

- The form should be — *intention - silent prayer - response*.
- The intention should be brief, inclusive and invite prayer, i.e. *For the sick*. rather than *Let us pray for the sick of our parish who are ill at this time: for Mrs Jones, Mr Smith, Sr. Mary...* Depending on the size of the group it may be sensitive to invite people to name people who are sick or to take another example name parts of the world that are longing for Christ's peace.
- The last intercession at Evening Prayer is traditionally for the dead.
- The intercessions are led by a second reader from the lectern, ambo or the assembly.
- Singing the response highlights the importance of prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. The response may be intoned by a cantor and repeated by all. The intercessions may also be sung.

The intentions of the sample intercessions are based on the Cycle of Prayer.

The Intercessions can be taken from the Divine Office.

Prayer and Reflection

*The word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.*

Psalm 32:4

*Your word is a lamp for my steps
and a light for my path.*

Psalm 118:105

*Let my prayer come before you like incense,
the raising of my hands like an evening oblation.*

Psalm 140:2

This leaflet is one a series of resources prepared by the Liturgy Office to accompany the publication of *Celebrating Sunday Evening Prayer* and to support parish celebrations of the Prayer of the Church. Excerpts from *Celebrating Sunday Evening Prayer* and this leaflet © 2006 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Excerpts from *The Psalms, a new translation* © 1963, The Grail, England. *Celebrating Sunday Evening Prayer* is published by Canterbury Press [www.scm-canterbury.co.uk]. Further resources can be found at www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Hours

**Liturgy
Office**
ENGLAND
& WALES

CELEBRATING SUNDAY EVENING PRAYER

A Guide for Readers

Evening Prayer is part of the ancient tradition of the Church.

Christians have always marked the morning and evening hours of the day with prayer. The earliest sources outside the New Testament tell us that they prayed the 'Our Father' at morning and evening. Other early documents tell us that they blessed the lighting of lamps at the hour of sunset by calling on Christ, the 'joyful light of God the Father.'

Still today, as the light of day dims, the Church gathers for her Evening Prayer, to offer thanksgiving to God for the gift of Christ, the light of the world.

In her prayer the Church also calls to mind her baptismal vocation to die to sin with Christ and live with him in holiness.

At Vatican II the Church urged that this ancient tradition of prayer should truly become once more the prayer of the whole Church. In particular it was said that:

*Pastors should see to it that the chief hours, vespers particularly,
are celebrated in common in church on Sundays and the more
solemn feasts.*
Sacrosanctum Concilium 100

The intention was to correct a tendency to see such prayer as more or less reserved to the clergy.

Over the past forty years, and especially since the texts have been published in English many other people have begun to pray Morning and Evening Prayer. However the published form of this prayer is sometimes seen as a little complex for those who do not pray the Office together every day.

Recently an adaptation of Evening Prayer has been prepared, firmly based on *The Divine Office* but better suited for parish use, and especially for weekly Sunday celebrations. *Celebrating Sunday Evening Prayer* has been authorised

for use in England and Wales by the Bishops' Conference Department for Christian Life and Worship

The use of this form of prayer provides a very healthy complement to the parish's celebration of the Eucharist, and helps it with the worthy keeping of Sunday, the Lord's Day.

Structure

The liturgy of Evening Prayer, sometimes known as Vespers, has the following basic format. There might be slight variations how your community chooses to celebrate Sunday Evening Prayer.

Introduction

- Hymn
- Opening Responses
- Opening Rite: Light *or*
- Opening Rite: Incense *or*
- Evening Thanksgiving

Psalmody

- Seasonal Psalm
followed by Psalm Prayer
- Second Psalm
[optional]
- New Testament Canticle

Word

- Scripture Reading
- Silence *or*
- Response
- Magnificat

Prayer

- Intercessions
- Lord's Prayer
- Concluding Prayer & Blessing

Ministry of Reader

All ministries are ministries of service, enabling the prayer of the community. CSEP, page 14

The reader will be sensitive to the style and content of the scripture, aware of the importance of good diction and have a simple manner of delivery. The Intercessions could be announced by a second reader.

Scripture Reading

The scripture reading at Evening Prayer is a time for reflection on the Word of God. At evening prayer it should usually be:

- from either the Old or New Testament excluding the Gospels.
- of moderate length and reflect the liturgical seasons.

It is recommended that the second reading of the Sunday eucharist is either repeated or that given in the Lectionary for another liturgical year (i.e. in year A that is the second readings of year B or C in the Lectionary cycle). This would give a pattern to the readings over a year and would also give a second hearing to a reading which is often neglected.

Performance

The reading may take place at a lectern, the ambo or from the reader's place, depending on the setting and the nature and scale of the assembly. It may help lead into silence if "This is the word of the Lord" is omitted. It should be proclaimed with a clear voice and be followed with sufficient time for reflection. The text should be read from a bible or a lectionary.

Intercessions

Intercessions should lead to prayer, they are invitations to pray, not the prayer itself. Although examples are provided, groups are encouraged to compose their own, following the guidelines below. Spontaneous prayer may also be included. It is simple and effective to invite people to pray their own petitions but in the style of the prepared intercessions. The sequence given in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* is a useful starting point: for the needs of the Church, for public authorities and the salvation of the world, for those oppressed by any need, for the local community (GIRM 70).