

# Alter Christus

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

## On the Breviary

By Fr. Jose Fortea

### Introduction

Humans are weak, and over time, a certain routine can easily creep into the praying of the Breviary. This little work arises from the desire to help priests in the performance of that most noble part of their priestly duties, which is to chant the Psalms in praise of God. It is a humble, brief booklet, a short talk put into writing, without pretensions. A few years earlier, I had written another work for the priest to prepare himself daily for the Holy Mass. That book, titled

*The bubbling living waters*, had such a positive effect on me in celebrating the holy sacrifice with greater devotion that the idea of something similar for the praying of the Breviary soon came to me. Sometimes a small spiritual consideration is enough to take up the Breviary again with new enthusiasm, with new strength. We all need to polish the gold of our praise anew. Utmost respect for the Sacred Scripture must make us attentive to the praying of the Psalms: attentive to listening to God. In the praying of the Breviary, this respect

is transformed into adoration toward the one who wrote these Psalms and sacred texts. What at other moments of the day is only faith in us, in the praying of the Psalms is transformed into adoration. Without further ado, I give way to these reflections that compose

this humble collection of thoughts.

## Various Reflections

The following reflections on the praying of the Breviary are best read little by little, rather than all at once.

### Author: Fr. Jose Fortea

José Antonio Fortea is a Catholic priest and theologian specializing in matters regarding angels, demons, hell, diabolical possession, and exorcism. He has been and continues to be the most famous exorcist in Spain.

Father Fortea was born in Barbastro (Huesca, Spain) on October 11, 1968. He studied for his Licentiate in Theology, specializing in Church History, at the Faculty of Theology of Comillas. In 1998, he defended his licentiate thesis *Exorcism in the Present Age*, directed by the secretary of the Commission for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Spanish Episcopal Conference. Subsequently, in the church where he was parish priest, he began to attend to cases related to demonic problems. And he continued doing so until he moved to Rome to pursue his Doctorate in Theology. Father Fortea in 2005 In 2015, he obtained his doctorate at the Ateneo Regina Apostolorum in Rome with the thesis *Theological Problems of the Practice of Exorcism*.

He belongs to the presbytery of the Diocese of Alcalá de Henares (Spain). Although he does not currently practice as an exorcist, but rather dedicates himself to writing books, he is the most visible face of this practice in Spain. He has written various titles on the subject of the devil, but his work encompasses other fields of Theology. His books have been published in ten languages and he dedicates part of his time to giving conferences.



The ideal would be to read one reflection before the praying of each canonical hour. Ultimately, these brief pages, for better or worse, are only a means to remind ourselves of the convenience of preparing for the Psalmody. Much more fruit would be drawn from the praying of the Breviary if one dedicated half a minute to preparing for that prayer. That half a minute would change the entire canonical hour. It will also be an excellent custom to keep about ten seconds of silence at the end, to briefly meditate before returning to ordinary work.

During Mass, how many times would I like to prolong the Liturgy of the Word: to read more extensively, to meditate longer. In the Liturgy of the Hours, you can do this. A beautiful way to consider the praying of the Breviary is as a means by which we are granted the opportunity to spend more time meditating on

the Word, and furthermore, spread throughout the day. And the Liturgy of the Hours is like a type of lectio. But the liturgy is not only a lectio; it is reading and praise at the same time.

**A beautiful way to consider the praying of the Breviary is as a means by which we are granted the opportunity to spend more time meditating on the Word, and furthermore, spread throughout the day.**

**The Word saves. It saves because Scripture is a bearer of salvation. It is true that what saves is grace. But Scripture leads to grace.**

attention and reverence.

What do I have to do during the canonical hour? The simplest action: listen, place myself in a posture of listening, open my being to the Word. All tension must also be discarded. The act of listening is not performed better

by becoming tense. We must learn to rest by praying, and to pray by resting. God as Teacher during that listening. We priests are teachers of the faithful people. In every hour, He is the Teacher. The viaticum was the food for the journey. We need the viaticum of the Word, which proceeds from His mouth, written by His hand. May the Word penetrate you. May the Divine Voice settle upon your soul.

