

For the

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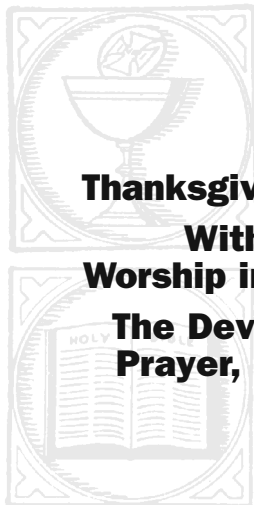
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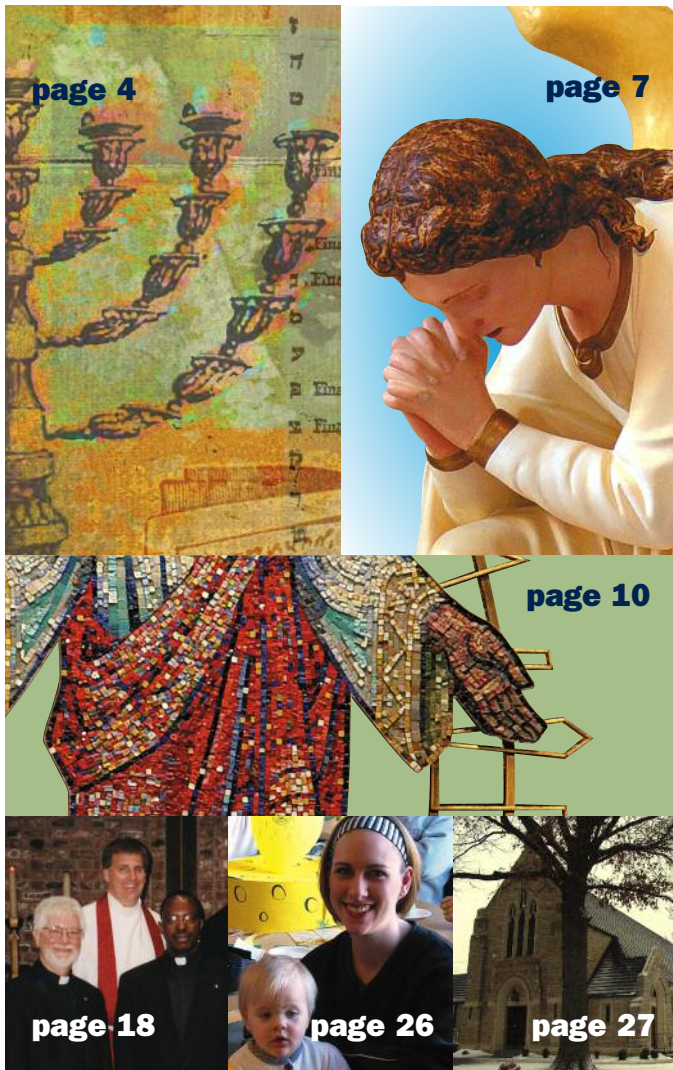
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FEATURES

4 Thanksgiving in the Old Testament

By the Rev. Chad Bird, Asst. Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

We don't get very far into the Scriptures before God breaks the silence with a four-word speech: "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3). After that, we continually encounter the God who speaks.

7 With Angels and Archangels: Worship in the Book of Revelation

By the Rev. Dr. Charles Gieschen, Assoc. Professor of Exegetical Theology and Chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

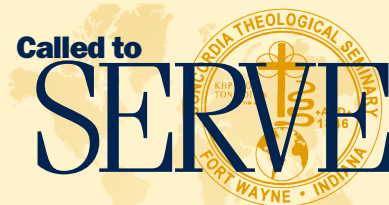
Heaven is understood too often as a faraway place with which Christians have no contact until after death. The Book of Revelation, however, helps us to see that heaven is not an "up there" and purely "future" reality, but an accessible and present reality that we participate in through the Divine Service.

10 The Devotional Life of Scripture, Prayer, Praise, and Thanksgiving

By the Rev. Dr. Arthur Just, Jr., Dean of the Chapel and Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

"Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples," asked one of Jesus' disciples (Luke 11:1). Jesus responded by teaching them the Lord's Prayer.

