

# A PEOPLE'S BREVIARY

## Prayer for the People of God

The Liturgy of the Hours, or the Divine Office, which is the official daily prayer of the Church recited by the ordained and by religious communities in monasteries, is popularly known as the "Breviary." It is long, made up of nine canonical "hours," taking up to three hours a day when sung in choir and an hour when recited privately. It is complicated: it takes another book, called an "Ordo," even for professionals to do it correctly. It is *difficult*.

"A People's Breviary" is short. It is made up of two "hours," a longer Morning Prayer and a briefer Evening Prayer. It takes about 15 minutes a day to pray. It is simple, with no complex rules, no options, no getting lost, etc. Though all prayer takes effort, it is, relatively, *easy*.

But it is substantially very similar to the official Breviary. Both have three basic parts:

I. The Psalms. The biblical book of *Psalms* has long been called the "prayer book" or "hymn book" of the Church. These songs of prayer are the inspired word of God. In the old breviary we used to recite all 150 of them in Latin at breakneck speed each week. The revised modern breviary spreads them out over a month in a 4 week cycle. This People's Breviary does it each season, Winter, Spring, Summer & Fall, in a 13 week cycle.

II. The Readings. The official breviary has a set of readings for each day of the year, some Scripture, some history, tradition, official documents, etc. They complement the readings from Scripture used in the Mass of the day, which is the heart of the Office. This People's Breviary uses those Scriptures of the day, called the "Lectionary," for its readings. In the course of a year one gets to read an excellent and ecumenical condensation of the entire Bible.

III. The Prayers. The official breviary provides a selection of ancient hymns and prayers of the Church. "A People's Breviary" only gets you started with a short couplet, the Lord's Prayer, a meditation, a hymn, intercessions and prayers of your own for as long as you want or have time.

A word about the form: The Psalms have been translated as what they are: *hymns*, with stanzas, and regular lines, meter and rhyme like most hymns. The Wisdom literature, like all ancient wisdom literature, and the oracles of the Prophets are in blank verse. Even the historical portions of the Old Testament and the Letters of the New are rendered in verse in keeping with much of the oral tradition of their day, rather than the literal prose we mostly read in silence by ourselves. The Gospels contain both: prose for the narrative, while the solemn sayings of Jesus come out in memorable verse. While much effort was spent to reveal the beauty, power and intelligibility of the oral form, fidelity to the content of the original was never compromised. The best modern scholarship was consulted and heeded. Some explanatory introductions have been added to help the user pray the Word with more understanding and a paragraph or poem to start the meditation.

A People's Breviary is available in two editions: one online at [www.apeoplesbreviary.com](http://www.apeoplesbreviary.com) with the texts of the current day; and a printed edition (in 4 seasonal volumes, like the official breviary) that contains all the texts for every year, the feasts of the saints, and an index to the psalms.

If there is some younger prophet out there who feels the call to continue this work of bringing the Word of God to the World in this small way when I am gone, call me. It is not difficult and takes me about an hour a day. The parts, the translations of the psalms and readings are all available; the Church's calendar and hymns are too; the brief meditations could stand to be done by another hand. It will take some skill, some background and some time, but that will come with time.

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Meanwhile I am completing what will probably be my last two volumes of translations of the full books of "The Letters of Paul" (all thirteen), and "The catholic books of the New Testament: Hebrews to Revelation." Both were revelations to me in their new metric format.