

Daily Office in the Third Order Society of St. Francis, Province of the Americas

Every few years the TSSF Chapter, Province of the Americas is asked to drop the requirements of praying the Daily Office. This short paper is a simple teaching about our Anglican and Episcopal Daily Office traditions and specifically, why praying the Office is fundamental to our ongoing formation as Franciscans.

When Fr. Joseph founded our American Order of St Francis a hundred years ago, praying either Daily Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer was established as daily requirement for the Third Order. The Daily Office is a path of regular prayer that feeds us a constant reading of scriptures, recitation of the psalms and daily prayers for the liturgical seasons. A Prayer Book Office gives us a rich use of the Canticles and the great songs of praise that have come down to us in Scripture and our ancient Monastic tradition. The Daily Office is a time when we, as a dispersed community of Franciscans, can gather around the world in unity through our daily prayer. We pray for each other and for the Order that we can indeed make our Lord known and loved everywhere. But Daily Office tradition is much older than Fr. Joseph.

Our Anglican tradition of Daily Office came through our first book of Common Prayer. It was a radical simplification of the monastic hours that were prayed 8 times a day. The traditional Office of the Hours are: Matins, Lauds or Morning Prayer, Terce or Mid-Morning Prayer, Sext or Midday Prayer, None or Mid-Afternoon Prayer, Vespers or Evening Prayer, then Compline. The intent of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the prime composer of the first English book of Common prayer (1549), was that every Christian would be able to pray the daily Office. This is why it was called the Book of "Common" Prayer. It was for everyday use by the common people. The Regular Daily Prayer is older than Thomas Cranmer and even deeper than the long history of that Monastic Divine Hours.

The deep roots of our daily office are found in ancient Jewish Worship. During the Babylonian exile Temple worship in Jerusalem ended for a few generations. The worship life of the synagogue arose and became the norm. Synagogue worship occurred at fixed hours every day with prayers, the reading of the Torah, and reciting Psalms. Sound Familiar? Jesus was raised with both worship in the Temple and in the daily prayers in the Synagogue. He would have been steeped in the regular rhythms of Jewish daily prayers, Scripture and reciting the Psalter. I ask you, who does not want to pray like Jesus.

The Third Order Norms provide that "*authorized editions from provinces of the Anglican Communion beyond the Province of the Americas may be used.*" Beyond our Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, we can use the New Zealand *Book of Common Prayer*, the English BCP or the West Indian. You get the idea, so I will not list them all. We also have Franciscan Breviaries that we can use such as the *Daily Office SSF*, *SSF Celebrating Common Prayer* or the *CSF Prayer Book*. For those with smart phones, Tablets and other online computers, Daily Office can be found in many locations in the Web. Try <http://www.missionstclare.com/english/>, or <https://dailyoffice.org/>, or <http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/ccp/>. We have many rich and varied guides for our Daily Office. The key is to pray them daily. If at times it seems dry remember that God formed Jesus in the desert following his Baptism. Persevere in your prayer for the Lord is about to create something new in your life.