The Word is like a seven-branched candelabrum that shines. Christ is at the center, surrounded by three branches representing all the prophets who wrote the books of the Old Testament, and by three others representing the apostles who wrote the books of the New. Someone might ask why there is no reading of a fragment of the Gospel in the Breviary. This is because the Gospel, as if it were a center, is read in the Holy Mass, which is the culminating point of the liturgy. The rest of the hours are the echoes of the Mass, just as the other sacred readings are echoes with respect to the Holy Gospel. In any case, both the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat* or the

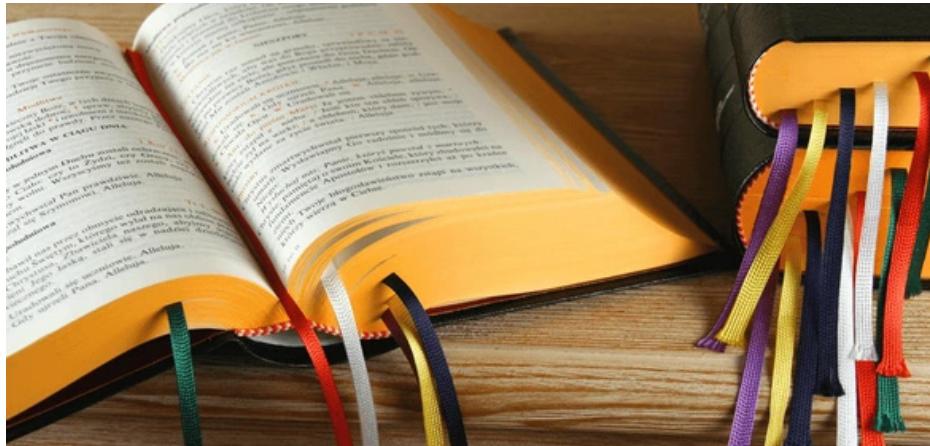
*Nunc dimittis* are Gospel canticles, and in that sense, the Gospel is present in the Liturgy of the Hours. But to make clear that centrality of the Mass, around which the canonical hours revolve, the teachings of Jesus are read only in the Eucharist. This singularity of the Mass is reinforced by the fact that in the hours, it is Zechariah, St. Mary, and Simeon who proclaim the praises of the Lord. That is, Jesus

Christ does not speak directly; we do not read parts in which Jesus speaks, for the reason indicated above.

Praying the Divine Office is part of your priestly work. Pray it:

- With preparation
- With pause
- With dignity
- With concentration
- With a dignified posture

Failing to pray the Breviary due to work is nonsense, because the canonical praying of the hours is part of the priest's work. Every priest must carry out this minimum of worshipful work. And I insist and emphasize the word "work". Our work as priests consists



in dedicating some time to prayer and others to pastoral tasks. If we dedicated ourselves only to pastoral work, we would not be doing our job well. Divine worship, the praise of God, is part of the daily tasks that are proper to us; it is not a devotion, something I do because I want to. I committed myself to the Liturgy of the Hours upon being ordained as a deacon.

It is appropriate that the divine liturgy be prayed at fixed times and, of course, distributed throughout the day to consecrate the entire day to God. Some may feel tempted to think that the Breviary interrupts their work. But it must be understood that the Liturgy of the Hours is designed to interrupt work, because its mission is for us to take a break and raise our mind and heart to God. If a priest concentrated the praying of all the canonical hours

in just two moments of the day, that would mean not having understood its meaning. I knew a presbyter who prayed the entire office upon waking up in the morning.

Stopping work for a few minutes to offer this sacrifice of praise is a daily manifestation that the first thing is to glorify the Creator. Priorities must be clear. Nor is it a waste of time to dedicate half a minute before each canonical hour to prepare the soul to begin chanting that divine canticle. Psalmody means joining the choirs of angels in their tribute of glory to the Trinity. The angels accompany us in the prayer if we ask them to.

