

PRAYING  
FOLLOWING  
WITH THE  
JESUS  
CHURCH  
DAILY, HOURLY, TODAY

SCOT MCKNIGHT

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Author of: *The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others*  
and *Embracing Grace: A Gospel for All of Us*

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*Praying with the Church: Following Jesus, Daily, Hourly, Today*

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*For my students who are now laboring  
in churches throughout the world  
praying and teaching others to pray—  
students who are  
too numerous to name,  
too selfless to notice.*



*The aim of man's life is union (henosis) with God.*

*This participation takes man within the life of the three  
Divine Persons themselves,  
in the incessant circulation and overflowing of love  
which courses between the Father, the Son and the Spirit,  
and which expresses the very nature of God.  
Here is the true and eternal bliss of man.*

*Union with God is the perfect fulfillment of the "kingdom"  
announced by the Gospel,  
and of that charity or love  
which sums up all the Law and the Prophets.  
Only in union with the life of the Three Persons  
is man enabled to love God  
with his whole heart, soul, and mind,  
and his neighbour as himself.*

A Monk of the Eastern Church



## FOREWORD

From their earliest moments, the three monotheistic faiths of Abraham—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—have all shared certain common assumptions about, and disciplines of, religious and spiritual formation. All three appoint one day each week as sacred unto God. All three require tithing. Each encourages spiritual pilgrimage. All three govern themselves according to the rhythms of a liturgical year; and each teaches the uses of fasting at appointed seasons in either the cycles of physical time or of a believer's individual courses. Most significantly for our purposes here, however, all three have, from their very inception, assumed the practice of fixed-hour prayer as part and parcel of the observant life.

It was understood, that is, that at set hours of each day the faithful would interrupt the business of vocational life in order to praise and worship the Almighty One, thereby not only offering an appropriate sacrifice of time and deliberate intention, but also assuring that the thoughts and actions of each worshiper had been returned to the Source from which he or she had come and to which he or she would ultimately be accountable. In general, the appointed prayers were usually offered in the physical presence of other worshipers, whether family or co-workers or simply co-religionists; but one did not have to be in the physical

company of other believers to do so. Because the hours of prayer were fixed or set, one could stop wherever one was, be it alone or in company, and offer the appointed words of praise and thanksgiving, knowing thereby that one was part of the whole company of believers worshiping together across geography and circumstance before the throne of God.

This is a potent image and a potent practice that hones the soul as surely as it hones and shapes the communion of which the soul is a member. It is still assumed today in both Judaism and Islam; in those faiths, the faithful stop and the faithful pray. It was also assumed in apostolic Christianity: Peter received the vision of the descending sheet while on the rooftop in Joppa for noon prayers. The flames of Pentecost descended on the early believers while they were gathered together in an upper room for nine o'clock prayers. Peter and John exercised the first healing after Christ's resurrection by ministering to the cripple whom they found on the Temple steps as they made their way to three o'clock prayers. . . .

Fixed-hour prayer was assumed as part of Christian devotion for several centuries, in fact, until Rome fell. After that, the decimation of Roman civilization drove the dangerous and literate business of fixed-hour prayer into the safekeeping primarily of monasteries and, to some extent, of royal households. Because of those long, dark centuries when only the clergy and the privileged had both prayer books and the literacy with which to use them, fixed-hour prayer (or the keeping of the offices, to use

another familiar name for the discipline as it is followed in Christianity) came to be associated in the minds of the humble faithful as particular not to the Christian tradition itself, but to chanting monks and/or times of sequestered individual devotion. Nothing could have been, or could be, farther from the truth. And little could have been more detrimental, more enervating, to the whole body of Christ on earth than the loss of those diurnal rhythms of praise and thanksgiving by all believers. As a result and as a part of its own emergence and re-configuration, what post-modern, post-denominational, post-Reformation Christianity now calls us to is the reclamation by all Christians of fixed-hour prayer and of the spiritual richness that comes from this most ancient and holy practice.

You will read here about several manuals or books for keeping the hours as twenty-first-century Christians. Among them you will discover a chapter about *The Divine Hours*, a manual or breviary that I had the great joy of compiling. But this book is not about any particular prayer book or prayer tool. Rather it is about the fact that now, because primarily of the work of a rising generation of young Christians who want more of the authentic in their Christian practice, there are manifold such books and tools. Scot McKnight, in fact, lovingly introduces some half dozen or so of them. These pages celebrate something else as well, though. They celebrate the fact that in this newfound multiplicity of resources, the individual Christian can experience the freedom of growing from the simpler manuals to the more intricate and sometimes richer

ones. This book celebrates, in other words, the near-miracle that one is able now to grow in this discipline in concord with one's own increasing spiritual perception of the place that is prayer.

