

The Liturgy of the Hours in the Life of the Church

Paweł Maciaszek



Kapłan archidiecezji częstochowskiej, absolwent KUL w Lublinie (doktor nauk teologicznych w zakresie teologii pastoralnej – specjalizacja: liturgika) i UJ w Krakowie (studia podyplomowe – dziennikarstwo i komunikacja medialna). Wykładowca w Instytucie Edukacji Medialnej i Dziennikarstwa UKSW w Warszawie oraz Wyższym Seminarium Duchownym i Wyższym Instytucie Teologicznym w Częstochowie. Autor artykułów o roli środków społecznego przekazu w dziele ewangelizacji oraz ukazujących duchowe życie katolików oparte na świadomym, czynnym i pełnym uczestnictwie w liturgii. Zainteresowania: teologia liturgii, teologia mediów, ewangelizacja medialna.

Introduction

Liturgy of the Hours is one of the most important liturgical celebrations of the Church. It occupies a specific place in the Church's community, because it is a daily prayer of God's people, and is celebrated both individually and as a community. It is also a fact these days that the breviary is undergoing a crisis. The apparent difficulties are concerned with the content, the form, not being adapted to our times. However, the causes are more serious, among others, widely understood crisis of religious life, generally observed laicisation undermining the foundations of faith, spread of independent set of ethics and others. Already during the Second Vatican Council the statements from the Fathers say that for many contemporary priests (overburdened with their duties) the breviary had become more a burden than a path to spiritual development¹.

¹ Cz. Krakowiak, *Liturgia Godzin w życiu i posłudze prezbiterów*, "Homo Dei",

The aim of this publication is to show the great value of the Liturgy of the Hours in the spiritual life of Christians; recognising anew the prayer of Christ and God's People, this prayer being the means of sanctification of time and man, showing the essence of the Church, the exposition of the daily celebration of canonical hours. To come to know the meaning of that prayer in the life of the Church's community becomes the vehicle of change and answer to the above mentioned crisis. This pray is indeed a great gift of God bestowing on His creation, the path to faith which then leads to the union with Him.

The Liturgy of the Hours as a Prayer of Christ and His Church

The Church teaches that the breviary prayer is a public act and a joint act; it is an expression of a new and eternal covenant (through Jesus Christ) between the Creator and His creature². It is in that prayer that the salvific dialogue happens between God and man. This dialogue, for the man redeemed in Christ, is the source of salvation and supernatural grace³ (see KL, no. 83). Liturgy of the Hours is therefore, deeply rooted in the mystery of the Creator, in His eternal plan towards His creatures. The plans realised by His Only Begotten Son in the Holy Spirit are being uncovered by man through his spiritual path marked with the dialogue full of love. In this salvific dialogue the main action of the Christian is to understand the richness of the Liturgy of the Hours. Undertaking such an effort becomes a clear root on the road of salvation and leads to understanding the mystery of Christ, the only Saviour, outside of whom man cannot attain eternal happiness (see Acts 4:12).

It can be seen from above that the worth of the liturgical prayer of the Church cannot be understood without reference to the mystery of Incarnation and Passion of Christ. The Son of God becoming man gifted humanity with the prayer of adoration to the Heavenly Father; through the fact of His Incarnation the prayer glorifying God is perceived by man, this prayer touches the nature of man and his specific life situation. The Eternal Word who became Flesh dwelt among people and thus His prayer of glory, exhaltation and adoration is an intercession to the Father so that He would bless His people⁴.

V. 47, No. 3, 1978, p. 223.

² Congregation for Divine Worship, *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* (2 February 1971), No. 1. Hereafter referred to as IGLH.

³ Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy "Sacrosanctum Concilium"* (3 December 1963), No. 83. Hereinafter referred to as SC.

⁴ S. Cichy, *Teologia Liturgii Godzin*, [in:] W. Świerżawski (ed.), *Liturgia uświęcenia*

In Jesus' teaching about prayer we find a new message addressed to His disciples. It is glorification of the Almighty in the revealed plans of love ("I glorify You, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and you have revealed them to infants" - Mt 11:25). And in the acceptance of the eternal will of God ("Abba, Father, everything is possible for You. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what You will" - Mk 14:36).

