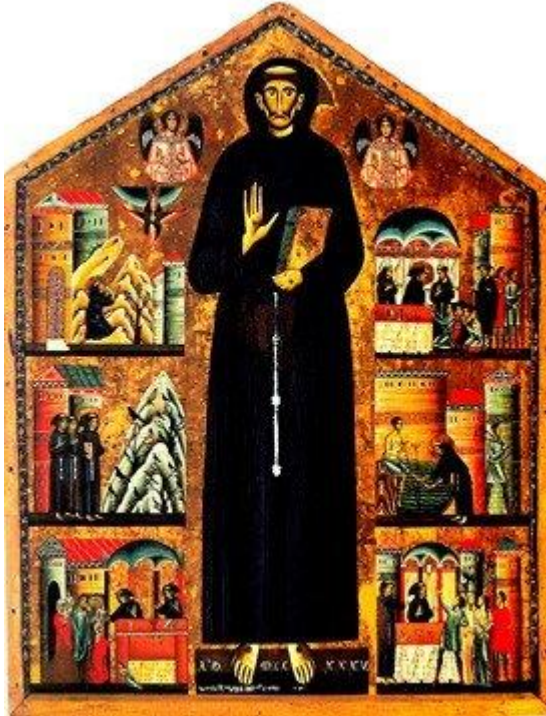


The Office of the Passion by St. Francis of Assisi

The Messianic Psalms organized into the Seven Hours of Prayer with each hour following the events from Christ's Betrayal through His trial, Scourging and, finally, Crucifixion with Vespers closing the day with tones of Hope and Victory in the coming Resurrection.



I. COMPLINE

Compline: Nightly prayer before retiring.

The opening rubric of the Office of the passion indicates the reason for its beginning with the Compline of Holy Thursday: 'For on that night our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed and taken captive.' The psalm verses selected for this hour reflect the attitudes of the Savior on the Mount of Olives.

Note: The [numbering of the Psalms](#) follows the Vulgate.

Ps. 55:9. O God, I have declared to Thee my life; Thou hast set my tears in Thy sight.

Ps. 40:8. All my enemies devised evils against me.

Ps. 70:10. They have consulted together.

Ps. 108:5. And they have repaid me evil for good and hatred for my love.

Ps. 108:4. Instead of making me a return of love they detracted me; but I gave myself to prayer.

Ps. 21:12. My holy Father, King of heaven and earth, depart not from me; for tribulation is near and there is none to help.

Ps. 55:10. When I cry unto Thee, then shall mine enemies be turned back; behold I know that thou art my God.

Ps. 37:12. My friends and my neighbors have drawn near and stood against me; and they that were near me stood afar off.

Ps. 87:19. Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me; they have set me an abomination to them; I was delivered up and came not forth.

Ps. 21:20. Holy Father, remove not Thy help far from me: My God, look toward my help.

Ps. 37:23. Attend unto my help, O Lord, the God of my salvation,—Glory be.

Prayer: Let us bless the Lord, the living and true God; to Him let us always render praise, glory, honor, blessing, and every good. Amen. Amen. So be it. So be it.

II. MATINS

Matins: Prayer during the night.

The psalm for matins cannot be related easily to a single scene of the Passion. The reference to the 'assembly of the mighty' in v. 9 may suggest Christ's presence before the High Priest (Lk. 22:63ff.). Verses 4 and 5 imply St. Francis's penetration into the central mystery of the Incarnation, i.e. Christ's uninterrupted self-giving in obedience to the Father

Ps. 87:2. O Lord, the God of my salvation, I have cried in the day and night before Thee.

Ps. 87:3. Let my prayer come in before Thee; incline Thy ear to my petition.

Ps. 68:19. Attend to my soul and deliver it: save me because of my enemies.

Ps. 21:10. For Thou art He that hast drawn me out of the womb; my hope from the breasts of my mother;

Ps. 21:11. I was cast upon Thee from the womb. From my mother's womb Thou art my God;

Ps. 21:12. Depart not from me.

Ps. 68:20. Thou knowest my reproach and my confusion and my shame.

Ps. 68:21. In Thy sight are all they that afflict me: my heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none, and for one that would comfort me and I found none.

Ps. 85:14. O God, the wicked are risen up against me and the assembly of the mighty have sought my soul; and they have not set Thee before their eyes.

Ps. 87:5. I am counted among them that go down to the pit; I am become as a man without help,

Ps. 87:6. Free among the dead. Thou art my Father, most holy, my king and my God.

Ps. 37:23. Attend unto my help, O Lord God of my salvation.

III. PRIME

Prime: Prayer of the first hour (6 am).

The setting of Prime suggests Christ's presence before Pilate, a common connection made by the people in the Middle Ages. The psalm is almost entirely taken from Psalm 56. Only one verse, 5b, is taken from Psalm 17. Thus the attitudes of trust and confidence are prominent.

Ps. 56:1. Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me; for my soul trusteth in Thee.

Ps. 56:2. And in the shadow of Thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away.

Ps. 56:3. I will cry to my most holy Father, the Most High: to God, who hath done good to me;

Ps. 56:4. He hath sent from heaven and delivered me; He hath made them a reproach that trod upon me. God hath sent His power and His truth.

Ps. 17:18. He delivered me from my strongest enemies and from them that hated me; for they were too strong for me.

Ps. 56:7. They prepared a snare for my feet; and they bowed down my soul; they dug a pit before my face; and they are fallen into it.

Ps. 56:8. My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready; I will sing, and rehearse a psalm.

Ps. 56:9. Arise, O my glory, arise psalter and harp; I will arise early.

