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Liturgy of the Hours and the Moral Life

INTRODUCTION

The philosopher Schopenhauer has an oft-quoted story about the way porcupines get through a cold winter. To keep warm they huddle together. Then they pull away because their sharp quills prick each other. But then they get cold so they keep adjusting their closeness and distance to keep from freezing and from getting pricked by the other porcupines, the source of both comfort and pain.

The porcupine metaphor is an apt one for the way we live as American Catholics in a pluralistic society. We cherish values of tolerance, diversity, independence, and liberty, as well as community and justice. In affirming the value of pluralism the Second Vatican Council opted for a dialogical presence of the Church in the world, offering to engage in conversation about the problems afflicting humanity. There is a very clear acknowledgment that the Church has something to learn as well as something to teach, and that other institutions and other fields of study have something to contribute to the well-being of society. A dialogical presence in the world implies the ability to engage in conversation, which suggests an open-minded and open-ended discourse together—"open-minded in the sense of grappling with each others' meanings, and open-ended in the sense of encouraging an ongoing exploration of new possibilities" (Magill and Hoff 1995, 1).

Once we become engaged in the world with others, however, we are often pricked by the different values and opinions that may threaten our own deeply held beliefs. Unity with diversity does not always appear to be something to celebrate. Consider the experience of Benedict Ashley, O.P., one of the participants in a conversation on conservative Catholics in America organized by R. Scott Appleby and Mary Jo Weaver. For Ashley, pluralism is a threat to truth and unity: "The notion that there are many valid perspectives on religious truth implies that these perspectives cannot be reduced to a single, objectively true theology and seems to contradict the biblical 'one Lord, one faith, one

baptism' (Eph 4:5)" (Ashley 1995, 63). Weaver reports that some of the "religious right" refused to join in the dialogue, insisting there would have to be agreement on the existence of absolute truth attainable through the Church. Others felt that there was no need to participate in conversation because there is no resolution to controversy. In essence "we have nothing in common" (Weaver, Appleby 1995, 8). One could imagine a similar rejection to an offer of dialogue emerging from left-wing Catholics who perceive nothing in common with those on the right. Yet, as a communal people we recognize the need for each other, however we differ, and so we keep adjusting our closeness and distance to keep from being isolated and in order to preserve the truth as we perceive it.

What does all this talk about porcupines and prickliness and pluralism have to do with the moral life and the Liturgy of the Hours? In this essay I will consider this question in relation to the Christian moral life as a call-response dynamic. I aim to show how the Liturgy of the Hours keeps the dialogical nature of morality before our eyes and has the potential to shape a worldview and form dispositions as a response of praise to God as Creator and Lord. Undergirding this thesis is a fundamental conviction that we can not dissociate liturgy and the moral life, that how we live our daily lives is integrally connected with the way we worship. While acknowledging that we cannot place too many burdens on the liturgy, the focus here will be on the ways that the Liturgy of the Hours impacts the moral life.

THE MORAL LIFE AS A CALL-RESPONSE DYNAMIC

As "beings-in-the-world-with-others," as Heidegger put it, a response to the other is necessary and unavoidable. We are confronted with an "ethical demand" by reason of the very nature of our life together, a life that places us in the midst of others whose very presence demands a response. Thus, the call is unavoidable even if the response remains undetermined. For the ethical demand arising from recognition of the other does not take away one's freedom to respond appropriately (other-directed) or inappropriately (self-centered). In this regard, as Enda McDonagh describes it in *Gift and Call*, the moral life can be understood as a call-response dynamic. The other who is the source of the moral call is a different fountain of knowledge, understanding, freedom, initiative, activity, and love—an other than oneself.