In the imparted teachings of the Saviour the truth is stressed for the need to have an obedient attitude towards God's plans in Christian life. Christ showed several times during His life (on earth) that the most important thing was the fulfilling of the Will of the Father. Fulfilling it was so important that in order to accomplish this nothing could stand in its way; every obstacle had to be overcome. In the life of every Christian there is nothing more important than the discovery and accomplishment of the Will of God. It was this Will that Jesus spoke of as being food for Him: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to accomplish His work" (Jn 4:34). Only through this attitude the glorification of the Father can be done. Christ desires to teach this attitude to every Christian and for this teaching to be well understood, He patiently accepts all degradation and accepts the death on the Cross, too.

Jesus accepted everything that constituted the Will of the Father, and what is important, He was able to point out that this is the right road to glorify the Almighty. He, the One who went through everything that was difficult and painful, was revealing the glory of God. It is an unceasing song of thanksgiving which the Only Begotten Son was bringing to the Eternal Father. Such a hymn of thanksgiving and glory, in front of the Face of the Father, should also be brought by His adopted children, the whole of the People of God. It is important then for Christians to find the connection, in the Christological dimension of the Liturgy of the Hours, with the actual stage of the history of salvation, in other words, the time of the Church. Christ continues His work of redemption of the world in the community of God's People and through the mouth of its members brings its prayer to the Father in Heaven. It would be useful at this stage to remember that among other things, it is in this way that Christ continues His priesthood in the Church⁵. It happens not only when a liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals take place, but also during the prayer of the breviary. Through the celebra-

czasu, Kraków 1984, p. 35.

⁵ SC, No. 7.

tion of this prayer "Church fulfils the priestly office of Christ"⁶. That is why everyone who turns to the Father must remain united with Christ, the Lord of all people and the only Intermediary, because only through Him the creatures have access to the Creator. And in this is found the enormity of the Christian prayer; it is a participation in the love of the Only Begotten Son to the Father and in the prayer which the Son was expressing during His earthly life using human words⁷.

It is because of the breviary prayer we have an unceasing priestly prayer of Christ: a dialogue with the Father in order to save the world. Hence, it is an error to state that it is only a prayer of the people. It is primarily the voice of the Saviour; He is the only intermediary of the human prayer. How very important this fact is for the faithful is shown in the practice described below: "Realisation that victorious Christ is the representative of all humanity which through Him and in union with Him has already overcome death, hell and Satan, allows us to present to Him various requests. They primarily concern the full participation in His victory"⁸. Every breviary prayer is a time during which the Christians ask that:

- Jesus who conquered sin and death, would become for them a source of paschal joy;
- through the power of the Saviour that they be given eternal life;
- and in the spirit of the Paschal Mystery they can unceasingly glorify the Eternal Father, the Only begotten Son and the Holy Spirit⁹.

Pius XII spoke clearly about the presence of the Saviour in the prayer:

"Moreover, through His Spirit in us, Christ entreats the Father, «God could not give a greater gift to men ... [Jesus] prays for us, as our Priest; He prays in us as our Head; we pray to Him as our God ... we recognise in Him our voice and His voice in us ... He is prayed to as God, He prays under the appearance of a servant; in heaven He is Creator; here, created though not changed, He assumes a created nature which is to be changed and makes us with Him one complete man, head and body»"¹⁰.

⁶ IGLH, No. 15.

⁷ S. Czerwik, *Liturgia Godzin w życiu Kościoła*, "Studia Theologica Varsaviensa", V. 18, No. 2, 1980, p. 227-228.

⁸ W. Głowa, *Liturgia Godzin w świętym Triduum Paschalnym Męki i Zmartwychwstania Pańskiego*, "Liturgia Sacra", V. 1, No. 1-2, 1995, p. 43.

⁹ *Hymn*, [in:] *Liturgia Godzin. Modlitwa codzienna Ludu Bożego*, V. 2, Poznań 1984, p. 423.

¹⁰ Pius XII, *Encyclical on the Sacred Liturgy "Mediator Dei et Hominum"*

Bringing prayers to the Father in Heaven through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit is a characteristic Christian dialogue. The above statement refers to every Christian prayer and in a special way concerns the Liturgy of the Hours. In the Liturgy of the Hours there is frequent glorification of every Person of the Holy Trinity: "glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to Holy Spirit". The prayer is primarily the work of the Heavenly Father realised through Christ in the Holy Spirit; He helps us in our weakness. "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express (Rom 8:26). It is very important, "no one can say: «Jesus is Lord» except by the Holy Spirit" (1Cor 12:3).

"Glorification and request are not the work of man only, they are not only fulfilling the duty of thanksgiving on the part of the creature, nor is it an excessive talking to God by the praying man, but rather *Opus Dei*, in other words, saving, life giving communication of God with man. Prayer which appears to be the action of man comes from heaven before it returns through man to God, and that is without achieving that which God intended it when sending it to earth (see Is 55:10)"¹¹.

