms. The spirit is opposed to the flesh, the divine by the human; Godlessness is incarnate in the wicked. This makes for extravagance in the expression of judgment and feelings.

Lament and the Cries of a Global World

Murphy's plea to attend to lament psalms is voiced today by many writers. Among these voices are Brueggemann, Craven, and liturgical theologian David Power. Power recognizes how "We may indeed grieve over suffering and oppression, bewail the calamities of the Jewish people, weep over the raped earth, and look with sorrow on the church's treatment of women." But he challenges "Do we ever allow this to be a complaint about God?" "Do we ever allow the questions that a postcritical age puts to the inmost nature

change the manner of praise. "Only if we cry out to the God who has led us to this impasse," Power asserts, "to the now almost nameless God, will we be able to come to a renaming of the holy in which human hope does not perish, but is born anew."⁵⁷

Dismantling almost forces a letting go of the securities of the past. It challenges individuals and communities alike to see the dangers of the present, not simply as a crisis or demise, but as a faith opportunity for growth, new life. Life which will only come as surprise. The emptiness of this season is a graced opportunity to look beyond ourselves to a generous God who creates us in the image of Jesus, "who is closest to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (John 1:18).

The ministry, dying, and rising of Jesus are invitation and model to open ourselves up to the larger contours of God's world of concern. Covenant (and new covenant) is a two-edged sword. When the psalmist speaks of sinking "in deep mire, where there is no foothold" (Psalm 69), or when we hear "out of the depths I cry to thee" (Ps 130:1), we catch these metaphors almost at once. We, too, have been there—in distress and abandonment. In such language, the biblical writer is using the metaphor of Sheol (the realm of the dead) to convey a distressful human situation. This symbol of Sheol suits modern needs as well.

New Orientation

The second move is from the context of disorientation to a new orientation, "surprised by a new gift from God, a new coherence made present to us just when we thought all was lost."⁵⁸ Where there has been only darkness, there is light. Joy breaks through despair. Corresponding to this new beginning, "psalms of new orientation" speak boldly about a new gift from God, a fresh intrusion that makes all things new.

Hymns of Declarative Praise

Hymns of declarative praise and songs of thanksgiving and newness give voice to liberation experienced in this season; for instance, Ps 98:1 ("O sing to the Lord a new song, for God has done marvelous things") and Ps 47:1–3 ("Clap your hands, all you peoples;

experience how the psalmways of the psalms correspond to seasons of human life and bring those seasons to speech. He understands that the movement of these seasons is "transformational and not developmental," never obvious, easy, or "natural." It is always in pain and surprise. In each age, it is thinkable that a different move might have been made.

Psalms Compel Engagement

Kathleen Norris, in her New York Times bestseller, *The Cloister Walk*,⁵⁹ tells how she rediscovered the psalms by accident through her unexpected attraction to Benedictine liturgy. One of the insights she gleaned from this experience is that the psalms demand engagement, that they ask you to read them with your whole self, praying, as

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shout to God with loud songs of joy. For the Lord, the most High, is awesome. He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet"). The hymn of declarative praise is a public song in praise to God for God and God's liberating actions.

Brueggemann has offered an adaptable schema that allow us to demonstrate and to

Saint Benedict says, "in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices." She admits, "I never felt particularly glorious at morning, noon, or evening prayer . . . but I did begin to sense that a rhythm of listening and response was being established between me and the world of the psalms. I felt as if I were becoming part

of a living, lived-in poem, a relationship with God that revealed the holy not only in ordinary words but in the mundane events of life, both good and bad."⁶⁰

The psalms support the finding of one's own voice with God. They are not 150 models of the most correct or most perfect ways to pray. Their "rightness" about prayer is in a pattern that their totality suggests.⁶¹ As a whole, the psalms legitimate multiple modalities of conversation with God, and model the "rightness" of every voice that speaks in faith to God. The psalms, then, continually give rise to new beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Because of the "interpretive strategy" attached to the psalms, the fixation of their canonical number is not a restriction,⁶² for the psalms validate multiple interpretations within the canonical collection itself, as well as multiple reinterpretations born of us in new contexts.



NOTES

- 1 See William L. Holladay, *The Psalms through Three Thousand Years: Prayerbook of a Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993, 1996).
- 2 Stanislaus Campbell, F.S.C., "Hours, Liturgy of," edited by Peter E. Fink, S.J. A Michael Glazier Book. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1990) 576.
- 3 James L. May, *Psalms Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994) p. 17.
- 4 John F. Craghan, *Psalms for All Seasons* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993) p. 57.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 James L. May, *Psalms*, p. 15.
- 7 Craghan, *Psalms for All Seasons*, p. 78.
- 8 Craghan, *Psalms for All Seasons*, p. 79. For Christians, Jesus is the fulfillment of this hope. Beginning with the texts of the New Testament itself, psalms Jesus would have prayed are the same psalms woven into his story. So a christological reading of the psalms is an ancient tradition of the church.
- 9 The second temple of Zerubbabel was rebuilt in 520–515 BCE. See Toni Craven, *The Book of Psalms* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) p. 18. She references the discussion of the canonical shape of the Psalter in Stuhlmüller's "Introduction" to Ps 1:15–55.
- 10 Murphy, *The Psalms, Job, Proclamation Commentaries* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) p. 35, in Craven, p. 18.
- 11 Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, translated by J. R. Porter (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 6.
- 12 See Psalm 3. Note 2 in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal / Deuterocanonical Books*. Edited by Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy. New Revised Standard Version. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- 13 See Kugel's article in *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages, World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest* 13, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1988) p. 135, as quoted in Craven, p. 9.
- 14 See Dianne Bergant, *Israel's Wisdom Literature: A Liberation-Critical Reading* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997) p. 8.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Kugel, p. 136 as quoted in Craven, p. 10.
- 17 May, *Psalms*, p. 36.
- 18 See Toni Craven, *The Book of Psalms* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), see ch. 6, esp. p. 83.
- 19 May, *Psalms*, p. 30.
- 20 Craven, *Book of Psalms*, p. 85.
- 21 Roland E. Murphy, *The Psalms, Job, Proclamation Commentaries*, ed. Foster R. McCurley (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) p. 11.
- 22 See Bernhard W. Anderson, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*, revised and expanded edition (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983) p. 9, in Craven, p. 10.
- 23 Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms*. (Minnesota: Saint Mary's Press, 1984 second edition) pp. 15, 16.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 See Charles Cummings, O.C.S.O., *Songs of Freedom: The Psalter as a School of Prayer* (New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1986) p. 8.
- 26 Roland Murphy, O. Carm., "The Faith of the Psalmist," *Interpretation* 34 (1981) p. 237.
- 27 Stuhlmüller, *Psalms* 1, pp. 16–17.
- 28 In addition to or in place of the written word, you might find that drawing, sketching, collecting clippings from current newspapers, as well as your own stories or the life-stories of people with whom you are partners in minister add to your reflections and insights.

- 29 See Bergant, *Israel's Wisdom Literature*, esp. the introduction and ch. 3. Also, *Reading from this Place*, vol. 2 of *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, editors (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). Stephen Breck Reid, *Listening In A Multicultural Reading of the Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997).
- 30 See Craven, pp. 37–40. I am drawing on her development of this image.
- 31 From Gregory Manly and Anneliese Reinhard, *The Art of Praying Liturgy* (Melbourne: Spectrum, 1984) p. 420.
- 32 James L. Mays, *Psalms. Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. (Louisville: John Knox, 1994) p. 19. Contemporary critical interpretation of the psalms is founded on the work of Hermann Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel, its pioneer practitioners. See further, the work of Claus Westerman and Walter Brueggemann.
- 33 Here I am drawing on the Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, translated by J. R. Porter (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1989) p. 2.
- 34 Ibid., p. 32.
- 35 See W. Brueggemann, *The Psalms and the Life of Faith* edited by Patrick D. Miller (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995. See especially "Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function," pp. 3–32, and "Psalms as Prayer," pp. 33–67; Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), see introduction, pp. 19–23. See also John F. Craghan, *Psalms for All Seasons* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993) p. 5.
- 36 Brueggemann, *Message*, p. 19.
- 37 Ibid., p. 26.
- 38 Ibid., p. 28 Italics are his.
- 39 See May, *Psalms*, p. 28ff. and Bergant.
- 40 See Craghan, *Psalms for All Seasons*, ch. 4.
- 41 Craven, *The Book of Psalms*, ch. 4.
- 42 See May, *Psalms*, pp. 25–26.
- 43 Brueggemann, *Message* p. 19.
- 44 Ibid., p. 20.
- 45 See Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms* (Minnesota: Saint Mary's Press, 1984 second printing) ch. 3.
- 46 See Kathleen A. Farmer, *Psalms in The Women's Bible Commentary*, Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, editors (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992) pp. 137–153, esp. p. 139.
- 47 See Craven, *The Book of Psalms*, ch. 3: "Anger and Praise."
- 48 See Mary Collins, "Glorious Praise: The ICEL Liturgical Psalter" *Worship* 66:4 (July 1992): p. 308 and Balthasar Fischer, "Praying the Psalms in the Light of Christ" *Assembly*. Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy 15:3 (March 1989) pp. 434–436.
- 49 Collins, "Glorious Praise," p. 308.
- 50 Craghan, *Psalms for All Seasons*, p. 99.
- 51 Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., ed., *Wisdom Literature and Psalms* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983) pp. 114–115.
- 52 On divine justice, see Brueggemann, *Message*, ch. 5: "A Retrospect: Spirituality and Theodicy," and Craven, *Book of Psalms*, ch. 8: "Understandings of God's Justice."
- 53 Murphy, *Wisdom Literature and Psalms*, p. 115.
- 54 David N. Power, O.M.I., "When to Worship is to Lament," *Worship Culture and Theology*. (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1990) pp. 155–175.
- 55 Ibid., p. 157.
- 56 Craghan, *Psalms for All Seasons*, pp. 134–135
- 57 Power, p. 172.
- 58 Brueggemann, *Message*, p. 21.
- 59 Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1996), "The Paradox of the Psalms," pp. 90–107, esp. p. 91.
- 60 Norris, *Cloister Walk*, p. 105.
- 61 See Craven, *The Book of Psalms*, part 3, esp. ch. 9, "Wholeheartedness in Prayer."
- 62 Note that, as in the Bible, not only the full collection of 150 psalms, but also the forty-four canticles from other parts of the Old Testament and twelve canticles from the New Testament are found present in the Liturgy of the Hours and the new Liturgical Psalter.

The Ministerial Function of Music, Gesture, and Environment

Aline Paris, R.S.M.

Introduction

Liturgy is the work of the people, and the *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy* is our participation in this work. As we prepare to implement our new form of praying the Liturgy of the Hours, I would offer several reflections on the incorporation of music, gesture, and the environment in the celebration of our prayer.

The Liturgy of the Hours has had a long-standing tradition with music; the psalms themselves were composed to be sung or chanted. We have always used music with the celebration of whatever form of the Liturgy of the Hours that we used. Even in the days of celebrating the Little Office of the Virgin Mary, despite the fact that we were repeating the same prayers every day, we did so with chanting. As we began to adopt other forms of the Liturgy of the Hours, such as the *Prayer of Christians* and the *Christian Prayer*, particularly since these texts were in English, the practice of communal chanting decreased and perhaps even stopped altogether.

