

RECLAIMING DAILY PRAYER

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
I. WHAT IS PRAYER?	4
II. THE LITURGICAL NATURE OF DAILY PRAYER	15
III. USING MATINS AND VESPERS	27
IV. RECLAIMING DAILY PRAYER	40
CONCLUSION	53
APPENDIX 1: PRAYERS FROM LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM	56
APPENDIX 2: SUGGESTED OFFICE HYMNS FOR THE CHURCH YEAR	58
APPENDIX 3: TABLE OF PSALMS	59
APPENDIX 4: THE LITANY	60
BIBLIOGRAPHY	64

Introduction

Something is missing. It is obvious that we are missing something. We are looking all over the place, trying to find something we cannot quite identify. But since we do not know quite what we are looking for, we content ourselves with something that seems to fill the void this unknown quality has left. We settle for *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and self-help books, and diligently ask ourselves the question, “What would Jesus do?” But none of these can fill the void left by a lack of daily liturgical spirituality.

It is so easy to overlook a lack of liturgical spirituality. After all, we gather for liturgy every Sunday. Surely that grudging hour should be more than sufficient for our devotional needs. But we still need those Robert Schuller, Charles Swindoll and Max Lucado books, and even then it is never enough. Our shelves are full of those books, but they do not fill our spiritual need.

Prayer is the only adequate resource we have. And even then, we still lack. Our prayers are selfish and spur-of-the-moment. The Lord hears and answers those prayers, of course. However, such prayer does not reflect the nature of prayer as Jesus taught His disciples to pray. The most difficult part of prayer has never been deciding to pray. The truly difficult part of prayer is making and maintaining a commitment to devotional discipline, “devotional discipline” being regular, even daily, prayer which is formed by the Word of God. Such prayer does not come naturally to us, especially in the wasteland of rugged individualism we call North America. Harold Senkbeil states:

The liturgy rescues us from the tyranny of individualism, a particularly American heresy. You and I were never created to live alone, and yet so often the Gospel is presented as a way to become healthy, wealthy, or wise, a path toward self-improvement. . . . Ironically, while we long for community, so much of

Christian preaching and teaching drives wedges between us, focused as it often is so narrowly on the individual Christian life.¹

We are programmed to be self-sufficient. How, then, can we need to be fed with something we cannot ourselves acquire? For that, we look to liturgy, liturgy which has its basis in Scripture and has centuries of rich tradition and use within the bounds of Christianity.

We rely on the person of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. We worship on Sunday the One who died to win us that forgiveness, and there we are absolved of our sins in His name. But is that sufficient for the whole week?

Martin Luther suggested that we pray each day. In addition to meals and in times of need and joy, he suggested that we pray regularly, at least twice a day: in the morning when we arise, and in the evening when we go to bed. The early Church prayed three times a day. As monasteries developed their pattern, they worked through a cycle of eight regular prayer hours, called "Offices." Matins and Vespers, two of these Offices, are designed specifically for morning and evening worship respectively. They are very similar in form, and so are not difficult to memorize.

As we will see, the Prayer Offices are quite scriptural in nature. They draw their focus from the Psalms, the first prayer book. Most of their versicles are taken directly from the Bible. As we do in the Divine Service, we pray the words which we are given by the Lord to pray, the words Christians have prayed for years upon end. We join with Christians of every time and place in the heavenly worship of our Lord. We have not yet joined with the Church Triumphant, but when we worship, we do so with the Church

¹ Senkbeil, Harold L. *Dying to Live: the Power of Forgiveness* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1994), 123.

Triumphant. It is made quite plain for us in the Divine Service, where the pastor worshipfully declares in the conclusion of the Preface, “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee . . .”² We then continue with the *Sanctus*, the hymn of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3 together with the hymn of the masses in Matthew 21:9 (a hymn we also sing in the *Te Deum Laudamus* in Matins).

Prayer is the most powerful tool a Christian has in the daily struggle with sin. Commending one’s life to the Lord, both waking and sleeping, leads to faithful stewardship of the talents he has given in wakefulness, and lends peace to the sleeper, knowing the Lord is watching over him as he sleeps.

The hymnal is a valuable asset for daily prayer. It is not just for Sunday morning at church. Every home should have at least one hymnal, and as each member of the family is old enough to learn how to use it, they should be given a hymnal of their own. There are three books that are vital for every Christian to have and use: the Bible, the Small Catechism, and the hymnal. Each is important for spiritual health and growth. Each is beneficial for the life of prayer. We are familiar with the Bible. We are made familiar with the catechism in confirmation instruction. It is long past time we become familiar with the hymnal, and especially the riches of Matins and Vespers.

² *The Lutheran Hymnal* (Authorized by the Synods constituting the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), 25.

Chapter 1

What Is Prayer?

Discussing the significance of baptizing with water, Luther states, “[Baptizing with water] signifies that the Old Adam in us should, by **daily** contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”³ We seem to forget about that “daily” part sometimes. One sign of contrition and repentance is worship. Some suggest that the Lord’s Supper is the means by which a Christian daily reclaims his baptism.⁴ However, very seldom in our circles do we find the Eucharist offered daily, and it is even unusual to find it available weekly. What, then, is our recourse?

One way in which the Church has historically worshipped is through the daily Prayer Offices. Christians have used these orders in one form or another—whether alone or in community with family, school, or congregation—to pray every day for nearly two-thousand years. Daily prayer is, indeed, a salutary practice. Is it, however, daily

³ Luther, Martin. *A Short Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1943), 17. The emphasis is mine.

⁴ Edmund Schlink states, “The whole life of the Christian is a *daily* repentance. This calls for a further assertion: The mortification of the old Adam followed by the resurrection of the new man both take place in us as long as we live so that ‘a Christian life is nothing else than a *daily* baptism, once begun and ever continued. For we must keep at it incessantly so that our faith may refresh and strengthen itself and not weaken in the struggle but grow continually stronger’ (L.C. V, 24). The Lord’s Supper is to be used as ‘a great . . . treasure which is daily administered and distributed among Christians’ (L.C. V, 39). The Confessions never tire of admonishing, inciting, and summoning the baptized to receive the Lord’s Supper frequently. (To this purpose Luther devotes the longest section in his treatment of the Lord’s Supper in the Large Catechism.) Such remarks about daily sacraments have no intention of permitting a repetition of Baptism. In the life of each Christian Baptism remains final, once-for-all. Rebaptism is rejected in the strongest terms. Whereas, on the contrary, the Lord’s Supper is to be received frequently, here too no demand is made that every Christian should actually commune daily. Rather, we are given to understand that daily repentance is a constant event between both sacraments, that as a matter of principle it can never be separated from them, but becomes a reality every day only in looking forward to the next approach to the Lord’s Table and in looking backward to the Baptism that was received once for all.” *Theology of the*

contrition and repentance by which the Old Adam in each of us may be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts? To answer that question, we must first ask ourselves, “What is prayer?”

Simply said, prayer is the act of giving voice to faith. What we know about prayer we have learned from the Bible, in which we see the people of God crying out to the One who answers all prayers. C. A. Behnke states, “[There] is no story more intriguing than the story of prayer. Moses, David, Elijah, Daniel, Peter, John, Paul, and many others prayed. In answer the earth, the sea, the sky, the human body, the animal kingdom, yes, even death, suspended their laws.”⁵ These who raised their voices to the Lord believed that God could do those things they asked of Him, and He answered their prayers.

Prayer is not something that comes naturally to us, as we have previously stated. Prayer is a foreign language to us, an alien concept. Before the fall in to sin, God and Adam had natural interaction. God provided for Adam’s needs, as we see when the Lord provided the helper fit for him that was not found among the animals.⁶ But after Adam and Eve turned away from the will of God to eat the forbidden fruit, it became natural for them to hide themselves from God. And since it is natural for us to hide from God, why then would we call attention to ourselves by calling to the very One from whom we wish to hide?

Lutheran Confessions (Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J. A. Bouman, trans. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1961). 144-5.

⁵ Behnke, C.A., “Prayer,” *The Abiding Word, Vol. 1*. Theodore Laetsch, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946), 253.

⁶ Genesis 2:18-23.

Because we will not—indeed, cannot—come to the Father on our own, as we confess in Luther’s explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed,⁷ He comes to us. John Pless states, “Prayer does not begin in the human heart but in the hearing of God’s gracious words of life and salvation spoken to us in the Gospel of His Son.”⁸ Even as God came to find Adam and Eve and speak with them so they could again speak with Him, God gives us the words to say that we might speak with Him. In the same way, when we say at the beginning of Matins and Vespers, “O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise,” it serves a dual purpose. First, it asks God to do what He already would do for us, namely, to open our lips so that we may raise our voices in His praise. Second, it offers back to God the words which He has graciously given us through Scripture to say. In that very invocation we pray, and at the same time that prayer is answered.

From what the Bible teaches about prayer, Behnke lists ten theses which give a good summary of the nature and characteristics of prayer. Examining these theses through the microscope of Baptism, we will see that prayer is, indeed, contrition and repentance to drown the Old Adam. Behnke states:

- I. Prayer is a vital phase of Christian life.
- II. Prayer is commanded by God.
- III. Prayer is endowed with promises of a faithful God, who “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”
- IV. Prayer, to be valid, must be offered to the Triune God in the name of Jesus.
- V. Prayer must proceed from faith.
- VI. Prayer must be conditioned by the will of God.
- VII. The scope of prayer must be as broad as living mankind.

⁷ “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him . . .” *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 35.

⁸ Pless, John, “Prayer: the Voice of Faith,” *For the Life of the World* III, no. 2 (April 1999), 10.

- VIII. In the life of the individual, prayer must be more than an emergency measure, a way of escaping from troubles and difficulties that distress. It must be a working force that reaches out for the more abundant life promised by our Savior.
- IX. Prayer must be an integral part of the home if it is to function according to God's plan.
- X. Prayer is essential to the Church in its life and functions.⁹

While this is not a comprehensive list, it is a good place to start.

The first three theses are listed under the heading, "What is prayer?" To paraphrase, prayer is vital. It is commanded by God and has promises attached to it. In discussing the number and use of the sacraments in Article XIII of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Melancthon states:

Lastly, if among the Sacraments all things ought to be numbered which have God's command, and to which promises have been added, why do we not add prayer, which most truly can be called a sacrament? For it has both God's command and very many promises; and if placed among the Sacraments, as though in a more eminent place, it would invite men to pray.¹⁰

Prayer, while not numbered among the sacraments, is definitely sacramental in nature. It draws its vitality from the command of God. Indeed, Christian prayer has its institution in Christ, who said, "When you pray, say," and then taught His disciples, and all who come after them, to pray in a God-pleasing manner, even going so far as encouraging us to address God as "Our Father."¹¹ In addition, we see throughout Scripture the promises and benefits of prayer. We see the promise of deliverance in times of trouble.¹² Indeed, the very promise that prayer will be heard is a profound gift. When the Lord says, "Seek

⁹ Behnke, 247-66.

