Prayer is the life of the soul. The soul in need cries out to God. Upon finding Him, the soul is led to seek Him more. Then, this soul, who has found Him, loves Him. From that point on, the soul in love with God cannot breathe without that breath rising up to him in love, forever longing for Him and offering all for His Glory and the salvation of souls.

Jesus often went aside to pray. He spent nights absorbed in prayer, and was in constant prayer to the Father. His Blessed Mother is a model of prayer: "But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). So, too, our Holy Father Saint Dominic spoke only "with God or of God", and spent his nights crying out to the Lord, "What is to become of poor sinners?"

Classic in the life of St. Dominic is his Nine Ways of Prayer, referring to the postures he took (kneeling, prostrating, genuflecting) or the actions he performed (using the discipline, traveling, studying) as part of his prayer. For the Dominican, prayer is therefore a vital part of life and, as such, is one of the four pillars–prayer, study, community, and apostolate–of Dominican life. In his *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas gave a theological expression to the order's motto when he said that an apostolic religious must "contemplate and give to others the fruit of his contemplation." (II-II, q. 188 a. 6). In keeping with the example of St. Dominic, the Dominican must 'speak with God or of God."

The Critical Need for Prayer

Our Lord Jesus warned: "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time will come." (Mk 13:33). In the Garden of Gethsemane, he urged the Apostles to "pray, lest you be tempted" (Matt 26:41; Mk 14:38; Lk 22:40-41). Surely, this applies to each of us. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes St. Augustine in its section on prayer: "Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him" (CCC 2560).

Liturgical and Private Prayer

It is necessary that we formalize our prayer. Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, OP, reflects: "It is not enough to wait for prayer to burst forth spontaneously in my heart, to wait until I feel like praying or happen to have time for it. … Someone who merely follows his spontaneous impulses becomes the slave of his desires" (Schönborn 55). The Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, and other public rites of the Catholic Church are called liturgical or public prayer. All else is private prayer, the "conscious personal interaction of an individual with God" (Jacobs 105). The greatest liturgical prayer is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, with the Liturgy of the Hours in second place. The Rule of the Fraternities of Saint Dominic (Rule no. 10b) urges the lay Dominican faithfully to participate at Mass and to pray Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer daily, insofar as it is possible.

Grades of Prayer

In *Spiritual Theology*, Fr. Jordan Aumann, OP, lists nine grades of prayer. They are vocal prayer, meditation, affective prayer, prayer of simplicity, infused contemplation, prayer of quiet, prayer of union, prayer of conforming union, and prayer of transforming union. Of these only three (vocal prayer, meditation and contemplation) will be considered in this lesson on prayer:

Vocal prayer (though not necessarily said aloud) is a prayer of words. Prayers of petition, adoration, contrition or thanksgiving are all vocal prayers. The greatest vocal prayer, the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus taught to his apostles, perfectly encompasses all the praises and petitions which we ought to offer to Our Father.

Meditation is the connecting of mind, heart, and soul in communicating with God. Through it, "the mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking" (*CCC* 2705). Meditation involves precise steps leading to and flowing from the application of the mind to a subject. Some people will meditate and converse with God spontaneously and informally (often called mental prayer). However, for the sake of humility and the health of the soul, a more formal method is advised as well.

Contemplation is prayer in which the mind and heart focus on God's greatness and goodness in loving adoration. It focuses on the life of Jesus with great faith and loving devotion. The practices of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass and spending time after receiving Our Lord in Holy Communion are commendable ways that hasten the individual to the gift of contemplation. The Liturgy of the Hours and the rosary are vocal prayers which, when prayed meditatively, may also lead, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to contemplation and union with God.

THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS (Divine Office)

In order to fulfill the Lord's precept to pray without ceasing (1Thess 5: 16-17), the Church, from its earliest days, has had the custom of consecrating the day to God by praying at fixed times in accordance with the Jewish tradition. Eventually, the main hours for prayer were daybreak and sunset. Over the centuries, the practice of praying the Office fell more to the life of the monasteries and this led to a decline in the participation of the laity. The Second Vatican Council saw the need for returning this prayer to all of the people. In 1970, Pope Paul VI provided for this restoration in the apostolic constitution *Laudis canticum*. The revision of the Divine Office was completed in 1970 and an English translation was published in 1974 (Brook 16).

The Liturgy of the Hours is seen as a necessary complement to the fullness of divine worship that is contained in the Eucharistic sacrifice, by means of which worship might overflow to reach all hours of our daily life (*Laudis canticum* 11). Therefore, the purpose of the Liturgy of the Hours is the sanctification of the day. It is principally a prayer of praise and petition.