For the Christian believer the moral call arising from the encounter with the other is always also a beckoning from God (Matthew 25). The Christian moral life is first and foremost a response to the experience of value of the other who is a medium of God's revelation in history

(*imago Dei*). It is a call to discipleship, an invitation to respond to the graciousness of life, the gift of persons who are, in the eyes of faith, incarnations of grace. Discipleship is not primarily a matter of human achievement but is a response to the in-breaking presence of God realized most fully in Jesus Christ. Discipleship requires a creative and total response, but the gift is primary. McDonagh refers to this way of understanding the moral life as a matter of “creative receptivity” or a “receptive creativity” (McDonagh 1982, 37, 43). That is, morality is first and foremost a response to the empowering and transforming gift of the Spirit. It is “not something we create but something by which we are claimed” (Wadell 1989, 15). In essence, what is called for is thanksgiving for the gift and celebration of its presence.

There is an ambiguous character to the call-response dynamic. The source of the moral call can be experienced as gift or threat. The other is a gift-presence embodying a call because the person is freely given, not a product of one’s own creation or achievement. In its gift-character, the other draws us out of ourselves, enables self-transcendence, and sets us free to respond. The gift of the other implies an invitation to enter his or her worldview. It involves a call to move out of and beyond the narrow confinement of the self, beyond one’s limited perceptions or biases in recognition and exploration of diverse points of view. Thus, as gift, the encounter with the world of another has the potential for transformation.

Experience is quick to reveal that the other, as different, may be perceived as “threat provoking fear” rather than complementary gift inviting acceptance and respect (McDonagh 1979, 72). This may be due to a fear of the other as taking over or upsetting one’s controlled and controllable world. Or, a person or group may be seen as threat because one cannot tolerate the existence of those who challenge or call into question one’s own viewpoint or values. The temptation to turn gifts into threats is the heritage of sin. As the heirs of countless generations of fear, suspicion, distrust, and mistreatment within the human race we find it difficult to assume attitudes of openness and trust and to reestablish community. Nevertheless, as McDonagh insists, the moral challenge of the call to discipleship is to enable the gift to triumph over the threat and toward genuine communion and mutual enrichment:

The concept of otherness for all its importance must not obscure community as the context in which it exists; communication as the method of recognising, respecting and responding to it; communion or deeper community as the crowning achievement of

response. Without the “commun-” dimension, human otherness could provide no insight into the experience of morality. And the “commun-” dimension seems necessarily reciprocal. To be in community, to communicate, to achieve communion—all involve mutual recognition, respect and response (McDonagh 1975, 32).

There is a clear reciprocity and common bondedness, however elementary, implied in the call-response dynamic, for each is called to recognize, respect, and respond to the other as a member of the human community. Otherness and response to it are complemented by communion and solidarity in the context of which difference may be engaged and celebrated (McDonagh 1982, 93).

What might this understanding of the moral life have to do with the Liturgy of the Hours? We shall consider how each of the three essential elements of the ethic—the communal context, the method of communication, and the celebration of otherness in communion and solidarity—are integral to the liturgy.

COMMUNITY AS CONTEXT

Worship is something Christians do together, not just from religious duty, but because it is the primary communal mode of remembering and expressing Christian faith and the Christian story. It is the means whereby the community confirms its life as derived from Christ and shared with each other. As such, the Liturgy of the Hours is a communal response to God; it is prayer in common.¹ In his introduction to the *General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours (GILH)*, Cardinal Annibale Bugnini emphasized this point:

The awareness of the Liturgy of the Hours as something belonging essentially to the whole Church, has, regrettably, hardly been in evidence for many centuries. It had come to be considered as the preserve of religious and clergy. Liturgical services however are not private functions, or reserved to groups of elites, they are celebrations of the Church, which is the “sacrament of unity” (Bugnini 1971, 11).

In fact, the tradition reveals that prayer together and at certain hours of the day was common practice for the early church (Acts 1:14;

¹The Liturgy of the Hours is referred to as the Divine Office and also as Common Prayer. Since the whole of the Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office is prayer and within the liturgy there are prayers, in order to avoid confusion I shall capitalize “prayer” when it is used to indicate the Liturgy of the Hours and use the lower case when speaking of the various prayers within the liturgy.