The breviary prayer is a prayer of glorification of God and is therefore of an exceptional worth. The theme of this dialogue is the acknowledgment that God exists. The creature gives Him the necessary glory not because he received a lot of good (in other words giving because it has received), but because He is. God is and therefore let Him be glorified. The glorification unites other forms of prayer and brings them to Him, who is the source and destination; there is only one Almighty who called everything into being and because of Him man exists (see 1 Cor 8:6)¹². In the documents of the Church the truth is frequently stressed that the community of the people of God which in the Liturgy of the Hours glorifies God, is united with the hymn of glory which unceasingly sounds in the heavenly realm. Christians listen to God speaking to His people, they rejoice in the foretaste of the heavenly glory, meditate on the mystery of salvation, glorify unceasingly the Most Holy Trinity, asking for the salvation of the whole world¹³. In this way the faithful not only express their faith, but also deepen it.

(20 November 1947), No. 144.

¹¹ M. Kunzler, *Liturgia Kościoła*, Poznań 1999, p. 520.

¹² *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (25 June 1992), No. 2639. Hereinafter referred to as CCC.

¹³ *Code of Canon Law* (25 January 1983), Can. 1173; CCC, Nos. 1090, 1136.

It is useful to add here that adopting the stance of glorification of God is the formation which the faithful receive through the character of the breviary prayer. The content of the psalms fulfils the glorification of God in His salvific acts which Israel experienced in its history and from which was born the faith of that nation in the Creator of the universe¹⁴. The announcing of the glory of God is also man's expression of God's creative work in creation, of its power and splendour, and His holiness in the work of salvation¹⁵. The glory of God evident in the breviary prayers cannot be separated from the paschal work of Christ. That work is as if the very essence of «being» God who shows His might in order to save. The Almighty One transforms man through His saving might and makes him «in the image» of His Son. Man, then through union with Christ, receives glory of God as a gift and through it participates in the life in God. This participation happens through the glory of God made present and visible in the salvific life of the Church. Jesus imparts the hymn of heaven to humanity, leads it towards meeting with the heavenly Father, teaches to call Him, «Abba - Father». The Saviour wants every man to behold God.

Liturgy of the Hours is the prayer of Jesus and equally of the people; it is a gift which is received from heaven, a hymn of heaven which has power to transform man. The Liturgy of the Hours is characterised by words of glorification, propitiation and intercession. These themes speak of the faithful having the knowledge of how wonderful God is and that He is worthy of all glory. This knowledge enlivens the desire for unceasing and ever more perfect praise. This type of prayer is expressed in psalms, canticles, short readings, hymns and also in the first request of the Our Father prayer¹⁶. As Thomas Merton said, "Contemplation which we are being taught by the psalms is not a simple speculation. Psalms are not disjointed treaties on the nature of God. We learn through them to recognise God not through the analyses of various ideas about His Divinity, but through glorification and loving Him"¹⁷.

Christian prayer remains always in union with Jesus who is the Intermediary between God and people. Because Jesus unites in Himself

¹⁴ *Psalmów księga*, [in:] H. Langkammer (ed.), *Słownik biblijny*, Katowice 1984, p. 131.

¹⁵ K. Romaniuk, *Chwała Boża*, [in:] R. Łukaszyk and others (ed.), *Encyklopedia katolicka*, V. 3, Lublin 1979, p. 431.

¹⁶ W. Głowa, *Liturgia Godzin*, Przemyśl 1991, pp. 179-181, 195.

¹⁷ Quote from S. Potocki, *Psalmny modlitwą Ludu Bożego Starego i Nowego Przymierza*, [in:] W. Świerżawski (ed.), *Liturgia uświęcenia czasu*, Kraków 1984, p. 140.

the whole humanity an internal bond is formed between His prayer and that of the whole human family. This bond becomes particularly significant for the faithful who through baptism have become members of Christ's Church. Every one of them has received the great riches of the Son, in other words the gift of the Holy Spirit, the truth and the life as well as participation in the Divine Sonship of Christ revealed in his prayer¹⁸. The only Intermediary to the Father is Jesus Christ. It is through His merit that the prayers of the saints and men have access to the Almighty. Because of that the prayers of man must unite with the prayers of Jesus (see Jn 14:13). Divine Saviour through the Paschal Mystery obtained for man the grace to receive everything he asks for in the name of Jesus. We should trust in the merits of Christ. The community of the Church does it saying: "Through Christ, our Lord." To ask in the name of Christ means to ask for that which He desires for His people¹⁹.