The Liturgy of the Hours is available in one volume called *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours* or in a four volume set entitled *Liturgy of the Hours*. The four-volume set is divided as follows:

Volume I Advent and Christmas Season (blue)
Volume II Lent and Easter Season (red)
Volume III Ordinary Time – Weeks 1-17 (brown)
Volume IV Ordinary Time – Weeks 18-34 (green)

The Parts of the Liturgy of the Hours Books

Proper of Seasons

The Proper of Seasons contains the parts of the Divine Office that change according to the season of the liturgical year. It includes the scriptural readings, responsories, antiphons for the *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*, intercessions, and concluding prayers for use during the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, and certain solemnities.

Ordinary

The Ordinary contains the rubrics for celebrating the Divine Office and frequently used prayers.

Psalter

The Psalter contains a four-week cycle of psalms,, hymns, and canticles. Also in the same cycle are a series of antiphons, Scripture readings, responsories, intercessions, and concluding prayers. The cycle is linked with the liturgical year in this way: the first week is resumed on the First Sunday of Ordinary Time, the First Sunday of Lent, and Easter Sunday.

Proper of Saints

The Proper of Saints contains the parts of the Divine Office that are specific to the saint's day being observed. It gives the date, rank (memorial, feast, or solemnity), and the instructions necessary for each saint's feast.

Commons

The Commons contain the hymn, psalms, antiphons, scriptural reading, intercessions and concluding prayer for each category of liturgical celebration: Churches, BVM, Apostle, Martyrs, Virgins, etc.

The Liturgy of the Hours: Sanctifying the Day

Office of Readings

The Office of Readings can be recited at any time during the day or even as a vigil during the previous night following evening prayer.

Morning Prayer (Lauds)

Morning Prayer is the first prayer of the day. It recalls the resurrection of Jesus. In it, we consecrate our day with all its works and prayers to God. Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer are the principal, or hinge, hours of the day.

Daytime Prayer:
(Midmorning, Midday, and Midafternoon Prayer)

These "minor" hours were established to recall events in Christ's Passion, and further spread prayer throughout the day as a means of sanctifying time.

Evening Prayer (Vespers)

Evening Prayer is a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings received during the day. Sunday begins on Saturday evening with the Vigil; Sunday Evening Prayer I is said. Sunday Evening Prayer II is said on Sunday evening.

Night Prayer (Compline)

Night Prayer is the last prayer of the day. In it we consecrate our night to God and entrust our lives to him, in sleep and in death.

The Liturgy of the Hours: The Parts of Each Hour

Invitatory

The Invitatory is the beginning psalm. It precedes the recitation of the first hour of the day either the Office of Readings or Morning Prayer. Its purpose is to draw one closer to God in prayer.

Hymns

Hymns provide a setting for the feast or the Hour being celebrated. After a hymn there are always psalms.

Antiphon

Each psalm has an antiphon adapted from a verse in the psalm and designed to highlight a dominant theme in the psalm. It is said at the beginning and the end of the psalm

Psalms

The psalms were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The basic psalm genres or types are: thanksgiving, lament, praise, penitence, and glory. These different kinds of psalms reflect the circumstances of the psalmist and the people Israel, and also resonate with our own feelings at the different times and under the changing circumstances of our own lives. The psalms also enable us to consider the feelings and circumstances of those around us, thus prompting us to pray for both

ourselves and our neighbors (Brook 54). A title is added at the head of each psalm to explain its meaning. It is intended as an aid to understanding and prayer, and is not read in an oral recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours.

Canticles

A canticle is a song, hymn of praise, or psalm, which comes from a part of sacred Scripture other than the Book of Psalms. A canticle from the Old Testament follows the psalm in Morning Prayer. Canticles from the New Testament are included in Evening Prayer.

Doxology

Each psalm concludes with the Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Psalm Prayer

A sentence from the New Testament or the Fathers of the Church is added in American publications of the Divine Office to foster prayer in the light of Christ's new revelation. It invites one to pray the psalms in their christological meaning. The psalm prayers are optional.

Readings

The readings include passages of sacred Scripture and the best of the writings of Christian authors, especially, of the Fathers of the Church (in the Office of Readings). The readings are intended to harmonize with the cycle of readings from Mass, and are meant to unfold the history of salvation throughout the year.

Responsory

The responsory after most of the hours is linked to the reading. The responsory after the second reading in the Office of Readings, however, is less closely connected with the text in order to allow a greater freedom in regard to meditation.

Te Deum

The *Te Deum* is said after the second reading in the Office of Readings on Sundays outside Lent, on days within the octaves of Easter and Christmas, and on solemnities and feasts during the week.

Intercessions

Since the liturgy of the hours is seen as the prayer of the whole Church, the intentions of the whole Church should be foremost. Particular intentions are permissible at Morning and Evening Prayer as well. The morning intercessions help us to consecrate the day to God and the evening intercessions encourage us to focus on the needs of others. The final intercession each evening reminds us of our obligation to pray for the dead.

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer follows the intercessions in Morning and Evening Prayer. These two recitations and the recitations, together with the Lord's Prayer at Mass, return us to an early Christian practice of saying the Lord's Prayer three times a day.