The mind and body must unite with the will in this office. The body also prays, either by sitting decorously, or kneeling, slowly making the sign of the cross, respecting the sacred silences,

participating in this veneration of the name of God through the divine texts. The mind must be totally concentrated on this task. Every *Glory to the Father* represents a glorification of the Most Holy Trinity. Every *Glory to the Father* is an answer of the soul to what was said in the psalm. From every verse that strikes us or in which the understanding of a divine truth is opened to us, it is advisable

to make a small note to meditate on it more often, for nothing that the Lord tells us should be forgotten, but rather His graces should be ruminated on.

Praying the canonical parts at their appointed hours means a consecration of the day; the day is sanctified. We sanctify the day by sanctifying the name of God. When one is traveling, it is preferable to pray the office sitting in a car or in a noisy square, than (as some do) to pray it all together at the beginning of the day in order to, as they say, "get it over with".

The question is not whether you enjoy the Breviary. The question is whether

you perform the mystery of sacred praise well. Even in the greatest dryness, the psalmody is true prayer. The pleasure may be completely absent, and it does not have less fruit because of it. If you want the Word to resonate in your soul, you must first create silence within the walls of your spirit. It is a communication of spirit to Spirit. The body prays, the mind prays, the spirit

prays. The act of liturgical praise will be according to the preparation. In the presence of the angels and with the angels.

## The Parts of Each Hour

**O GOD, COME TO MY ASSISTANCE** One begins by asking for help to pray. Without the help of the grace that God sends, our mind would become distracted, our thoughts would scatter. Furthermore, we mark ourselves with the holy cross of Christ when making that petition, because, in truth, we need God's assistance to pray.

For let us remember what St. Paul teaches us: "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). That is, without the help that comes from the Third Person, we could utter those words (Jesus is Lord) in a merely material way, but not as an act of faith. Similarly, without the help of that Holy Breath that comes from the mouth of the Father, the praying of the Breviary would be a mere physical pronunciation of words without any interior act in our soul.

We do not only praise God by carrying our daily crosses, it is true. But remember that

your union with the passion of Christ gives much more value to your praise. Just as your vital sacrifice is, so will your glorification in the liturgy be. The Cross is what gives life to life. The Cross of Christ vivifies and fills the liturgy.

**GLORY TO THE FATHER** After asking for help to begin praying, the very first thing, the absolutely first thing, is to honor the Most Holy Trinity. The purpose of all these prayers is to glorify God.

**ALLELUIA** That Alleluia at the

beginning of the prayer is a brief, very brief remembrance of the Resurrection of Christ.

**HYMN** Then comes the glorification through human words. In the Breviary, not everything is the Word of God; there are also parts that are completely human. The hymn is like incense of glorification that is scattered around the altar of adoration. This altar is in the center of the soul.

**Praying the canonical parts at their appointed hours means a consecration of the day; the day is sanctified. We sanctify the day by sanctifying the name of God.**

Word. It is a book that God gives us for prayer.

**THE CANTICLE**, both from the Old and New Testaments, is like another psalm. Even though they do not belong to the book of psalms, each canticle was written by God so that we could pray with it.

The Church, with great wisdom, has arranged that, in the two main canonical hours, two canticles be added to the psalms to enrich Lauds and Vespers with more scriptural passages. The will

of the Church, therefore, is to enrich, to add more passages from the Scriptures.

The psalms are the thought of Christ. When the psalms speak of enemies, I always think of my only enemies: the world, the devil, and the flesh. The psalms do not speak of past events; they speak to you right now. They are God's message for now. They are the answer to your questions.

**ANTIPHONS** The antiphons are like a response to the psalm. They are conceived as an ejaculation (short, fervent prayer). They are carefully chosen verses that lend themselves to being repeated as ejaculations during the day. In any case, even if they are not used as ejaculations

to nourish the presence of God during the day, they are a response of the soul at the end of the psalm prayer.

The antiphons also have a certain character of recapitulation regarding the psalm that is about to be prayed or has already been prayed. That is why they

are placed at the beginning and the end of it, as if they were embracing it. It is as if the antiphon makes us focus on an essential idea before starting and upon finishing.