In the current presentation of the meaning of the Liturgy of the Hours in the life of the People of God, one cannot miss out the fact that in the renewed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council it is stressed that the breviary prayer is the prayer of all the Christians and not only sacerdotal and consecrated souls. And from this statement the truth suffices that the breviary, regardless of where and when, and by whom it is said, always remains the prayer of all the members of the Church²⁰. When the faithful say this prayer according to the written form, doing this most wonderful song of glory in a proper way, we then truly have a call of the Bride to the Bridegroom. It is a prayer in which Christ together with the Mystical Body turns to the Father²¹.

Hence, the breviary prayer is not only a personal duty of the priest, but also of the whole Church. In consequence, it has a community character, and even said individually it does not stop being a community prayer. This celebration in its nature is a community prayer; saying it privately is as if a substitute for its communal character. The truth should always be stressed that although there is a private prayer, speaking of a private *Officium* is a misunderstanding. This can be explained on the basis that the fundamental duty of the community prayer in the

¹⁸ IGLH, Nos. 6, 7.

¹⁹ A.J. Sobczyk, *Modlitwa jako środek do zbawienia w nauczaniu sługi Bożego Jeana Berthiera (1840-1908) założyciela Zgromadzenia Misjonarzy Świętej Rodziny*, [in:] J. Misiurek and others (ed.), *Homo orans. Modlitwa dziękczynna*, Lublin 2005, p. 198.

²⁰ K. Konecki, *Eklezjalny walor Liturgii Godzin*, "Teologia i człowiek", No. 7-8, 2006, p. 124-125.

²¹ SC, No. 84.

form of Liturgy of the Hours is the fact that this prayer belongs to the community of the Church and it is not a prerequisite to have received the holy orders in order to say it. Receiving the priestly orders or being consecrated to the religious life strengthens the duty to pray²². Regardless then of what life God calls His adopted children, each one should follow the right calling on the road of faith in the Holy Trinity.

Liturgy of the Hours, in a similar way to other liturgical acts, is not a private act, but the act of the whole of the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. It makes this community visible and has influence over it²³. It is the most visible and it is therefore strongly advised that this prayer is said by the local Church together with its bishop assisted by priests and altar servers. One can then understand (sadly, ever more frequently forgotten these days!) why it is recommended that where it is possible, the main canonical hours (Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer) should be said in a church by other communities of the faithful, most especially parish-based. The parishes are communities of the diocese organised locally and led by shepherds standing in for the bishop.

The practice of daily dialogue of the People of God with the Almighty Father, which takes place in a community, helps the faithful to respond to the call of Christ to an unceasing and persevering prayer, to being ready and expecting His second coming. All the people practising the Liturgy of the Hours are fulfilling, in our days, the duty of the Church imposed on it and participate at the same time in the highest honour of the Bride of Christ by giving God the glory due to Him; they stand before the throne of God in the name of all the Christians²⁴. This truth is ever more evident the greater the number of the faithful saying the prayer. In this way the faithful defend themselves against the temptation of abandoning their faith and intercede this grace for all the redeemed.

The great value of the Liturgy of the Hours for the Church community can be seen through the example of priests who are obliged to daily observance of the prayers in their totality and (if it is feasible) at the right time of day. Forgoing part of the *Officium Divinum* is only justified because of a serious reason; leaving it out without such an important reason burdens the conscience of a priest and that is why it is not allowable without a valid reason²⁵. It should be stressed that the

²² *Liturgia Godzin*, [in:] B. Nadolski (ed.), *Leksykon liturgii*, Poznań 2006, p. 783.

²³ IGLH, Nos. 20, 21.

²⁴ SC, No. 85.

²⁵ Paul VI, *Apostolic Constitution Promulgating the Divine Office as Revised in Accordance with the Decree of the Second Vatican Council "Laudis Canticum"*

daily work of shepherding which the priests undertake is made easier because of the Liturgy of the Hours (see Mt 11:30); this prayer brings supernatural graces for the personal life and service to the Church. The foundation for the priestly or consecrated souls' duty for the daily prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours is:

- firstly, common calling of all the People of God in consequence of the received sacraments of baptism and confirmation;
- secondly, sacrament of holy orders which even closer unites the Priest with Jesus Christ;
- finally, an explicit call of the Church to say this prayer.