In the tradition, we also were very conscious of the role of gesture. Our prayer was punctuated by deep bows at the doxology, and we assumed changes of posture: sitting and

standing for the invitatories and gospel canticles. There was a sense that the whole body was involved in the act of giving praise. This use of gesture and posture may still be prevalent in larger communities, although I have noticed a lessening of the bows for the doxology. But, as communities have become smaller and less formal, so has the sense of morning and evening prayer as liturgical celebration become less formal. People sit together in living rooms or prayer rooms, in small circles; the use of a variety of gestures in these instances seem foreign to the prayer. Also, many of us pray the Liturgy of the Hours privately; therefore, this sense of involving the body in the prayer has been lost.

For Sisters in the larger communities, the environment for praying the liturgy of the hours has been the community chapel, yet this has not necessarily guaranteed that the space was totally conducive to communal celebration, particularly in those chapels where the community stays scattered throughout the pews and stalls. The less formal communities, on the other hand, have had a stronger sense of a community gathering, but they have an equal challenge of creating an at-

mosphere of centering within the ordinary living areas of their homes.

As we prepare ourselves to incorporate the *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy* into both our individual and communal prayer, we need to allow ourselves to focus some attention on the role of music, the use of the body in gesture and posture, and the setting of the environment. The following reflections are given to provide both individuals and communities the opportunity to consider these roles in the use of the new book of prayer.

Music

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* identifies the essential role of music in liturgical worship; "the musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value . . . as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy."¹ In response to the directions of Vatican II, the American Bishops promulgated two documents on liturgical music, *Music in Catholic Worship* and *Liturgical Music Today*. The conciliar constitution and the two American documents will be the basis for the rationale in these reflections on the place of music in the new

Mercy book for morning and evening prayer.

"Music chosen with care can serve as a bridge to faith as well as an expression of it."² In the celebration of the liturgy, we have become increasingly more conscious of this role of music as a bridge; therefore, much attention has been given to improving both the quality and performance of liturgical music. It is ironic, though, that as we have increased our appreciation for congregational music in the Eucharistic liturgy, we have decreased its use in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours even though this was formerly a "sung office . . . in which everything was sung."³ Our challenge, therefore, is to recognize how to reincorporate music into our Mercy celebration of the divine office.

There are many opportunities for the use of music in all its forms: chant, hymns, and instrumental music. One principle that can guide the selection and use of music is that of "progressive solemnity" which allows for adaptation to the seasons and liturgical time; "the elements which lend themselves to singing (the psalms and canticles with their antiphons, the hymns, responsories, litanies, and prayers; and the acclamations, greetings, and responses) should be sung in accordance with the relative solemnity of the celebration."⁴ The incorporation of music can be governed by the season or the occasion, with more chanting and sing-

ing to enhance the day. But they could be chanted only occasionally to enhance solemnity, even though the psalms should be sung, "the psalms and canticles are songs; therefore, they are most satisfying when sung."⁵ The ICEL psalms have already been annotated to facilitate any chanting that communities choose to do. There is also variety in the types of chant, the most common for the office being that of alternating verses. Fur-

address the issue of using recorded music. In some situations, particularly the more formal contexts of chapel prayer, there has been some hesitancy regarding the use of taped music. Yet, this is one of the primary ways that instrumental music can be incorporated. The smaller group gatherings are presently the groups which best use recorded music both for lyrical and instrumental music. Thus, the benefit of using

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thermore, there is the responsorial style, a style with which we are familiar because of its use after the first reading in the Eucharistic Liturgy. This may be a good style to incorporate into the morning and evening prayer particularly with the Benedictus and the Magnificat; "the two canticles are especially suited for the responsorial style of singing."⁶

Instrumental music can also be at the service of the Liturgy of the Hours. Such music serves a ministerial function; "Instrumental music . . . is rather ministerial, helping the assembly to rejoice, to weep, to be of one mind, to be converted, to pray."⁷ Since, in many communities, the opportunity for instrumental music is limited, I would like to

taped music has been proven by the common experience of many of our Sisters. In the planned use of such music, we simply need to remember the function of music, which is to facilitate the prayer of the community. This becomes the criteria of judgment, not whether the music is live or recorded.

The use of lyrical music (a song or hymn) is appropriate at the beginning of the Liturgy of the Hours, as a call to prayer. An instrumental musical interlude is particularly good after the reading, for "music enhances the power of the readings and prayer to capture the special quality of the liturgical seasons."⁸ A closing song may also add to the solemnity of the occasion. The important

principle to remember is that everything does not have to be done every time. Therefore, there is a need for variety, not only in the type of music that is used, but in the manner with which it is used. For example, if the psalms and canticles are chanted, then instrumental music may be the better type of music for an opening call to prayer. On the other hand, if there is no chanting, then hymns or songs are good to use. The final principle is that not everyone will like everything every time; "all must be willing to share likes and dislikes with others whose ideas and experiences may be quite unlike their own."⁹ Our communal experience of respect for the other should be reflected in our communal prayer.

Gesture and Posture

To speak of gesture and posture is to recognize that our prayer is a holistic experience. We do not pray only with the mind and heart; rather, our bodies themselves are capable of being engaged in the great act of prayer and worship. Other religious traditions teach us the value of posture and gesture in prayer. We have all seen Islamic men bowing profoundly to the ground as they bless the hours of the day; we have watched the Hasidic Jews at the Western Wall bending quickly from the waist as if keeping time with a psalmodic metronome; and we are familiar with the many yoga positions employed by

the Hindus as they strive to reach their interior center. Within our own tradition, we have learned the ritual nature of praying with a change of posture, particularly in the Mass. Perhaps, however, we have not fully appreciated the wisdom which incorporated the change of posture and deep bows in the formal recitation of the office. Therefore, I would maintain that we need to consider ways that we can incorporate gesture with the use of our book of morning and evening prayer.

The use of gesture and changes of posture also emphasizes the unifying nature of liturgy, "the uniformity in standing, kneeling, or sitting to be observed by all taking part is a sign of the community and the unity of the assembly; it both expresses and fosters the spiritual attitude of those taking part."¹⁰ Our morning and evening prayer is public worship, not private, although it may be frequently prayed in private. It forms part of the Church's liturgy, one which consists of ritual elements and repeated action. Therefore, as is stated in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, "To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of . . . actions, gestures, and bearing."¹¹

If we used the principle of progressive solemnity in discussing the incorporation of music, I would suggest that we need to use the principle of proportionality when using gesture and posture. Keeping in mind the essential compo-

nent of involving the body when we pray, we must adapt to the space in which we are praying. The change of posture which is appropriate in the chapel may lose some of its significance in the small prayer room or community living room; such change of posture could even hint at the comic.

Keeping in mind that posture and gesture need to be adapted to space, I would offer several possible suggestions. When the Liturgy of the Hours is prayed in the chapel, it is important to continue standing for the invitatory and the gospel canticles, as we stand for them in the Eucharistic Liturgy. The Benedictus and the Magnificat are the only gospel readings incorporated into the Liturgy of the Hours; therefore, they deserve the same honor that the Gospel has in the Mass. Bows for the doxologies are also appropriate. These come at the beginning of the prayer and after the psalm.

In the more informal settings, the change of posture may be less appropriate, but many gestures can be incorporated. Certainly it remains appropriate to bow for the doxologies, even if the bow is not as profound. Other suggestions are: standing together for the Lord's Prayer; blessing one another with hands extended over the other; and offering an individual blessing over one other person while passing a symbol such as a candle, water, or other seasonally appropriate symbol such as ashes.

I would like to put forth another possible gesture that has not been a strong part of our tradition. This is the use of dance, particularly communal dance or circle dance. A repertoire would need to be developed within a local community, but this is not impossible, since this type of dance can be very simple. The experience of participating in such dance unites the group in a non-verbal act of praise and provides a profound ritual gesture.

Sacred Space

In a document entitled *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, the bishops addressed the issue of careful consideration of the liturgical environment so that a suitable atmosphere for all liturgy including the Liturgy of the Hours can be provided. Some attention must be given, therefore, to the space which local communities and even individuals use for celebrating morning and evening prayer so that the space itself can enrich and facilitate prayer. "The environment can be nothing less than a vehicle to meet the Lord and to encounter one another."¹²

What is the environment? Environment:

means the character of a particular space and how it affects the action of the assembly. There are elements in the environment, therefore, which contribute to the overall experience, e.g., the seating arrangement, the placement of the liturgical centers of action, temporary

decoration, light, acoustics, spaciousness, etc. The environment is appropriate when it is beautiful, when it is hospitable, when it clearly invites and needs an assembly of people to complete it. Furthermore, it is appropriate when it brings people close together."¹³

According to this definition, the environment has a three-fold purpose: providing hospitality or a sense of welcome, facilitating participation, and delineating the room as sacred space.

The arrangement of the space can be inviting, exclusive, or neutral. If the Liturgy of the Hours is both public and communal worship, then the environment must support the sense of communal

bility, in view of one another as well as the focal points of the rite, involved as participants and not as spectators."¹⁴ Acoustics are particularly important to the participation of many of our Sisters. For example, the readings should be proclaimed and listened to rather than read. Yet, many remain wedded to their texts during the readings. In order to encourage listening, it is essential that readers be seen and heard.

Finally, the arrangement and the decor of the space set an atmosphere for the sacred. "An important part of contemporary Church renewal is the awareness of the community's recognition of the sacred. Environment and art are to foster

The environment can be nothing less
than a vehicle to meet the Lord and to
encounter one another.

gathering in which all are welcomed. The need for people to sit together may be more of a challenge in large convent chapels where individual Sisters are scattered throughout the stalls and pews. The sense of closeness is more easily achieved in the smaller local groups where people are gathered in prayer rooms or living rooms, but these groups face other challenges.

The space facilitates participation. Therefore, it needs to be a space "in which people are seated together with mo-

this awareness."¹⁵ If the space is the chapel, then this dimension may not be as crucial. Yet, even in the chapel, some focus could be placed on the use of symbols, such as the lighting of candles or the occasional use of incense. Icons or religious images to emphasize the season or feast could be displayed in a central location such as in front of the altar, which is not needed for the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours.

The arrangement of space is more of a challenge in the

informal setting of smaller communities. Ordinary space must be turned into liturgical space. One could argue, however, that since morning and evening prayer blesses the ordinary, there is no need to pay attention to space and environment issues. Yet, we are a sacramental people; we use the ordinary with an awareness of its transparency, that is, through the ordinary we are connected to another transcendent reality. As a result, it may be necessary to "set aside" the space just as we "set aside" the hour. "The experience of mystery which liturgy offers is found in its God-consciousness and God-centeredness. This involves a certain beneficial tension with the demands of hospitality, requiring a manner and an environment which invite contemplation (seeing beyond the face of the person or the thing, a sense of the holy, the numinous, mystery). A simple and attractive beauty in everything that is used or done in liturgy is the most effective invitation to this kind of experience. One should be able to sense something special (and nothing trivial) in everything that is seen and heard, touched and smelled, and tasted in liturgy."¹⁶

We are a people of ritual. We frequently arrange our space to reflect the occasion. We decorate for birthday celebrations or special events, for holidays, etc. In doing so, we define the ordinary space as a celebration space. Is it not, then, equally important to do

so with prayer? God is present to us whether we arrange the space or not, but to do so allows us to sharpen our awareness of the presence of God in this moment and place.