Salve Regina

This antiphon to our Blessed Mother at the end of Night Prayer completes our day.

Praying the Liturgy of the Hours

The praying of the Liturgy of the Hours is meant to help us to grow in holiness. If we are beginning to pray it for the first time, we might want to begin slowly. Perhaps we will want to start with Morning Prayer since that is one of the prayers that we are encouraged to pray on a daily basis. Choose a time and a quiet place for prayer. Finally, with the aid of "The Guide for the Liturgy of the Hours," (included with the book) set up the Office book for the psalms and prayers for the day and hour before beginning to pray.

THE ROSARY

Like the liturgy of the hours, the rosary "draws its inspiration from Sacred Scripture and is oriented toward the mystery of Christ" (Paul VI, *Marialis* 48). St. Dominic had a great devotion to the Blessed Mother and he imparted this to his sons and daughters. He taught people to honor the Virgin Mary, and shared with them fruits of his own meditation on Sacred Scripture. While the precise origins of the rosary are somewhat obscure, we know that Alan de la Roche, OP (1428-1475) made popular its preaching and attributed it to St. Dominic. Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic letter on the rosary (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 39) wrote: The history of the rosary shows how this prayer was used in particular by the Dominicans at a difficult time for the Church due to the spread of heresy. Today we are facing new challenges. Why should we not once more have recourse to the rosary, with the same faith as those who have gone before us?"

Pope St. Pius V, our Dominican brother fixed the Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious mysteries of the rosary in 1569. And in the Year of the Rosary (October 2002-October 2003) that he celebrated with the Church before his death, John Paul II proposed the additional "mysteries of light" (Luminous mysteries) as a complement to the others. The rosary draws from the Gospel the presentation of the mysteries, and its main formulas, which give the rosary its christological orientation (*Marialis cultis* 46). The different mysteries recall Christ's early years, his public ministry, his Passion, and his glorious victory over death.

From the conversion of the Albigensians to the victory at LePanto, the power of the rosary has been recognized. Mary, herself, has encouraged us at Lourdes and Fatima to recite her rosary for peace in the world and for the conversion of sinners. Pope John Paul II entrusts "to the power of this prayer the cause of peace in the world and the cause of the family" (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 39).

COUNSELS ON PRAYER

Preparation for Prayer

Blessed Columba Marmion, OSB, describes five dispositions the soul must attain to make prayer fruitful: detachment/purity of heart, recollection, complete acceptance of God's will, reverence for he is present, and humility

(Marmion 317-319). Further, Our Lord said, "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mk 11:25).

Promptness in Prayer

Saint Vincent Ferrer, OP advises us to rise promptly, "as if the bed were on fire, and kneel and offer to God a few prayers to rekindle our devotion" (Ferrer 131). He also advises us to stop occasionally "while studying (or working) to offer a prayer… imploring God's help, then recalling the study or work and returning to it. Both Cain and Abel offered God the fruit of their labors, but God rewarded Abel for he gave God the first, therefore best, fruits" (Gen 4:3-5). When tempted to procrastinate in prayer, especially the Liturgy of the Hours, strive to give God the first fruits of your morning and evening.

Perseverance in Prayer

Do not imagine that when you pray you change God's will. But understand this: "The immutable will of God is not a granite wall against which men dash their lives; … prayers, merits, sufferings, and all the rest are by no means futile, … not because they change the will of God but because they fulfil it" (Farrell 33). "It is simply a question of raising our will to the level of His will so as to will with Him what He has decided to give us, the good things useful to our sanctification and salvation" (Garrigou-LaGrange 203).

"Humble, trusting, persevering prayer, by which we ask for the things necessary for salvation, is infallibly efficacious by virtue of Our Lord's Promise" (Garrigou-LaGrange, 206). Yet God considers our temporal needs as well as our spiritual needs, for Jesus assured us, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matt 6:33). And recall the words of our Lord to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you," (2 Cor 12:9) if you do not receive that for which you pray (Garrigou-LaGrange 206).

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Discussion Questions

1. Name 5 dispositions for fruitful prayer. Of these, which is most difficult for you and how can you acquire this disposition?
2. As contemplatives in an active world, we try to "pray always". How do you set time aside strictly for prayer? Is it enough? What can you do to improve?
3. As you undertake praying the Liturgy of the Hours daily, what are some of the difficulties that you have or might encounter? How can they be resolved? Locate the second psalm for Evening Prayer 1 of Sunday Week II. Meditate upon the Psalm for 10-15 minutes. Write down for discussion your reaction to it, as well as any insights, thoughts, and resolutions you may have.
4. Do you see any retationship between the Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours? If so, how does this make your participation in the Mass more meaningful, and praying the Liturgy of the Hours more effective? Which prayers are the same in both the liturgy of the hours and the Mass?

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