It can therefore be said that saying the Liturgy of the Hours is fulfilling the service of the Good Shepherd who prays for his sheep so that they would have life and be gathered into one (see Jn 10:11). "The practice of love remains always in an inseparable union with prayer and that ensures dwelling in God. Prayer is listening to God, accepting His Will, is the source of strength to change the world. It is the power of faith allowing speech with God in the name of all and to speak to everyone in His name. God who is Love, desires for each priest as a man of God, to be a man of love"²⁶.

The Liturgy of the Hours as a Path of Sanctification of Time and Man

Liturgy of the Hours is a prayer which helps Christians to live their daily life in union with God and to offer Him every moment of that life. The worth of that moment is properly understood when the faithful, knowing the hours of the day through prayer are discovering anew that all of their temporary life belongs to the Creator. In this way all of them can experience the truth about the Saviour, about the One, who as the liturgy says, is: "Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, to Him belongs time and eternity, to Him be glory and power for all ages"²⁷.

The Catechism of the Church teaches about *Divine Office* that it is a faithful response to the teachings of the apostles, to "pray unceasingly" (see 1Thes 5:17; Eph 6:18), and is so constructed "that all the

(1 November 1970), No. 8.

²⁶ P. Maciaszek, *Liturgia Godzin w życiu duchowym kapłana*, [in:] H.J. Sobeczko (ed.), "Mirabile Laudis Canticum". *Liturgia Godzin: Dzieje i teologia*, Opole 2008, p. 210.

²⁷ *Wigilia Paschalna w Wielką Noc*, [in:] *Mszal Rzymski dla diecezji polskich*, Poznań 1986, p. 152.

periods of day and night can be sanctified by glorifying God²⁸. Understanding this aim becomes easier by the truth that God reveals Himself "through history of sanctity: the occurrences, on the basis of which this history is woven, are the works done by God here on earth. That is why time when these happenings were taking place, through itself, has a sacred worth: not because it is a repetition of previous times when God created the world once and for all, but because it brings something new as particular stages of God's plans are moving and of which each one has a very particular meaning. (...) It is entirely the Will of God which directs separate parts of time to one, mysterious aim which when it will achieve its time, will reach its termination and will be found to be containing its fullness"²⁹.

The Almighty God constantly directs the lives of men leading them to the fullness of happiness. He does it not only during the prayer but also in every other life experience. Various life experiences happening at every moment of the day or night consist of the time of meeting with the Almighty, in other words it has an opportunity to discern and accept His Will. The whole time and everything that man does in it happens in front of God and for Him, and only that understanding of daily life allows us to fulfil the direction given by St. Peter: that God would be glorified in everything (see 1P 4:11). Here we have the authentic glorification of God in everything that belongs to the time of human life. It concerns the need to experience everyday life as means of giving witness to the faith in the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Morning Prayer should be placed first in the practice of marking time with a dialogue with God and the Evening Prayer constitutes of, as if hinges, in the Liturgy of the Hours (*sund veluti cardo*). These two prayers are based on the customs of the Jewish people and (most of all) on the example of Jesus and the Apostles. The places where joint prayers were said were: Passover, Temple in Jerusalem and private houses. Apostolic Constitution (*Constitutiones Apostolarum from c. the 4th century*) demanded that bishops would encourage the faithful to joint saying of the prayers of psalms in the morning and evening, so that their lack would not be hurting the Church³⁰.

The Morning Prayer sanctifies the beginning of the day³¹. St. Basil the Great wrote about it: "The Morning Prayer is there so that God

²⁸ SC, No. 103.

²⁹ M. Join-Lambert, P. Grelot, *Czas*, [in:] X. Léon-Dufour (ed.), *Słownik Teologii Biblijnej*, Poznań-Warszawa 1985, p. 177.

³⁰ W. Głowa, *Modlitwa liturgiczna. Liturgia Godzin*, Przemyśl 1999, p. 31.

³¹ IGLH, No. 348.

can sanctify the first movement of our thoughts and soul and so that we would not undertake anything else earlier before we begin joyful thinking of God, as it is written, «I remembered of God and became joyful», and so that we would not start working without first doing that which is said: «I say this prayer to You, Yahweh, for at daybreak You listen to my voice; and at dawn I hold myself in readiness for You, I watch for You» (see Ps 5:4-5)³². It is worth remembering that even in the pagan world the breaking sun was greeted at dawn; it was done standing and facing east. Christians, for whom the sun was a symbol of Christ, adored God realising the truth about the Light of the World. Hence, a Christian praying in the morning gives witness that he is the one who has understood that the Rising Sun which comes to us from above is the Resurrected Jesus.