But this book is more even than all that. This book is the tool that those of us who have worked these fields for many years have not, up until now, had. This book has the power of succinct statement. In one phrase, Scot McKnight has captured the essence of what fixed-hour prayer is: It is praying *with* the Church. What a simple insight, yet brilliant in its perfect accuracy. McKnight has also, pastorally and with great skill, separated the discipline of fixed-hour prayer from the exercise of other forms of prayer, showing us with the deft insights of one who is himself a practitioner, the need for all of them and the place of each way in approaching God.

If a generation of new Christians has opened the doors to fixed-hour prayer, then just as surely Scot McKnight has swept clean the room and prepared a place for all of us to be Church here, undivided and indivisible. I welcome that with quiet joy, and I strongly suspect you will too.

Phyllis Tickle  
compiler, *The Divine Hours*  
The Farm In Lucy

# 1

## PRAYING WITH THE CHURCH

*M*ost Christians are not happy with their prayer life—they either don't pray often enough or well enough. This book is written to help such Christians—and for those who do pray often, this book might also bring a welcoming word.

For far too many Christians the only kind of prayer experience is praying alone *in* the church. This happens whenever an individual prays exactly and only what is on his or her heart. I call this praying *in* the church. Many Christians today, however, are turning to another kind of prayer and rediscovering its formative influences. This second form of prayer consists of set prayers that the Church has written down and prayed for centuries. The Church has always prayed at fixed times with set prayers, and in so praying it creates a sacred rhythm of prayer. I call this praying *with* the Church. When Christians pray at fixed times with set prayers, they join millions of Christians scattered across the globe who routinely pause two or three or even more times in a day to pray what other Christians are praying.

Christians use various terms for praying *with* the Church, such as liturgical prayer, fixed-hour prayers, the Divine

Office, the divine hours, the hours of prayer, or the *Opus Dei* ("the work of God"). No matter what term we use, it is what we are doing that is important: We are joining hands and hearts with millions of other Christians to say the same thing at the same time. By doing this, we are creating in our lives a sacred rhythm of prayer.

A growing number of Christians today are adjusting their lives in order to pray set prayers at fixed times. I stand with them. And when I mention that I practice fixed-hour prayer in public settings, someone nearly always replies, "I've learned to do the same thing, and I love it!"

What may surprise some is that nearly everyone who practices a sacred rhythm of praying finds it life-shaping. As one of my blog readers said in a comment, it takes "the earthbound and frames it in the divine."



*I was challenged toward fixed prayers reading Lauren Winner's Girl Meets God and Mudhouse Sabbath. She wrote about prayer in a way that brought depth and a rhythm to faith I felt was missing from my experience. Lauren recommended The Divine Hours to me, and I have been very grateful. . . . [I]t helps to bring focus to the daily routine in which it is so easy to become distracted and earthbound. Focusing for a few minutes on the richness of the psalms, historical prayers, and hymns takes the earthbound and frames it in the divine.*

—MARK PERRY

## BUT NOT IN MY CHURCH

I grew up in a church that did not teach fixed-hour prayer rhythms. We did not pray *with* the Church. Instead, we prayed *in* the church. We were good at it. More than a hundred from our congregation would gather nearly every Wednesday night just for prayer—no sermon, no music just prayer. And many of us (by my count) prayed at home alone and with our families. We were good at spontaneous prayers—at praying what we sensed should be said when we sensed we needed to pray. We prayed alone or together *in* the church.

Let me emphasize that I'm not saying there is anything wrong with praying spontaneous prayers *in* the church. But there is another kind of prayer, taught in the Bible and practiced throughout the history of the Church, that can have a powerful impact on our spiritual life.

Again, let me go back to my experience: I do not recall ever reciting the Lord's Prayer aloud in my church on a Sunday morning or a Sunday evening, or even during the Wednesday evening prayer meeting. Using someone else's prayers was not permissible. (Even Jesus' prayer!) The unwritten code was this: "Do not pray other peoples' prayers." They could endanger one's soul.

I do not mean to be disrespectful here. And I don't recall anyone screeching someone's prayer to a halt or gasping when someone trotted out a line or two from a written prayer, but the word was out and worked itself all the way through our proud church: You can catch spiritual infections from set prayers.

