

DAILY RHYTHM OF PRAYER

What does it mean to have a life characterised by prayer? When life is at its busiest, we tend to cram prayer into one corner of the day, setting aside a few minutes either first thing in the morning or last thing at night.

However, this is not how it has to be. Monastic communities have been self-isolating for centuries: living lives full of work, study, service and caring, all held steady by rhythms of prayer. They would punctuate their days with prayer. Whenever the monastery bell rang, they would stop what they were doing and step away to pray. Many communities still live that way today. Where instead of our day being interrupted to pray, we interrupt our day with a regular rhythm of prayer.

Rhythms define our lives. The habits we adopt and the patterns we repeat form our daily existence, direct our decisions and feed our motivations. The rhythms of life bring normalcy to unforeseen disasters and our highest celebrations. This is true of our physical and emotional lives and also true of our spirituality.

We were created for a loving relationship with our Creator that is renewed and strengthened by the rhythm of prayer. By rhythm of prayer we mean regular, fixed times of the day. The morning and the night are often cited in the Psalms as a call to prayer:

In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; In the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly (Ps. 5:3)

On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night (Ps. 63:6)

The rhythm of prayer has a rich spiritual history. "Fixed-hour prayer...actually had its origins in the Judaism out of which Christianity came. Centuries before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Hebrew psalmist wrote the 'Seven times a day do I praise you' (Ps.119: 164)."

By the time of Jesus, the people of God responded to ringing of forum bells that called them to prayer, including both Jews and then Christians. Scriptures teach us that Jesus followed a rhythm of prayer while on earth. Often he rose early in the morning to pray.

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed (Mark 1:35)

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:16)

With the crowd dispersed, he climbed the mountain so he could be by himself and pray. He stayed there alone, late into the night (Matthew 14:23 The Message)

As the early church saw in the lives of Old Testament saints and Jesus a rhythm of daily prayer, they incorporated into their lives this same practice. "...by the second and third centuries the great Fathers of the Church- Clement (c 150-215 A.D.), Origen (c. 185-254

A.D.), Tertullian (c.160-225 A.D.), etc- assumed as normative the observance of prayers in the morning and at night as well as for the so-called 'little hours'."

This is something that can be done alone, try setting an alarm on your phone for times throughout the day and commit to stop. It maybe your work or home situation doesn't allow for this, maybe you can take a comfort break that gives you a couple of minutes to pray. Set prayers can be helpful using resources like:

Celtic Daily Prayer: <https://www.eden.co.uk/christian-books/the-church/prayer-books-and-liturgical-books/celtic-daily-prayer-book-one/>

The Divine Hours (This is an abridged version, there are also versions for the different seasons): <https://www.eden.co.uk/christian-books/the-church/prayer-books-and-liturgical-books/divine-hourstm-pocket-edition/>

You could also work through the Psalms or pray the Lord's Prayer.

To make this time fruitful it might be helpful to set up a short time once or twice a day to call or zoom with others. Committing to a daily rhythm of prayer with others can make the time richer as well as keeping us accountable.

At OCC we have 2 daily fixed prayer times. We gather Monday-Friday on zoom for 15 mins (no longer) at 6:30am and 10:00pm. We read a portion from the Scriptures and then pray in response.

If you would like to join these prayer times you can subscribe to the calendar here: <https://ics.teamup.com/feed/kseowcyxiy6vsvwqfa/10580630.ics>

You can join the 6:30am morning prayer here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86958881570?pwd=c2NkTmRnMTZWcFcxbzF5bnpsSVdyQT09>

Meeting ID: 869 5888 1570

Passcode: pray

You can join the 10:00pm evening prayer here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86806556950?pwd=YnZzaXRnc2w2TnUvQjg1WkJOUnRlYz09>

Meeting ID: 868 0655 6950

Passcode: pray

Because of the length of time we have we will start and finish promptly, there is no need to have your camera on, and we do ask that people pray in sentences rather than paragraphs just to allow others to pray.