¹⁰ *Triglot*, 311,313.

¹¹ Luke 11:2 (NKJV).

¹² Psalm 50:15 (NKJV): "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

my face,” we can answer with David’s extreme confidence, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.”¹³ We have that confidence from our Baptism, where God’s promise of deliverance to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden¹⁴ is fulfilled as Christ’s death and resurrection unites us with Him.

Theses four through ten discuss the essential characteristics of prayer. Again, this is by no means a comprehensive listing of prayer’s characteristics. It does, however, cover the vital ground of the inner workings of prayer.

Theses four and five discuss faith. To paraphrase, prayer proceeds from faith in the Triune God, namely, through the name of Jesus, to the Father, in the Holy Spirit; one God, now and forever. We see here an intimate connection to Baptism. Our baptismal formula, which has its mandate and institution from Christ,¹⁵ states, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁶ Only in our baptismal faith are we made bold to call upon God as “Our Father,” as we do in the Lord’s Prayer. We read in Luther’s explanation of the Second Commandment in the *Large Catechism*:

[They] should be constantly urged and incited to honor God’s name, and to have it always upon their lips in everything that may happen to them or come to their notice. For that is the true honor of His name, to look to it and implore it for all consolation, so that (as we have heard above) first the heart by faith gives God the honor due Him, and afterwards the lips by confession.¹⁷

¹³ Psalm 27:8 (NKJV).

¹⁴ Genesis 3:15 (NKJV): “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

¹⁵ Matthew 28:16-20 (NKJV): And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”

¹⁶The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 202.

¹⁷ *Triglot*, 601.

Faithful honoring of the name of God comes from calling upon that name, believing in the power of the One who bears that name to do what we ask of Him. That faith proceeds from Baptism.

Theses six through eight deal with the selflessness of prayer. To paraphrase, prayer must be formed by what God wills and not bound by the limits of what we as individuals want for ourselves or need at any particular moment. To be sure, we can pray for what we need or when we are faced with an emergency or a moment of temptation, and expect our prayers to be answered. But that should not be the complete focus of our prayer life. Our best example in the selflessness of prayer is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. His whole life was selfless denial, but in two particular instances we see the absolute selflessness of the Lord in His prayer life.

First, the Lord poured out His soul to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, begging for deliverance from the coming suffering. But then He leaves it in His Father's hands, saying, “. . . Not as I will, but as You will.”¹⁸ He layed aside His own will for our sake. Second, we see the Son hanging on the cross, after a trial rigged by the very people He came to save. He cries out, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”¹⁹ Again, His prayer in agony was not for Himself, but for others. He shows us true selflessness in His prayer.

Theses nine and ten discuss the corporate usage of prayer. To paraphrase, prayer is imperative for homes and the Church as they seek to work according to the will of God. Regarding prayer in the home Behnke states:

¹⁸ Matthew 26:39 (NKJV).

¹⁹ Luke 23:43 (NKJV).

Every day at a suitable time parents and children will assemble for Bible study and prayer. The result will be that family life will be on a higher level. The ties that bind will be strengthened. Problems will be met with the help of God. Christian stewardship will direct the talents and the family income into the channels of Christian service.²⁰

We have become accustomed in these days to complaints about the unruly nature of children and the fragile nature of family life. A family grounded in the Word of God and prayer will have its difficulties, but they will ultimately prosper in their baptismal grace which makes them part of a family even greater than their own: the family which calls God “Father.”

Regarding prayer in the church, Dr. Kenneth Korby states, “Prayer is the life of the Church because prayer is ‘faith in action,’ the faith by which the righteous live.”²¹ Just as we lament over the deplorable state of families, conflict in congregations is another problem which we find distressing. Hermann Sasse has an interesting theory about this:

Perhaps much of the oft-lamented breakdown of the church in its tasks over against the modern world can be explained by this that she has long since ceased to be a praying church in the sense of the early church, a church which behind locked doors brought all concerns of mankind, also those of non-Christian mankind, before the throne of God. Is not our praying in all churches, in the Catholic churches as well as those which call themselves Evangelical, only a weak echo of the early church’s mighty praying? Are not also our churchgoers to a great extent simply only listeners, even though they hear the prayer in their mother tongue?²²

²⁰ Behnke 264.

²¹ Korby, Kenneth. “Prayer: Pre-Reformation to the Present,” *Christians at Prayer* (James Gallen, ed. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 115.

²² Sasse, Hermann, “Ecclesia Orans: Letters Addressed to Lutheran Pastors,” *Logia* II, no. 2 (Eastertide/April 1993), 31.

We seem happy enough to get together: for dinners, in clubs, and especially for administrative meetings. But when it comes to prayer, even the Divine Service, we do it grudgingly, if at all.

How can we drown the sinful Old Adam in us if we despise the means the Lord gives us to drown him? Even as the Word was placed upon us in the waters of Baptism, the Word must also then proceed from our mouths, to the great glory of God, as we pray that His good and gracious will may be done in our lives. Francis Pieper states, “[Christians] must bear in mind what would be the inevitable consequence of their sins, too, if they did not by daily repentance continue in spiritual life and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Believers daily pray: ‘So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom’ (Ps. 90:12).”²³ And again, Luther writes in his *Large Catechism*:

For this end it is also of service that we form the habit of daily commending ourselves to God, with soul and body, wife, children, servants, and all that we have, against every need that may occur; whence also the blessing and thanksgiving at meals, and other prayers, morning and evening, have originated and remain in use. Likewise the practice of children to cross themselves when anything monstrous or terrible is seen or heard, and to exclaim: “Lord God, protect us!” “Help, dear Lord Jesus!” etc. Thus, too, if any one meets with unexpected good fortune, however trivial, that he say: “God be praised and thanked; this God has bestowed on me!” etc., as formerly the children were accustomed to fast and pray to St. Nicholas and other saints.²⁴

As aforesaid, prayer is the act of giving voice to faith. Making the sign of the cross upon ourselves, we remind ourselves of the sign of the cross made over us “. . . in token that

²³ Pieper, Francis, *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 1:537.

²⁴ *Triglot*, 601.

thou hast been redeemed by Christ the Crucified.”²⁵ Even as we are commended to God in our baptism, we commend ourselves to God, believing in His power to save and bless us.

We must make absolutely clear, however, that prayer is not in and of itself a means of grace, as we acknowledge in Article VI of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*:

And true prayers, true alms, true fastings, have God's command; and where they have God's command, they cannot without sin be omitted. But these works, in so far as they have not been commanded by God's Law, but have a fixed form derived from human rule, are works of human traditions of which Christ says, Matt. 15, 9: *In vain they do worship Me with the commandments of men*, such as certain fasts appointed not for restraining the flesh, but that, by this work, honor may be given to God, as Scotus says, and eternal death be made up for; likewise, a fixed number of prayers, a fixed measure of alms when they are tendered in such a way that this measure is a worship *ex opere operato*, giving honor to God, and making up for eternal death. For they ascribe satisfaction to these *ex opere operato*, because they teach that they avail even in those who are in mortal sin.²⁶

Rather than being a means of grace, prayer flows from the means of grace.

Prayer is the natural response to the forgiveness of sins, and in the same way it points towards the forgiveness of sins. In our Baptism we are able to call on God as “Father,” because we are made children of God and are enabled to call on Him “as dear children ask their dear father.”²⁷ Through that Baptism we can call on His name and lay our sins before Him, as we do in the Divine Service:

O Almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto Thee all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended Thee and justly deserved Thy temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them

²⁵ *The Lutheran Agenda*. Authorized by the Synods constituting The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), 2.

²⁶ *Triglot*, 295,297.

²⁷ Luther, 12.

and sincerely repent of them, and I pray Thee of Thy boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor sinful being.²⁸

As we call upon our Father, He graciously answers our prayer, bestowing on us the forgiveness of sins through His chosen servant:

Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.²⁹

This absolution restores us into the right relationship with God which Christ won for us in His death and resurrection, and which He bestows on us in Baptism. From there we approach the altar where we are given and receive forgiveness of sins Christ's very body and blood, which strengthens and preserves us "in the true faith unto life everlasting!"³⁰ And then we emerge from the Divine Service strengthened in our Baptism, enabled to freely call on the name of the Lord in every trouble and need, and praise that name in times of joy and thanksgiving. Prayer connects us daily to the Divine Service, making the forgiveness of sins real to us the entire week in our work and play with family, friends, and whomever we encounter.

Thus we can pray with Martin Franzmann in "Thy Strong Word," his powerful hymn about the Word of God:

Thy strong Word bespeaks us righteous;
Bright with thine own holiness,
Glorious now, we press toward glory,
And our lives our hopes confess.

²⁸ *Lutheran Hymnal*, 16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to thee who light dost send!
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!

Give us lips to sing thy glory,
Tongues thy mercy to proclaim,
Throats that shout the hope that fills us,
Mouths to speak thy holy name.

Alleluia, alleluia! May the light which thou dost send
Fill our songs with alleluias, Alleluias without end!³¹

³¹ Franzmann, Martin H., "Thy Strong Word," *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), Hymn 328, vv. 3, 5.

Chapter 2

The Liturgical Nature of Daily Prayer

It is easy to say that we should pray. We have already seen that prayer has a divine mandate, and we have heard the promises God has spoken to those who would call upon His name. Moreover, we have powerful examples from Scripture of how completely and wonderfully God has kept His promise to hear and answer those who approach the throne of grace.

It is more difficult to say that our prayer should be liturgical. We do not understand liturgy. We become bored, even annoyed with its repetition. And to make it that much worse, those orders printed in the hymnal do not even say what we want them to say. Harold Senkbeil speaks of our attitudes toward liturgy:

The really offensive thing about liturgy is that it insists on having things God's way. It does not express what we feel at the time, but it teaches us what to feel. It demands the subordination of the individual to the communion of saints. It will not tolerate the great idols of our age: individualism, experientialism, and materialism. Is it surprising that Americans are offended?³²

This may be a rather grim assessment, but like all other facets of the Gospel, liturgy is offensive to those who do not want to hear it. We have so many wild misconceptions that we would do well to ask, "What is liturgy?"

The word liturgy comes from the Greek word *leitourgi,a* (*leitourgia*), which means "public service or duty." The liturgy of the Church is the body of material appointed for use in the conduct of worship. In his explanation of the Divine Service, David A. Koeneman lists five basic characteristics of liturgy:

1. Liturgy is Communitarian.
2. Liturgy is Daily.
3. Liturgy is Anonymous.
4. Liturgy is Powerful.
5. Liturgy is Normative.³³

Let us look at each characteristic individually.