We believed, and I joined in with this conviction for a long time, that there was a spiritually dangerous connection between set prayers and impersonal faith. (We did, however, have a choir led by my mother that sang "The Lord bless you and keep you. . . ." nearly every Sunday—and I still like that song because of its constancy.) But the repetition of prayers or especially the reading of the prayers of others was not practiced.

We were given this diagnosis for an argument: *Repetition* leads to *recitation*, and recitation leads to *vain repetitions*. (And we all knew where vain repetitions lead you—right into Dante's *Inferno*, though we didn't read Dante or use any version of his word "inferno.") Before long, we thought, we'd just be mouthing words and not meaning them at all. It is better, we were taught, to say something clumsy but really mean it from the heart than say something profound and poetic and run the risk of not meaning it. If meaninglessness meant vain repetition and meaningfulness meant spontaneous prayers, I would choose the second every time.

But these are not the only two options.

The Bible, Jesus, and the Church teach that we can learn to use set prayers at set times and pray *with* the Church and mean every word we say and, as a result, grow both personally and as a community of faith. So the aim of this book is to encourage Christians to pray not only *in* the church but also *with* the Church.



*For most of my life I only prayed extemporaneously. Three years ago, I began praying the offices: morning and evening on a daily basis, midday and compline less frequently. For the past two years, I have exclusively used Northumbria's Celtic Daily Prayer, and am often amazed by how personally relevant and challenging the prayers and readings have been. Admittedly, I did not expect this, but am so grateful to God for leading me in this direction. The rhythm and relevancy have deepened my prayer life significantly.* —CHRIS MONROE

Praying *with* the Church at fixed times with set prayers can engage the mind, the heart, the soul, and the body—and can be just what prayer was meant to be: the total engagement of the whole church with God.

### BUT WHAT ABOUT . . . ?

There was a reason my spiritual mentors frowned upon rote prayers at set times: They knew folks who said fixed-hour prayers and didn't mean them. Let's start right here—humans have a knack for turning religious acts into meaninglessness. But saying the right things is not the point. The point is to learn to engage with God—and the point is also learning to engage with God *together*, not only alone *in* the church but also *with* the Church. Every scene of heaven in the Bible shows us a vision of the Church praying together and singing together and praising together.



*"When we pray, we add our own voices to this ceaseless chorus, taking our part in the song that has been sung since creation began. Prayer is the way by which we join earth's refrain to heaven's hymn."*

—THE LITTLE BOOK OF HOURS, IX.

But still, no one can dispute the tendency for fixed-hour prayers to slip into mindless, memorized mouthing of words. Whose fault, we need to ask, is that?

If our prayers have become vain repetitions, it is because our heart is not engaged, not because of what we say. I know from personal experience that set prayers have stimulated my own prayers and my own life. For many of us, fixed times for prayer, when, instead of trying to figure out something to say, we say what the Church is saying, might just be the stimulus our prayer life needs. The development of sacred rhythms might help set loose a church that learns to pray together. That is my (spontaneous) prayer for this book.

What we need then is both lively, spontaneous prayers *in* the church and heartfelt prayers *with* the Church. We needn't choose one or the other, nor need we downgrade one or the other. We need both.

## AND THIS ALSO . . .

If you compare the written prayers from the psalms, the Lord's Prayer, or those we find in the prayer books of the church, one thing will immediately strike any reader: The prayers from those sources are theologically rich and aesthetically appropriate. I cannot always say this of the spontaneous prayers of many Christians—and I am not impugning their motives or questioning their hearts.

What I *am* suggesting is that spending time with the psalms, the Lord's Prayer, and the prayer books of the church can improve the prayer life of Christians and the church. Time spent with the prayers of others can teach us to pray both alone *in* the church and together *with* the Church. Perhaps the following story will give an image to what we are saying.

### THE *PORTIUNCOLA* OF ST. FRANCIS

Last summer my wife, Kris, and I vacationed in Italy. We visited Assisi, the home of St. Francis and St. Clare. Perched on top of a gentle Umbrian hill, Assisi peers out over a hazy, rich, and fertile plain. We Protestants have no "saints," but many of us claim Francis and Clare as our own. (Some of us see Francis as the first Protestant, and his story has been told well by Mark Galli in *Francis of Assisi and His World*.) We saw the historic places, including the Church of San Rufino, where the two saints were baptized, and the Basilica of St. Clare, where we stared with others at some of

her relics. We participated in a worship service in the Basilica of St. Francis. We wandered with other tourists through the basilica to absorb as much as we could, paying special attention to the walls of the basilica, because they are "wallpapered" with Giotto's famous paintings depicting the Franciscan movement. It would take more knowledge of art and more time than we had to understand them all, but we tried.