What are some suggestions that can be made for the arrangement of space? Since I have already made several comments regarding the space of chapels and prayer rooms which are already set aside as places of prayer, I will address specifically the more common scenario—that of the space used by small living groups or people living alone. The lighting of a candle is a definable moment; in view of its symbolic meaning of the light of Christ, it is particularly appropriate for all prayer. Care should also be taken to physically arrange the space; for example, clearing the coffee table or other cluttered spaces. Finally, setting the environment can be enhanced by arranging a focal point for the prayer which can be done with candles, flowers, a bible, or some significant symbol. The principle to keep in mind is that the setting of such space is to facilitate and focus an awareness of the presence of God who is always in our midst.

Conclusion

It is up to each local community to decide how best to celebrate morning and evening prayer. The above reflections and their rationale are given as a guide for each communi-

ty's decisions; they are not meant to be imposed norms. "We must praise God and give God thanks with the human means that we have available. God does not need liturgy; people do, and people have only their own arts and styles of expression with which to celebrate."¹⁷



Notes

- 1 Vatican Council II, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (1963), no. 112.
- 2 Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Music in Catholic Worship* (1972), no. 16.
- 3 Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Liturgical Music Today* (1982), no. 13.
- 4 *Liturgical Music Today*, no. 13.
- 5 *Liturgical Music Today*, no. 35.
- 6 *Liturgical Music Today*, no. 43.
- 7 *Liturgical Music Today*, no. 58.
- 8 *Liturgical Music Today*, no. 47.
- 9 *Music in Catholic Worship*, no. 17.
- 10 *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (1974), no. 20.
- 11 *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, no. 30.
- 12 Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* (1978), no. 107.
- 13 *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, no. 24.
- 14 *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, no. 11.
- 15 *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, no. 18.
- 16 *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, no. 12.
- 17 *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, no. 4.

The Prayers of Catherine McAuley

Mary C. Sullivan, R.S.M.

IF WE WISH TO ENTER DEEPLY into the prayer of Catherine McAuley, as a place where she and Christ may teach us, we may enter the ordinary scenes of her praying that have been recorded for us by those who lived with her. Whether we come in the early morning moonlight, or the noonday of ministry, or the late night darkness, we may in these scenes kneel with Catherine in God's presence, and join our voices to hers as she prays the prayers that were most dear to her.

We may kneel with her in 1829, in the side room on Baggot Street, where she is gathered with the handful of companions who had joined her, at the beginning of a God-calling, the full dimensions of which she little dreamed:

All rose at 6, but Revd. Mother and myself and sometimes Mother Frances used to rise at 4 and say the whole Psalter "by moonlight" often, read some of *The Sinner's Guide*, and transcribe.¹

We may kneel with her in 1832, in the makeshift hospital on Townsend Street in Dublin, in the midst of the devastating cholera epidemic:

There were always four there from nine in the morning till eight at night, relieving one another every four hours; and although our Reverend Mother had a natural dread

of contagion, she overcame that feeling, and scarcely left the Hospital. There she might be seen among the dead and dying, praying by the bedside of the agonized Christian, inspiring him with sentiments of contrition for his sins, suggesting acts of resignation, hope, and confidence, and elevating his heart to God by charity.²

We may kneel with her in the mid 1830s, in the darkened chapel on Baggot Street, conscious perhaps of our own breaches of charity and of our lack of loving union with our Sisters:

We may in these scenes kneel with
Catherine in God's presence, and join our
voices to hers as she prays the prayers
that were most dear to her.

Once it did happen that some disagreement took place, and although fatigued by the exertions of the day, she requested a Sister in whom she confided to remain with her in the Choir after night prayers that they might say the 'Thirty Days' Prayer to obtain the restoration of peace and union, a circumstance which shewed in what a serious light she viewed the least breach of charity, since she never performed that devotion except in some important case; for

she had a particular reliance on its efficacy, saying she was careful what she petitioned for by means of it, as the request was sure to be granted.³

Catherine McAuley was markedly reserved about her own spiritual life and personal prayer. Writing of her after her death, Mary Clare Moore says: "You ask about dear Revd. Mother's spiritual exercises. She was too humble to talk much about self—indeed, she disliked the words my or myself so much that I often felt ashamed when inadvertently I had pronounced them."⁴ Simi-

larly, Mary Vincent Harnett says of Catherine's instructions to the first Sisters of Mercy:

She taught them to love the hidden life, laboring on silently for God alone; she had a great dislike to noise and display in the performance of duties. Often she was heard to say, "How quietly the great God does all His mighty works; darkness is spread over us, and light breaks in again, and there is no noise of drawing curtains or closing shutters."⁵

Thus, in the only firsthand evidence we have—the contemporary biographical manuscripts about her and her own letters—Catherine does not describe her personal prayer, either orally or in writing. She may have shared her private prayer experience with her confessors or close priest friends (for example, Edward Armstrong, Michael Blake, and Redmond O'Hanlon, O.D.C.) or with one or other of her good friends in the Sisters of Mercy (Clare Moore, Frances Warde, Elizabeth Moore, or Teresa White, for instance), but if these conversations occurred, their privacy has been preserved.

Catherine's "Favorite" Prayers

We can, therefore, know nothing about the worded or wordless "I-Thou" utterances of Catherine's heart to her God, except insofar as her interior prayer can be inferred, in a very indirect and limited way, from other features and expressions of her life. We will not hear the "curtains" or "shutters" of her inner hymns and psalms.

Yet there are many scenes in Catherine's life that give us glimpses into the more public aspects of her prayer and reveal, in particular, the depth of her devotion to a few "favorite" prayers found in the ordinary prayerbooks of her day—prayers which were, in her own vocal prayer and in the communal prayer of the commu-

nity, central expressions of her zeal, confidence, and ardent love. These "favorite" prayers were, as Mary Clare Moore lists them: "The Thirty Days' Prayer in honour of our divine Lord, and that also in honour of our blessed Lady. The Psalter of Jesus. The Universal Prayer [for All Things Necessary to Salvation]. The Seven Penitential Psalms, with the Paraphrase by Fr. [Francis] Blyth." Clare says Catherine's "Favourite Book" was "'The Following of Christ,' especially Chapters 30th of Book 3rd, and 8th of Book 4th."⁶ In the biography of Catherine inserted in the Bermondsey Annals for the year 1841, Clare gives a similar account of Catherine's preferences:

She considered it most useful to adhere to a few solid spiritual works rather than to run over many without reflection. *The Following of Christ* was one of her favourite books, also Blythe's *Paraphrase on the Seven Penitential Psalms*; her Prayer book was that entitled *Devotions to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*. Besides the spiritual exercises of the Community, at which she assisted with very great fervour, she had much devotion to the two Thirty Days' Prayers, the Psalter of Jesus, and the Universal Prayer. Some passages of the last she used to repeat often, especially this: "Discover to me, O my God, the nothingness of this world, the greatness of heaven, the shortness of time, and the length of eternity."⁷

The "Universal Prayer for All Things Necessary to Salvation" was composed by Clement XI during his papacy

(1700–1721) and is included in William A. Gahan's *A Complete Manual of Catholic Piety*, the prayerbook used in the Baggot Street community from the earliest days, as well as in other prayerbooks of Catherine's day. This relatively short prayer expresses, in sixteen four-part petitions addressed to God, Catherine's desire for God's transforming help and her recognition that God is "my first beginning . . . my last end . . . my constant benefactor . . . [and] my sovereign protector." As she prayed its petitions, the humility, simplicity, and purity of heart that characterized her spirit found expression in the straightforward words of this prayer. Later, out of deference to her or because the various Mercy communities occasionally prayed this prayer, the "Universal Prayer" was included in many nineteenth-century editions of the Choir Manual of the Sisters of Mercy.

"The Psalter of Jesus"

The "Psalter of Jesus" is a prayer that was especially dear to Catherine McAuley, though we may never fully grasp all that it meant to her. Evidently, as a child her "first attempt at writing was to try and print" this prayer.⁸ We are told that when "she was still very young, before she knew how to write, she copied in a kind of large print passages from the Psalter of Jesus," and that it was "a prayer for which she always retained great affection." Later in her life, having memorized

the fifteen paragraphs of petitions in the Psalter, she "used to repeat parts of it at different hours of the day, even when going thro' the streets."⁹ In the years after the opening of the House of Mercy and before the founding of the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine and the community used to gather at eight o'clock in the evening to pray night prayers with the women in the House of Mercy and the people of the neighborhood who wished to join them. The prayers Catherine used each night "were those in the *Catholic Piety* with an additional Litany or the Psalter."¹⁰

In October 1838, during the first months of the founding of the Limerick community, when they prayed that young women from the area might join the new foundation, Catherine wrote from Limerick to Frances Warde: "We finished the 2 30 Days Prayer on the 23rd—one in the morning and one in the evening—and are now going to say the whole Psalter for 15 days. This is our best hope."¹¹ In the months of preparation prior to founding the Mercy community in Birmingham, England, Catherine followed a similar plan. As she noted on April 6, 1841: "We commenced the 30 Days Prayer on Thursday in place of the Psalter. The substance of [the] petition: that God will graciously direct all the arrangements to be made for the establishment of the Convent in Birmingham."¹²

The Psalter of Jesus takes its inspiration and epigraph from Acts 4:12: "there is no

other name under heaven . . . by which we must be saved"; it takes its title from its numerical similarity to the Psalter of the Hebrew scriptures, which contains one hundred and fifty psalms, and to the rosary (sometimes called the "Psalter of Mary") which contains one hundred and fifty Hail Marys in its meditations on fifteen mysteries of Jesus' life. The Psalter of Jesus reverently invokes the name of Jesus one hundred and fifty times. These invocations, distributed within fifteen petitions, are uttered in the biblical context of reflection on the death and the name of Jesus as honored in the letter to the Philipians:

Catherine and the community used to gather at eight o'clock in the evening to pray night prayers with the women in the House of Mercy and the people of the neighborhood.

"he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (2:8–11).

The fifteen petitions of the Psalter are grouped in three Parts of five petitions each. In William A. Gahan's *A Complete Manual of Catholic Pi-*

ety, a prayerbook Catherine used, the editor advises those who pray the Psalter to appportion it through the day in whatever manner is most conducive to prayerfulness:

As it is not to be run over in too hasty a manner, but performed with the utmost reverence and recollection, the whole may be said without interruption; or each Part, at three distinct periods of time, according to the leisure which persons may find after discharging the indispensable duties of their several states and conditions of life.¹³

Present-day users of the Psalter of Jesus sometimes choose to pray only one petition

thoughtfully each day, for a period of fifteen days.