First, Koeneman calls the liturgy a community activity. He states, “Liturgy always takes place in the context of Community . . . God’s people gathered together around God’s word and sacraments, proclaimed and administered.”³⁴ We see throughout Scripture the promise of God to be with His people. We even see Christ as Immanuel, “God with us.”³⁵ But we see that promise attached specifically to the community when Jesus states, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”³⁶ Thus the prayer of Christians in community is sanctified.

That is not to say, however, that something is missing from the prayer of the individual. Individual prayer is as beneficial as prayer with the family of God. God does not place any limitations on His power to answer prayer, nor does He limit the prayers He hears to those offered by a group of people. Elijah faced the prophets of Baal without a human ally, but when he alone called on the name of the Lord, the Lord answered his prayer powerfully, sending fire from heaven. We do not need to fear that the Lord will refuse to hear our prayer if we are stranded alone on a desert island. The Lord graciously

³² Senkbeil, Harold L. “The Liturgy is the Life of the Church,” *Lutheran Forum* 26, No. 1 (1992): 29.

³³ Koeneman, David A, “The Divine Service,” (presented to the Assiniboine Circuit Convocation, Holy Trinity, 1994), Martin Chemnitz Library, Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23.

³⁶ Matthew 18:20 (NKJV).

hears the prayers of His children who approach Him in their baptismal faith, whether they are alone or in the midst of a congregation of believers.

There is no need to question whether corporate prayer is better than individual prayer, or the other way around. Various groups and religious events have tried to sway opinion one way or the other. Those who favor corporate worship cling to Matthew 18:20, as previously stated, for their Scriptural support. Those who favor private prayer cling to Matthew 6:5-6 for their Scriptural support.³⁷ Both groups miss the point. Those who favor corporate prayer ignore the fact that Jesus went off by Himself to pray, or claim that He was a special case because of His divine nature. They ignore the various cases where individuals call on the Lord's name, and the Lord answers their prayers with power and acuity. Those who favor private prayer ignore the fact that Jesus prayed with His disciples. They forget three-thousand years of corporate liturgy, both before and during the Christian era. Moreover, they ignore the context of the words of Matthew 6. Jesus was not speaking of the mechanics of prayer, but rather of the attitude of prayer. He spoke against prideful prayer, teaching His disciples to pray humbly.

Both groups miss the point. Corporate and private prayer are both gifts to us, gifts that by nature work together in us. Philip Pfatteicher states:

A proper understanding of prayer does not pull people more and more into themselves, as if what has often been called the "interior life" is a life in a house with the blinds shut and the curtains drawn, closing off the outside world. Authentic prayer takes place in the deepest recesses of one's being, but it is finally not one's own doing, nor is it one's own voice that is heard. Prayer, as St. Paul, Martin Luther, and other great teachers have known, is the work of the

³⁷ Matthew 6:5-6 (NKJV): "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly."

Spirit of God breathing within us. That breath, from the outside, is a constant challenge to us, inspiring us to move and to grow. Such developing maturity draws us into an ever-deeper relationship with God. At the same time, however, it necessarily draws us into an ever-deeper relationship with the world that God has made and with everyone and, indeed, with everything in that world.³⁸

Liturgy is a community activity, and communities are made up of individuals. Private prayer without corporate prayer is missing the vital food of the sacraments, but corporate prayer without private prayer is missing the vital aspect of a faith lived in the midst of the trials of worldly life. We will discuss this again.

Second, Koeneman calls liturgy a daily activity. He states, “Liturgy is Daily: Not that liturgy occurs every day, but that it is in constant movement from Sunday to Sunday. The devotional life of the community fits into the liturgical life of the community and makes use of the books of the community.”³⁹ Koeneman states that liturgy is daily, but then weakens his position by saying that it does not necessarily occur every day. When we look at the Lord’s Prayer, we see the petition, “Give us this day our daily bread.” We pray for this day today. If we do not repeat this prayer tomorrow, when have we prayed for that day?

We see throughout Scripture examples of daily liturgical activity. Each day during Israel’s escape from Egypt, the children of Israel went out to gather up the manna from heaven.⁴⁰ We can call this an act of liturgy. The Psalmist writes, “Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments.”⁴¹ Pfatteicher states that,

³⁸ Pfatteicher, Philip, *Praying with the Church: An Introduction to Prayer in Daily Life* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 9.

³⁹ Koeneman, 3.

⁴⁰ Exodus 16

⁴¹ Psalm 119:164 (NKJV).

according to what is set out in Psalm 55:17,⁴² devout Jews at the time of Jesus would face toward Jerusalem to pray three times a day.⁴³ Moving into the New Testament, we see the apostles praying each day in the Temple.⁴⁴ Paul states, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you,”⁴⁵ which means that prayer should be pervasive in our daily living. Martin Luther takes up that thought, offering orders for morning and evening prayer and prayers before and after meals.⁴⁶ Liturgy shapes daily life, and should be present daily so that all of daily life might be shaped by it.

Third, Koeneman discusses the anonymous nature of liturgy. He states, “There is no one single author. The community places itself under God, and adopts the language of scripture as its language. There is a complete immersion in the scriptures.”⁴⁷ In the previous chapter it was stated that prayer should be according to the will of God. Liturgy simplifies that for us. It takes from us the need to form a worthy prayer on our own, putting in its place the words God has given us to say.

Liturgy is a living thing. It changes throughout the Church year, and has grown throughout history through God’s revelation to His people. Through the Old Testament worship was formed by what God had revealed to the children of Abraham. As Christ revealed Himself as the new testament, our worship took on Christological aspects, reforming liturgy into distinctly Christian language.

⁴² Psalm 55:17 (NKJV): “Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.”

⁴³ Pfatteicher, 27.

⁴⁴ Acts 2:46-47 (NKJV): So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

⁴⁵ I Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NKJV).

⁴⁶ See Appendix 1.

⁴⁷ Koeneman, 3.

Other than to say that it has been formed by the divinely-inspired Word of God, we know of no particular author for the liturgy we use. Liturgy in its anonymity fights two dangerous aberrations. The first is that previously stated need for the individual to try to form God-pleasing prayers from his own spiritual poverty. Senkbeil states, “The liturgy rescues us from the tyranny of individualism, a particularly American heresy. You and I were never created to live alone, and yet so often the Gospel is presented as a way to become healthy, wealthy, or wise; a path toward self-improvement.”⁴⁸ The second is the increasing practice of the clergy to write new liturgies for every service. Charles McClean speaks of the dangers of these practices:

[The] danger seems to be that of a disregard of the accepted liturgy of the church which not only violates the integrity of the rite, but also robs the congregations of the protection of the liturgy is intended to give them against the often arbitrary whims of the clergy. To follow rite and rubric in mechanical fashion is deadening; to disregard them not only frequently produces liturgical impoverishment; more seriously, it indicates a failure to appreciate the fact that corporate worship—while rightly expressing *local* concerns and fully exploiting *local* possibilities—should also be a reflection of the worship of the larger church in space and time.⁴⁹

Liturgy is not given to be a law or restriction, but rather it is Gospel, a gift given by God for the benefit and *protection* of His people.

Fourth, Koeneman discusses the power of the liturgy. He states, “It has real power. It gives life and salvation, because it is word and sacrament. It helps us deal with reality. It is the power of the Gospel which imparts forgiveness, life and salvation.”⁵⁰

The idea that liturgy has power is not immediately evident to us. This is not a new problem, either. Almost fifty years ago Sasse wrote about this same crisis:

⁴⁸ Senkbeil, *Dying*, 125.

⁴⁹ McClean, Charles L., “Matins and Vespers in the Life of the Church,” *Church Music* 75:2, 5.

And now, let no one say that prayer is self-evident, that, after all, we have services once or twice a Sunday. No, that prayer of the church which we meet in the New Testament everywhere where the life of an *ecclesia* is spoken of is unfortunately not something self-evident. Or who would maintain that prayer is made in our Lutheran churches today with a fervor which even approaches that with which the church of the New Testament prayed “without ceasing?” (Acts 12:5). Where today is Luther’s mighty praying with its visible answers? Where is the prayer of those pious people, of which Luther wrote in his explanation of the Lord’s Prayer in the Large Catechism, the prayer which in those days held the devil back from destroying Germany in its own blood?⁵¹

In the same article he offers a reason for this. “The church of the present day lives in a world which no longer prays and which no longer can pray. One has only to recall Kant’s famous dictum that the more a person progresses in good (*im Guten*), the more he begins to stop praying.”⁵² We fail to see the power of liturgy because we fail to see the *need* for prayer.

But liturgy has its power. Dr. David Scaer calls it “a weapon to defend [the Christian] against Satan and to fight him back.”⁵³ Senkbeil adds, “Throwing caution to the wind, we rush in where angels fear to tread: to the very throne of God, there to offer the prayers and praises of our broken hearts in the confidence of healing and love.”⁵⁴

Robert Zagore writes about the power of liturgy in crisis:

⁵⁰ Koeneman, 3.
⁵¹ Sasse, 29.
⁵² *Ibid.*
⁵³ Scaer, David P., “Luther on Prayer,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47:4 (October 1983), 305.
⁵⁴ Senkbeil, *Dying*, 140.

For some, the words [of the liturgy] were only the vague shadows from a childhood ritual. But they still were true. With others, I saw the time-ripened fruit of an ongoing relationship with God. I didn't have to teach them the words. They didn't have to struggle through their tears to understand. They knew the words, and the words brought hope. Christ crashed through their darkness and pain. They weren't alone.

. . . The scene was much different with unbelievers. False hopes and worldly goals are little comfort when facing death or great trauma. God's Word still brought hope, even created faith. But a deathbed is a hard place to teach the faith. It is much better learned day by day, week by week. In this way, the words of the liturgy make incremental deposits in our hearts and minds from which the fruits of hope are drawn in times of trial.

The structure and timeless nature of the Church's worship calls order out of the chaos of a crisis. It perfectly provides pastoral care at the end of life, because the peace and hope it gives have been accruing for a lifetime. It is familiar, easily recalled, and theologically solid. The words revive a thousand moments in the presence of a merciful and loving Father, and bring us there again.

In the parish, I have found that this same truth holds. I have been the pastor of an Alzheimer's patient who struggled to remember even her daughter's name. But she could speak every word of the Divine Service. I witnessed her blessed relief as hope, faith, and peace-giving words broke through the hellish torment of a languishing mind. Christ had come to her. It was a gift from my predecessors. Because they had taught her the liturgy, she had the words to greet her God.

When parishes cultivate a liturgical life, they arm their sons and daughters with words ingrained with the Gospel. They implant a resolute and joyous hope. Reinforced over a lifetime, they are unshakable, even by death.⁵⁵

Not only do we have in the liturgy the power to fight the devil and his powers, but we have the power to approach God with our needs and troubles, fears, and joys, as He would have us do. Again, it brings us back to Baptism, where we learn to address God as "Father."