Yes, I liked the basilica, but the most memorable part of the trip for me occurred after we left Assisi. We got into our rented Alfa Romeo and wound our way down from Assisi into the Umbrian plain to see two more churches. I had to see the *Portiuncola*. In the thirteenth century Francis restored this small church after it had crumbled to pieces, and it became the meeting point for the Franciscan friars. Famously small, the *Portiuncola* has become a stone parable of the humble life and ministry of Francis himself.

The *Portiuncola* was, of course, not large enough to house the crowds of pilgrims who would for centuries come to touch the Franciscan spirit. So St. Mary of the Angels was built to contain the crowds. We found St. Mary's easily enough, but we couldn't find the *Portiuncola*. I walked around the outside of the basilica but couldn't find St. Francis's little church. As we entered St. Mary's I asked a guide where the *Portiuncola* was, and he simply looked down into the basilica, pointed to a "church within a church," and said, "Right there."

There it was: Francis's original church, now completely restored, standing smack-dab in the middle of the basilica:

a church inside a church. I made a beeline through the basilica to the *Portiuncola*, entered into it, and just looked—trying to imagine my way into the world of Francis. Pilgrims were kneeling in prayer, while others were lost in meditation. By any account, the *Portiuncola* is a humble church of almost no distinction—except that St. Francis and the Franciscan movement owe part of their origins to this humble building.

The *Portiuncola* was humble. St. Mary of the Angels, as you might guess, was majestic and expansive and filled with all sorts of people, none of whom I knew but with whom I felt some kind of spiritual kinship. We had visited the *Portiuncola*, and we stood in the basilica with others, worshipping, praying, and drinking in the aesthetics of the place. I felt at home in both places—the *Portiuncola* and St. Mary of the Angels.

My intent for the Umbrian plain was to find the church of St. Francis, the *Portiuncola*, but what I discovered was that St. Francis's little church had been swallowed up by the movement that St. Francis created. I was seeking, as it were, Francis the individual, and what I discovered was a community that carried on his work. The gospel work of St. Francis spreads now across the globe, just as the work done on and in the *Portiuncola* was surrounded by St. Mary of the Angels.

The *Portiuncola* and the basilica. A church within a church. A little man inside a big movement. We need both. These are images for us to consider when it comes to understanding the two kinds of prayer.

## PRAYER IS LIKE THAT

Prayer is both small and private and quiet and all alone (like the *Portiuncola*), and prayer is public and verbal and with others and in the open (like the basilica). Prayer is both private and public, both personal and communal. We may seek individual prayer, but the individual needs to be encompassed by the Church in prayer. We need both the personal and the communal—both are good; both are spiritually formative.

The theme of this book is this: As Christians, we are invited to pray both alone *in* the church (in our own *Portiuncola*) and together *with* the Church (in the basilica). We are invited to let our personal prayers be engulfed and enlarged by the prayers of the Church. We are invited to pray both *in* the church and *with* the Church.

Praying *with* the Church involves allowing our own prayer lives to be adjusted to the *sacred rhythms* of the Church's prayer tradition and invites us to use the words of the Bible and the Church. This book will focus on learning to pray *with* the Church, and it is an invitation for all Christians to learn to pray not just alone *in* the church but also together *with* the Church. There is nothing wrong with having our own *Portiuncola* kind of prayer—where we are alone with God, in our humble dwelling, and praying about our own concerns in a spontaneous fashion. I do this all the time.

But at times we are summoned out of our own prayer cells into the larger space where other Christians pray. I do this two or three times each day.

## WHY SHOULD WE PRAY WITH THE CHURCH?

But why do we need this second form of prayer? The first answer is this: We pray in order to come into union with God. Prayer is talking to God, conversing with God, becoming intimate with God. By prayer we learn to love God. And the closer we come to God, the closer we come to God's people, for they surround God's heart.

The second answer to the question about why we need to pray *with* the Church is this: because we confess the *communion of saints*. This means we believe there is a spiritual unity among all Christians, all over the globe and all through history: Christians who are praying in heaven now and on earth below, saints who have gone before us and who will follow us. Sometimes we narrow our scope in this confession to those who are now alive with us, but the Church has always believed that we are ever surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses" (as the author of the letter to the Hebrews puts it).