Anyone who meditatively prays the Psalter of Jesus can hear in its petitions the enduring desires and attitudes of disciples of Jesus. Beneath the datedness of some of the vocabulary and some of the theological formulations and emphases, one can feel the great Christian themes that spoke so strongly to Catherine's spirit as she prayed this prayer: recognition of our personal weakness, and our need for God's forgiving and enabling mercy; awareness of our subtle

tendency to inconstancy and vanity, and our absolute dependence on God's help; admiration and reverence for the person and mission of Jesus, and gratitude for his passion and death.

One can hear in the sentences of the Psalter of Jesus, if one lets their meaning sink in, all the hunger for single-heartedness, sorrow for sin, desire for God's guidance, re-

deemer, in Honour of His Bitter Passion" and one "To the Blessed Virgin Mary, in Honour of the Sacred Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Tullamore Annals for 1836 says of the Thirty Days' Prayer to Mary: "Our Venerated Foundress made it a practice all through life, which she commenced in Tullamore, to remain a month on a new Foundation, during which

she never performed that devotion except in some important case; for she had a particular reliance on its efficacy, saying she was careful what she petitioned for by means of it, as the request was sure to be granted. That devout prayer was always commenced by her on the first day of her arrival at a new foundation, and she endeavoured to remain at the place until it was completed.¹⁶

The Psalter is best regarded as a lifelong personal prayer of Catherine McAuley.

spect for Jesus' goodness, and grief at his sufferings that characterized the mind and heart of Catherine McAuley. Although the language of the various petitions differs from that in present-day Christian prayers, the sentiments of the Psalter are the deep sentiments of the New Testament: grateful remembrance of the life and death of Jesus, in whom we are redeemed, and earnest desire to be, in the pilgrimage of this life, his authentic disciples.

The "Thirty Days' Prayers"

Although the early Sisters of Mercy often prayed the "Psalter of Jesus" communally, the Psalter is best regarded as a lifelong personal prayer of Catherine McAuley. This was not exactly the case with the two "Thirty Days' Prayers"—one "To Our Blessed Re-

time she always said the Thirty Days' Prayer to our Blessed Lady to implore grace for the Sisters and a blessing on their work, through the intercession of the Mother of Mercy."¹⁴

The biographical manuscripts about Catherine written by her contemporaries and her own correspondence all speak of her profound devotion to this prayer and to the version of it addressed to Jesus Christ. Clare Moore explicitly notes Catherine's confidence in this prayer: "Whenever she was in doubt or difficulty she had recourse to prayer and the Thirty Days' Prayer as long as I knew her was the means by which she obtained all she wanted. She used always say it with entire confidence of obtaining what she asked."¹⁵

In the Bermondsey Annals, Clare says of Catherine and the Thirty Days' Prayer:

Catherine's letters contain frequent references to the two Thirty Days' Prayers—when she is in Limerick, Galway, and Birr and when she is preparing for the foundation in Birmingham. From Galway she writes to Frances Warde: "We said our two sweet Thirty Days Prayer, the one to our Saviour in the morning, to the B[lessed] V[irgin] in the evening. We did this also in London. My faith in it has increased very much."¹⁷

Except for the opening paragraphs of these prayers, the two Thirty Days' Prayers—to the Redeemer and to the Blessed Virgin Mary—are nearly identical in structure and content. After acknowledging with gratitude the divine embrace of our human nature in the conception and birth of Jesus, both prayers recount—from the perspective of Jesus' experience or Mary's—the chronological events of Jesus' passion and death, his resurrection and ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the anticipated last judgment. Then, on the strength of all this testimony to God's compassion toward humanity,

the prayers provide an open opportunity to state the particular need or request for which God's special help is now being sought. Here Catherine prayed for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Institute, for women who might choose to enter the Sisters of Mercy, and for union and charity within the community. In the Limerick Manuscript, Mary Vincent Harnett notes that during the entire month of September, in which the Institute's patronal Feast of Our Lady of Mercy occurs, Catherine "said in choir the Thirty Days' Prayer in honor of the Blessed Virgin for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Institute."¹⁸

The passion of Jesus Christ constitutes the main content of the two Thirty Days' Prayers. This emphasis corresponds with the intense reverence and compassion for the redemptive sufferings of Jesus that marked both Catherine's personal spirituality and her ministry to suffering people. Her devotion to the passion of Jesus was not seasonal, but daily—even though such contemplation took a heavy toll on her. In the Bermondsey Annals, Clare Moore says: "She meditated with heartfelt attention the great mysteries of Faith—and feeling as she did so sensibly for the sufferings of her fellow creatures, her compassion for those endured by our Blessed Lord was extreme, so much so that it was a real pain to her, as she once told a Sister in confidence, to meditate on that subject."¹⁹

But like Teresa of Avila, whom she admired, Catherine believed in the crucial importance to authentic Christian life of meditation on the gospel accounts of Jesus' human life and death.

The longstanding, communal Mercy practices of honoring the passion of Jesus Christ on one's knees at three o'clock on Friday and of standing for the light meal of gruel

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on Good Friday grew out of Catherine's profound reverence for the final sufferings of Jesus. In her biography of Catherine published in 1864, Mary Vincent Harnett, who had lived with Catherine at Baggot Street, says of her on Good Friday:

On that day she entirely abstained from food, though she used to remain in the refectory sometimes, as if she were partaking of the light collation which she had prescribed for the Sisters, and which they take standing, the seats being removed according to the custom she established. She could not endure the appearance of a regular meal on the anniversary of our dear Lord's death, or to have any cooking done in the establishment that day.²⁰

The Penitential Psalms

Finally, among Catherine's "favorite" prayers are the penitential psalms—the ancient, classic psalms of repentance for sin and confident appeal to God's mercy. At least since the sixth century, the penitential psalms have been identified as seven: in the Vulgate numbering that Catherine would have used they are Psalms 6, 31 (NRSV

32), 37 (NRSV 38), 50 (NRSV 51), 101 (NRSV 102), 129 (NRSV 130), and 142 (NRSV 143). The long tradition of praying the *De Profundis* (Psalm 130) daily in all communities of Sisters of Mercy—"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!"—surely evolved from Catherine's devotion to these seven psalms, as did the frequent communal praying of the *Misereere* (Psalm 51). Catherine's main aid in understanding these psalms was Francis Blyth's *A Devout Paraphrase of the Seven Penitential Psalms: or, A Practical Guide to Repentance*.²¹

Blyth's small book contains the complete texts of the seven psalms, accompanied at the bottom of each page by amplifications of the meaning

of each verse. The tone of his volume is gracious, focusing on the merciful love of God which is promised to those who recognize their true dependence on God's goodness. The "penitence" of these psalms is not the so-called "guilt-trip" feared and shunned by many present-day students of the spiritual life, but rather the saints' truthful and peaceful acknowledgment of their radical need for God's forgiveness, for God's redemptive bridging of the gap between their spotty human virtue and God's clean holiness. This kind of penitence gave serenity and courage to the heart of Catherine McAuley, silently impelled her through the streets of Dublin, and allowed her to feel the deepest sorrow of those she visited and served. Often she would have prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me . . . a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Ps 51:10, 17)—the same psalm verses Teresa of Avila is said to have prayed as she was dying.

Catherine's Principles

In personal and communal prayer, Catherine McAuley seems to have favored three principles: simplicity of language, restraint in the choice of communal prayers, and subordination of prayer to the works of mercy. Her contemporaries were well aware of her discomfort with "highflown"

language. In the *Bermondsey Annals*, Clare Moore writes:

She loved simplicity singularly in others, and practised it herself, telling the Sisters to adopt a simple style of speaking and writing . . . Even in piety she disliked highflown aspirations or sentences, and to a Novice, who was writing something very exalted in that way, she observed, how much more suitable those simple phrases found in ordinary prayers would be, and then suggested as a favourite of her own, "Mortify in me, dear Jesus, all that displeases Thee, and make me according to Thine own heart's desire."²²

Clare Augustine Moore, living at Baggot Street in Catherine's day, tells an instructive story about Catherine's restraint in the choice of communal prayers. She describes Catherine's use of certain prayers in *The Soul United to Jesus* by Ursula Young, O.S.U.:

She loved to pray before the Most Holy Sacrament and finding that in Carlow they used after the mid-day prayers one of the beautiful "Effusions of Love" at the end of *The Soul United to Jesus*, she liked them so well that she began to use them herself. After a month, however, she ceased this devotion and when I asked her why said that if she added prayers herself some very devout successor would add more and another more till, especially in poor convents, the Sisters would be incapable of the duties of the Institute . . . Still she told me she would always use these prayers herself and advised me to do the same.²³

The short "Effusions of Love" in the back of Ursula Young's prayerbook have the ardor, zeal, humility, and confidence that must have characterized Catherine's personal prayer. One can imagine why she initially wanted her community to pray these prayers together, but one can also admire her restraint in not adding to the prescribed communal prayers.

For Catherine always regarded specific times of prayer, both personal and communal, as subordinate to the requirements of the works of mercy. While she did not intend that the Sisters should casually excuse themselves from the times proposed for prayer, she insisted, especially in her essay on the "Spirit of the Institute," that in a religious congregation like the Sisters of Mercy, and in the practical order, the "duties" of Mercy have an overriding religious priority:

We ought therefore to make account that our perfection and merit consists in acquitting ourselves well of these duties, so that though the spirit of prayer and retreat should be most dear to us, yet such a spirit as would never withdraw us from these works of mercy, otherwise it should be regarded as a temptation rather than the effect of sincere piety. It would be an artifice of the enemy, who . . . would endeavour to withdraw us from our vocation under the pretence of labouring for our advancement.²⁴

On the contrary, Catherine believed that prayer was the constant servant of ministry:

"We ought to give ourselves to prayer in the true spirit of our vocation, to obtain new vigour, zeal and fervour in the exercise of our state."²⁵

Times of personal or communal prayer simply gathered to explicit concentration the ongoing contemplative prayer that, of necessity, always accompanied the works of mercy.

Given the nature, difficulties, contexts, and goals of the works of mercy—if they were indeed works of God's mercy—these works could not, in her view, be accomplished except by a minister who moved forward in an attitude of prayer, relying on God's guidance and help. Thus, Catherine believed, "the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, which draw religious from a life of contemplation, so far from separating them from the love of God, unite them more closely to Him, and render them more valuable in His holy service."²⁶

The "favorite" prayers of Catherine McAuley are faithful to these principles. The language, though occasionally archaic by present-day standards, is not ornate or hyperbolic; and the theological concepts, though sometimes needing present-day nuances, are in fact mainstream elements of Christian faith and relationship to God. Secondly, the prayers are few in number, and were not all used simultaneously as communal prayers: they were used occasionally, perhaps even frequently, to express the special needs and hopes of the communities.

And finally, all of these prayers are biblical and apostolic in their language and outlook: they focus on the revelation of God's mercy and on the merciful life and mission of Jesus.

Communal Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy

The new *Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy* will, in time, be supplemented by a small volume tentatively entitled *Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley*. This volume will contain, in addition to other prayers in the Mercy tradition, adaptations of the "Psalter of Jesus," the "Thirty Days' Prayers," and the "Universal Prayer for All Things Necessary to Salvation," as well as the original texts of

cherishes the Sisters of Mercy and their Associates.

