

Diocese of San Joaquin Training Guide for Lay Readers

(Note: Lay Reader candidates are also responsible for the material contained in the *Eucharistic Minister* and *Eucharistic Visitor* training guides.)

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Canonical/Historical Background

The office of Lay Reader has been around for decades. As such, it is the original licensed lay ministry in the Episcopal/Anglican Church. It evolved in response to the desire of rural congregations to worship on Sunday even when the services of a priest were not available. Lay Readers were commissioned to officiate at non-sacramental rites—i.e. Morning and/or Evening Prayer. As congregations began to celebrate the Eucharist more frequently in the wake of the Catholic revival of Anglicanism in the nineteenth century, Lay Readers began to administer the chalice at Holy Communion. Consequently, it is still usually assumed that Lay Readers will function, when needed, as Eucharistic Ministers.

In an era of increasing clergy shortage, particularly in smaller communities, the original need that brought forth the Lay Reader's license still exists—that all the faithful be afforded the opportunity to duly observe the Lord's Day by participating in corporate worship of Almighty God. However, even in urban and larger congregations today, even those with adequate clergy staffing, licensed Lay Readers can be of substantial assistance by being trained and available to preside at Morning and/or Evening Prayer on weekdays. These services constitute the *official* (hence, the term "Daily Office") daily prayer of the Church, and are an important element in the regular worship life of a healthy parish. While it certainly does not require a license to read the daily office on one's own, or in an informal group setting, a Lay Reader's license authorizes an individual to officiate at these services when they are read publicly at previously announced times.

The Daily Office—Background

The custom of daily prayer at set times is rooted securely in Judaism, and we see evidence of it in both the Old and New Testaments. Early Christianity adopted the practice, and distinctive liturgical forms evolved in the cathedral churches of major cities. When the western monastic tradition went through its critically formative stage under the leadership of St Benedict in the sixth century, seven occasions for daily communal prayer were established in the Benedictine rule. These services all consisted of some combination, in varying proportions, of chanted psalms, scripture readings, and prayers.

When Archbishop Thomas Cranmer undertook to simplify the liturgy for ordinary English lay folk in the sixteenth century, he conflated the seven "canonical hours" into two: Morning Prayer (known as Mattins when sung) and Evening Prayer (known as Evensong when sung). In recent decades, the pendulum has been swinging away from such "simplification" and back toward "enrichment." The present American Prayer Book provides two forms of the office that have not been formally present in Anglican liturgies since the Reformation: Noonday Prayer and Compline.

The Daily Office--Structure

The Daily Office in the present Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church is four-fold: Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer (early evening), and Compline (late evening). There are three fundamental parts of each office: (1) psalmody, (2) scripture, and (3) prayer. These elements may vary widely in length and in proportion to one another, but they constitute the core of the Daily Office. You should thoroughly acquaint yourself with both the text and rubrics between pp.36-135 in the Prayer Book.

The rubrics, of course, are mandatory instructions which must be followed. There is, however, an unofficial unwritten tradition with respect to the daily office. This study guide attempts to elucidate some aspects of that tradition, as well as offer comments on the texts and rubrics.

Opening Sentence (37, 61, 75, 115)

This is optional, and varies by season or occasion. Only one should be used, if any. In the Easter Season, notice that the first three sentences speak of the resurrection, so are most appropriate for the first four or five weeks after Easter. The next two speak of the heavenly ministry of the ascended Christ, and are most appropriately used during the week between Easter VI and Easter VII. The final sentence looks forward to Pentecost, and would be well used during the final week of the Great Fifty Days. This final sentence should not be used, however, any time after the Day of Pentecost itself. Pentecost is observed in anticipation, not in retrospect. The Monday after Pentecost is “ferial” (the technical term that denotes “ordinary time,” i.e. no particular season of either feasting or fasting).

Confession of Sin

If, as a Lay Reader, you are officiating at Morning or Evening Prayer which functions as that community’s only Sunday corporate worship (i.e. the Eucharist will not be celebrated), the Confession should be included. (It is appropriately omitted on Sundays “after Christmas” and “of Easter,” as well as on the actual days of Epiphany (6 January) and All Saints (1 November). On other occasions—i.e. routine weekdays in congregations where a priest is available—it should be omitted. If used, please note the rubric prescribing the substitution of “us” for “you” in the absolution.

The Invitatory...

The main body of the Office begins, in the morning, with “Lord, open our lips” and in the evening with “O God, make speed to save us.”