Fifth, Koeneman discusses the intentional, normative nature of liturgy. He states, "The Community of faith at worship is the way God intended for his people to be."⁵⁶ Perhaps the most profound example we have of this is that the pictures we have of heaven from the Bible are pictures of those who surround the divine Presence in the act

⁵⁵ Zagore, Robert, "The Liturgy Serves Us Until Our Dying Breath," *Reporter Insert* (July 1997).

of singing praise to God. Isaiah sees a vision of the angels before the throne singing a hymn:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”⁵⁷

St. John’s vision of the end times includes numerous instances of heavenly worship. In the fourth chapter we see the liturgical nature of heaven:

The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”⁵⁸

We see the living creatures and the elders singing in endless praise. In the next chapter we see the rubrics of that hymn slightly altered as they sing in praise to the Lamb who is worthy to open the seals of the scroll:

And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.” Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under

⁵⁶ Koeneman, 3.

⁵⁷ Isaiah 6:1b-3 (NKJV).

⁵⁸ Revelation 4:8-11 (NKJV).

the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.⁵⁹

When the seventh angel blows the seventh trumpet, we hear another song of heavenly worship:

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.”⁶⁰

These and other pictures show us the liturgical nature of heaven, the fulfillment of the reuniting of men with the perfect will of God. It is absurd that God would wish something different for His people on earth than He would give His people in heaven. He graciously gives us a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven while we yet remain on earth, not only in the body and blood of Christ, but also, indeed, in the very liturgy which we mimic from His lips. Those who argue against liturgical worship as repetitive, boring, or meaningless do regrettably rail against God’s will, the fulfillment of that will for which they pray every time they pray the Lord’s Prayer, saying, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

⁵⁹ Revelation 5:9-14 (NKJV).

⁶⁰ Revelation 11:15-18 (NKJV).

Daily prayer needs the confidence and reliability of repetition. That is where the liturgy comes in. The repetitive nature of the liturgy keeps us focused on what God gives us therein.⁶¹ We have already seen that prayer has the command of God. It also carries the promise that God's power accompanies it. Liturgy focuses on God's action toward His people, as we see in the name by which we call the communion liturgy, namely, Divine Service. In the liturgy we see the grace of God at work in our lives. It counteracts our selfish impulses by imposing the will of God above our own, and in doing so it frees us. Kurt Lantz writes:

⁶¹ Eckardt, Burnell F, Jr., "On Rote Repetition: A Response to the Scoffer," *Gottesdienst* 6:1 (Easter 1998). Eckardt writes: Now we can get at the reason the employment of rote ritual in worship is a point in its favor, even in connection with the wandering of minds. In addition to the dominical command, rote repetition is a great divider: it helps to separate the sheep from the goats. The fact that rote ritual is the bane of some and the blessing of others is not unrelated to the fact that rote ritual results in the wandering of minds. For in the first place, when the mind of the contemptuous wanders, it will produce the closing of his mind; conversely, when the mind of the diligent wanders, this will produce a self-chiding, and hence a greater desire to concentrate. In fact, such a one who puts forth the consequent effort to concentrate will quickly find that he has no difficulty doing so, by virtue of the fact that much rote repetition is going on, and he already knows what to expect.

This whole process is not unlike the reason Jesus gave for preaching in parables:

Because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand . . .
 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
 (Matthew 13:14-15)

Why did Jesus preach in parables, if He knew that some people were already dull of hearing? His approach contains both grace and judgment: grace for those who do hear, and implicit judgment against others who refuse, as if He would say, This message is not for you, then. So His parables served as a beginning of the separation of the faithful from the hypocrites. For it was only those who asked, What does this mean? who were told.

So also does rote repetition serve to separate the faithful from the hypocrites, and in a way to expose the hypocrisy of the latter: I'll say it once, but don't make me listen two or three times in a row! Oh? And why not? Because you did not really rejoice in it the first time? We find therefore another critical reason for keeping the liturgy, latent in the very complaints of those who wish to throw it out. Liturgical worship—which in fact is called liturgical precisely because it employs set (rote!) forms and orders, using in repetitive patterns portions of the Word of God, keeping patterns handed down through the tradition of the Church—tends automatically to weed out the scoffers. Of course, God wants everyone, including scoffers, to be saved, but He also knows—as should we—that no scoffer who persists in his scoffing at the Word of God can be saved. Jesus' approach to such as these was to let them alone (Matthew 15:14), and on the other hand to say, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). So it is reasonable to suppose that the liturgy has been employed throughout the history of the people of God in part for this very reason: it is helpful to the faithful and it hinders the hypocrites.

Lutheran worship may be characterized by two main conclusions drawn from Scripture, expounded in the Lutheran Confessions and evident in the writings of Martin Luther. First, worship is a matter of faith. As such it is primarily God's work and not ours, as Luther's explanation to the Third Article of the Creed states so well. Second, worship is enveloped in the freedom that comes with the Gospel. Therefore, the gathered believers are free to make use of the rich tradition of the liturgy in order to clearly manifest God's grace extended to us.⁶²

Liturgy is Gospel, flowing from the means of grace. As such, it is truly a blessed gift of

God.

⁶² Lantz, Kurt A., "Confessed Doctrine: An Examination of Theology and Practice in the Holy Communion Services of Current North American Lutheran Liturgies," M. Div. Treatise, Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, 1998, 43.

Chapter 3

Using Matins and Vespers

Now that we understand the great need for prayer and the liturgical nature of prayer, we can say with the disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray.” The disciples asked their Lord to form their prayer lives. In the same way Scripture, the very Word of God, should form our prayer lives, rather than allowing our own spiritual poverty to lead us astray. Harold Senkbeil states, “The vocabulary of prayer is formed by the Word of God Himself. There is strength in such prayer, for it is prayer grounded in the very name of God. And where God’s name is, there He is to bless with His presence. All liturgical prayer, whether public or private, is grounded in the conviction that God is present in His Word.”⁶³

We use Matins today as a substitute for the Divine Service on Sundays in which we have no celebration of the Eucharist. Vespers is often used for evening services: again, especially when there is no celebration of the Eucharist. These services were never meant to replace the Divine Service as the primary service in weekly worship. They were formed as liturgical aids to supplement the daily prayer lives of Christians, and have been used as such for centuries.

Matins and Vespers, as they have been passed on to us, combine aspects of the seven prayer services of the historical Divine Office. Charles McClean gives a brief overview:

The daily office of the Western Church emerged in its classic pattern in the sixth-century monastic rule of St. Benedict. The office consisted of eight

⁶³ Senkbeil, *Dying*, 147.

services. Matins, sung during the night, consisted mainly of three sets of psalms and lessons, and was characterized by meditation on the Scriptures. Lauds followed at dawn. Essentially an act of praise, Lauds took its name from Psalms 148-150 which were invariably sung at that office. Prime was said at the beginning of the day's work. Terce, Sext, and Nones—said at nine o'clock in the morning, at noon, and at three o'clock in the afternoon—consisted chiefly of the praying of Psalm 119. Vespers, sung at sundown, was an act of praise for God's mercies during the day drawing to its close. At Compline, prayed before retiring, Christians commended themselves to God's keeping for the hours of darkness.⁶⁴

Matins as it stands now combines elements of the classic offices of Matins and Lauds, while Vespers in its current form combines elements of Vespers and Compline. With this in mind, we make our way through the offices.

The Versicle

- V. O Lord, open Thou my lips.
 R. And my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.
 V. Make haste, O God, to deliver me.
 R. Make haste to help me, O Lord.
 All. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.
 Hallelujah!⁶⁵

The Matins and Vespers services both begin with two psalm verses called versicles. The first, Psalm 51:15, is a cry for the Lord's aid in our prayers. The second versicle, Psalm 70:1, asks the Lord to aid and deliver us in all our needs. Since these are both Psalm verses, they are concluded with the *Gloria Patri*. Psalms used in Christian worship are always concluded with the *Gloria Patri*, because all true worship now must include the Christ, who won redemption for us.

Upon the words, "O Lord, open my lips," it is appropriate to make the sign of the cross upon the forehead, upon the lips, and upon the heart, to consecrate to the Lord our

⁶⁴ McClean, Charles L. "Matins and Vespers in the Life of the Church." *Church Music* (75.2, 1975), 1.

⁶⁵ *Lutheran Hymnal*, 32, 41.

thoughts, our words, and our hearts as we worship. Upon the words, “Make haste, O God, to deliver me,” one may make the sign of the cross again, this time from forehead to sternum, shoulder to shoulder, as a reminder of the sign of the cross placed on us at Baptism.

In Scripture, Hallelujah is the ancient conclusion to Psalms of praise. Hallelujah, from the Hebrew, means, “Praise the Lord.” In the seasons of Advent and Lent, the word “Hallelujah” is omitted in favor of seasonal statements of praise.

The Invitatory and *Venite* (Matins)

- V. Oh, come, let us worship the Lord.
 R. For He is our Maker
 All. Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God: and a great King above all gods. In His hands are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land. Oh, come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. For He is our God: and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Glory be to the Father and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.⁶⁶

The Invitatory is a summons to praise. We are invited to praise the Lord, and we respond that we will worship Him. Indeed, we have already prayed that He would open our mouths to do so. This Invitatory comes from Psalm 95. Other invitatories are appointed for various seasons of the Church year. Any choice forms an appropriate antiphon for the *Venite*,⁶⁷ which is also from Psalm 95. The Invitatory and the *Venite* together form a fitting introduction to the day. In this Psalm all creation praises its Lord,

⁶⁶ Ibid., 33-34.

⁶⁷ Reed, Luther D., *The Lutheran Liturgy*, Revised Edition (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 410.

and creation commends itself to the Lord who created it. There is no corollary to these in the Vespers service.

The Office Hymn (Matins)

At this time in the Matins service a hymn may be sung. It is called the Office hymn, and should thus be chosen for its appropriateness to the time of day and the season of the Church year.⁶⁸ It is the principal hymn of Matins. In fact, it is the only hymn in either Matins or Vespers which is not listed in the rubrics as optional. Correctly done, the office hymn is chosen for the entire season of the Church year, not only for the week.

The Psalmody

The principal feature of the Daily Prayer Offices is the use of Psalms. In the monastery it was the practice to pray through the entire Psalter in a week. In our hymnals we lean more toward a monthly cycle for praying the Psalter.⁶⁹ We have gotten away from the practice of praying the Psalter in its entirety, although it is a fine and acceptable practice.

As we look at pp.164-6 of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, we see psalms listed for each week of the church year. Just as there are readings and hymns appointed for each Sunday and feast day of the Church year, there is also an appointed Psalm. It is appropriate to use this Psalm in daily worship, although any Psalm may be used in this place. It is also appropriate to use more than one Psalm. The Psalter has always been the prayer book of the Church. Jesus Himself prayed the Psalms, and they became a part of His daily life.