The Sisters of Mercy have not multiplied communal prayers in recent years. The recognized need for the two volumes noted above is evidence of that. Moreover, the once strong petitionary prayer of the Institute—the communal prophetic outcry of Mercy women the world over who were committed to the works of mercy and the reign of God's justice—may now appear more mute to the world than it really is, for lack of specific prayer prayed in common. The continued renewal of our visible and audible communal prayer life will have many facets. Perhaps one small element of this renewal may be a docile return to pray-

All of these prayers are biblical and
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these prayers, as Catherine would have prayed them, and an invitation to develop one's own adaptations.

The desire to pray in the spirit of Catherine McAuley, whether it is a personal or communal desire, is not a sentimental attempt to recreate a theological time and place that is past or to imitate one's founder in some superficial way. Rather it is a desire born of docility: a confident readiness to be taught anew by the woman who, in a singular way, most deeply understands and

ers Catherine McAuley prayed, or to slight adaptations of them that preserve their intent while modifying their vocabulary (even simply changing the Thee's and Thou's does much to modernize them).

Whether we kneel with Catherine in the early morning moonlight, at the bedside of the world's grave illnesses, or in the dark chapels of the night, she will support our personal and communal prayer as ardently as she once encouraged our renewal of vows:

"When we first make our vows [she would say] it is not surprising if we feel anxious, and pronounce them in a timid, faltering voice, being as yet unacquainted with the full extent of His infinite goodness to whom we engage ourselves for ever; but when we renew them it ought to be with that tone of joy and confidence which the experience of His increasing mercies must inspire." This feeling was easily discerned in her manner of reading the Act of Renewal, and also in the joyful way in which she repeated the usual *Te Deum* afterwards.²⁷



Notes

- 1 Mary Clare Moore to Mary Clare Augustine Moore, 23 August 1844, in Mary C. Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley and the Tradition of Mercy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995) p. 85.
- 2 Mary Clare Moore, "Bermondsey Annals," in Sullivan, p. 112.
- 3 Ibid., p. 116.
- 4 Mary Clare Moore to Clare Augustine Moore, 1 September 1844, in Sullivan, p. 92.
- 5 "Limerick Manuscript," in Sullivan, p. 174.
- 6 *A Little Book of Practical Sayings, Advices and Prayers of our Revered Foundress Mother Mary Catharine [sic] McAuley*, ed. Mary Clare Moore (London: Burns, Oates, 1868) pp. 34–35.
- 7 "Bermondsey Annals," in Sullivan, p. 116.
- 8 Mary Clare Moore to Clare Augustine Moore, 1 September 1844, in Sullivan, p. 92.
- 9 Mary Vincent Harnett, "Limerick Manuscript," in Sullivan, p. 140.
- 10 Clare Augustine Moore, "A Memoir," in Sullivan, p. 201.
- 11 Catherine McAuley to Frances Warde, 25 October 1838, in *Letters of Catherine McAuley*, ed. Mary Ignatia Neumann (Baltimore: Helicon, 1969) p. 141.
- 12 Catherine McAuley to Mary Cecilia Marmion, 6 April 1841, in Neumann, ed., p. 327.
- 13 "The Psalter of Jesus," in *The Christian's Guide to Heaven, or A Manual of Catholic Piety*, ed. William A. Gahan, O.S.A. (Agra: Agra Press, 1834) p. 92. There were, of course, earlier Irish editions of Gahan's prayerbook, including one published by T. M'Donnel in Dublin in 1804 with the sub-title, *A Complete Manual of Catholic Piety*, but library copies of these are very rare and photocopying their pages is not permitted. "The Psalter of Jesus" is on pages 92–105 of the 1834 edition.
- 14 "Tullamore Annals," in Sullivan, pp. 66–67.
- 15 Mary Clare Moore to Clare Augustine Moore, 1 September 1844, in Sullivan, p. 93.
- 16 "Bermondsey Annals," in Sullivan, p. 116.
- 17 Catherine McAuley to Frances Warde, 30 June 1840, in Neumann, ed., p. 219.
- 18 "Limerick Manuscript," in Sullivan, 182. The complete texts of the two Thirty Days' Prayers are contained, for example, in *The Golden Manual: or, Guide to Catholic Devotion, Public and Private* (London: Burns & Lambert, n.d.) pp. 438–44.
- 19 "Bermondsey Annals," in Sullivan, p. 117.
- 20 [Mary Vincent Harnett], *The Life of Rev. Mother Catherine McAuley*, ed. Richard Baptist O'Brien (Dublin: John F. Fowler, 1864) p. 113.
- 21 The seventh edition of this book was published in Dublin by The Catholic Book Society in 1835, but Catherine presumably had an earlier edition. Since Blyth (1705?–1772) was a Carmelite, she may have received a copy from one of her Carmelite friends in Dublin.
- 22 "Bermondsey Annals," in Sullivan, p. 111.
- 23 Clare Augustine Moore, "A Memoir," in Sullivan, p. 213.
- 24 Catherine McAuley, "Spirit of the Institute," in Neumann, ed., p. 389. Catherine is here dependent on the treatise of Alonso Rodriguez (1526–1616), "Of the End and Institution of the Society of Jesus," in his *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*, vol. 3, published in English translation in Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1806. Catherine transcribed her much-abbreviated essay from this source. Please see my "Catherine McAuley's Theological and Literary Debt to Alonso Rodriguez: The 'Spirit of the Institute' Parallels," *Recusant History* 20 (May 1990) pp. 81–105.
- 25 Ibid., p. 389.
- 26 Ibid., p. 387.
- 27 "Limerick Manuscript," in Sullivan, p. 183.

The Communion of the Saints of Mercy

Mary Celeste Rouleau, R.S.M.

WHO ARE THE SAINTS OF Mercy? And why do we still keep a list of undoubtedly holy persons who lived in the past, for most of whom (except perhaps Mary) most of us have never felt any real "devotion," much less a personal relationship? As our Institute prepares to publish a new manual of common prayer, can we discern some value in the ancient tradition of patron saints which would really be relevant for the third millennium?

Think how often we have spoken the words of the creed, "we believe in the communion of saints." What are we saying? Over thirty years ago, the second Vatican Council eloquently proclaimed to the pilgrim church the theological depth of this belief. First of all, communion: We who are so infected with the individualism of our culture tend to translate our human destiny into individualistic terms; but eternal life is in community.

All who belong to Christ, having his Spirit, form one church. The union of us wayfarers with those who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is not in the least interrupted . . . In full consciousness of this communion of the whole mystical body of Christ, the church in its pilgrim members has always honored with great respect the memory of the dead. When we look at the

lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the heavenly city which is to come . . . [In them] God gives us a sign of the kingdom to which we are powerfully drawn, having such witnesses to the truth of the gospel.¹

But honor and inspiration alone do not draw us into a sense of communion. Much less does the use of the traditional term "patron" saints, which designates a relation of superior/inferior (true, of course, as to holiness), but can also, drawn as it is from its historical context, connote a con-

courage it takes to be a mystic and the courage it takes to be a prophet. But just learning about something is stark abstraction. We are called instead to a participatory relation, to the communion of saints. The spirit passed on from our ancestors is the spirit to face the issues of OUR time with their depth of imagination and courage.²

In contemplating the meaning of this union, this personal participation, anyone who has experienced the death of a beloved one knows the agonizing paradox: the person in her/his physical reality is no longer here; yet in a mysteri-

The union of us wayfarers with those who
have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ
is not in the least interrupted.

descending distance. And neither does a mere study of the lives of the saints, be they patrons or not. As Matthew Fox, in a charming article about the biographies of the saints, says,

How often have I felt in reading academically qualified historians on our spiritual ancestors that they had all of the facts and none of the music. The point in studying and reflecting on the lives of the saints is to build participation—between past and future, between the

ous way the real person *is* here, someone whom we still relate to in love. Our union with those we love is not in the least interrupted, continues the Vatican II text:

. . . but on the contrary, it is strengthened through the exchanging of spiritual goods. For those in heaven who are more closely united with Christ, through him and with him and in him do not cease to intercede for us. By their interest our weakness is greatly strengthened.³

How do we "exchange spiritual goods" with those who have died, and hopefully are "in heaven"—which is not a place, but the radiant presence of God fully known and enjoyed according to the capacity of each created person? Since exchange connotes a reciprocal giving and receiving, what do we have to share with them? What kind of genuine communication do we have with them, unless through our prayer, in the firm belief that they are real and that this two-way interchange is possible? Their ceaseless intercession for us implies in part that we have

God vividly manifests the divine presence and the divine face. God speaks to us in them.⁴

This marvelous belief has been echoed by many over the centuries. St. Paul spoke of living, not in himself, but Christ living in him.⁵ What flows out of Catherine McAuley's deep faith in the living presence of Christ in herself is the recognition of Jesus in other people, most especially in the poor and suffering. Gerald Manley Hopkins wrote a delightful sonnet which concludes, "For Christ plays in ten thousand places, / Lovely in limbs, and

If those we have related to personally—parents, relatives, friends who have died,—have shown us something of "the face of God," then doesn't it make sense that with some individuals we have not known personally, but whom we have come to know in a vicarious sense, we might develop a personal relationship? How can we do this?

Relationships aren't just intellectually learning about people, although we do first have to know something about them—how they look, how they act, what we can learn of their characteristics through the particulars of their life and writings. But relationships involve the whole person, including imagination, intuition, and heart. And relationships with those who have died in the peace of Christ require an active faith in the present reality of our communion with them, as the church so eloquently teaches. In this way, some of us have come to know (not just know about) Catherine McAuley as a living person, someone whom we not only honor but who now exchanges spiritual goods with us, who now intercedes for us, who is interested in strengthening us, and in whom God speaks to us.

With due respect to real differences, we can draw an analogy from our reading of sacred scripture. David Stanley, S.J., has powerfully delineated how, in the creation of the gospels, there was first the lived experience of Jesus with his disciples, then a period of

Relationships involve the whole person, including imagination, intuition, and heart.

asked them for this favor. They continue to be interested in us, and really do greatly strengthen our weakness. They are people who have shared our humanity on earth and yet somehow in a special way put us in touch with the transcendent. So how conscious am I that my relationship with the saints, at least a special one or a few of those who have died in the peace of Christ, is a direct and immediate personal relationship, not just honor and admiration?

The Vatican text continues:

In the lives of those who shared our humanity and were transformed into more radiant images of Christ,

lovely in eyes not his, / To the Father through the features of men's faces."⁶ And C. S. Lewis, in contemplating the death of those we have loved on earth, realizes that:

Only by being in some respect like [God], only by being a manifestation of His beauty, loving kindness, wisdom or goodness, has any earthly beloved excited our love. It is not that we have loved them too much, but that we did not quite understand what we were loving. It is not that we shall be asked to turn from them, so dearly familiar, to a Stranger. When we see the face of God, we shall know that we have always known it.⁷

later reflection on that experience by the Christian community, and finally the writing of the Gospels. We, using the written word in our liturgy and prayer, reflect on its meaning for us now, and finally experience the living presence of the same Jesus in our faith community.⁸ Something analogous is true for our study of the lives of the saints. First there was a person's life which witnessed to Christ, and which was researched and written about, hopefully with "some of the music." Then we read about this person, meditating on what her/his life reveals to us of the face of God. Finally, in faith, we can come to experience the present reality of this holy one who has a personal interest in us, who intercedes for us, and with whom we can truly exchange spiritual goods. We can indeed have a personal relationship with a friend in heaven.