At Morning Prayer, one of the seasonal antiphons (43, 81) may be used “with” (traditionally—both before and after) the invitatory canticle. Technically, the assumption seems to be that the antiphon is recited or sung by all in unison. As a concession to practicality, however, there is a custom that the officiant gives the first part, and all give the common response, “Come, let us adore him.”

In the larger western, tradition (with its roots in the Rule of St Benedict, dating back to the fifth century), *Venite* has a certain pride of place as the morning invitatory canticle. Some scheme of alternating *Venite* and *Jubilate*, however, is not inappropriate. *Venite* is a truncated version of

Psalm 95. On Fridays in Lent, it may be desirable to take advantage of the rubric (45, 82) and use the entirety of the Psalm, including its austere concluding verses.

Christ our Passover is mandated for use as the invitatory during Easter Week (not to be confused, per the common mistake, with Holy Week), but it is customary to use it during the entirety of the Great Fifty Days.

Incidentally, with apologies to serious students of both classical and liturgical Latin, in Anglican circles, *Venite* is customarily pronounced so as to rhyme with “nighty” and *Jubilate* with a hard “J” (ju-bi-LAH-tee). Ugh!

The evening Invitatory is the canticle *Phos hilaron*—**O gracious light**. This is an ancient Greek hymn that has appeared in Anglican hymnals for more than a century, but its use at this point in the liturgy is an innovation, albeit a welcome one. In addition to the form in the Prayer Book, there are three metrical versions in the hymnal: 25/26, 36, and 37. The rubric also permits “some other suitable hymn” to be used in this spot. Alternatively, the whole thing may be omitted, proceeding directly to the Psalter.

... *and Psalter*

The Psalms are the heart of the Daily Office. In a typical monastic community, all 150 Psalms are prayed over the course of a two week cycle. In the seventeenth century English experimental community of Little Gidding, under Deacon Nicholas Ferrar, the entire Psalter was exhausted on a daily basis! The Prayer Book lectionary is more relaxed, taking seven weeks to complete the circuit. (There is, of course, the alternative method, wherein one starts with Psalm 1 at Morning Prayer on the first day of the month and ends with Psalm 150 at Evening Prayer on the 31st.)

The Psalter is, in essence, the Jewish hymnal. Psalms are intended to be sung; anything else is not the norm, but a pastoral/practical concession—a concession, however, that is in fact more the rule than the exception. As a Worship Leader, your experience of the Psalms is virtually certain to be said rather than sung. The rubrics on p.582 list the most common methods of corporate recitation and the situations when they are most appropriate. In communities that pray the office together regularly, it is customary, following Benedictine practice, to observe a break at the asterisk in the middle of each verse. This should be at least a discernible pause, but three or four seconds is probably too long. A leisurely “one-one thousand” is a good benchmark. However, when the congregation consists mainly of those who do not ordinarily worship together, it is probably more trouble than it is worth to impose this custom, as it will take a while for many people to catch on. This calls for wisdom and discretion on the part of the officiant.

The lectionary permits the omission of whole Psalms (e.g. 83, 109) and portions of Psalms (e.g. 137) that are considered excessively violent (the “imprecatory” Psalms) or historically/geographically arcane. While this practice may be pastorally desirable among those who have not reached a certain level in their spiritual formation, we do well to remember that this material is sacred scripture, given to us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is there for a reason. Sooner or later we have to deal with it in our own hearts, and ask ourselves, “How is this an authentic expression of what is inside me?”

At the Daily Office (as distinguished from the Psalm used in the Eucharist), the *Gloria Patri* should be used in connection with the Psalms. If it is not considered overly tedious, the classic pattern calls for its use after each individual Psalm. Alternatively, it may be “saved up” and used only once, at the conclusion of the Psalms appointed for that particular Office

Preferences vary as to congregational posture during the Psalms. In the classic Benedictine pattern, however, the community is seated.

The Lessons

The lectionary provides three lessons per day—one from the Old Testament, one from the Epistles (as well as Acts and Revelation), and one from the Gospels. Although it is never spelled out, the intention seems to be that two readings be used at Morning Prayer and one at Evening Prayer. This is in accord with ancient custom, and is evidenced by that fact that the appointed selections from the Psalter are uniformly longer in the evening than in the morning. When it is desired to use two lessons at each of the major offices, one (typically the Old Testament in the Evening) may be “borrowed” from the “other year” in the two-year lectionary cycle.