2:42; 4:24; 12:5; Eph 5:19-21). About the second century there begins to appear a pattern of daily prayer during various hours of the day and night, with the morning and evening designated as the principal times for the people to gather for prayer. It is recorded that in the description of her visit to Jerusalem, the fourth-century pilgrim Egeria witnessed that as an ordinary practice, large numbers of lay people gathered for daily prayer. A.-M. Roguet, O.P., notes that in Western Christian antiquity, while celebration of the Mass was not everywhere a daily occurrence, daily worship was the norm (Roguet 1977, 93). These prayers in common gradually took on a more definite shape in the Liturgy of the Hours and came to be referred to as the cathedral or public office to distinguish it from its monastic counterpart. Briefly stated, the purpose of the cathedral office was to sanctify the beginning and the end of the day for ordinary people and it was to be celebrated in common. The early monastic office tended to aim more at continuous prayer throughout the day and night and was more of a quiet meditation on Scripture than a public liturgical ceremony of the cathedral type.

The interrelationship of these two forms of prayer and the ultimate dominance of the monastic influence is a long and complex story beyond the scope or purpose of this essay to recount. It is sufficient to note, however, that the Liturgy of the Hours is traditionally the public prayer of the people. Robert Taft, S.J., states this point clearly:

The privatization of the office into a breviary-become-clerical-prayer book is certainly not traditional, for traditionally the Liturgy of the Hours is something a group celebrates, not something an individual reads. . . . As with so much else in the history of the Church, what was once the property of the entire People of God has degenerated into a clerical residue, only reminiscent of what it was meant to be (Taft 1986, 362).

Thus, the *GILH* recommends the common celebration of the Divine Office:

The example and command of the Lord and his apostles to persevere in continuous prayer are not to be considered a mere legal rule. Prayer expresses the very essence of the Church as a community. . . . Community prayer, therefore, has a special dignity since Christ himself said: "Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them" (Mt 18:20). . . . The Liturgy of the Hours, like the other liturgical services is not a private function, but pertains to the whole body of the Church. It manifests the Church and has an effect upon it. . . . As often as the communal

celebration may take place with the presence and active participation of the faithful, it is to be preferred to individual and quasi-private celebration (nos. 9, 20, 33).

Furthermore, the *GILH* does not limit the context of communal celebration of the liturgy to the parish, but it may take place “wherever groups of the laity are gathered and whatever the reason which has brought them together” (no. 27).

COMMUNICATION AS THE METHOD

As “liturgy” the Liturgy of the Hours recalls and re-presents the story of God’s self-communication to humankind and humankind’s response to God. It is not monologic in form but dialogic, our response to God’s initiative (*GILH*, no. 14). The gift that summons and empowers belongs no less to the structure of the liturgy than it does to the structure of moral living. Liturgy is first and foremost an activity of God in Christ. It is one of the ways the Church responds in praise, surrender, and thanksgiving to God’s call to conversion, to reconciliation, and to union with one another. Through the liturgy Christians are enabled to recognize, give thanks for, and cooperate with this basic structure of human existence as it derives from and tends toward God. This “eternal doxology” is integral to the liturgy and is not just our response, but also the eternally repeated call. It is both God’s unending saving activity and our prayerful response in faith and commitment (Taft 1986, 343). Further, as Mark O’Keefe notes:

In the liturgy, Christians acknowledge and celebrate one another as sons and daughters of God and thus as brothers and sisters to one another. People who participate in the celebration of the liturgy, then, are empowered to see other persons as gift with a greater clarity and to respond to their needs with a greater urgency. . . . Liturgy, therefore, lends new power to the foundational response to other persons that is the heart of all good moral action (O’Keefe 1995, 99).