The Saints of Our Tradition

We are quite conscious of our distance from the early nineteenth-century-Irish context in which the original Rule was written. Yet, with a kind of spiritual instinct, we are convinced that there is relevance in our origins, a medium of connection with the past, a thread of continuity that will not rigorously bind us into older external forms of reverence, but will rather be a well-spring of living energy. When we look at the texts of our tradition—at the list in the origi-

nal Rule, for instance, of the "patron saints" of the community of Mercy—we know in faith that these holy women and men live in Christ now, are real, do intercede for us, and do manifest the face of God to us in some way.

We know, too, that according to the teaching of the church, tradition grows and develops through the centuries. In faith we come, in various ways, to grow in insight into the words and realities that are handed on to us,

through the help of the Holy Spirit . . . This comes about through the contemplation and study by believers who treasure these things in their hearts. It comes from the intimate [from within] understanding of the spiritual realities they experience.⁹

In other words, we first must be open to receiving the gift of the Spirit, make an effort to clear our hearts of prejudice against former ages which seem to have no relevance for our own and against former ways of expressing holiness.

With a kind of spiritual instinct, we are convinced that there is relevance in our origins, a medium of connection with the past.

We need to find the time for relationships to develop. Then we must make an effort to contemplate and study the lives of those persons to whom the Spirit seems to draw us, whether they lived in our own day, or in any time in the

past—contemporaneity does not in this instance depend on the material time in which we live, but upon the way in which any holy one can be present to us and accost us.¹⁰ There are many examples in our own day; for instance, the growing popularity of the women mystics of earlier centuries. And finally, for one or a few of these to whom we are drawn, we will come to treasure in our hearts and to experience the spiritual reality of a friendship with a saint, and come to understand intimately—that is, from within a vital personal relationship—how that individual can exchange spiritual goods with us, and show us something of the face of God.

Admittedly there will be a marvelous variety, according to the variety of our own personalities within the community. Why, then, were certain saints proposed as special for the community of Mercy? Remembering that our Rule was derived (and greatly condensed) from that of the Pres-

entation, we may look at the list which Catherine McAuley took from that source, and note a few changes. She adopted all the names except that of [John] Francis Regis, and added John of God, Catherine of Siena, and Catherine of

Genoa. "These additions," remarks Mary Sullivan, "demonstrate the importance Catherine attached to concrete participation in Christ's merciful work." She continues:

According to Clare Moore, at least from June 1829 on, the community at Baggot Street listened to a portion of the lives of the saints each day: "breakfast at 8 or a quarter past, and immediately after, in the Refectory, Rev. Mother read the saint for the day." It is reasonable to assume that these readings were from Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, the widely available compilation first published anonymously

mystery of God dwelling in our midst; Peter, Paul, and John, apostles and heralds of the Word, laying down their lives in witness to Jesus Christ, who instill in us a deep love for the word of God and a loyalty to the leaders of the church; Patrick, apostle to the Irish people through whom Catherine McAuley and so many others received the priceless heritage of the faith, and Francis Xavier sent to the ends of the earth, who help us realize the universal extent of God's mercy so that we may reach out in our prayer to the needs of the whole world, and in our

gave their lives in tender care for the sick and dying; Joseph Calasanctius and Angela Merici, concerned for educating the young and founders of orders for teaching children; Catherine of Siena, peacemaker and unifier, politically involved and devoted to the church; and Monica, whose persevering prayer for her son Augustine won for the church great graces through him.¹³

This is much too brief an acknowledgement. But a problem confronts most of us still. If, as Karl Rahner insists, the function of the saints in the church is to be "creative models of the holiness which happens to be right for, and is the task of their particular age," then who are the holy women and men who appeal to our age at the end of this century, who "create a new style, prove that a certain form of life and activity is really a genuine possibility, and show experimentally that one can be a Christian even in 'this' way"?¹⁴ Another theologian writes:

What it means to be holy is conditioned by sociocultural and religious factors . . . Because the nature of sainthood is an incarnational reality, the contours of sanctity may change from age to age and culture to culture. For this reason the diversity of models of holiness will never be exhausted.¹⁵

The multiplicity of ways in which the transcendent face of God is revealed to us through holy persons reflects something of the infinite richness and diversity of the divine being. We

The function of the saints in the church is to be "creative models of the holiness which happens to be right for, and is the task of their particular age."

in 1756–57. Its biographies of John of God, Catherine of Genoa and Catherine of Siena describe in some detail their actions on behalf of the poor, and one can easily see that the practical inspiration Catherine found in these narratives contributed to her operative Christology.¹¹

A brief survey of the names included in the original Rule reveals how each in some way mirrors an aspect of mercy: Mary, of course, first and foremost as Mother of Mercy;¹² Joseph, Anne and Joachim, poor in spirit, whose silent and humble lives were permeated with the presence of the Holy, who teach us to find in the ordinariness of daily living the

works beyond our immediate circle; Augustine, African bishop and doctor of the church whose Rule serves as the basis of our own, who shows us how to live according to the spirit of a holy way of life; Brigid of Kildare, founder of a community of consecrated virgins, who manifests how to live in response to God's infinite personal love; Francis de Sales, director of holy women in the way of the love of God and instrument in the gentle winning of many persons to the gentle Christ, whose words about humility Catherine included in our original Rule; John of God and Catherine of Genoa, who

must have witnesses who are contemporary, who speak to the conditions of our particular historical situation—who may be of our time or not, but who are relevant to us now.¹⁶ The martyrs, for instance,

... tell us that some things are worth dying for; foremost among these being our faith in Christ. The ascetic reminds us of the cost of discipleship, and has an enormous relevance in our consumer society. The contemplative accents the transcendent, calling us to union with God in prayer. The servant teaches us that practical, everyday charity lies at the heart of New Testament spirituality and is the only really convincing sign that one loves God and one's neighbor.¹⁷

St. Bernard spoke from his own experience in his sermon for the feast of All Saints:

Calling the saints to mind arouses in us a longing to enjoy their company. We must rise again with Christ and set our minds on the things of heaven. We must long for those who are longing for us to join them, and ask them to intercede for us. We are also inflamed with another yearning: that Christ our life may also appear to us as he appeared to them, and that we may one day share in his glory.¹⁸

On this feast, we pray with the whole church to our gracious God, source of all holiness, that we who aspire to have part in the joy of the saints may be filled with the Spirit that blessed their lives and be pre-

pared to be in communion with them in heaven. Perhaps in our common celebration of the feasts proposed to us in our new book of morning and evening prayer, we may be inspired to a new or renewed personal relationship with one or a few of the original saints of Mercy whom Catherine and the first community chose as special, who can truly be our communal intercessors and friends in heaven.



Notes

- 1 Vatican II, *Constitution on the Church* (1964) #49–50.
- 2 Matthew Fox, "Hermeneutics and Hagiography," *Spirituality Today* 30 (Sept. 1978) pp. 264–265. See also Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets* (Ottawa: Novalis/New York: Continuum, 1998).
- 3 Vatican II, op. cit.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Philippians 1:21
- 6 Sonnet, "As kingfishers catch fire . . ."
- 7 C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1960) p. 190.
- 8 David M. Stanley, S.J., "Contemplation of the Gospels, Ignatius Loyola, and the Contemporary Christian," *Theological Studies* (September 1968) pp. 417–443.
- 9 Vatican II, op. cit., #49.
- 10 A. M. Allchin, "The Capacities of the Heart," *The Way* (October 1996) p. 306.
- 11 Mary C. Sullivan R.S.M., *A Contemporary Critique of the Christology of Catherine McAuley* (Master of Theology dissertation, Heythrop College, University of London, 1988 p. 78). In later years, but before 1890, were added the names of Ignatius of Loyola and Aloysius Gonzaga (no doubt due to Jesuit influence), Camillus of Lellis, and Peter Nolasco.
- 12 I hope to write a sequel to this article in which I will explore in particular Catherine McAuley's devotion to Mary and the contemporary relevance of our relationship to her.
- 13 Names listed in original Rule of the Sisters of Mercy (1841), chapter 13, "On Devotion to the B.V.M."
- 14 Karl Rahner S.J., "The Church of the Saints," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 3 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1967) p. 100.
- 15 Shawn Madigan C.S.J., "Saints, Communion of Saints," *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993) pp. 846, 850.
- 16 See Karl Rahner S.J., "Why and How Can We Venerate the Saints?" *Theological Investigations*, vol. 8 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) pp. 3–29. He speaks of reasons why there has been a decline in veneration of the saints, and of the contemporary experience of the silence of God to which a renewed devotion to saints can respond.
- 17 Robert P. Maloney C.M., "Models of Being Holy," *America* (Feb. 15, 1997) p. 22. Also see Sara Maitland, "Saints for Today," *The Way* (October 1996) pp. 275–284.
- 18 Bernard of Clairvaux, *Opera Omnia* (Edit. Cisterc. 5, 1968) Sermon 2, p. 367.

Ritualizing Death and Burial in the Mercy Community

Julia Upton, R.S.M.

ANTHROPOLOGISTS, sociologists, psychologists, and theologians are all in agreement that death is the most profound experience human beings encounter. It takes us to the limits of our existence and plunges us into the depths of mystery. Each time we enter into the experience of another person's death and dying, we come face to face with our mortality and, on some level, rehearse our own death. Death and burial rituals, known since Paleolithic times, are so critical to the experience of death in the human community, that anthropologist Margaret Mead knows of no people without a ritual for dealing with death. In some cultures, although birth may be treated casually, death is always critical.¹

It is the purpose of this essay to address the critical nature of death by examining the Roman Catholic rituals of death and burial in a historical context. This will serve to introduce and integrate the Church's rituals with those found in the *Mercy Prayer Resources*. While this sounds straightforward, it is a taller order than we might expect, because "today our American cultural practices impinge so heavily upon the rites as to practically deprive them of their power to function."²

Customs from Judaism

The primary influence on the eventual growth of Christian practice, as one might expect, comes from Judaism. Among the Jews, burial was seen as both an obligation and a work of mercy. What scattered references we have to burial rites in Judaism always reflect realism and simplicity.³ Jesus, for example, was buried according to Jewish custom. Although the nearness of the Sabbath, coupled with fear of the authorities, prevented his friends from anointing the body in the usual way, both the Synoptic and the Johannine Gospels, while differing in specific details, record that his body was wrapped in linen, with myrrh and aloes between the bands (Matt 27:59; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53, 56; 24:1; John 14:39-40), and laid to rest in the tomb.