⁶⁸ See Appendix 2. Other hymns may be substituted, of course, However, using such a chart will, like the rote repetition of the liturgy, encourage the memorization of these hymns and facilitate their use in worship.

⁶⁹ See Appendix 3.

Even upon the cross, we see Him crying out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” the opening of Psalm 22.

Another appropriate practice in the use of the Psalter is the choice of an Antiphon, a verse which focuses meditation upon a Psalm. It is generally chosen to focus the worshipper on the life of Christ, as reflected in the Church year. It may come from within the chosen Psalm itself, from another Psalm, from a verse from another part of Scripture, or even from a traditional liturgical text. As is the practice of the whole Church, we include the *Gloria Patri* at the conclusion of each psalm, recognizing that Christian prayer is now offered to the Father *through the Son in the Holy Spirit*.

The Lection and Responory

After the reading the following is chanted or said:

V. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us.

R. Thanks be to Thee, O Lord!⁷⁰

As we look at pp.161-4 of *The Lutheran Hymnal*, we notice a list of readings for morning and evening of each day of each week of the church year. They coincide with the seasons of the church year, making the Sunday lectionary that much richer and more focused.

The readings for the Prayer Office may be the same as the readings used on Sunday. This is a salutary practice, because it gives the worshipper more than a brief glance at the texts used on a given Sunday. The more we see these texts, the more we remember of them. The more we remember of them, the more fruitful for our faith and prayer life each text will be.

The Responory actually comes from the monastery. It was customary that Scripture be read during the meals. At some point some obscure abbot noticed that the

monks were not really paying attention to the reading, and so he interrupted the reading by saying, “But Thou,” at which point the monks were to respond, “O Lord, have mercy upon us.” The author has been unable to determine when it was brought into the Prayer Offices. However, it is a proper prayer for mercy for our poor listening to the Word, and a proper giving of thanks for the Word itself. It is also proper to use that responsory after each lesson. *Lutheran Worship* offers alternate responsories for various seasons of the church year.

The Office Hymn (Vespers)

In the Vespers service, the office hymn occurs at this point.⁷¹

The Versicle (Vespers)

- V. Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense:
 R. And the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.⁷²

This versicle, taken from Psalm 141:2, hearkens back to the evening sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple. Since Christ fulfilled the Temple sacrifices with the sacrifice of His own body on the cross, we lift up our prayers even as He Himself was lifted on the cross on our behalf. That prayer has a sacrificial nature is an acceptable attitude. In fact, as we see in the Psalter, prayer is spoken of as a sacrificial act. Psalm 51 states: “The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.”⁷³ Psalm 116 agrees: “I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of the LORD.”⁷⁴ And while prayer is a gift of God and does

⁷⁰ *Lutheran Hymnal*, 34, 42.

⁷¹ Again, see Appendix 2.

⁷² *Lutheran Hymnal*, 42.

⁷³ Psalm 51:17 (NKJV).

⁷⁴ Psalm 116:17 (NKJV).

not earn us anything of our own merit, because of the intercessory nature of our great High Priest Christ, the Father looks upon our prayer even as He looked with pleasure upon the evening sacrifice in the Temple, and then upon the sacrifice of His own Son on our behalf.

The Canticle

Matins	Vespers
<i>The Te Deum Laudamus</i>⁷⁵	<i>The Magnificat</i>⁷⁶
<p>All. We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord; all the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting. To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein; To Thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory. The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee. The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise Thee. The noble army of martyrs praise Thee. The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee: The Father of an infinite majesty; Thine adorable true and only Son; also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father. When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst humble Thyself to be born of a virgin. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Thou sittest at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father. We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge. We therefore pray Thee, help Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood. Make them to be numbered with Thy</p>	<p>All: My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior, for He hath regarded: the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed; for He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with His arm. He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath holpen His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy, as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without</p>

⁷⁵ *Lutheran Hymnal*, 34-37.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<p>saints in glory everlasting. O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine heritage. Govern them and lift them up forever. Day by day we magnify Thee. And we worship Thy name ever, world without end. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. O lord have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us. O Lord, let Thy mercy be upon us, as our trust is in Thee. O Lord, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded.</p>	<p>end. Amen.</p>
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Or:

<i>The Benedictus</i> ⁷⁷	<i>The Nunc Dimittis</i> ⁷⁸
<p>All: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies: and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people all by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.</p>	<p>All: Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.</p>

⁷⁷ Ibid., 38-39.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 43-44.

Martin Luther loved the *Te Deum Laudamus*. He said of it, “It is . . . a fine symbol or creed (whomever the author) composed in the form of a chant, and not only for the purpose of confessing the true faith, but also for praising and thanking God.”⁷⁹ It is both confession of faith and fervent prayer for mercy and deliverance. We have no idea who the author of the *Te Deum Laudamus* might be,⁸⁰ but like the rest of the liturgy, its anonymity lends itself to joyous acceptance because we see the Lord Himself as the source of this confession of faith.

The *Te Deum Laudamus* is often sung at festive events and new beginnings, such as weddings, ordinations, baptisms, and confirmations, as well as on the Feast of the Holy Trinity. The petition, “Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin,” asks special blessing upon the beginning of the new day, and the new beginnings for which we offer this prayer and song of praise.

An appropriate substitute for the *Te Deum Laudamus*, especially during Advent and Lent, is the *Benedictus*, the song of Zachariah upon the birth of his son, John the Baptist in Luke 1:68-79. It is another song of praise, focusing particularly on the promised redemption, and on the eventual fulfillment of that promise in the person of Jesus Christ.

The *Magnificat* is the main canticle of Vespers. The song of Mary in Luke (1:46-55), it points to the fulfillment of the ancient Messianic prophecies in the person of the Child in her womb. Luther Reed states, “In our use of it as a canticle, we regard Mary as

⁷⁹ AE 34:202.

⁸⁰ John T. Pless writes, “A tradition that dates back to the ninth century assigns authorship of this hymn to St. Ambrose and St. Augustine upon the occasion of Augustine’s baptism. Dom Morin’s studies have concluded that the *Te Deum* is the composition of Niceta, Bishop of Romesiana in Dacia, and a contemporary of Saint Jerome. This conclusion is generally accepted in modern liturgical scholarship, although some argue that the *Te Deum* was derived from a text of the Paschal Vigil. At any rate, the *Te*

a type of the whole church. In her song we too give thanks to God for the mystery of the Incarnation and affirm our belief in his mercy which is ‘on them that fear him from generation to generation.’”⁸¹

The Kyrie

All. Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.⁸²

The Kyrie is not a meek prayer of resignation, but is rather a bold cry of faith to our merciful Lord. It has always been a part of prayer. It has been used as a response to petitions of prayer, a form called a “litany.” Said three times as it is here, it has come to have the character of an invocation of the Trinity. It is a very Scriptural prayer⁸³ which was said by people who were confident in Christ’s ability to do whatever they asked of Him.

The Lord’s Prayer

All: Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.⁸⁴

This is the prayer Jesus taught His disciples (Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:1-4). In just a few sentences it offers praise to God and summarizes the needs of the Christian. It

Deum has remained an integral part of Matins since the time of St. Benedict.” Precht, F. L. (ed.), *Lutheran Worship: History and Practice* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 447.

⁸¹ Reed, 439.

⁸² *Lutheran Hymnal*, 39, 44.

⁸³ Psalm 51:1 (NKJV) states: Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Matthew 9:27 (NKJV) states: When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” Luke 17:13 (NKJV) states: And they lifted up *their* voices and said, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” This is not a comprehensive list.

⁸⁴ *Lutheran Hymnal*, 39, 44.

is a prayer **of** the faithful, **for** the faithful. Only a faithful child of God could know God as “Father,” and only through the instruction of Jesus and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are we made bold to do so.

The Salutation and Collect of the Day

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with Thy spirit.⁸⁵

This is more than an appropriate statement; it has been and is part of the everyday speech of God’s people. In the early Church, Christians who passed each other on the street would greet each other with these words, and also would do so as they entered the church. In this context, it is an introduction to the prayer which follows.

We now pray the Collect of the Day. Again, a prayer is appointed for each Sunday in the Church year, and it is proper to pray this prayer throughout the week. The Collect is a prayer meant to gather all the petitions of the individual or the group and “collect” them into one. Other prayers may follow as well.

In place of this prayer, the Litany may be used.⁸⁶ This is a responsive prayer by nature, and so is most appropriate for use in groups such as families, although individuals may use it as well. It is a general, comprehensive prayer with a long tradition of use among the faithful. It is a selfless prayer, praying for “the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Ibid., 40, 45.

⁸⁶ See Appendix 4.

⁸⁷ The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 167.

The Final Collect

The Collect for Grace ⁸⁸	The Collect for Peace ⁸⁹
<p>O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day, defend us in the same with Thy mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, being ordered by Thy governance, may be righteous in Thy sight; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.</p>	<p>O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just words do proceed, give unto Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments, and also that by Thee, we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may pass our time in rest and quietness; through Jesus Christ, our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.</p>

Finally, we conclude the prayers with the Collect for Grace in Matins, and the Collect for Peace in Vespers. The Collect for Grace appropriately thanks God for bringing us through the night, and commends the new day to the Lord. In the Collect for Peace we pray for peace in our daily living and in our rest, the peace “which the world cannot give.”

The *Benedicamus* and Benediction

- V. Bless we the Lord.
 R. Thanks be to God.
 V. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.
 R. Amen.⁹⁰

The *Benedicamus* summons the worshipper to thanksgiving. It is a doxology found at the end of each section of the Psalter (Psalms 41, 72, 89, 106, 150). The response appropriately leaves the word “thanks” as the final expression of the worshipper before he begins the day in the Lord’s care.

⁸⁸ *Lutheran Hymnal*, 40.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

When a layman leads the Office, the service concludes at this point. If a clergy member leads it in a congregational setting, the Office concludes with the Apostolic Benediction.

Summary

Matins and Vespers have a rich tradition of use in the private and corporate worship of the people of God. The Church does itself a disservice if it ignores the riches contained in the liturgical prayer which has been handed down from centuries of faithful use. While these services were abused by those who mistakenly thought that praying them earned merit and forgiveness of sins, we cannot use that reasoning as an excuse to abandon them. If we used that excuse in this case, we could also use that reasoning to abandon the liturgy of the Divine Service, the Sacraments, the Church, and even its head, Christ Himself.