*Communion of the saints: "the fellowship which we enjoy with the saints and with those who have died in Christ."* —PETER S. DAWES,  
*THE NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF THE CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH*

This communion of the saints revolves around a life of prayer and worship and service and love—for all times, world without end. Alleluia. Amen. So, the reason we need to get out of our own *Portiuncola* is that the Church is praying, too, and it asks us to join in the eternal chorus of praise and confession and worship and thanksgiving.

### SO HOW DO WE PRAY *WITH* THE CHURCH?

We pray *with* the Church whenever we read or recite the Psalms, whenever we utter the Lord's Prayer (the Our Father) aloud, and whenever we learn to use the prayer books of the Church. That is, we pray *with* the Church when we pray at fixed times with the Church.

Quietly and unknown to many, there are Christians throughout the entire world—Protestants, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Christians of other stripes and hues—who gather together, open up the psalms or a prayer book, and "say their prayers" together. Many pray as an act of joining with the whole church, as an act that embodies the "communion of the saints," and as an act of solidarity in worship.



*Carol Showalter, author of 3D: Diet, Discipleship, and Discipline, explained to me that she was in a gas station with a friend who was completely devoted to praying at fixed times. Carol's*

*friend's little alarm went off, and the alarm was set to tell her friend this: "Time to pray." She invited Carol to the corner of the gas station where they had a short time of prayer. When it is time to pray, you pray, wherever you might be.*

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In other words, we learn to pray *with* the Church when we practice the sacred rhythms of the day. Praying *with* the Church enables us to stand with Christians who are raising their hands at the same time in prayer. We are invited to join a revolving twenty-four-hour round of uninterrupted prayer offered by God's people all over the world.

## THE UNITY OF PRAYING WITH THE CHURCH

We live in a fractured Church.

The Anglicans, or the Episcopalians in the USA, have a saying, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, meaning, "As we pray (or worship), so we believe." That is, though we may not agree in theology or even in Eucharistic practices, we can learn to pray and worship together.



*"In our community, we think of prayer as our common heartbeat, that rhythmic and unceasing exchange of receiving and giving that sustains our lives, both as a body and as individuals." —THE LITTLE BOOK OF HOURS, X.*

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Praying together unites Christians. Jesus, after all, prayed for the unity of the Church when, as we are told in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, he prayed that his followers might be one. *Lex orandi, lex credendi* is one way of working toward that goal of unity.

To do this we need to add prayer *with* the Church to our prayer *in* the church.

## SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER IN PRAYER

Prayer is difficult for many Christians. How many Christians pray even five minutes a day? There are lots of reasons for the lack of prayer: It takes time and effort. We are cramped in our schedules, and we are exhausted and gasping for some time to ourselves. Prayer requires concentration—serious concentration.

Sometimes we don't have the energy for prayer, and at other times we don't know what to say. If we are always in our own *Portiuncola* praying our own spontaneous prayers, we can eventually run out of things to say; our own spontaneous prayers can become, ironically, vain repetitions themselves. But learning to pray set prayers at fixed times according to a sacred rhythm can reinvigorate our prayer lives and lift the burden of creativity off our shoulders.

## MY OWN STORY

Whether we pray in our own *Portiuncola* or in a basilica, prayer takes time, and it requires commitment. I have struggled with prayer my entire Christian life. Apart from a couple of seasons of my life when prayer seemed to be both natural and effective, I have struggled most of my adult life when it comes to regular prayer. Not that I don't pray: I've always prayed for my family, especially for Kris and our two children. And I've prayed about my day and expressed my concerns to God in the quiet of my study or in the midst of the day's activities. I've routinely dedicated my work for the day to God's glory. But prayer has been a struggle.

I now understand that the heart of my struggle was that I knew only one form of prayer: spontaneous prayer in my own *Portiuncola*. I grew tired of carrying the same little basket of prayers to God every day. But comments by friends a few years back prompted me to look again at prayer in the Bible and in the Church, and to take a fresh look at the prayer-book tradition of the Church.

As I studied, I began to see how God made Israel's life rhythmical: He gave them a calendar full of holy days. He directed them to come often to spend a day at the tabernacle or the temple, where worship and sacrifice were set into sacred rhythm. Israel's history reveals a continuous rhythm of sacred, communal prayer.