After each of the readings, a canticle (numbered 1-7 in Rite One, 8-21 in Rite two) is sung or recited corporately. The only guidelines offered in the rubrics are that #8, *The Song of Moses (Cantemus Domino)*, is “especially suitable for use in Easter Season,” and that #14, *A Song of Penitence (Kyrie Pantokrator)* is “especially suitable in Lent, and on other penitential occasions.” However, there is a strong current in the tradition fixing *The Song of Zechariah (Benedictus Dominus Deus)*—#4 in Rite, #16 in Rite Two—as an unvarying morning canticle, and *The Song of Mary (Magnificat)*, similarly, in the evening. On Sundays, Principal Feasts, Feasts of Our Lord, and Holy Days (see pp.15-17 for definitions of these categories), *We Praise Thee/You Are God (Te Deum)*—#7, #21) should be used in the morning (along with **Benedictus**). *The Second Song of Isaiah (Quærite Dominum)*—#10), with its penitential tone, is particularly appropriate for Fridays (outside of Lent and Easter), and *A Song of Creation (Benedictus, omnia opera)*—#12), with its emphasis on creation, is well used on Saturdays. You will not go wrong if you simply overlook the inclusion of *Glory (be) to God (Gloria in excelsis)*—#6, #20) among the canticles (it is linked so strongly to the Eucharist that it is jarring to use it otherwise), and if you never use **Magnificat** or **Nunc Dimittis** in the morning (they are quintessential evening canticles; the latter should be used at Evening Prayer when there are two lessons, but its true native territory is Compline). The remaining canticles (9,11,13,18,19) may be rotated through available slots.

The Apostles’ Creed follows. It may be omitted when the Eucharist is to be celebrated subsequently, and at one of the major offices when both are publicly read.

The Prayers

The Lord’s Prayer may also be omitted when the Eucharist is to immediately follow.

Suffrages ‘A’ are identical at both Morning Evening Prayer. There are two Suffrages ‘B’—one unique to the morning and one unique to the evening. The evening ‘B’ offers the opportunity to include the name of a saint being commemorated, so it would make sense to make this choice on feast days of whatever grade.

The rubric then prescribes “one or more of the following Collects.” This offers a great deal of latitude, but, once again, the weight of tradition suggests three:

- **The Collect of the Day**—if it is a Principal Feast, Feast of Our Lord, or a Holy Day, the collect appointed for that occasion is used. In most other cases, the appropriate collect is that of the preceding Sunday. (The major exceptions to this rule would be when Christmas, Epiphany, or Ash Wednesday have occurred since Sunday—in which case the collect for those days is used—and the weekdays after the Day of Pentecost and Trinity Sunday, to which the “numbered propers” [see below under “Lectionary”] apply.) What about “days of optional observance” (lesser feasts)? That’s a toss-up, but since that material is found in another volume (*Lesser Feasts and Fasts*) and not in the Prayer Book, it will probably be simpler to use the Sunday collect.
- **A Day-of-the-Week Collect**—Collects for Sunday, Friday, and Saturday after appointed in both Morning and Evening Prayer. The four that remain may easily be divided between the other days. In the morning: Renewal of Life on Monday, Peace on Tuesday, Grace on Wednesday, and Guidance on Thursday; and in the evening: Peace on Monday, Aid against Perils on Tuesday, Protection on Wednesday, and Presence of Christ on Thursday.
- **A Collect for Mission**—Three are provided. In the morning, the third one (58, 101) suggests itself for Wednesday and Friday, the traditional days for remembering the cross. For similar reasons, the second of the evening mission collects (71, 124) may best be used on those days.

“Authorized intercessions and thanksgivings may follow.” Rely on instructions from your priest and/or your own pastoral discretion in how to handle this. Different communities have different needs and expectations.

The General Thanksgiving and the Prayer of St Chrysostom are both optional. When Morning Prayer is the principal service on Sunday, it is probably best, from a pastoral standpoint, to use one or both of these forms. During the week, particularly if the office is an everyday event, it will probably be best to omit them on most occasions.

A word about hymns: If you are presiding at Morning or Evening Prayer as a community’s principal act of Sunday corporate worship, and there is a desire to include congregational singing, the one place in the office when a hymn is specifically sanctioned is after the third collect, and before any closing prayers. (If there is to be a homily, it is delivered after this hymn.) Technically, there is no provision for an opening or closing hymn, but if it is pastorally desirable to sing at these spots, one can easily decide that these moments are outside of “liturgical time,” so explicit rubrical permission is not required. Please also note the rubric on page 141 concerning the use of metrical versions of the canticles. (See pp.680-681 of the accompaniment edition of the Hymnal 1982 for helpful information about this possibility).