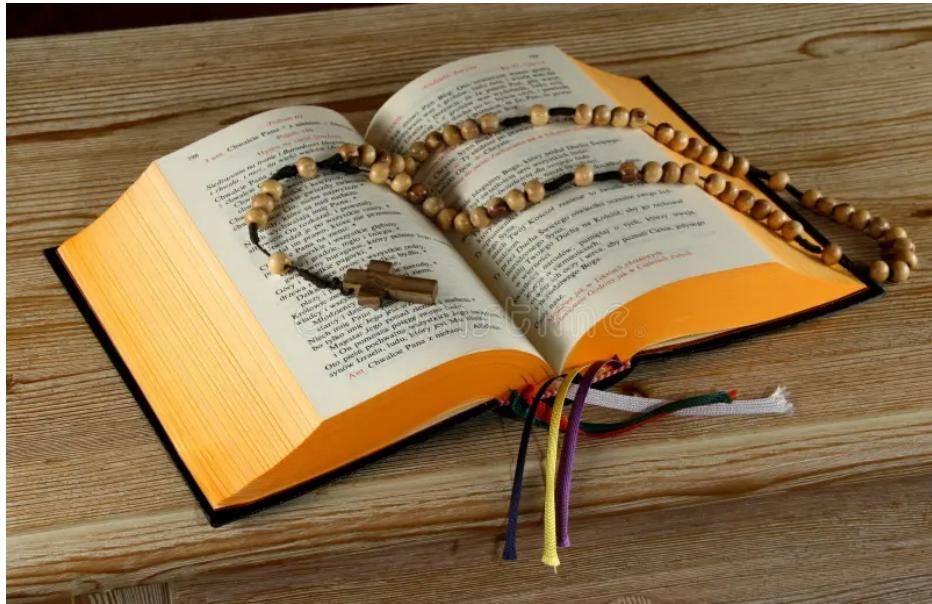
***It must be understood that the Liturgy of the Hours is designed to interrupt work, because its mission is for us to take a break and raise our mind and heart to God. Stopping work for a few minutes to offer this sacrifice of praise is a daily manifestation that the first thing is to glorify the Creator. Priorities must be clear.***

**SHORT READING** So that the listening to the rest of the Scriptures might be joined to the psalm prayer, a small biblical reading was added from very ancient times. The reading leads to meditation, which is why it is indicated that a moment of silence be observed after this reading. It is true that the pause for prayer can be done now or after the praying of each psalm. Remember that this silence is also prayer.

**RESPONSORIUM** It

is a response to the reading, a choral response: one reads the first part, the community responds by repeating that antiphon. The responsum is like a harmonious combination of antiphons.

**GOSPEL CANTICLE** Finally, we arrive at that moment of the prayer where all the



texts of the Scripture flow into a text from the Gospel. A Zechariah and a Mary preach to us every day. Every day we listen to that priest of the Temple who represents the Old Testament, and to Mary who represents the New. If the essential body of Lauds and Vespers are the psalms and the canticle that accompanies them, the center of those hours is the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*. It is as if the psalms and the short reading culminated in these two praises. It is like an ascent until reaching the words of the Gospel.

**INTERCESSIONS** The Church, concerned about the needs of our neighbor, reminds us that we should not worry only about our own souls, but that we

must also pray for our brothers and sisters. In this moment, we exercise intercession for all.

**FINAL PRAYER** The praise is transformed into a solemn prayer addressed to the Father. The entire hour is like an ascent to a mountain to pray. This prayer is the culmination, the highest point. It means reaching the summit where, after praising Him, we finally address Him solemnly.

In the minor hours, *Oremus* (*Let us pray*) is said, and a moment of pause is left, as in Lauds. Let us become conscious in that small moment of silence that we are going to address God; let us become conscious of His greatness and our smallness.

This moment of the final prayer is so important, culminating everything, that *Oremus* is said beforehand so that we may prepare ourselves. You were praying, and yet the same prayer asks you to become conscious that you are praying.