Chapter 4

Reclaiming Daily Prayer

We have examined prayer and discussed the necessity of daily prayer. We have asserted that prayer should be liturgical. We have noted the benefits of using the specific forms of Matins and Vespers, and have come to see the Psalter as a superior tool for uniting our prayer with that of Christ, our great High Priest. It stands before us now to offer suggestions for how daily prayer might be reclaimed. This reclamation must cross through and combine four aspects of Christian community: the clergy, the congregation, the family, and the individual. Senkbeil states:

[The] Christian life is lived as one great liturgy, or divine service. It includes God's service to us and our service to Him, but first and last and always it is God's action. Everything we do in the Christian life is therefore liturgical from beginning to end—including public worship, which is liturgical life together; our private prayers and meditation, which is liturgical life alone; and the service we perform in our vocation, which is liturgical life in the world.⁹¹

As we discuss daily prayer in each aspect of community, we must remember that each aspect crosses over into and works to shape the other aspects of community. Christians do not live in vacuum conditions, and it is natural that each should shape the others.

The Clergy

We begin with the Office of the Holy Ministry and those whom the Lord of the Church has called to this ministry. This is not meant to be a commentary on whether the pastoral office is a higher estate than that in which the laity operates. Rather, the laity looks to its pastor, as it

should do and should expect to be able to do, to provide spiritual direction, even as it looks to be fed in the Divine Service by Christ, in whose stead the pastor stands by virtue of his Office as a Called and Ordained servant of the Word. Thus if the pastor prays and his spiritual life is plainly evident in his daily life and work, the laity will see that and appropriate daily prayer for their own lives.

How does the pastor pray daily? Where does he find the time? What good will it do him? Probably the most common objection to daily prayer is that it consumes time which could be used for any of the hundred things for which sufficient time cannot be found. While this is true for everyone, it is especially true of the clergy. All that silent, inactive time in prayer seems wasted: not only to the pastor, but also to the parishioners who wonder why pastor is not making more shut-in visits, knocking on more doors with evangelistic zeal, writing longer sermons, or offering more Bible classes.

The primary responsibility of the pastor is the shepherding of the sheep whose souls have been entrusted to his care. In the same way as he washes Christ's sheep in the waters of Holy Baptism and feeds them with Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper, through prayer the pastor gathers the sheep together and fends off the predators who would tear the sheep away from Christ's flock. John Fritz states:

Of Jesus we read, Mark 1, 35: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out and departed unto a solitary place and there prayed." The Lord Jesus Himself, the chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, has given, not only to all Christians, but especially to those whom He has made shepherds and bishops under Him, an example of a life of prayer. Since the sufficiency of the minister of the Gospel is not of himself, but of God alone, he should not fail diligently to call upon God to enlighten the eyes of his understanding, Eph. 1, 18, and to open his heart to the understanding of the Scriptures, Acts 16, 14, and pray Him to give him wisdom from above, so that he may

⁹¹ Senkbeil, *Dying*, 116.

apply God's Word in accordance to God's will, without partiality and without hypocrisy, Jas. 3, 17.⁹²

Prayer is not a waste of the pastor's time; it is among the most responsible uses of the pastor's time. As he prays for each parishioner he cares for each soul daily in a way which is impossible to match through home visits. He can only reach so many people in their homes each day, but he can pray for the perceived and general cares and concerns of each person each day. This does not excuse him from visiting with his parishioners, however, as he can only know their cares and concerns by listening to his people.

But does not this daily prayer make the pastor that much more busy? Burnell Eckardt denies this charge. He states, "[One] who thinks he may not have sufficient time for prayer has not yet discovered a marvelous divine secret: when one sets aside time for holy things, the economy of God's time begins to fall into place, and the ordering of one's entire day is taken up by angels who provide even more time for daily duties than one had before. This is surely what is meant by 'redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'⁹³ Prayer may not necessarily make the pastor's burden lighter, but it does allow the pastor to share his burden with the Lord who delights to ease the yoke.

Also, the pastor who does not pray becomes stale in his preaching and pastoral care. His spiritual well has become empty. While he may very well be steeped in the Word as he prepares his sermon and shares it with his shut-ins and Bible classes, that very Word of God becomes a mere tool for his ministry, instead of food for his soul. G. H. Gerberding speaks eloquently of this:

⁹² Fritz, John H. C. *Pastoral Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1932), 3.

⁹³ Eckardt, Burnell F., Jr., "Praying the Psalter," *Gottesdienst* 7, no. 4 (Christmas 1999), 9-10.

Yes, verily, here is a great danger. If not realized and guarded against, it will work havoc with the pastor's devotional life. He will at length come to use his Bible in no other way than as a lawyer uses his law books, or as a physician uses his professional books. Then will his Bible cease to be to him spirit and life. He will no longer desire the sincere milk of the Word that he himself may grow thereby. He himself will not be sanctified by the truth. And so with his preaching, his pastoral visits, his sick-calls, his catechising, and even his service at the altar. All will be professional, perfunctory, mechanical, heartless, and lifeless. Woe to the minister who goes through his round of duties in such a spirit. Such an one cannot maintain that measure of spiritual life which alone makes and marks the minister as a man of power, a man of God.⁹⁴

Eventually a man who is unable to feed himself also loses any capability to feed the others in his care.

In addition to the outward practicality of daily prayer, the pastor needs that prayer for his own sake. We must never forget that the pastor himself is a sinner in need of forgiveness, a man who needs to call upon the name of the Lord and return daily to his Baptism. While he carries the great responsibility of tending the souls which have been placed into his care, at the same time he is a sheep in need of the very same care which he gives in the stead of Christ to the flock. Gerberding states:

Now the truth is that no class of men stand in such great and sore need of spiritual watchfulness and self-culture as ministers. Their calling carries with it special dangers. There is danger that, while feeding others, they starve themselves; that in counseling and warning others they forget self; that their own spiritual life languish and their official functions become professional and lifeless.⁹⁵

As a sheep, a pastor cannot feed himself. He must look to the Lord to feed him, calling upon the Shepherd to lead him to the "still waters." By that same token, a pastor should base his prayer in liturgical forms. The same poverty of spirit which inclines him to call upon the name of the Lord compels him also to look beyond his own heart and vocabulary for words to express his

⁹⁴ Gerberding, G. H. *The Lutheran Pastor* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1902), 193-194.

condition and need. And as we have asserted before, the liturgical forms of Matins and Vespers, with their Scriptural richness and long history, are excellent in this regard. Choosing one or two forms and adhering to them removes the onus from the pastor to be eloquent in his own way.

The liturgy is eloquent on his behalf.

The Congregation

Worship is a community event, even when done alone. Prayer should be brought consciously into the community of faith. In his book *Life Together* Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes the following statement:

The believer feels no shame, as though he were still living too much in the flesh, when he yearns for the physical presence of other Christians. Man was created a body, the Son of God appeared on earth in the body, he was raised in the body, in the sacrament the believer receives the Lord Christ in the body, and the resurrection of the dead will bring about the perfected fellowship of God's spiritual-physical creatures. The believer therefore lauds the Creator, the Redeemer, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the bodily presence of a brother.⁹⁶

It is natural for man to desire companionship, and even as He did in the Garden of Eden, the Lord is gracious to provide that companionship in the form of Christ's Church. The congregational nature of prayer becomes evident to us in the words of our Lord. Matthew 18 speaks of the corporality of prayer:

Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁹⁶ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1954), 19-20.

⁹⁷ Matthew 18:19-20 (NKJV).

In its context this passage discusses divisions between the individual members, but at the same time it speaks of what unites those members: the name of the Lord. Gathering in the name of the Lord cannot occur without *calling* on that name. When a congregation prays together, and does so often, it gives strength and unity to the community of faith. McClean states:

The daily office could be a source of genuine spiritual strength to those who attend; it would especially be a source of strength to those who find themselves confronted with sickness, death in the family, and other difficult circumstances. If the sick of the congregation and those about to undergo surgery are remembered at the office, if anniversaries of Baptism, marriage, and death—which for Christians is entrance into the larger life—were to be commemorated, members of the congregation might make the effort to be present on days important in their own lives. All this would require patient teaching and encouragement from the clergy.⁹⁸

When Christ promises His presence among the two or three who are gathered in His name, we would do well to gather often in His name.

With this in mind, we would be well served to resurrect daily prayer in our churches. Of course the author recommends the specific forms of Matins and Vespers as forms historically used for mornings and evenings. We are well accustomed to assembling for business meetings. What is it about prayer that makes it less vital, less desirable than the voters' assembly or a Lutheran Women's Missionary League meeting? Perhaps gathering twice daily has seemed like a waste of the congregation's resources. "Why waste the money it takes to heat and illuminate the church twice a day? Nobody is going to show up anyway, being as busy as they are." Perhaps we see the need for these business meetings, and prayer has seemed like a waste of time when action needed to be taken. McClean answers this charge:

One wonders if a recovery of daily corporate worship might not go far in contributing to the renewal of our church life, balancing and bringing into proper

⁹⁸ McClean, 3.

perspective the frenetic activism that characterizes American Christianity. It is certainly not expected that large numbers of people would be willing or able to come together for daily worship, yet regardless of how few might come, those few would in praying the office be representative of the whole Christian community in that place.⁹⁹

He adds:

Given present-day conditions, it may not be possible to maintain both morning and evening prayer. Yet every congregation has evening meetings during the week. A possible way to arrange for the praying of the evening office would be to schedule Vespers fifteen or twenty minutes before the meeting begins. In time individuals coming to a meeting might be willing to make the additional effort necessary to join in the evening prayer of the church. And who knows what might happen if our church meetings were preceded by the reverent praying of the church's evening office rather than by the (often perfunctory) *ex corde* prayer that so frequently opens them.¹⁰⁰

We cannot measure the practicality of prayer by the number of people who attend or what the process costs in financial or material resources. We must measure the practicality of prayer in how the needs of the Church and the world are brought before the Lord. Senkbeil states, “[The] solemn actions of the liturgy are not cold and impersonal. For we are never more at home than when we are with God. And we are never more ourselves than when we are in community with the brothers and sisters He has given us in the family of faith.”¹⁰¹ Measuring the practicality of prayer in this manner, our eyes are opened by just how truly efficacious the daily prayer life of the congregation is. McClean concludes, “If worship is in fact central in the church's life, then the ordering of the church's daily life should reflect that fact.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Senkbeil, *Dying*, 128.

¹⁰² McClean, 4.

The Family

In speaking of corporate prayer, we would be remiss if we did not discuss family prayer. We have noted previously the fragile nature of family life in this generation. Many cite a lack of “quality time” together as the cause of the breakdown of family. In our age of technological advancement we have wonders to hold our attention from awakening to the time our eyes close in sleep. We have access to tremendous amounts of information to quench our thirst for knowledge. At the same time the divorce rate, the teen crime and pregnancy rates, and incidents of domestic violence have all increased in the period of a generation.

So what has this to do with prayer? We find our answer in the old adage: “The family who prays together, stays together.” It is a trite and clichéd answer, but adages and clichés become such by containing an elemental seed of truth. Families have always had plenty to keep them busy, be it agricultural duties, sports, housekeeping, etc. Yet traditional families have found time to pray. Parents have joined their children in their bedtime prayers. Families prayed together at meals. Despite their busy schedules families made time to pray. This is true “quality time,” time spent gathered in the name of the Lord and in His presence.