It is the *Kaddish*—the sanctification—that gives us a synthesis of Jewish theology with regard to death. This prayer was originally the concluding prayer of the synagogue liturgy. It is an eschatological prayer, similar to the Lord's Prayer:

*Magnificent and sanctified be the
Glory of God
In the world created according to
God's will.
May God's sovereignty soon be
acknowledged,*

*During our lives and the life of
all Israel.
May the glory of God be eternally
praised,
Hallowed and extolled, lauded
and exalted,
Honored and revered, adored
and worshiped.
Beyond all songs and hymns of
exaltation,
Beyond all praise which we can
utter
Is the glory of the Holy One,
praised is He.
Let there be abundant peace from
heaven,
And life's goodness for us and for
all Israel
The one who ordains the order of
the universe
Will bring peace to us and to all
Israel.⁴*

In the burial liturgy, an additional ending is used: "Revive the dead, and raise them up to life eternal."⁵ Traditionally, the *Kaddish* must be recited every day for eleven months following the death of a parent, blood relative, or spouse.

Christian Liturgy⁶

We find the oldest Roman ritual for death and burial in Ordo 49, which dates from the seventh century.⁷ Rather than a highly structured ritual, the Ordo actually presents an outline for the service. The ritual consisted of two parts: the first part, which ritualized death, took place in the home of the

deceased; the other, a burial ritual, took place in the church and cemetery.

When death appeared to be imminent, the Christian was given the Eucharist, as a token of the resurrection he or she was about to experience. From that time until the moment of death, family and friends would read the passion narrative to the one dying. When they thought the soul was about to leave the body, those gathered in prayer would respond, "Come, saints of God: advance angels of the Lord . . ." Then, after reciting Psalm 113 they would pray, "May the choir of angels receive you."

After death, the body was placed on a litter and carried in procession to the church. There the community recited an "office," consisting of psalms, using the poignant antiphon: "May the angels lead you into paradise, may the martyrs welcome you and guide you into the holy city Jerusalem." While reciting Psalm 117, the procession continued on its way, escorting the body to the cemetery, and responding, "Open the gates for me, and once I am within I shall praise the Lord."

It is interesting to note that Psalms 113 and 117 formed part of the structure of the Jewish Passover meal. The intention in using these psalms in the funeral liturgy as well might have been to demonstrate that Christian death completes the paschal "exodus."⁸

Medieval Christianity: Shifting Focus

From the seventh century and our brief look at Ordo 49 to the more detailed funeral liturgy we find in the seventeenth-century Roman rite of burial, we see a dramatic shift in focus. Harsh scenes of the final judgment replaced the peaceful, paschal vision of the Christian's final journey. God and the company of angels were no longer waiting to welcome Christians at the moment of death, but instead stood guard, waiting to scrutinize them before the heavenly court.⁹ Christian death ceased to be recognized as an accomplishment of the paschal exodus, becoming instead yet another ordeal.

During the Middle Ages, as plagues ravaged Western Europe, the attention of medieval Christianity focused on sin, death, and judgment. Historically, the doctrine of purgatory and the practice of indulgences for the dead also developed during this era, so the funeral liturgy was not the only aspect of ecclesial life to be affected. Another way of expressing this struggle is to observe the human reality that astronomical death rates from plague, "barbarian" invasions, and crusades were challenging the previously hope-filled ceremonies for the dead.

The Ordo of 1614 included funeral rites along with rites for sacraments and blessings. The official book attempted to bring order to the

collection of monastic rituals that had been developing.¹⁰

The church service began at the door of the church, where the celebrant met the body of the deceased and the company of mourners. He sprinkled the coffin with holy water, symbolizing purification from sin. All of the prayers of the liturgy, from beginning to end, show a preoccupation with sin, with the liturgy's attitude toward death particularly evident in the sequence, *Dies Irae*. Its apocalyptic character seems to be more reflective of the superstitions of pagan mythology than of a people formed in the resurrection of Christ.

Bring Order to Our Funeral Rites

Following the reforms initiated by Vatican Council II, use of the vernacular was first permitted in non-Eucharistic celebrations, which made wake services among the first experiences contemporary Roman Catholics had of liturgical prayer in their native language. As people began to hear the words of the funeral liturgy spoken in their own tongue, the gloom and doom the prayers displayed became more obvious. No longer softened by the ambience of Latin mumbling, the inconsistency between the words prayed and the theology professed became more apparent. The bishops' recommendation was quickly understood:

The rite for the burial of the dead should evidence more clearly the paschal character of Christian death, and should correspond more closely to the circumstances and traditions found in various regions. The latter provision holds good also for the liturgical color to be used.¹¹

The rites have been rearranged and developed so that they represent a cohesive theology of death and Christian burial.

Even before a word of the liturgy changed, off went the black vestments and on went the white, creating an even more stark contrast between what we saw and how we prayed. It was necessary to begin immediate work on reforming the rites, so that the community gathered in prayer could give witness to the paschal quality inherent in Christian death, and incorporate cultural elements into the funeral liturgy.

Vatican Council II: Theology of Death

The *Order of Christian Funerals* [OCF] (1989) was a revision, reorganization, and English translation of the *Ordo Exsequiarum* (August 15, 1969) which actualized the reform initiated at Vatican Council II. The rites have been rearranged and developed so that they represent a cohesive theology of death and Christian burial, and can be of greater use to ministers,

both in preaching and in presiding. The general introduction is an expansion of the introduction given in the Latin edition. The ritual also contains pastoral notes before each of the rites. In addition, there are newly composed prayers to provide for situa-

tions not addressed in the Latin edition. These prayers are poetic and provide a rich resource for meditation on the Church's theology of death.

This essay discusses the principal rites first, before looking to the ancillary rites.

Celebrating the Rites

The Funeral Liturgy includes reception of the body, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the final commendation and farewell. The Rite of Committal follows.

Standing at the door of the church, the members of the community welcome the deceased as their own. In the name of the community, the priest greets the company of mourners. National flags and/or insignia of other associations are removed before the body of the deceased is brought into the church. The priest sprinkles the body with holy water, recalling the waters of baptism, and covers the coffin with

a pall, again recalling the garment with which the deceased had been clothed in baptism.

The procession, led by the priest and assisting ministers, enters the church, and the coffin is placed near the sanctuary. The paschal candle, recalling the foundational mystery of the community's faith and its source of hope, while not carried in the procession, may be placed near the coffin.

The OCF regards the Liturgy of the Word as a central element of the Church's ministry in the funeral liturgy for "the readings proclaim the paschal mystery, teach remembrance of the dead, convey the hope of being gathered together again in God's kingdom, and encourage the witness of Christian life . . . tell of God's design for a world in which suffering and death will relinquish their hold on all whom God has called his own" (OCF 137).

A homily based on the Scripture texts is an essential part of the funeral liturgy. Rather than dwelling on the life of the deceased, as is customary in a eulogy, the homilist tries to focus on God's compassionate love and the community's faith in the paschal mystery, and through these words, the community receives strength and consolation.

In the Liturgy of the Eucharist which follows, "all are given a foretaste of eternal life in Christ and are united with Christ, with each other, and with all the faithful, living and dead" (OCF 143). The

funeral liturgy usually concludes with the final commendation. However, this may be celebrated instead at the place of committal.

The presider invokes God, aware of the sadness present in this last farewell, but taking comfort in the hope that one day we shall once again enjoy the friendship of the deceased. "Although this congregation will disperse in sorrow, the mercy of God will gather us together again in the joy of his kingdom. Therefore let us console one another in the faith of Jesus Christ" (OCF 171B).

A brief period of silence gives the individual members of the community an opportunity for private prayer and remembrance before the customary signs of farewell. Then the body is sprinkled with holy water either before or during the community's song of farewell, often the traditional "In Paradisum." Other hymns are sung as well, if it is possible for the community to process together to the place of committal.

The procession to the place of committal mirrors the journey of human life and the pilgrimage to the new and eternal Jerusalem.

For the community of mourners, the rite of committal marks the final separation from the deceased in this life. The rite's stark simplicity underscores the radical separation between life and death, while its prayers continue to look forward to the day when the entire community will be

reunited for all eternity. The "Service at the Graveside" in the *Mercy Prayer Resources* supplements the Church's Rite of Committal.

Wake Services

The *Order of Christian Funerals* provides ministers with a variety of rites that may be celebrated between the time of death and the funeral liturgy, or before the Rite of Committal in the event that there is no funeral liturgy. Sensitive to the fact that the death of a loved one brings about emotional extremes—bewilderment, anger, grief, relief—the Church's ministry at this time takes the form of companionship.

Two forms of the wake service, or "Vigil for the Deceased" are provided in the order; one for use when the vigil is celebrated in the church; the

Mercy symbols with the traditional prayers of the Church. The "Ritual for a Time of Remembrance" parallels the Vigil for the Deceased, which is the principal rite celebrated by the Church between the time of the person's death and the funeral liturgy. "At the vigil the Christian community keeps watch with the family in prayer to the God of mercy and finds strength in Christ's presence" (OCF 56).

Other Prayer Services

In the first section of the *Order of Christian Funerals* one finds "related rites and prayers," consisting of three brief services: "Prayers after Death," "Gathering in the Presence of the Body," and "Transfer of the Body to the Church or to the Place of Committal."

Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley provides the Mercy community with rituals to supplement those provided by the Church.

other when the vigil is celebrated in the home of the deceased, a funeral home, or some other suitable place. *Praying in the Spirit of Catherine McAuley* provides the Mercy community with rituals to supplement those provided by the Church. A "Welcoming Ritual" for greeting the body, parallels the OCF rite for "Gathering in the Presence of the Body." The Mercy ritual interweaves the placing of

These provide the minister with a way to meet the varying needs of mourners, especially when the priest has been called to administer the Anointing of the Sick, only to discover that death has already occurred.

The "Prayers after Death" (OCF 101–108) give a model for the minister to use when he or she first meets the family. Consisting of a reading, response, prayer, and blessing, it

gives the family a simple way to begin their ritual of mourning.

The "Gathering in the Presence of the Body" (OCF 109–118) provides a model service which can be used when the family gathers around the body of the deceased soon after death, or when they gather in the funeral home after the body has been prepared for burial. This service begins with the sign of the cross and a brief reading from Scripture. Recalling the living water into which the Christian has been baptized, the body is sprinkled with holy water. A psalm follows, and the rite concludes with a prayer and blessing.

The "Transfer of the Body" (OCF 119–127) gives a third model for possible intermediary rites. This rite is intended to precede the procession of transferal of the body either to the Church or to the place of committal. It begins with an invitation to prayer and brief Scripture verse. This is followed by a litany, the Lord's Prayer, and a concluding prayer before everyone is invited to join in the procession.

Office of the Dead

Part 4 of the *Order of Christian Funerals* contains the Office of the Dead (nos. 348–395), providing a setting of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer that may be used or adapted. Volume 1 of *Mercy Prayer Resources, Morning and Evening Prayer of the Sisters of Mercy*,

provides the Mercy Community with just such an adaptation that can be used in either the morning or evening.

Since the liturgical celebrations bring together family and friends who are experiencing deep grief, the *ritual* itself becomes a minister. Therefore, the ritual is attentive to all the senses, marked by beauty and reverence, and with simplicity, the ritual invites the participation of the community.