The relationship with God at the heart of all liturgy is analogous to an ongoing conversation with a friend. Just as words and gestures are the language of human communication, so to with divine self-communication in liturgy and sacraments. While not diminishing the importance of informal, spontaneous prayer, Nathan Mitchell observes that the Liturgy of the Hours is structured in order to ensure optimum conditions for both communication and participation with a

minimum of distortion. He writes: "Like other forms of worship the Liturgy of the Hours is a multi-leveled act of communication. Its levels include the *verbal* (short readings, psalms, songs, etc), the *non-verbal* (gesture, movement, silence), the *overt* (varieties of external expression) and the *covert* (internal moods and dispositions), the *interpersonal* and the *transcendent*" (Mitchell 1977, 22). To exemplify this multileveled form of communication, consider the rhythm and structure of morning (Lauds) and evening (Vespers) prayer, which are designated in the *GILH* as the "chief hours" of the Office (nos. 29, 37, 40). In placing the emphasis on these "two hinges" of the Liturgy of the Hours, the *GILH* seems to have revived the emphasis on the cathedral or public office.

Morning prayer is designed and structured to sanctify the day; the evening is celebrated as a prayer of thanksgiving. Although they have a different character, these two prayers have a similar dialogical structure and elements (*GILH*, nos. 37–54). With the opening prayer we are initiated into the conversation and given the grounding of good dialogue as we ask that our lips, ears, minds, and hearts be opened. It is an invitation to sing the praises of God and to hear God's voice. The opening prayer begins the style of communication that marks the Liturgy of the Hours. That is, the conversation is structured in a responsorial fashion, with time for speaking, listening, and responding as we move from the opening prayer to pray the psalms and canticles, to listen to the reading, to reflect, to offer intercessions, and to join in the Lord's Prayer and concluding prayer.

To prevent the liturgy from becoming overly wordy, a prudent use of silence is recommended, particularly after the psalms and reading. As the *GILH* makes clear, it is not sufficient to listen to the word of God; we must understand it and assimilate it in order to engage in a conversation between the people and God (nos. 56, 201). Silence is also needed to promote active and "conscious" participation. To participate means that each one should play his or her part as members of an organic community. Like the different parts of a symphony, each person has his or her role in contributing to the harmony of the whole. As Roguet notes, "We do not participate merely by acting, speaking or singing: we also participate by keeping quiet, by waiting, or by listening when it is the time for someone else to act or to speak" (Roguet 1971, 128). Conscious participation means one is not passive and resigned as if going through the ordeal of some unpleasant duty. Rather, it is an activity that is in some way creative. Like good conversation in general, there needs to be a rhythmic balance of speaking and listening. Just as a person who talks incessantly can stunt dialogue, so too,

may conversation be blocked by one who listens but offers little or nothing to further the communication.

While no moments of silence are specified in the liturgy, there is a considerable degree of flexibility and freedom of choice, particularly on weekdays, in arranging the Prayer (*GILH*, nos. 28, 189, 245–53). This liberty, however, is given within the stable framework noted above. In the *GILH* the importance of flexibility is made clear:

The Liturgy of the Hours should not be looked on as a beautiful moment of a past age, to be preserved almost unchanged in order to excite our admiration. On the contrary, it should come to life again with new meaning and grow to become once more the sign of a living community (no. 273).

Along with this rhythmic balance of word, reflection, silence, gesture, and symbol there is an experience of variety in the liturgical roles, as well as opportunities for leadership of the laity that sets up a mutual and respectful dialogue among the participants.

Before concluding this section, some comment on the dialogical style of the psalms will highlight the method of communication. The psalms speak of how one ought to converse with God and others. They are sung or said alternately between choirs or as a response to a leader(s). There is a rhythm to the psalms that expresses both sides of the conversation of faith between God and Israel. As Walter Brueggemann explains this is seen most clearly in the lament psalms, which make the important point that “everything must be brought to speech and everything brought to speech must be addressed to God” (Brueggemann 1984, 52). These psalms speak of the disarray of the relationship, a disorientation that concerns both partners in various ways. Conversation is integral to righting a relationship that has gone amiss. This is so because in Israel life is always understood covenantally and dialogically. Thus, one party cannot do all the talking because a monologue does not evoke a response.