For that, I insist, the moment of silence required by the rubric must be respected. In that moment of silence, become conscious that this is the moment when you are going to reach the peak of the entire liturgical act you have performed.

In that moment of silence, you can imagine that you are going to speak directly before the Throne of the Most High as the priest that you are. Or, you can simply make silence within your soul, the silence of the spiritual powers (cogitative, imagination, memory), so that when you recite the prayer, it resonates powerfully within the bare walls of your soul.

Although *Oremus* is not said in Lauds and Vespers, the reminder of that invitation in the minor hours can serve to make that last prayer with greater preparation. Even in Lauds and Vespers, let us prepare for that moment in which the priest solemnly addresses the Divinity.

**MAY THE LORD BLESS US** The Mass ends

with a petition for the Lord to bless us. We need His blessing, both spiritually and physically, in all our affairs of life. We began with the sign of the cross and we end by marking ourselves again with that cross. We began by asking for His help to pray; we end by asking for His help to continue with the day.

The hour ends with a blessing *requested* or *imparted*. It is *imparted* if a cleric who blesses those who have praised with him presides over Lauds or Vespers. It is *requested* if one asks God to bless him. In the final blessing, whether requested or imparted, you will receive as much as is your faith that you are receiving His blessing.

## The Different Canonical Hours

We can never insist enough on the importance of praying the office at its appointed hours, of offering the incense of our praise at its natural hours. People who lived outdoors, in small towns that did not prevent them from seeing the sky in all its splendor and had little artificial light, naturally felt that nature itself invited them to recollect themselves in prayer at dawn and at dusk. These are two moments that nature itself marks as especially conducive to recollection in prayer if one contemplates the spectacle

of the sun emerging or hiding.

To this, souls who love God added remembering Him in the middle of the day and before immersing themselves in nocturnal rest. With that, we already have the hours of the Breviary. These hours must be joined by the Office of Readings, which was prayed at night in monasteries, before dawn. Afterwards, the monks dedicated themselves to personal prayer until dawn, the hour when they prayed Lauds.

### LAUDS

I pray them after my mental prayer. It is the first liturgical prayer of my priestly day.

All the liturgical acts of my day begin with this verse that is both a petition and a desire: “*O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise*”.

The beauty of maintaining silence inside my soul, from the night of the previous day, until I say that verse. May that verse be the first word my lips utter during the day.

This hour is perfect for giving thanks to God for existing for one more day.

**We can never insist enough on the importance of praying the office at its appointed hours, of offering the incense of our praise at its natural hours.**

Do not take it for granted that you will wake up every day to continue with your ordinary life, because there will certainly be a day when you will not wake up —a day when the sleep of the night will join the sleep of eternity. This canonical

hour is, therefore, the most appropriate one for giving thanks for the fact that you are granted more hours. Pray the psalms in honor of the One who gives you more time.

Remember what the invitatory psalm says: “*O that today you would listen to his voice, harden not your hearts*”.

Another verse of the invitatory that expresses the spirit of this hour very well is: “*Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving*”.

The invitatory is like the entrance door to the first canonical hour. The hymn would be the atrium, the invitatory the great entrance door.

Pray the “*O Lord, open my lips*” with extreme slowness, with the feeling of penetrating the atrium of the prayer of praise, of praise and glory to the One who gives you life. According to how you penetrate that atrium, so will you

continue walking through the rest of the canticles, verses, and prayers. It is a divine atrium, for His hand carved those verses.

“*O God, come to my assistance*” is already a verse from a psalm. When praying it, have the feeling of entering through a portico. And remember, when praying the invitatory psalm, that as one enters, so one continues. If you enter with devotion, adoring, you will continue that way throughout the entire time of that liturgy. If you enter distracted, out of pure obligation, it will be a tasteless, empty prayer.

The invitatory psalms are not just any psalms: they are psalms of entry to the Temple, of entrance to Mount Zion, they are psalms for beginning a new life. It is very important to offer God the first fruits of the day. Offer the God who created Time, the Giver of the hours, the first time of each day. The soul upon waking is calmer, as if with more inner silence.