The word of God ministers to the grieving, as it proclaims the paschal mystery and comforts the sorrowful. Although non-biblical readings should not replace Scripture, they can be used in addition to biblical

mourners" (OCF 28). The prayers of intercession even more directly address the needs of the deceased, those who mourn, and the entire assembly. It provides models that can be adapted to the particular circumstances as needed (OCF 29).

Because of its power to evoke strong feelings, music has an important place in all of the funeral rites. Songs can console and uplift the mourners by their references to the paschal character of Christian death and the community's share in Christ's victory. Full participation of the assembly is encouraged at celebrations of the funeral rites (OCF 30–33).

Since the liturgical celebrations bring
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readings at the non-eucharistic services (OCF 24). The psalms are particularly responsive to the needs and moods of the community, expressing the depths of grief as well as the heights of praise. These ancient songs cut through time and culture to touch the core of human longing, which is why their use is encouraged in many sections of the funeral rites (OCF 25, 26).

The OCF provides a variety of prayers that "capture the unspoken prayers and hopes of the assembly and also respond to the needs of the

There is also a place for reverent *silence* in the funeral rites, which can evoke awe as the community stands in the face of the mystery of death.

Local custom dictates the degree to which each of these Christian symbols "speaks" in the funeral rites.

- The *Paschal candle* serves as a continuous reminder to the community of Christ's victory along with our share in that victory. This symbol recalls both the Easter celebration and the sacrament of Baptism during which the

newly baptized receive the light of faith symbolized by the baptismal candle.

- *Holy water*, sprinkled on the coffin at the beginning of the funeral liturgy, likewise recalls our incorporation into Christ's death and resurrection through the waters of Baptism.
- *Incense* is used in the funeral rites to lend greater dignity to the celebration. After the bread and wine have been prepared, they are incensed, together with the altar and the Paschal candle. This gives visual expression to our prayers as they rise to God.
- The *pall*, recalling that the deceased "put on" Christ in Baptism, may be placed over the coffin as it is received at the door of the Church.
- A Bible or *Book of the Gospels* may be placed on the coffin to symbolize the deceased's fidelity to God's word.
- The *cross*, with which the Christian is first marked in Baptism, may also be placed on the coffin.
- *Flowers*, subtle reminders that life and beauty transcend present suffering, also enhance the celebration.
- *Liturgical color* should reflect Christian hope, with-

out negating human grief.

- *Processions*, with pallbearers carrying the coffin, have significance as we go from one ritual to the next. They recall not only early Christian funerals, but also "the journey of human life, the Christian pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem" (OCF 41, 42).

Conclusion

The new *Mercy Prayer Resources* supplements the *Order of Christian Funerals*, which provides the Roman Catholic community with a coherent means of ministering to the social and spiritual needs of those who face the searing pain of death. In both ritual books, the progression of rites brings hope and consolation to the living by immersing the faithful again in the wonder of the paschal mystery, and allowing the waters of baptism to wash us all again. The extent to which we are able to carry out this important ministry will demonstrate how confidently we believe that God has created us for eternal life, where God "will wipe away all tears from our eyes and there will be no more death and no more mourning or sadness" (Rev 21:4).



Notes

- 1 Margaret Mead, "Ritual and Social Crisis," in *Roots of Ritual*, ed. James Shaughnessy (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) pp. 89-90.
- 2 Robert W. Hovda, "Reclaiming for the Church the Death of Christian," *Worship* 59 (1985) p. 148.
- 3 There are no written records of the Jewish liturgy of burial dating before the ninth century CE.
- 4 Adapted from *Weekday Prayer Book*, Rabbinical Assembly of America, 1961.
- 5 Geoffrey Rowell, *The Liturgy of Christian Burial: An Introductory Survey of the Historical Development of Christian Burial Rites*, Alcuin Club, no. 59 (London: SPCK, 1977) p. 6.
- 6 For a more thorough presentation of the historical development of the Christian funeral liturgy, see Richard Rutherford, *The Death of A Christian; The Rite of Funerals*, Studies in the Reformed Rites of the Catholic Church, vol. 7 (New York: Pueblo, 1980) pp. 37-107.
- 7 See M. Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du haut Moyen-Age*, IV (Louvain, 1956) pp. 529-530.
- 8 Philippe Rouillard, "The Liturgy of the Dead as a Rite of Passage," in *Liturgy and Human Passage*, Concilium 112, eds. David Power and Luis Maldonado (New York: Seabury, 1978) p. 77.
- 9 Rouillard, p. 78.
- 10 Rutherford, pp. 56ff.
- 11 Sacrosanctum Concilium [SC] 81, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter M. Abbot, S.J. (New York: Guild Press, 1966).

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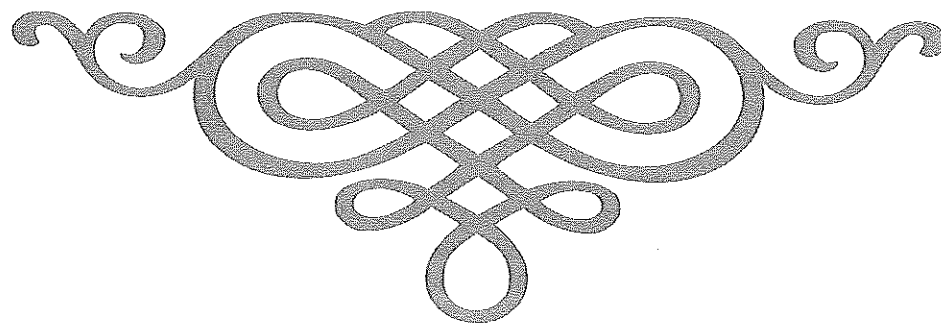
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Discussion Questions

(Browne) How do images like "Christ, the Rising Sun," and "our prayers rising like incense" aid your prayer? What other metaphors appeal to you?

(Caron) Which psalm has particular meaning for your own journey?

(Collins) When you take two translations of the same psalm, which one feels better for your prayer and why?

(Doyle) What religious experience unique to women finds expression in these readings and rituals?

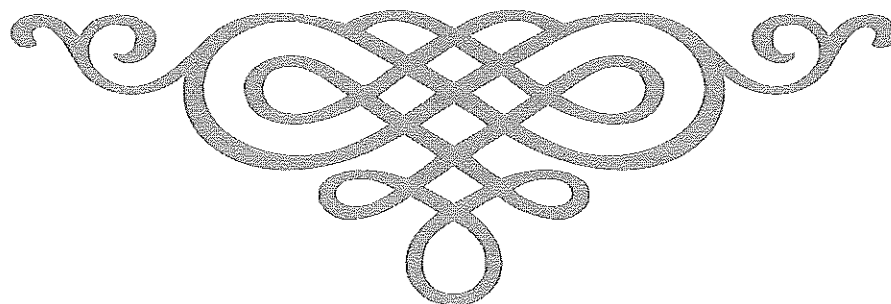
(Gottemoeller) How is the Mercy Prayerbook part of the process of becoming Institute?

(Paris) What does our/my prayer space look like? How does it help or hinder prayer?

(Rouleau) Do you have a friendship and personal relationship with a saint? If so, who? Why is this relationship special for you?

(Sullivan) Pick one of the prayers dear to Catherine McAuley. What is the benefit you see in praying it?

(Upton) How are times of death times of renewal and transformation?



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Want to Write: If you have an idea for an article, or you have a talk or article you would like published in *The MAST Journal*, please send the article or inquiry to Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., MAST Office, Sisters of Mercy, 2300 Adeline Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010. Please include a complete return mailing address on all correspondence or contact her by e-mail at Eloise@gtu.edu.

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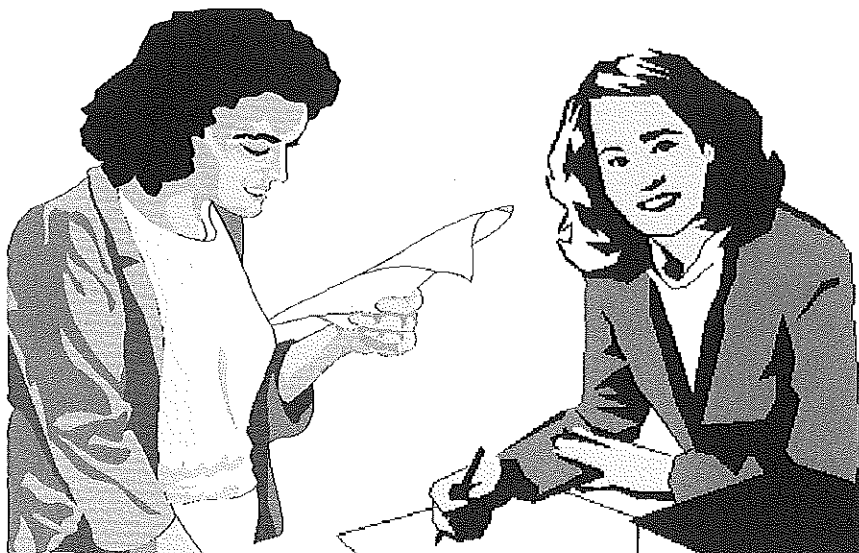
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MERCY ASSOCIATION IN SCRIPTURE AND THEOLOGY

MAST, the Mercy Association in Scripture and Theology, met for the first time in June 1987 at Gwynedd-Mercy College in Gwynedd Valley, Pennsylvania. Called together by Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M. and Mary Ann Getty, twenty Mercy theologians and Scripture scholars from fourteen regional communities formally established the organization to provide a forum for dialogue and cooperation among Sisters of Mercy and associates. The stated purpose of the organization is to promote studies and research in Scripture, theology, and related fields; to support its members in scholarly pursuits through study, writing, teaching, and administration; and to provide a means for members to address current issues within the context of their related disciplines.

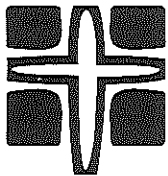
MAST has been meeting annually since then, usually in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, and the organization now numbers fifty, with members living and working in Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central and South America, as well as in the United States. Julie Upton, R.S.M. currently serves as MAST's executive director. MAST will hold its annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, June 18-20, 1999, just prior to the Institute Chapter.

Members work on a variety of task forces related to their scholarly discipline. Present task forces include: Scripture, healthcare ethics, and spirituality. In addition, the members seek to be of service to the Institute by providing a forum for ongoing theological education.

Membership dues are \$20 per year, payable to Marie Michele Donnelly, R.S.M., MAST treasurer, Convent of Mercy, 515 Montgomery Ave., Merion Station, PA 19066.

If you would like to be on the mailing list, call or write: Julia Upton, R.S.M., Executive Director, St. John's University, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Jamaica, NY 11439 (718) 990-1861, or email to Uptonj@stjohns.edu.

Since 1991, *The MAST Journal* has been published three times a year. Members of the organization serve on the journal's editorial board on a rotating basis, and several members have taken responsibility over the years to edit individual issues. Maryanne Stevens, R.S.M., was the founding editor of the journal, and Eloise Rosenblatt, R.S.M., currently serves in that capacity.



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