The content of The Morning Prayer has the teaching about the Holy Trinity. The teaching about the Heavenly Father, Only Begotten Son and the Holy Spirit who explains and makes us realise the need to offer every moment of the day to God, the One who continues the salvation of the world, directs all time to its fulfilment. There is a call to glorification of the Heavenly Father who is good and all powerful, just and holy, merciful and faithful. The Person of Jesus Christ is shown in union with the Father, and the Son of God is to receive the same glory and adoration. The Holy Spirit is shown as a giver of consolation, of Goodness, Fire, Light of «the heart of man», Father of the poor, the Giver of respite, giving rest in the tiredness and toil, providing coolness in the heat, Sweet Guest of souls, Gift and Giver of holiness and the Teacher of the Truth.

The soul's need to offer God every moment of the day is satisfied in the Evening Prayer. In that Prayer the Church thanks God, "for all that was given us that day and for the good which was done through us"³³. This is a time of adoration and glorification of God's majesty for everything that God did for man (and constantly does), and particularly for the work of Salvation. The Prayer consists of a rich array of various requests concerning temporary and eternal life. People saying the Evening Prayer do not want to waste the time given them on earth but rather experience it as a pilgrimage to heaven. Through the union in the strength of faith in God on this earth we obtain eternal happiness with Him. These prayers are therefore, "an expression of the Church's faith and they deepen that faith. The thread of Christian

³² Ibidem, No. 38.

³³ Ibidem, No. 39; M. Tatar, *Uświęcający rytm czasu wyznaczony Liturgią Godzin*, "Studia Diecezji Radomskiej", No. 6, 2004, p. 424.

hope surfaces in them. They are an expression of love for God and the neighbour. They encourage us to follow life in accordance with the Will of God. And saying them is also an expression of giving God the gift of our time³⁴.

All the canonical hours (Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Readings, Prayer during the Day, Night Prayer) show the harmony between all the efforts of man and the gifts of God's grace. Their content shows up daily light of the Lord's Presence who constantly endeavours to save every man. The dialogue between the Creator and the creature is the expression of the mystery of God's always present salvific love found in the Church and the world. It is also a time to accept that love and respond to it. In the deepening spiritual life there is a meeting with the Word of God through the call to faithfulness to the Almighty, to giving Him ever greater glory. Independent of the faithfuls' stage of their spiritual life every one of them can find in this prayer the path to union with God³⁵.

For the faithful praying the Liturgy of the Hours, the Liturgy becomes the road of entry into the «fullness of time». This is connected with «sanctification of time»: «between heaven and earth, a certain type of exchange happens thanks to which God's actions are met with the thanksgiving song of the faithful. Liturgy unites with it two sanctuaries: earthly temple and heavenly one, God and man, time and eternity³⁶.

Pointing to the sanctifying systematic prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, it should be stressed that this enlivens the spirit of conversion and penance and helps to forgive sins³⁷. And through this allows everyone who undertakes a dialogue with God to follow the path to sanctity. Holiness then is «a renewed discovery of the Church as «mystery», in other words as people «united with the union of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit», it is belonging to the One who in the deepest way is Holy, «thrice Holy» (see Is 6:3)³⁸. As John Paul II adds, the foundation of union with the Holy Trinity is ever more perfect say-

³⁴ S. Cichy, *Teologia Liturgii Godzin*, [in:] W. Świerzawski (ed.), *Liturgia uświęcenia ...*, op. cit., p. 34.

³⁵ K. Małys, *W rytmie liturgii*, "Pastores", V. 3, No. 2, 1999, p. 44-46.

³⁶ Jan Paweł II, *Jutrznia. Poranna modlitwa Kościoła. Czwarty tydzień*, Warszawa 2004, p. 16.

³⁷ CCC, No. 1437.

³⁸ John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter at the Close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 "Novo Millennio Ineunte"* (6 January 2001), No. 30. The Pope referring to *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen Gentium"* (No. 5), reminds us of the calling to holiness for all have received baptism.

ing of the prayers; in his teachings he points towards the Morning and Evening Prayers as the secret of the authentic Christian life which is characterised by bravery. The source of that bravery is the contemplation of the Face of the Heavenly Father (thanks to the Holy Spirit and Christ)³⁹.