#### **SEXT**

Of the three minor canonical hours, I usually pray Sext. I pray it exactly at twelve o'clock noon, interrupting whatever I am doing at that moment.

I become conscious that for the first time in the day I say “*O God, come to*

*my assistance*,” since before I began with “*O Lord, open my lips*”. Both prayers are very beautiful; becoming conscious that it is the first time they are recited is a way of saying them with the heart and not just with the lips.

We remember with gratitude and adoration the hour when Christ was raised on the Cross.

Sext offers you the opportunity to place yourself before Jesus. With your spirit, go before Him.

It is one of the five sacred moments of the daily Liturgy of the Hours. The more sacred you make this moment, the more it will sanctify you.

This hour is like an oasis in the middle of the morning. It is as if we were entering before the Throne of Jesus Christ, to offer Him a brief greeting.

It is an excellent custom to interrupt what is being done as soon as the bell rings (if applicable) to praise God, to unite ourselves with Christ on the Cross.

Although I usually pray Sext, if one is going to pray the minor hour between 9:00 am and 12:00 pm, I pray Terce. If I pray between 3:00 pm and 6:00 pm, I pray None.

#### **OFFICE OF READINGS**

I pray it one hour after finishing my

meal. It puts an end to the rest after lunch. It is like a clear and fixed marker on the road that indicates when my work begins again.

The Office of Readings has a certain character of teaching. But before learning, the psalms are prayed to praise Him: praise before teaching.

The Father is going to teach you as a master in this canonical hour. He does so through two readings: one divine and one human.

This hour is like an oasis in the middle of the afternoon. It is as if we were entering before the Throne of Jesus Christ to listen to Him as the Wise One in Divine Science. I deliberately do not pray this part of the Breviary at the beginning of the day, so that it does not form a unit with Lauds and my personal prayer; I prefer it to sanctify this part of the day, the one that begins after the midday rest.

If the hours are prayed at these times of the day that I suggest, it is as if there were an oasis of prayer in the middle of the morning (Sext) and another in the middle of the afternoon (Office of Readings).

Most priests pray the Office of Readings before Lauds. I prefer this proposed order here to distribute the canonical hours throughout the day.

## VESPERS

I pray it just before dinner. Lauds is the beginning of the morning, Vespers is the end of the afternoon. In between them are two oases of prayer.

Strive to understand this priestly office of praying the Breviary as a way of offering a spiritual sacrifice. Call the angels to be by your side. Pray Vespers with the Virgin Mary, just as the apostle St. John must have prayed with her every day as the day drew to a close.

## COMPLINE

I pray it just before going to bed. It is the last thing I do in the day before entering my bedroom.

This liturgy consecrates the hours of sleep to God. Sleep must also be praise. To continue the adoration I performed during Compline, after praying it, my mind must keep internal silence. If I maintain the presence of God, the dialogue with the Holy Spirit, discarding everything that distracts me, the night will be completely sanctified.

There should be no conversations with the world after Compline. Compline must be understood as a consecration of the night: the time remaining until we fall asleep must be dedicated to prayer without indulging in worldly thoughts or work-related thoughts, thus perfectly

consecrating both the end of the day and the beginning of the day when we wake up, thereby offering the first fruits of the day and its end.

There is a beautiful parallel between the silence after Compline and the silence before Lauds. This is preserved in monasteries and seminaries. In the seminary, it was so edifying to see all my companions go to their rooms in silence, recollected ; and the same in the morning. Only after the thanksgiving of the Mass would we joyfully greet each other as we went to breakfast. The secular priest will also do well to preserve that holy custom when he leaves the seminary.

### Some Practical Questions

#### **What if I make a mistake? If I make a mistake in the office, do I have to start again from the beginning?**

The answer is no. From very ancient times, this maxim has existed for the Breviary: *error corrigitur ubi deprehenditur* (the error is corrected where it is discovered). That is, when one realizes that they have made a mistake in the day of the week, or are praying the ferial office when it is a feast, or are praying Lauds again because the ribbon was misplaced, then one finishes the psalm already started

and continues with the appropriate office.