This is no longer the case. We all too easily accept the mantra; “We are too busy.” Families seldom share meals. Children are sent to bed, where they turn on the television or compact disc player to catch the latest show or the newest beat. These conditions are not universal, but they are rampant.

Like any other aspect of the community of faith, families too busy to pray together are entirely too busy. When Luther speaks of praying, he asserts that the father should teach his household to pray. Thus it is for the father, as the head of the household, to set family prayer as

a priority. No matter how busy the family is, no matter how many obligations each individual sees before him, the first obligation, the first fruits of the time we have been given, belongs to the Lord. And from that time with the Lord, the rest of our time falls into place. As Bonhoeffer states, “Order and distribution of our time become more firm when they originate in prayer.”¹⁰³

In addition, even as the congregation finds unity in worship, the family finds common ground as they gather in the name of the Lord. Parents and children who cannot agree on radio stations, curfew times, clothing styles, or anything else find unity in a common confession of faith. Senkbeil states:

The liturgy removes the walls we erect around ourselves and the wedges others seek to drive between us and our brothers and sisters. In the liturgy God once again summons His people to solemn assembly. And when we come together, we discover we are not alone. For the one who calls us into fellowship with Him also calls us into fellowship with others, newly created as we are by the washing of water with the Word to be His sons and daughters.¹⁰⁴

While he is speaking of “brothers and sisters” in the sense of the Christian family, the earthly nuclear family finds true unity in the same way.

So how does the family pray? It is, indeed, difficult to find a mutually agreeable time for families to assemble for prayer. Again, it is for the father as the head of the household to set out a time for family prayer. This will by no means be an easy task, especially if the family includes children. Nevertheless the Christian father for the sake of the spiritual welfare of his family will set down the best possible time and call his family together.

Once the father has chosen a time, he must then decide what form the family’s worship will take. This becomes a dilemma especially when young children enter the picture. Matins

¹⁰³ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Psalms: The Prayerbook of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1970), 64.

and Vespers are quite involved for young children to learn. Those who cannot yet read and those learning to read must memorize whatever form of worship is used in order to participate. It is imperative that these children should participate in family worship. As alternatives to Matins and Vespers, the father could choose Luther's orders for morning and evening prayer.¹⁰⁵ The Invocation, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer are the most basic texts of Christian life. Young children will have heard these words their whole life, and they may already have them memorized. Knowing these texts allows them to participate not only in daily devotions, but also in the Divine Service. Luther's prayers for morning and evening will not be familiar at first, but daily repetition will encourage the children to memorize these prayers as well, and will thus allow the children to fully participate. In addition, *Hymnal Supplement 98* from the Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod provides brief orders of daily prayer for families and individuals.

We need to encourage our children to participate in prayer, and must show them by example that it is important to pray daily. Children form their habits early, and they will not easily be broken of those habits. If they learn to pray daily and it becomes a habit or custom for them, they will carry prayer with them as they grow older, leave the house, and start families of their own.

The Individual

In our examination of the daily worship of the community of faith we must not forget the devotions of the individual Christian in his daily life and work. The prayer of the individual is as much a part of the liturgical life of the community of faith as the worship of the pastor, the

¹⁰⁴ Senkbeil, *Dying*, 126.

congregation, or the family. Senkbeil states, “[The] Christian life is not lived exclusively within the four walls of a church building. We cannot always be in church. Therefore God’s people have always prized personal prayer, for it is a private liturgy where we find rest and solace in the presence of God.”¹⁰⁶

At the same time some have argued that the prayer of the individual is a higher, purer form of prayer. As we have said before, Matthew 6 on the surface seems to support this idea.

We read:

And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.¹⁰⁷

Yes, this passage speaks of private prayer, but it does not focus on any dichotomy between individual and corporate prayer. Rather, it speaks of the attitude of prayer. The hypocrite praying in an obvious manner in the synagogue is not engaging in corporate prayer, but is rather praying so that others may notice his praying and commend him for his spirituality. Jesus speaks against the pride of the hypocrite in his prayer and speaks approvingly of the humility of the man who prays in secret. We miss the point when we differentiate between corporate prayer and individual prayer, because “. . . praying in one’s chamber has always existed only in connection with prayer in the church.”¹⁰⁸ Alvin Barry, President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, adds:

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix I.

¹⁰⁶ Senkbeil, *Dying*, 140.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 6:5-6 (NKJV).

¹⁰⁸ Sasse, “Ecclesia,” 29.

[The] prayer lives of our families, of our church, and of ourselves are interrelated. Personal prayer and devotion must never become a substitute for the church's worship services. As we are gathered by our Lord, week in and week out, to receive the gifts of forgiveness through the Gospel proclaimed and through the Lord's Supper, we are given the strength we need to be devoted to him in our personal prayer lives. The family's devotions also are an outgrowth of their regular gathering around Word and Sacrament in church.¹⁰⁹

The individual Christian has a great need for prayer in his life. He may be part of a family, and he is likely a member of a congregation, but he is not always with his family, and he is not always at church. In those times when he is by himself he is most in need of the name of the Lord, because it is in those solitary times when he is most susceptible to temptation, doubt, and despair. Senkbeil states:

Left to ourselves here in this world, we become bogged down in mundane routine and paralyzed by our own fears. Prayer is the invitation to leave fear and routine behind and to enter again into our true identity as the children of God—to “ask Him as dear children ask their dear Father,” as Luther put it. No apprehensions here, no holding back. . . . Our focus is not on our fears, but on our gracious God. We need not tremble before Him, for there is peace in Christ.¹¹⁰

Again, we come back to our Baptism, where we are made children of the Father and are freed to call upon Him as we would call upon our earthly fathers. And as children, even though we are individuals, we are part of a family, with countless brothers and sisters who also bundle their prayers with ours before the same heavenly Father. Pfatteicher agrees: “When we pray we are never alone. We join with others who pray now and who lead lives of prayer and communion

¹⁰⁹ Barry, A. L. *Let us Pray* (St. Louis: The Office of the President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1998), 78.

¹¹⁰ Senkbeil, *Dying*, 140.

with God, and we also join with those of all times and all places who have walked this way before us. Prayer is never an individual, isolated activity.”¹¹¹

Whether we are alone in our chamber or alone pursuing our vocations in the world of which we are not really a part, our prayers as individuals are heard and answered by our gracious Father who hears us in secret and rewards us openly. Orphans, the widowed, the stranded, and the lonely need not fear that their prayers will be ignored.

Prayer is a community event. The community of faith comes together to call on the name of the Lord, and at the same time the prayers of the believers who come together work to shape the community. The Christians who come together assemble in the name of the Lord, and strengthened by what they are given as they gather in that name they go back out into the world to live as individuals and families, strengthened by the presence of Christ who promises that He is in the midst of the two or three who gather in His name.

¹¹¹ Pfatteicher, 14.

Conclusion

This is by no means the exhaustive, definitive work on prayer. It is barely a drop in the proverbial bucket. But we have to start somewhere. Something has, indeed, been missing from our lives, and that is prayer. We no longer pray together. We no longer pray alone. We do gather for the Divine Service on Sunday morning, and that goes a long way towards establishing and strengthening the community of faith. We are given absolution for our sins and are blessed to hear the Word of the Lord. We are fed with the holy body and blood of our Lord. And then we are dismissed in peace, in the name of the Lord.

But we are dismissed into the world, a world that does not know that peace. Jesus calls it the peace which the world cannot give.¹¹² We find ourselves in the midst of chaos from the moment we step outside the sheltering doors of the church. That peace we experience in the presence of the Lord becomes overshadowed by the thousand earthly obligations placed upon us, the frustrations and worries of the earthly lives we live.

We are commanded to pray. But we are commanded to pray by the very one who hears and answers our prayers. As our Father, He knows our needs, our trials and hardships, and He commands us to pray so that He may answer those prayers, and give us “all that [we] need to preserve this body and life.”¹¹³ He sees the chaos that awaits us as we go about our daily lives, and He commands us to pray, attaching to that command the promise to hear and answer our prayers. Bonhoeffer states:

¹¹² John 14: 27 (NKJV): “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

¹¹³ Luther, 9.

Prayer means nothing else but the readiness and willingness to receive and appropriate the Word, and, what is more, to accept it in one's personal situation, particular tasks, decisions, sins, and temptations. What can never enter the corporate prayer of the fellowship may here be silently made known to God. . . . And we may be certain that our prayer will be heard, because it is a response to God's Word and promise.¹¹⁴

And so we pray. We call upon Him in a hundred different ways in a hundred different moments of need. But we only bring to him our perceived needs. We need so much more than we realize. When we bring ourselves daily to liturgical prayer, we offer all our needs to the Lord who knows so much better than we do what it is we need.

Pfatteicher agrees:

In order to give the greatest benefit, the discipline of Daily Prayer needs to be carried out whether we feel like it or not, whether our heart is in it or not. For in such regular and dependable repetition lie the seeds of meaning for us, which can break open with new and unexpected life when we least expect it. But we must keep on doing our duty in times of spiritual dryness as well as in times of spiritual exultation to ready the ground for such sudden growth. Revelation comes to those who, like the shepherds abiding in the fields outside Bethlehem, were just going faithfully and dependably about their daily duty.¹¹⁵

We cannot feed ourselves. We cannot answer our own spiritual need. Therefore we call upon the name of the Lord using the words He gives us to say in the liturgy, and He is gracious to hear and answer us. Pless writes:

The liturgy also becomes a tutor in Christian prayer as the liturgy not only gives us the words and gifts of the Triune God, but also gives us God's own words so that we might faithfully confess His gifts, extol His saving name, and call upon Him in prayer and intercession. Prayer shaped by the liturgy draws us out of our inborn selfishness, freeing us to use prayer in faith toward Christ and in love for the neighbor. As the liturgy is first and foremost, "Gottesdienst" (divine service) or God's service to us, liturgical prayer reminds us that prayer is always a

¹¹⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Life*, 84-85.

¹¹⁵ Pfatteicher, 53.

response to what God says and does. Hearing God's words, we use His words to speak to Him.¹¹⁶

We pray with David, "O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise." And the Lord graciously answers our prayer.

¹¹⁶ Pless, *Prayer*, 11.

APPENDIX 1

Prayers from Luther's Small Catechism

Morning Prayer

In the morning when you get up, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, You dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn, like that of the Ten Commandments, or whatever your devotion may suggest.

Evening Prayer

In the evening when you go to bed, make the sign of the holy cross and say:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. If you choose, you may also say this little prayer:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angels be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Then go to sleep at once and in good cheer.

How the head of the family should teach his household to ask a blessing and return thanks.