Those praying the Liturgy of the Hours experience the truth about the Church, the Church which lives; it is a community where everyone can develop according to the measure of God's adopted children, children of the Heavenly Father. In this way the Christian comes to know the truth about Christ who has remained with His people and they proclaim their faith in Him. Being the Head of the Mystical Body, He not only offered Himself to His disciples, but He unceasingly teaches them to draw from His Offering the spiritual power of love. That is why He has remained with His community «through the means» of the liturgy. It would be useful to note at this point that the condition of correct saying of the liturgy is the realisation that its purpose is not only to express the truth of faith and giving testimony of the religious attitude, but most of all it is an unceasing development of spiritual life (and according to the order which was chosen by Christ). The purpose of the saying of the Liturgy of the Hours is to help the faithful to open up to life in God, so that in ever deeper degree it forms a part of man's life⁴⁰. This life in God is particularly visible when the breviary prayer helps the Christians to even deeper experience of the Holy Mass. In this way everyone participating in the Eucharist can obtain holiness by experiencing everyday life according to the plans of God – His commandments.

Liturgy of the Hours is truly the best means to prepare for the celebration of the Eucharist. There is a close correlation between the celebration of the Eucharist and saying the canonical liturgy of the Hours; as can be seen on the example of priests, "breviary prayer will stand as a guard for the Eucharist. The priest finds the teachings of the prophets and saints in the breviary and also teachings of Jesus Christ how to live in order to worthily offer the Eucharist"⁴¹. Liturgy of the Hours is a perfect preparation for the offering of the Holy Mass and its fulfilment. The breviary is a personal prayer, meditation, reading of the Holy Bible, the spirit of asceticism and life offering, good deeds,

³⁹ Z. Wit, *Liturgia Godzin moją modlitwą*, "Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne", V. 53, No. 8, 2006, p. 53-54.

⁴⁰ J. Garcia, *Modlić się psalmami*, "Pastores", V. 3, No. 2, 1999, p. 50.

⁴¹ T. Korpusiński, *Obowiązek brewiarza*, "Ateneum Kapłańskie", V. 75, No. 3, 1983, p. 397.

in other words, everything that provides for the best preparation for the celebration of the Most Holy Sacrifice. It is then that the enlivening of faith, hope, love, piety, and the spirit of sacrifice happens⁴². The faithful preparing for the celebration of the Holy Mass are not only open to receive the Word of God, but also to offer their own lives on the altar. Through this they express the desire and readiness to undergo the daily test of even higher holiness and perfection.

In the theme of the importance of the Liturgy of the Hours in the life of the Church, one cannot ignore the fact that it is a public prayer of this community and at the same time the prayer which formulates the attitude to faith and forms the Christian piety. In this dialogue with the Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit Christ acts and thus makes the salvation real among Christians and the experience of God's action in the community of the People of God⁴³.

“Liturgy leads people on the path beyond everyday life and into the depth of human person who in the dialogue with God frees himself from the dangerous gravitation towards nothingness and evil, opening himself up to eternity and meeting with the Triune: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This personal encounter with God presupposes a certain Christian maturity. It is not the same as the minimum of the religious knowledge and some prayer or sacramental practices, but rather leads to the complete adherence to the Lord. It is then a process of specific Christian formation through the liturgy which would lead to the personal acceptance of the person of Christ as a master of one's life and the highest good. The daily consequence of this process is the belief in the Word of the Lord and following Him with faith, hope and love”⁴⁴.

The Church truly tries to make the breviary a personal prayer book for Christians. Then each one, through the liturgical celebration, will perfect his faith, will give glory to God “in Spirit and in Truth” (Jn 4:23). The prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours encompasses all people and contributes to the salvation of the world. If in the words of Christ “without Me you cannot do anything” (Jn 15:5) is found the direction

⁴² IGLH, No. 12.

⁴³ Z. Narecki, *Odnowiona Liturgia Godzin w służbie ewangelizacji parafialnej*, “Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny”, V. 40, No. 5, 1987, p. 423.

⁴⁴ J.J. Kopeć, *Rola liturgii w budowaniu wspólnoty kościelnej. Sprawozdanie z grup dyskusyjnych sympozjum naukowego: Parafie wczoraj – dziś – jutro*, “Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne”, V. 32, No. 6, 1985, p. 100.

for man to ask for help in everything he does, then certainly it should also be in his persistent and pious call for sanctity. It is demanded from the faithful who pray this way that they are also spiritually engaged and each one has an opportunity to present his intentions every day. It will then be true the assurance that: "in that way we will day by day grow as a temple of God in the Spirit according to the full measure of maturity in Christ, at the same time as we are growing in the strength of proclaiming Christ to everyone who is outside"⁴⁵.