**Is it necessary to recite the office orally?** For a cleric to fulfill the praying of the individual office, it is not necessary for him to do it orally; reading it is sufficient. I make this clarification because some people have been troubled by this question and have become scrupulous. The Congregation for Divine Worship responded to this question in the sense I have stated.

**Does the cleric fulfill the obligation if he joins the prayer of a community that prays another office?** The answer is yes. Whether that day they pray a specific feast or solemnity, or they have a divine office completely different from the Roman Breviary. One fulfills the obligation by joining the office of any Catholic community.

**Does the cleric fulfill the obligation to pray the canonical hour without reading or reciting it, only by listening to it?** Today there are websites on the Internet that read the Divine Office. The cleric fulfills the obligation of the Breviary in this way, because the obligation is to pray the office. It does not matter if the verses enter our mind

through the sense of sight or through the sense of hearing. Prayer is a matter of the spirit.

**Can the office be listened to in the car while driving?** The Divine Office is part of the cleric's work. This has been a key idea repeated over and over again in this brief work. The priest, therefore, must strive to perform that work of worshiping God as well as possible. Therefore, anything that distracts him from that worship must be set aside out of respect for God. Much more so if it involves doing two things simultaneously. A well-done liturgical act attracts God's blessing. The better it is done, the more blessing it attracts. Poorly done worship attracts punishment. Poorly done liturgical worship is a way of expressing how little God matters to us.

The Liturgy of the Hours is part of the priest's work. Therefore, the priest cannot plead that he has too much work not to do the Divine Office. Because, I insist, the Divine Office is part of his work.

If some faithful ask him why he cannot celebrate a sacrament between two Masses, the priest can answer with meekness: "Because I have to pray Vespers. I have an obligation to do it".

He is not denying them the sacraments. He is simply explaining why not everything can always be concentrated on Sunday or Saturday.

However, if a priest, exceptionally, has not been able to pray a canonical hour one day and it is getting very late to pray it, then, and only then, it is better to pray it while simultaneously performing another activity (such as driving a car) than not praying that hour. But doing something like this must be unusual. Even doing this just once a week is a sign that the day's activities need to be organized better. It is preferable to do fewer things, but to honor the One who is three times holy with dignity.

When a priest and a lay person are in a car, the priest can ask the lay person to drive while he prays the psalms in the passenger seat. If the priest prays aloud, both will pray and both will be sanctified.

**Can the office be substituted by other prayers?** The Congregation for Divine Worship determined, for the tranquility of the conscience of the clerics, that if a priest has several Masses in one morning or afternoon, or several hours of confessions or other similar pastoral works one day, he may omit one or more canonical hours according

to the volume of work that reasonably prevented him from fulfilling the Divine Office.

However, it is clear from the Congregation's response that this must be exceptional. The Congregation did not want to burden the conscience of a priest who one day encounters an unexpectedly large volume of work that leaves him no free time. But it was not the will of the Congregation that priests habitually exempt themselves from the Divine Office due to work. If a priest has many pastoral duties, he must organize himself. As an exception, due to the enormous amount of work, one part of the office can be omitted one day. But this situation cannot become a custom. Therefore, the priest either can or cannot pray the office, according to which, in conscience, he will be exempted from that obligation or not. But he cannot himself change the object of what he has obligated himself to before God.

**In what posture is it best to pray the Breviary?** Let the priest pray the Breviary in the posture that gives him the most devotion. If he concentrates more while sitting, let him do it sitting. If it gives him more devotion to do it kneeling before the tabernacle, let him

do so. If he spends a lot of time sitting during the day and prefers to stretch his legs a little, he can do it while walking. In this, the Church gives him freedom to pray it wherever he wishes and in the posture he desires.

**Is it advisable to pray the Breviary while walking?** There is nothing wrong with it. For several centuries, it was normal to see parish priests in their cassocks praying the Breviary while walking through the streets of their towns. It constituted not only a very beautiful scene, but it was a reminder for all the parishioners of the need to pray. But these were quiet streets, without automobiles, where one could concentrate very well on prayer.