CELEBRATION OF OTHERNESS IN COMMUNITY AND SOLIDARITY

In examining this third element of a call-response dynamic and its relationship to the Liturgy of the Hours I will first introduce an explanation of solidarity and then comment on the interaction of a communal vision and the virtue of solidarity.

The most comprehensive understanding of solidarity is given to us by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis: On Social*

Concern. While he has drawn on a century of Catholic social thought for which solidarity is integral, this pope first names it as a virtue. As a Christian virtue solidarity is a “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good . . . because we are all responsible for all” (no. 38). Further, solidarity is integrally related to charity:

It seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. . . . It is clearly linked to the Christian ideal of unity or communion. This unity reflects the intimate life of the Trinity and discloses a new model of the human race, which must ultimately inspire our solidarity (no. 40).

In other writings, John Paul explains that the virtue of solidarity unites mercy, love, and justice. It binds us to those who are close to us, to society as a whole, and to the world community. This is not a “solidarity-against” but a constructive “solidarity-for,” which requires collaboration. As Marie Vianney Bilgrien points out, for John Paul collaboration is constitutive of solidarity because to achieve it necessarily involves some conflict, opposition, and efforts toward consensus in decision-making. Among the various components of collaboration, dialogue is one of the most important aspects. For “as long as the dialogue continues there is an opportunity to work together and find solutions. If the dialogue does not continue because of differences and divisions, the whole collaborative effort ceases. Then there is no possibility for solidarity or unity, and the result is separation, division, alienation” (Bilgrien 1995, 101).

We see in this explanation that the virtue of solidarity is linked with the vision of unity or communion. How can the Liturgy of the Hours foster both this vision and virtue?

A COMMUNAL VISION

An important part of the moral task is to learn to see rightly, to develop a keen sense of perception, to be aware of the newness and transformation that is possible despite the tragedy and conflict that too often permeate reality. To fail to see correctly leaves us with a perspective that admits of only limited community (with “our own”), with restricted possibilities of change in ourselves or others, and with little hope that human life together can be experienced as gift and not threat. As Philip Keane maintains, the discipline of vision is an exercise of imagination, for it often involves a “letting go” of preconceived notions in order to look deeply at reality to see it as it really is. Imagination is that creative,

poetic faculty that provides us with the capacity to relate diverse experiences so as to make sense of our world. With imagination

we suspend judgment about how to unite the concrete and the abstract. We let the two sides of our knowing play with one another. By allowing this interplay between the two aspects of our knowing, we get a much deeper chance to look at what we know, to form a vision of it (Keane 1984, 81).

The psalms, which assume a dominant place in the Liturgy of the Hours, are formative of an imaginative vision. As poetry the psalms embody evocative, metaphorical, and symbolic language that delights in ambiguity. This impressionistic and creative kind of speech holds surprise and may create new and diverse ways of perceiving the world. As Walter Brueggemann writes: "The language of the psalms permits us to be boldly anticipatory about what may be, as well as discerning about what has been" (Brueggemann 1982, 29). He further points out that to engage in the dialogue of the psalms requires effort, as does all good communication between people. For the psalms are filled with metaphors that are rooted in concrete reality. Yet the words are not descriptive but elastic, requiring the stretch of imagination to extend beyond the concrete to the universal. For example, consider the metaphor of "the protective wings of God," derived from the concrete observation of how little birds are safe under the protective wing of the mother hen:

Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings (17:8).
Be merciful to me, O God . . . for in you I take refuge,
in the shadow of your wings I take refuge (57:2).

There is a yearning for safety, well-being, and communion with God. This image may be discerned as acknowledging that the resources for life are not found in ourselves but in God. It embodies an openness to a new purpose and a reliance upon the protective concern of another.

In Psalm 27 the metaphor of "an army encamped" refers to the concrete experience of being threatened by war and enemies yet trusting in God. Whatever the threats may be in our lives, we need not fear or resist engagement with those who seem to be "in the enemy camp" because of trust in God's protection.