Conclusion

Thanks to the praying of the Liturgy of the Hours that Christians enliven their faith by:

- adoration of the majesty of God. This prayer awakens trust in the efficacy of grace and God's calling, and certainty that God is truly the One who knows how to direct men's lives regardless how difficult or weak is our search;
- thanksgiving given to God because He came on earth in His Word and let Himself be known as incarnate love, allows us to have hope for the fulfilment of His plans in us;
- asking God that His plans of salvation be realised in all the People of God;
- craving for the kingdom of God and its final realication (shape).

In this way all who pray the Liturgy of the Hours and belong to the community of the Church can experience more easily this earthly life as a way of walking the path of sanctity, as the time of grace and salvation. This prayer brings about the development of the spiritual life in a Christian; he sees his aim and sense of his life, rejoices in an even deeper union with God.

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PAWEŁ MACIASZEK

Liturgia Godzin w życiu Kościoła

Streszczenie

Artykuł uzasadnia prawdę, że Liturgia Godzin należy do najważniejszych celebracji Kościoła. Jest to modlitwa Chrystusa i Jego ludu; od Syna Bożego płynie bowiem, wyrażona ludzkimi słowami,

⁴⁵ S. Koperek, *Udział świeckich w Liturgii Godzin*, [in:] W. Świerzawski (ed.), *Liturgia uświęcenia...*, op. cit., p. 207.

chwała Boża. W ten sposób dokonuje się uświęcenie człowieka oraz przeżywanego przez niego czasu. Dla wiernych jest to także źródło pobożności i droga ożywiania modlitwy osobistej.

Ci, którzy modlą się zawartymi w brewiarzu słowami, kontynuują zbawczy dialog Syna Bożego z Ojcem Niebieskim i, przez jednoczenie się Chrystusem – Pośrednikiem, mają dostęp do Ojca, który jest w niebie. Ten prowadzony we wszystkich porach dnia dialog pomaga stworzeniom ufnie otwierać się na Stwórcę; przypominając sobie o tym, że do Niego należy wszelki czas – dostrzegają Jego nieustanną obecność i tak przeżywają każdą chwilę życia, by doskonalić się w świętości.

Temat wartości Liturgii Godzin w życiu Kościoła jest tym bardziej potrzebny współcześnie żyjącym chrześcijanom, im bardziej prawdziwa w ich codziennym życiu staje się opinia o kryzysie, jaki dotyka brewiarz. Coraz częściej powtarzane są zdania o nierozumieniu treści tej modlitwy, jej zbyt trudnej formie czy niedostosowaniu do obecnego stylu życia. Kościół, zatroskany o zbawienie człowieka, w swoim nauczaniu wiele miejsca poświęca *Officium Divinum*, aby wierni rozwijali swoje życie duchowe, widzieli sens i realizowali cel swojego życia, cieszyli się coraz większym zjednoczeniem z Bogiem. W ten sposób skutecznie przeciwstawiać się będą panującej sekularyzacji.

Słowa kluczowe: Liturgia Godzin, kościół katolicki, modlitwa, uświęcenie.

PAWEŁ MACIASZEK

The Liturgy of the Hours in the Life of the Church

Abstract

The present article justifies the truth that the Liturgy of the Hours is one of the most important Church's celebrations. This is the prayer of Christ and His people; it is the God's Son from whom, expressed in human words, the God's grace follows. Thus, the sanctification of man and the time experienced by him takes place. For the faithful it is also a source of piety and the way to rouse the personal prayer.

Those who pray with the words contained in the breviary, continue the redeeming dialogue of the God's Son with the Heavenly Father and, by unifying with Christ the Mediator – have access to the Father who is in Heaven. This conducted in every period of the day dialogue helps the creatures to trustingly open to the Creator; by remembering that the whole time belongs to Him, they notice His constant

presence and they live through every moment of life in such a way – to perfect their own holiness.

The topic of the value of the Liturgy of the Hours in the life of the Church is the more necessary to the contemporary Christians, the truer the opinion of the crisis concerning the breviary becomes in their everyday life. More and more often the statements are repeated about the misunderstanding of the prayer's content, its too difficult a form and un-adaptation to the contemporary style of living. The Church, worried about man's salvation, devotes much space to the *Officium Divinum* in its teachings, so that the faithful could develop their spiritual life, see the sense and implement the aim of their lives, enjoy the greater and greater union with God. Thus, they will effectively oppose to the prevailing secularisation.

Key words: Liturgy of the Hours, Catholic Church, prayer, sanctification.