**Is it advisable to pray the Breviary in the confessional with interruptions?**

Yes, it is preferable to offer that service of being in the confessional for the good of souls, even if that means that the praying of the Breviary is interrupted from time to time. It is so important for priests to be sitting in the confessional that the Church has always considered it lawful and even advisable to combine both tasks. Such a great good it is for the faithful to have a priest inside the confessional that there

is no inconvenience in that prayer being performed fragmented.

**Is the obligation fulfilled by praying it in a place with a lot of noise and distractions?** God must be praised in the best way possible. However, it is preferable to pray the canonical hours at their natural times, even if this prayer is in the midst of noise, than to pray them too close together in order to perform this act in a more recollected manner. It is preferable that the hours sanctify the different moments of the day, even if that implies praying them on a bus with the radio on and many distractions, than to pray them very well but concentrated in a small space of time. Therefore, two principles to keep in mind:

- The hours must be prayed as well as possible.

-The hours are prayed as best one can in the place where one is.

One should not have a scrupulous conscience because of the great distractions that come to us in these cases, especially during long journeys. The Breviary fulfills the function of sanctifying that travel time

**What if my mobile application does not have the feast day of this diocese I am in?** If I leave my house and

realize that it is a solemnity or a feast in this diocese, and my phone or tablet application only offers a ferial day, in that case, pray the ferial office if you do not have the liturgical book to look up the common of the feast in question. One fulfills the canonical obligation with what one has at one's disposal. If you realize it beforehand, arrange things to pray the correct office. If you realize it late, the old maxim *officium pro officio* (one office for another) applies; you fulfill the obligation by praying one office for another.

**What if I forget to pray an hour or have not been able to do it?** The obligation of the office remains. The hour should be prayed when possible. And if there is a communal praying of Vespers and one has not yet prayed the minor hour, one can join the communal praying and then pray the minor hour.

**To avoid problems, can I pray the entire office concentrated in two moments?** Doing that means not having understood that the Breviary is a liturgy of time, a sanctification of the different moments of the day. A priest who did that would fulfill the office, but would not have understood the meaning of the office itself. It is preferable to pray

with distractions during a trip than to concentrate everything in one or two moments.

**What if I forgot the Breviary at home during a trip and arrive home late at night?** Today almost everyone has mobile phones, and it is easy to ask someone for a mobile phone to pray the Breviary. But if one is traveling with strangers and it is not convenient, upon arriving home late at night, one would only be obliged to pray Compline. Praying the entire Breviary consecutively, in such a case, is neither the spirit of that liturgical act nor the will of the Church.

The same applies to a priest who has a breakdown in his car and has to go to the workshop, attend to urgent parochial matters, and arrives home very late after dinner time and has to pray all the canonical hours except Lauds. With a calm conscience, it will be sufficient for him to pray Compline before going to bed. It is not the mind of the Church that a priest should significantly delay his rest to fulfill an entire office that it was blamelessly impossible for him to do.

If that priest has the custom of praying for an hour before the tabernacle before

going to bed, he also has no obligation to sacrifice his personal prayer for the mere fact of complying with the law. If it gives him devotion to pray the canonical hours one after another, let him do it. But if not, it is enough for him to pray Vespers, do his mental prayer, and finish with Compline. That is, in unforeseen and exceptional cases, one should resort to the spirit of the Law without creating worries that one is sinning.

**Am I in mortal sin if I don't pray the Breviary?** The law that obliges a cleric to pray the office is holy; it obliges in conscience, but it should not be seen as an ironclad obligation that leads us to mortal sin if an exceptional and unforeseen occasion arises. It is not the mind of the Church that a cleric should have to pray the entire office after dinner. But if it is only a few hours, try to distribute them between dinner and nocturnal rest, making pauses between them, changing activities between them.

Of course, the priest who voluntarily fails to pray Lauds or Vespers without any reason commits a grave sin against the promise he made to his bishop to pray the canonical hours. And if he fails to pray the minor hours without any reason, he commits a venial sin.