Though an army encamp against me
my heart would not fear.
Though war break out against me
even then would I trust (27:3).

And in the metaphorical stanza, “like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is yearning for you my God” (42:1), we are asked to reflect upon how we take God for granted. It is filled with yearning for God, the source of sustenance and life.

Praying the psalms requires an attentiveness to language, a cultivation of the imagination in order to bring our own experience to the psalms while permitting it to be disciplined by the speech of the psalms. Conversely, we need to allow the poetry to reshape our sensitivities and to fill our minds with new pictures and images that may redirect our lives. Thus, regular and repeated engagement with the psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours can bring about a more open and flexible approach to life and to others because, as Mary Collins maintains, “with such words regularly placed on our lips, corresponding sentiments form gradually in our hearts. In this way the psalm excerpts become primer and tutor, expanding and guiding our religious sensibilities” (Collins 1992, 291).

The metaphor of light over darkness is central to and permeates the psalms as well as other prayers in the Liturgy of the Hours (*GILH*, no. 16). For example, in the book of *Christian Prayer* we find in morning prayer a renewal of our commitment to Christ by consecrating the day through thanks and praise with the symbol of light. In the evening we begin with the reminder that “Christ is the light of the world.” With the psalms we are called to “cast off darkness, put on light” (Psalm 36); and we pray to the Lord who “is my light and my help” (Psalm 27). As Taft notes, anyone who “walks in the light” and claims to live in communion with God must live as Jesus did in accord with God’s command to love one another, in loving communion with one another (1 John 2:5-6). “And since we celebrate what we are, and our core reality is that we have been saved by the saving death and resurrection of Jesus, the rising sun calls to mind that true Sun of Justice in whose rising we receive the light of salvation” (Taft 1986, 353).

Being in communion with God means that we live no longer in darkness but in the light, that we share a common life, bonded to one another. The illumination of light, then, has moral and communitarian dimensions, for living in light implies loving our brothers and sisters; not to do so is to remain in darkness (1 John 3:11). To love darkness over light is what Bernard Lonergan describes as “scotosis,” which produces a blind spot or “scotoma.” It has to do with the repression or rejection of an unwanted insight that might provoke further questions and complementary insights which would challenge a person’s current viewpoints and behavior and therefore call for change. When an insight is unwanted, censorship is operative at the pre-conscious level

to exclude from consciousness those unwanted images (Kelleher 1992, 131). The question the Christian story poses is: What moral vision is really moral blindness in my life?

Shared life in union with God is the source of holiness. To become holy—an aim of the Prayer—has to do with a growing awareness that all creation is graced because of the incarnation and there is oneness of Christian life expressed as the body of Christ. The Liturgy of the Hours is profoundly Eucharistic in that it brings us into communion with the Church and with Christ, which is exemplified in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup (*GILH*, no. 12). Thus, it can be said that the daily Office is a “kind of spinning-out of the Eucharist through the day” (Guiver 1988, 191). This means that interaction with others “is one of mutual acceptance, hospitality and dialogue, and that it extends beyond the members of the assembly to all humanity” (Dallen 1991, 301).

VIRTUE OF SOLIDARITY

To become a person of virtue requires formative training and habitual practice. Thomas Aquinas notes that all virtue is a habit or disposition acquired through repeated acts over time, which inclines a person to act in one characteristic way rather than another (*ST I-II*, q. 55, a. 1; *ST I-II*, q. 49, a. 4). After sufficient regular practice, we are able to more spontaneously and skillfully act in accord with the virtue. It is like learning to play the piano or any other musical instrument. What was difficult to play becomes easy with practice, and then we move to the next level and the process is repeated. As habitual and patterned prayer the Liturgy of the Hours is a “characterizing activity,” engaging people in the stories and ritual that shape how they are to be disposed toward and view the world. Through a complex symbolic pattern of prayer and gestures in its ritual actions, Christian worship both forms vision and expresses dispositions belonging to the life of faith in God. For “to pray is to become a living text before God. In this sense . . . meaning what we pray involves sharing a form of life in which the affections and dispositions are oriented toward God” (Saliers 1989, 181).