When I (re)discovered that Jesus lived according to those rhythms, I began to see them in the early Christian churches. It was then that I saw how significant prayer books were for

the history of the Church. And only then did I say, "It's time for me to experience sacred prayer rhythms." This book is the result of that journey, a journey of struggling in my own *Portiuncola* and finding that the prayers of others have given me new words to say, new praises to utter, and new friends to support me.

This journey led me to see that there are two kinds of prayer in the Bible: spontaneous individual prayers and communal prayers. The first kind of prayer, praying *in* the church, can be seen in the life of Brother Lawrence, who learned to pray constantly by learning to dwell in the presence of God. The widely read book *The Practice of the Presence of God* describes how he lived in God's presence and in constant communion with God. This type of prayer was a good fit with the tradition I grew up in.



*I have left off all devotions and prayers which are not required for me, and I occupy myself solely with keeping myself in God's holy presence. I do this simply by keeping my attention on God and by being generally and lovingly aware of Him. This could be called practicing the presence of God moment by moment, or to put it better, a silent, secret and nearly unbroken conversation of the soul with God.*

—BROTHER LAWRENCE

But my journey led me to discover the second kind of prayer, praying *with* the Church. This kind of prayer is usually

associated with prayer books. My first experience with a prayer book was with the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*, the most widely used Protestant prayer book. My wife's maternal grandmother's copy of the *BCP* sat on one of my bookshelves for years: Leather-bound, gilt edges. Onion-skin paper. Very nice looking. Occasionally I would pull it down and look through it—but not having been taught to use it, I found it confusing.

As I continued my study, however, I saw that prayer books are used in many traditions of the Church, and that they provide a means for Christians to live according to sacred rhythms just as Jesus himself did. My instinctive fear of repetition gave way to an understanding that sometimes I just didn't have the words to say what was on my heart, but the "old, old" words of prayer books could express my thoughts better than I could by myself.

My journey showed me that I was following in the footsteps of millions of God's people who have gone before me. "Come along," Jesus, the Bible, and the Church say, "and you'll discover what many are discovering today: Praying *with* the Church can re-shape the soul."

## MY OWN PRACTICE

So many people are interested in using prayer books that some new ones have appeared. These can, as it were, open the door from your own *Portiuncola* into the wider basilica.

A few years back I began using Phyllis Tickle's modern prayer book, *The Divine Hours*. Whenever Kris and I are

together in the morning or evening, we pull out *The Divine Hours* and read from it aloud and we "say our prayers." When I am traveling, I carry a copy with me, and I pray *with* the Church—sometimes in airports or hotels. On days I teach, I get to my office, turn on the lights, start my computer, and then sit down in a comfortable chair in my office and read the morning prayers for that day before heading to class.

And I always do this aloud, or at least at a mumble level, making sure I am doing more than just glancing at the psalms or prayers. Glancing at prayers is the fastest path toward vain repetitions I know of. For that reason, the church has always advocated reading our prayers aloud so we will go more slowly and concentrate more on what we are saying. Prayer books are designed to be read aloud.

I use *The Divine Hours*, but I also change prayer books. Sometimes I use *A Manual of Eastern Orthodox Prayers*, and sometimes I use *The Liturgy of the Hours*. Sometimes I use *Benedictine Daily Prayer*, and sometimes I use *The Book of Common Prayer*. Sometimes I use *The Glenstal Book of Prayer* or *The Little Book of Hours: Praying with the Community of Jesus*. Sometimes I use other books. You no doubt may find yet others. In my own practice, I establish variety as a rule. Each prayer book invites me to pray with the Church with set prayers at fixed hours.

This book is designed to help you learn how to use the great prayer books of the Church. It is not designed to eliminate spontaneous prayers but to complement that kind of prayer with the inclusive, beautiful prayers that the Church has prayed for centuries.

If you want to pray better, I can think of no better way than to learn to pray *with* the Church by using its prayer books. Certainly, we need to pray whatever is on our heart, when we want to—that is spontaneous prayer. But, the Church has also prayed together, and this book encourages us to learn to pray also with the church.



*A new study about the prayer life of pastors, who are our supposed to be our leaders in prayer, shows that about half of them are dissatisfied with their prayer lives. In fact, only nine percent of younger pastors are satisfied with their times of prayer. Many dissatisfied pastors are discovering that a life of prayer is stimulated by the use of prayer books.*

## COME, JOIN ALONG

In this book I'm inviting you to leave your own *Portiuncola* two or three times a day to join the saints of God in the church—so we can learn to pray together, not only alone *in* the church, but also together *with* the Church.