

Before beginning his messianic work and promulgating the New Law in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus prepares himself by prayer and fasting in the wilderness. Moses acted in a similar way before promulgating, in the name of God, the Old Law at Sinai; and Elijah traveled forty days in the wilderness to advance his mission of promoting the Law.

The Church, too, encourages us to seek spiritual renewal during the forty days of Lent. As the *Roman Missal* reads: “Lord, protect us in our struggle against evil. As we begin the discipline of Lent, make this day holy by our self-denial.”

Aside from Mass, Confession, and Holy Communion, perhaps one of the greatest ways of seeking spiritual renewal is by becoming familiar with what is known as the Liturgy of the Hours.

The Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office, is the daily prayer of the Church, marking the hours of each day and sanctifying the day with prayer. Each of the five canonical Hours includes selections from the Psalms that culminate in a scriptural proclamation. The two most important, or hinge, Hours are Morning and Evening Prayer. These each include a Gospel canticle: the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat*. Morning and Evening Prayer also include intercessions that flow from the scriptural proclamation, just as the Psalms prepare for it.

With time, the Liturgy of the Hours will become an important part of our parish’s prayer. Until then, a helpful article on the Liturgy of the Hours can be found on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Also, if one wishes to begin praying this prayer form, it may be found for free on *iBreviary*, which is available online or as a smartphone app.

“One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

Father Frei