There are at least three ways that regular participation in the Liturgy of the Hours can form us as a people disposed to solidarity. First, as a response of praise and thanksgiving to the Trinitarian God the Prayer is an invitation to share in God’s inner life of self-giving love. As Augustine argued again and again, God loves because that is the divine nature, not because creation deserves it. For Augustine love is the bond between the lover and beloved, with God as the other who is loved. God’s own life is an ever-living communication

in love, an unending exchange, always in movement, because the divine life of love is constituted through such interchange and activity. Thus, solidarity is grounded in the very foundational claim about the nature of God and the nature of being, that we are to give ourselves away in relationships of love for we are created in the image of God, who is a community of love. The trinitarian metaphor of relationship has its correlative at the level of human interpersonal relationships as a response to otherness. Modeled on the Trinitarian image, relationships of mutuality require justice and love as their precondition. Justice cares for the establishment of right relationships, and worship is the celebration and concrete expression of right relationships (Hughes 1991, 41). As worship of the trinitarian God, the Liturgy of the Hours helps us recognize our bondedness as a people of justice who not only tolerate, but try to incorporate dissonant points of view. For “when the Church gathers it does so in order to imagine what the world would be like if we believed that the justice of God has become flesh; to rehearse the Justice of God until we get it right” (Koernke 1992, 37).

Second, the intercessory prayer brings us into solidarity with all peoples of the world. As the liturgy is concerned with the unity of the Church’s prayer, intercession is not simply a “praying-for but also a praying-with” (Guiver 1988, 172). In the morning, prayers are invoked to consecrate or commend the day to God; at evening time intercessions are for the various needs of the Church and the world. Christ is in the midst of the people praying with and for them and, just as Christ identifies with all humanity, especially with the suffering and forsaken, so too are the intercessory prayers focused on our solidarity with the world. Consider a few examples from the book of *Christian Prayer*:

May we seek those things which are beneficial to our brothers and sisters, without counting the cost. . . . Grant that we may progress today in your love, and that all things may work together for our good and the good of all. . . . Lord, be the refuge of the poor, their help in distress. . . . Enlighten all legislators to enact laws in the spirit of wisdom and justice. . . . Merciful God, hear the cries of the dying, comfort them with your presence.

Donald Saliers highlights four aspects of intercessory prayer that constitute its “grammar.” (1) In praying with and for others we encounter dimensions of ourselves. It requires an integrity about who we are in relation to others, people of empathy and compassion. (2) It is

only in and through solidarity with those in need that we can mean what we pray in intercession. (3) We gain a “moral intentionality” in asking God to remember those for and with whom we pray. Commending others to the grace and mercy of God requires the development of a capacity learned over time and circumstances to trust God and to be attentive to God’s hidden ways with the world. (4) There needs to be some experience of the reality of others and their needs included in the intercessory prayer. In other words, a connection between prayer and life, not seen in opposition but understanding one’s whole life as a prayer, a continual self-offering in love to God with others (Saliers 1989, 184).

Finally, the Prayer brings us into communion with the saints, which expresses the reality of communion with God and all others, that race, nationality, class, gender, even space and time pose no limitations within the shared life of people. As a metaphor for the mystical body of Christ, the communion of saints entails a relationship with Christ and all others, living or dead. The “supernatural” sharing of the communion of saints offers an analogy for the way earthly society should be structured, as a community of solidarity. As Michael and Kenneth Himes write:

Being attuned to the communion of saints promotes attention to the identity of being a fellow believer with others past, present, future. . . . One of the potential benefits of such an identity is that it fosters a sense of solidarity with those whom we do not know personally; it suggests that solidarity should not be limited to the immediate group near at hand (Himes and Himes 1993, 167).