Ps. 56:10. I will give praise to Thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing a psalm to Thee among the nations;

Ps. 56:11. For Thy mercy is magnified even to the heavens; and Thy truth unto the clouds.

Ps. 56:12. Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; and Thy glory above all the earth.

IV. TERCE

Terce: Prayer of the third hour (9 am).

Terce is clearly the hour of the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the mockery and abuse of the crowds.

Ps. 55:2. Have mercy on me, O God, for man hath trodden me under foot; all the day long he hath afflicted me, fighting against me.

Ps. 55:3. My enemies have trodden on me all the day long; for they are many that make war against me.

Ps. 40:8. All my enemies devised evil against me;

Ps. 70:10. They have taken counsel together.

Ps. 40:7. They went out and spoke to the same purpose.

Ps. 21:8. All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn; they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head.

Ps. 21:7. But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men and outcast of the people.

Ps. 30:12. I am become a reproach among all my enemies and very much to my neighbors; and a fear to my acquaintance.

Ps. 21:20. Holy Father, remove not Thy help far from me; my God, look toward my defense.

Ps. 37:23. Attend unto my help, O Lord God of my salvation. -Glory be.

V. SEXT

Sext: Prayer of the sixth hour (12 pm).

Sext occurs during the hour of the crucifixion in which Christ seems to be totally abandoned and 'zeal for His Father's house' has consumed Him.

Ps. 141:2. I cried to the Lord, with my voice; with my voice I made my supplication to the Lord.

Ps. 141:3. I pour out my prayer in His sight; and before Him I declare my trouble.

Ps. 141:4. When my spirit failed me, then Thou knewest my paths. In this way wherein I walked, they have hidden a snare for me.

Ps. 141:5. I looked on my right-hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would know me. Flight hath failed me; and there is no one that hath regard to my soul.

Ps. 68:8. Because for Thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.

Ps. 68:9. I am become a stranger to my brethren; and an alien to the sons of my mother.

Ps. 68:10. Holy Father, the zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me.

Ps. 34:15. And they rejoiced against me and gathered together; scourges were gathered together upon me and I knew not.

Ps. 68:5. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head who hate me without cause; My enemies are grown strong who have wrongfully persecuted me; then did pay I that which I took not away.

Ps. 34:11. Unjust witnesses rising up, have asked me things I knew not.

Ps. 34:12. They repaid me evil for good and

Ps. 37:21. detracted me; because I followed goodness. Thou art my Father, most Holy; my King and my God.

Ps. 37:23. Attend unto my help, O Lord God of my salvation.

VI. NONE

None: Prayer of the ninth hour (3 pm).

The Synoptic Gospels see this as the hour of Christ's death. St. Francis uses those psalm verses that most vividly portray the attitudes of Jesus. Yet even in the depths of depression, the saint perceives the hope of the Resurrection.

Lam. 1: 12. O all ye that pass by, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.

Ps. 21:17. For many dogs have encompassed me; the council of the malignant hath besieged me.

Ps. 21:18. They looked and stared upon me;

Ps. 21:19. They parted my garments among them and upon my vesture cast lots.

Ps. 21:17. They have dug my hands and my feet;

Ps. 21:18. They numbered all my bones.

Ps. 21:14. They have opened their mouth against me: as a lion ravening and roaring.

Ps. 21:15. I am poured out like water and all my bones are scattered. And my heart is become like melting wax in the midst of my bowels.

Ps. 21:16. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue hath cleaved to my jaws.

Ps. 68:22. And they gave me gall for my food: and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Ps. 21:16. And Thou hast brought me into the dust of death;

Ps. 68:27. And they have added to the grief of my wounds.

I slept and rose again; and my most holy Father received me with glory.

Ps. 72:24. Holy Father, Thou hast held my right hand; and by Thy will Thou hast conducted me and hast received me with glory.

Ps. 72:25. For what have I in heaven; and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?

Ps. 45:11. Be still and see that I am God, saith the Lord; I will be exalted among the nations and I will be exalted in the earth. Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,

Ps. 33:23. Who has redeemed the souls of His servants with His own most holy Blood; and none of them that trust in Him shall offend.

Ps. 95:13. And we know that He cometh; for He will come to judge justice.

VII. VESPERS

Vespers: The evening prayer (6 pm).

The verses St. Francis uses at this hour show his sense of the victory of the risen Lord. The psalm is redolent with expressions of wonder and his eagerness to share his joy with all creation. Nonetheless, the saint is not satisfied with these expressions of celebration; he returns to the main theme of this paraliturgical prayer: an embrace of the cross of Jesus, which leads to victory over sin and death.

Ps. 46:2. O clap your hands, all ye nations, shout unto God with the voice of joy.

Ps. 46:3. For the Lord is high, terrible: He is a great king over all the earth. For the most holy Father of heaven, our King, before ages sent His beloved Son from on high:

Ps. 73:12. And hath wrought salvation in the midst of the earth.

Ps. 95:11. Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad, let the sea be moved and the fulness thereof:

Ps. 95:12. The fields and all that are in them shall be joyful.

Ps. 95:1. Sing unto Him a new canticle; sing unto the Lord, all the earth.

Ps. 95:4. For the Lord is great and exceedingly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods.

Ps. 95:7. Bring to the Lord, O ye kindreds of the gentiles, bring to the Lord glory and honor.

Ps. 95:8. Bring to the Lord glory unto His Name. Bring your own bodies and bear His holy cross; and follow His most holy precepts even unto the end.

Ps. 95:9. Let all the earth be moved at His presence;

Ps. 95:10. Say among the gentiles that the Lord hath reigned.