Asking a Blessing

The children and the members of the household shall go to the table reverently, fold their hands, and say:

The eyes of all look to You, O Lord, and You give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing (Psalm 145:15-16).

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Returning Thanks

Also, after eating, they shall, in like manner, reverently and with folded hands say:

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love endures forever. He gives food to every creature. He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call. His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor His delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear Him, who put their hope in His unfailing love (Psalm 136:1, 25; 147:9-11).

Then shall be said the Lord's Prayer and the following:

We thank You, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 557, 559.

APPENDIX 2

Suggested Office Hymns for the Church Year

	Matins	Vespers
Advent	TLH 60 – Hark, A Thrilling Voice is Calling	TLH 95 – Savior of the Nations, Come
Christmas	TLH 98 – Of the Father’s Love Begotten	TLH 106 – The People that in Darkness Sat
Epiphany	TLH 131 – The Star Proclaims the King is Here	TLH 101 – O Gladsome Light, O Grace
Lent	TLH 140 – Jesus, I Will Ponder Now	TLH 559 – O Christ, Who Art the Light and Day
Easter	TLH 192 – Awake, My Heart, with Gladness	TLH 194 – Abide with Us, the Day Is Waning
Pentecost 1-9	TLH 550 – O Splendor of God’s Glory Bright	TLH 564 – O Trinity, Most Blessed Light
Pentecost 10-18	TLH 240 – Father Most Holy, Merciful and Tender	TLH 244 – Glory Be to God the Father
Pentecost 19-27	TLH 541 – O Blessed Holy Trinity	TLH 558 – All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night

Adapted from Rev. Robert C. Johnson’s *Guide to the Use of the Office Hymns* which appears in a manual prepared for the staff of the Chapel of the Resurrection, Valparaiso University.

APPENDIX 3
Table of Psalms

DAY/ OFFICE	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Matins I		5-8	12-16	19-21	25-27	31-33	37, 38	43-45
Vespers I	1-4	9-11	17, 18	22-24	28-30	34-36	39-42	
Matins II		50, 52, 53	57-60	65-67	69	73, 74	78	82-85
Vespers II	46-49	54-56	61-64	68	70-72	75-77	79-81	
Matins III		89	93, 94, 96	102, 103	105	107, 108	111-114	118
Vespers III	86-88	90-92	97-101	104	106	109, 110	115-117	
Matins IV		119, V- VIII	119 XIII-XVII	120-124	131-133	136-138	143-145	148-150
Vespers IV	119, I-IV	119, IX- XII	119 XVIII-XXII	125-129	134, 135	139-142	146, 147	

The Daily Office, Herbert Lindemann, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), 694.

APPENDIX 4

The Litany

(The Litany may be used at Vespers on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, on Days of Humiliation and Prayer, and at Matins on Sundays when there is no Communion. [A musical setting is given at the end of the hymn section of The Lutheran Hymnal.] The Responses may be repeated after each phrase or only at the end of each group, as here followeth:)

O Lord,
Have mercy upon us.

O Christ,
Have mercy upon us.

O Lord,
Have mercy upon us.

O Christ,
Hear Thou us.

O God the Father in heaven,
Have mercy upon us.

O God the Son, Redeemer of the world,
Have mercy upon us.

O God the Holy Ghost,
Have mercy upon us.

Be gracious unto us.
Spare us, good Lord.

Be gracious unto us.
Help us, good Lord.

From all sin;
 From all error;
 From all evil:
Good Lord, deliver us.

From the crafts and assaults of the devil;
 From sudden and evil death;
 From pestilence and famine;
 From war and bloodshed;
 From sedition and rebellion;
 From lightning and tempest;
 From all calamity by fire and water;
 And from everlasting death:
Good Lord, deliver us.

By the mystery of Thy holy incarnation;
 By Thy holy nativity;
 By Thy baptism, fasting, and temptation;
 By Thy agony and bloody sweat;
 By Thy cross and Passion;
 By Thy precious death and burial;
 By Thy glorious resurrection and ascension;
 And by the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter:
Help us, good Lord.

In all time of our tribulation;
 In all time of our prosperity;
 In the hour of death;
 And in the day of Judgment:
Help us, good Lord.

We poor sinners do beseech Thee
To hear us, O Lord God,

And to rule and govern Thy holy Christian Church;
 To preserve all pastors and ministers of Thy Church in the true

knowledge and understanding of Thy
Word and in holiness of life;

To put an end to all schisms and
causes of offense;

To bring into the way of truth all
such as have erred and are deceived;

To beat down Satan under our
feet;

To send faithful laborers into
Thy harvest;

To accompany Thy Word with
Thy Spirit and grace;

To raise up them that fall and to
strengthen such as do stand;

And to comfort and help the
weak-hearted and the distressed:

**We beseech Thee to
hear us, good Lord.**

To give to all nations peace and
concord;

To preserve our country from
discord and contention;

To give to our nation perpetual
victory over all its enemies;

To direct and defend our
President and all in authority;

And to bless and keep our
magistrates and all our people:

**We beseech Thee to
hear us, good Lord.**

To behold and help all who are in
danger, necessity, and tribulation;

To protect all who travel by land
or water;

To preserve all women in the
perils of childbirth;

To strengthen and keep all sick
persons and young children;

To set free all who are innocently
imprisoned;

To defend and provide for all
fatherless children and widows;

And to have mercy upon all men:

**We beseech Thee to
hear us, good Lord.**

To forgive our enemies,
persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn
their hearts;

To give and preserve to our use
the fruits of the earth;

And to graciously hear our
prayers:

**We beseech Thee to
hear us.**

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
**We beseech Thee to
hear us.**

O Lamb of God, that takest away
the sin of the world,

Have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away
the sin of the world,

Have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away
the sin of the world,

Grant us Thy peace.

O Christ,

Hear Thou us.

O Lord,

Have mercy upon us.

O Christ,

Have mercy upon us.

**All: Lord, have mercy upon us.
Amen.**

*(Then shall the Minister, and the
congregation with him, say the Lord's
Prayer, after which may be said one or
more of the Litany collects here
following.)*

Our Father who art in heaven;
Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom
come; Thy will be done on earth as it is
in heaven; Give us this day our daily
bread; And forgive us our trespasses, as
we forgive those who trespass against
us; And lead us not into temptation; But
deliver us from evil; For Thine is the
kingdom and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

LITANY COLLECTS

1

V: O Lord, deal not with us after
our sins.

R: **Neither reward us
according to our iniquities.**

Almighty God, our heavenly
Father, who desirest not the death of a
sinner, but rather that he should turn
from his evil way and live, we beseech
Thee graciously to turn from us those
punishments which we by our sins have
deserved and to grant us grace ever
hereafter to serve Thee in holiness and
pureness of living; through Jesus Christ
our Lord.

2

V: Help us, O God of our
salvation, for the glory of Thy name.

R: **Deliver us and purge away
our sins for Thy name's sake.**

Almighty and everlasting God,
who by Thy Holy Spirit dost govern and
sanctify the whole Christian Church,
hear our prayers for all the members of
the same and mercifully grant that by
Thy grace they may serve Thee in true
faith; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our
Lord.

3

V: O Lord, deal not with us after
our sins.

R: **Neither reward us
according to our iniquities.**

O God, merciful Father, who
despise not the sighing of a contrite
heart nor the desire of such as are
sorrowful, mercifully assist our prayers
which we make before Thee in all our
troubles and adversities whensoever they
oppress us, and graciously hear us that
those evils which the craft and subtlety
of the devil or man worketh against us
may by Thy good providence be brought
to naught, that we, Thy servants, being
hurt by no persecutions, may evermore
give thanks unto Thee in Thy holy
Church; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son,
our Lord.

4

V: O Lord, enter not into
judgment with Thy servant.

R: **For in Thy sight shall no
man living be justified.**

Almighty God, who knowest us
to be set in the midst of so many and
great dangers that by reason of the frailty
of our nature we cannot always stand
upright, grant us such strength and
protection as may support us in all
dangers and carry us through all
temptations. Through Jesus Christ, Thy
Son, our Lord.

5

V: Call upon Me in the day of
trouble.

R: **I will deliver thee, and thou shalt
glorify Me.**

Spare us, O Lord, and mercifully
forgive us our sins, and though by our

continual transgressions we have merited
 Thy punishments, be gracious to us and
 grant that all those evils which we have
 deserved may be turned from us and
 overruled to our everlasting good;
 through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord.

6

FOR PEACE

V: The Lord will give strength
 unto His people.

R: **The Lord will bless His
 people with peace.**

O God, from whom all holy
 desires, all good counsels, and all just
 works do proceed, give unto Thy
 servants that peace which the world
 cannot give, that our hearts may be set to
 obey Thy commandments, and also that
 we, being defended by Thee from the
 fear of our enemies, may pass our time
 in rest and quietness; through the merits
 of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

The Lutheran Hymnal (Authorized by
 the Synods of constituting the
 Evangelical Lutheran Synodical
 Conference of North America.
 St.Louis: Concordia Publishing
 House, 1941), 110-112.

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One of the more disturbing trends in Christianity today is the movement towards "generic" spirituality. Christians are becoming convinced that "If I just believe in God and live a morally acceptable life, then I will go to heaven." In the meantime, Lutherans who have become dissatisfied with the Divine Service as their only means for spiritual nourishment, in their search for some sort of interim spiritual fulfillment, have taken up the likes of Chuck Swindoll, Robert Schuller, Max Lucado, *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books, *et cetera* and *ad nauseam*. This disturbing trend toward universality of faith is a surrendering of the great historical liturgical and doctrinal heritage of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. As the concept of *lex orandi, lex credendi* holds true, we see generic prayer leading to generic faith, and even to generic gods.

It is the premise of the author that a return to liturgical daily prayer such as the Daily Office and Matins and Vespers in particular, while not a cure-all for the spiritual decadence of modern Christians, would certainly be of inestimable value to the Christian who truly seeks the Word of God in his daily life. In asserting this premise, the author in his research has sought those writers who have gained extensive knowledge of the historical liturgical prayer practices of the Church, the Scriptural and liturgical natures of prayer, the richness of the Psalter for the prayer life of the Christian, and the role and power of prayer in the life of the Christian community. He has also examined resources that discuss the actual orders of the Prayer Offices and other orders that might be used for daily prayer. This information has been examined through the lens of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

First the author seeks to set out a definition of prayer, with the understanding that prayer is a means of making the daily return to Baptism a reality. Second the author addresses the liturgical nature of daily prayer, noting that liturgy focuses the Christian beyond selfishness to what God offers to us in prayer. Third, the author examines the orders of Matins and Vespers, finding their roots in Scripture and asserting their superiority as a resource for daily prayer. Fourth, the author offers suggestions for reclaiming daily prayer in the following aspects of Christian community: the clergy, the congregation, the family, and the individual.