In addition, the saints are important for the moral life as examples or exemplars: as examples of charity, justice, honesty, and as persons who show a pattern of living that cannot be captured in one virtue. Saints also remind us that we share with others a tradition, a cause by which we are linked with millions of others who have gone before us. The community of saints implies a bond between those now living and those who are dead, thus infusing the present with importance, for we see ourselves as part of something much larger, part of a drama that is more than our own story.

Since the celebration of the saints as solemnities, feasts, or memorials is an integral component of the Prayer (*GILH*, nos. 218–9), this bondage occurs in several ways. For example, while it offers a good deal of flexibility, the Prayer does require that the final intention of the intercessions is always for the dead (*GILH*, no. 186). And the morning

and evening canticles of Zachariah and Mary's Magnificat are prayers of remembering and memorial. They bridge the past, present, and future as well as offer a shared perspective and common outlook on reality. Furthermore, the psalms are prayers of praise in the name of the whole body of Christ (*GILH*, no. 108). They incorporate the voice of the apostles and the communion of saints joined with the Church on earth (Baxendale 1993, 387).

CONCLUSION

In his commentary on the renewed Liturgy of the Hours Roguet asked: "Why would anyone want to reanimate this corpse?" (Roguet 1971, 77). His response was quite simply that the Divine Office is not a clerical or monastic preserve, but rather it belongs to all the Christian people. Roguet's desire to revive the liturgy as the people's prayer remains valid today, for little has changed in twenty-five years. Not only has the Office remained primarily the preserve of the clergy, but this form of prayer remains the "best kept secret" from most of the Catholic laity. An unfortunate consequence of this state of affairs is not only that we are functioning in a way that is not traditional, but we are losing out on a valuable resource for living the moral life in a pluralistic society.

The dynamic of gift and response that is the nature of the Prayer is analogous to the ethical demand of the moral life. As an experience of value and a beckoning from God, the encounter with another who is different from one's self calls minimally for a response of acceptance and respect. We are more apt to see the other as gift with greater clarity through participation in the Liturgy of the Hours as we celebrate our unity amidst diversity and through repeated prayers of praise and thanksgiving. The linkage between the Prayer and the moral life is evidenced in the three essential elements of the ethic. The call is experienced and the response is made in the context of community. As common prayer, the liturgy traditionally is a communal celebration and calls for a response of engagement and participation. The ritual of conversation—word, gesture, symbol, and silence—is analogous to good communication with others. We are invited to enter the dialogue with open eyes, ears, heart, and mind; to proceed in a rhythmic "back and forth" of listening, speaking, seeking to understand and grasp the meaning of the speech. One participates in the conversation in a creative, imaginative way with attentiveness, aware of the effort required to grasp the multi-layered meanings of language. The response is made with flexibility and freedom, yet within a structured dialogical framework. Moreover, otherness and response are complemented by a communal vision and the virtue of solidarity. The Prayer fosters an

imaginative and communal vision through the poetry of the psalms and metaphors such as light over darkness, the body of Christ, and trinitarian God. As a habitual and patterned prayer the Liturgy of the Hours also shapes the virtue of solidarity through the prayers of intercessions and life within the communion of saints.

The dialogical mindset and appropriate respect for the other, which is fostered, shaped, and refined through regular participation in the Liturgy of the Hours, can lead to sharpened abilities to practice civility in our public discourse. Learning the art of public conversation and the disciplines necessary for civil discourse are not direct aims of praying the liturgy, but such skills, so badly needed in our acrimonious society, may be valuable secondary benefits acquired through a practice of dialogue and regular communal prayer.

To return to the porcupine metaphor, we come together to celebrate our common bondedness in the midst of difficulties and struggles. To appropriately respond to others we keep adjusting our closeness and distance to establish right relationships and to keep from getting pricked by those who are different, who may challenge and call into question our deeply held beliefs and perceptions of the truth. Unlike the spinous hogs, however, the imagination enables us to experience alternative images previously unknown and helps us to recognize the ambiguity of life, that what may appear to be a threat may, in effect, be gift.

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