Lectionary & Calendar

The Daily Office lectionary is on a two-year cycle, Year One beginning on the First Sunday of Advent preceding odd-numbered years. However, if you are presiding at Sunday Morning or Evening Prayer in a community that does not have access to the Eucharist, it may be pastorally desirable to use the three-year eucharistic lectionary instead. Doing so provides a valuable element of commonality with the wider church. The provision of an Old Testament reading for the Sundays of Easter (when Acts is normally the first reading), and the “long Psalm” (i.e. more verses) option on many Sundays, is especially intended for such situations.

The long season “after Pentecost” can be confusing, calendar and lectionary-wise. It is not the season “of” Pentecost—Pentecost is merely the marker from which the following Sundays, between then and the arrival of the new church year in Advent, are numbered. But while the names of the Sundays are anchored to Pentecost, the appointed lessons and collects are anchored to fixed dates in relation to the beginning of the next Advent season—these are known as “Proper X”. So, while the second Sunday in June 2002 was the “Third Sunday after Pentecost”, in other years it might be the third or the fifth or some other “Sunday after Pentecost,” depending on the date of Easter. But it is nearly always going to be Proper 6, which is defined as the Sunday closest to June 15. The Sunday before Advent is always Proper 29, however many Sundays after Pentecost it is.

Practical Issues

Your supervising priest will deal with practical issues in detail. If what you read here conflicts with his instructions, follow his instructions! Nonetheless, we offer the following:

When you are officiating at services (or even just reading a lesson):

- Speak slowly and hyper-enunciate. This applies particularly to consonants. What sounds exaggerated and silly to you will just sound normal (and audible!) to people in the congregation.
- Pay close attention to not letting your voice trail off at the end of sentences.
- Minimize the giving of page numbers and directions. The infrastructure should not overwhelm the substance of the liturgical drama. Nonetheless, be pastorally sensitive to who is actually in the congregation on any particular occasion, and give them as much help as they need to participate comfortably.
- When leading unison prayers, slow down even more; don’t get ahead of congregation.
- When you say something to which a response is expected (like “The Lord be with you” or “Let us pray” or “Let us bless the Lord”), **WAIT** for the congregation to give the response (or change postures)—don’t turn away or change positions until they have done so.

Appendix: A Guide to the Recitation of the Daily Office

Examples and page numbers refer to Morning Prayer, Rite II, but the same principles apply to Evening Prayer and to Rite 1.

<i>Page #</i>	<i>Optional</i>	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Suggested</i>
75-78	Opening Sentence (according to season)		
79	Confession of Sin ¹		
80		Versicle & Gloria	
80-82	Invitatory Antiphon (according to season) ²		
82-83		Invitatory: Venite, Jubilate or Christ our Passover	A possible scheme: <i>Venite</i> on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday; <i>Jubilate</i> on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday; <i>Christ Our Passover</i> every day during the Great Fifty Days of Easter.
585-808		Psalm(s) ³	
84		First Reading (see lectionary)	Gloria Patri Possible scheme: Old Testament and Epistle in morning, Gospel in evening. Use #16 every morning and #15 every evening. Save #8 for Easter Season, #10 good for Fridays, #12 good for Saturdays, save #14 for Lent, use #15 only in the Evening, never use #20, use #21 on Sundays and Major Holy Days.
		Canticle	Use #16 every morning and #15 every evening. Save #8 for Easter Season, #10 good for Fridays, #12 good for Saturdays, save #14 for Lent, use #15 only in the Evening, never use #20, use #21 on Sundays and Major Holy Days.
			Second Reading Second Canticle
96		Apostle's Creed ⁴	
97		Lord's Prayer	
97-98		Suffrages (A or B)	
211-246		Collect of the Day ⁵	
99-100		Collect of the Day of the Week Sunday, Friday, Saturday—as indicated	Monday— <i>Renewal of Life</i> , Tuesday— <i>Peace</i> , Wednesday— <i>Grace</i> Thursday— <i>Guidance</i>
100-101		Collect for Mission (suggest last one for Wednesdays and Fridays)	
100-101			General Thanksgiving <i>or</i> Prayer of St Chrysostom
102		Closing Sentence	

¹ The form given here is more suited to corporate than personal prayer. I would recommend an informal time of self-examination and confession in the context of bedtime prayers, or Compline, if used.

² When done in a group, all give the response: *Come, let us adore him.*

³ The lectionary for the Daily Office is on pp.936-995. This method completes the entire Psalter in seven weeks. An alternative is the "day of the month" method, beginning with Psalm One at Morning Prayer of the first day, and concluding with Psalm 150 at Evening Prayer on the thirty-first day. I recommend using the lectionary.

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⁵ Use the Collect from the preceding Sunday.