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The Devotional Life of Scripture, Prayer, Praise, and Thanksgiving

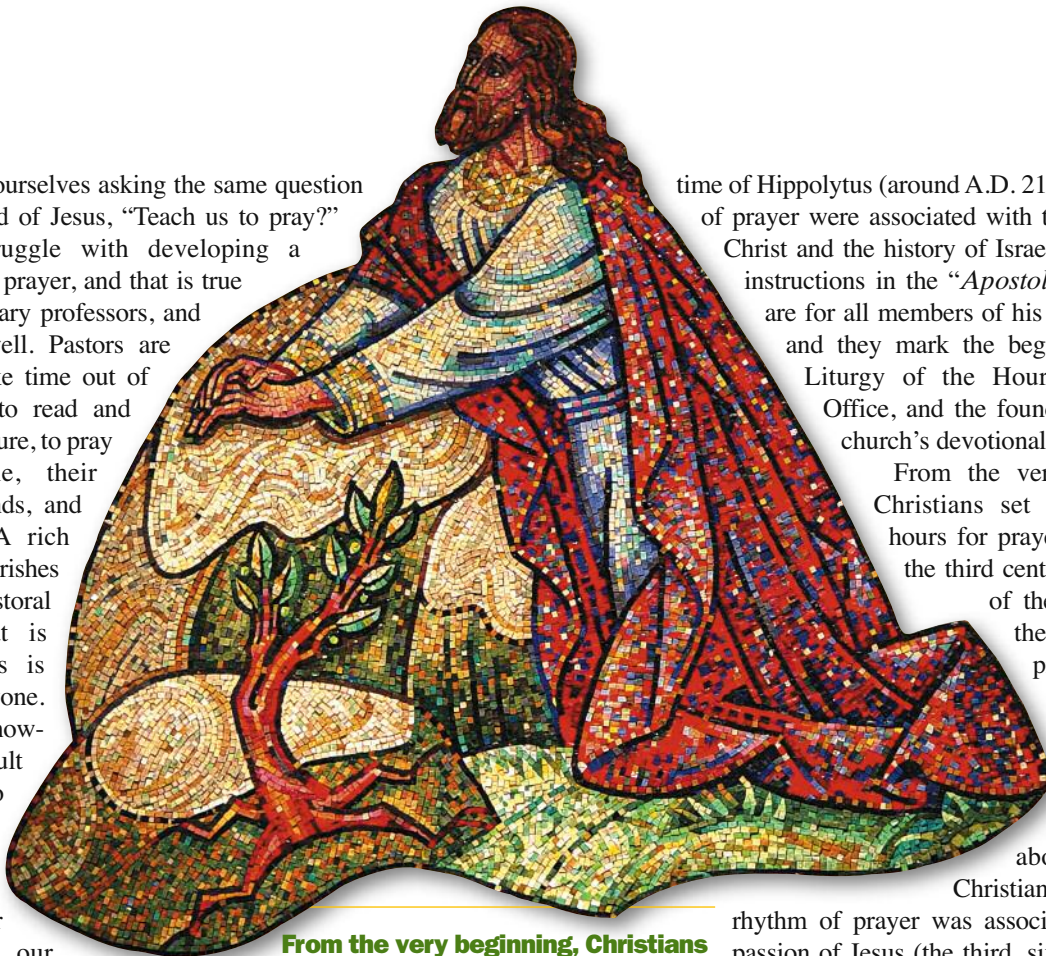
By the Rev. Dr. Arthur A. Just, Jr.

“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples,” asked one of Jesus’ disciples (Luke 11:1). Jesus responded by teaching them the Lord’s Prayer. Certainly, the disciples knew how to pray, for the center of the liturgical life of Israel was a continuous cycle of prayers based on a very simple prayer structure. There were three essential prayers in the worship of Israel: *blessing* God for His creation, *thanking* God for His revelation of mercy, and *petitioning* God to continue saving His people. When Jesus’ disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, they used the word for *petition*, that is, teach us how to petition the Father as You petition the Father. The Lord’s Prayer is the perfect prayer of petition, that is, the perfect way to ask God the Father for all the needs that we could possibly have in our lives. Martin Luther said that “the Lord’s Prayer is a prayer above all prayers, the greatest of all prayers, which has been taught by the greatest Master of all, in which all spiritual and bodily trouble is comprehended and which is the strongest consolation in all temptations, tribulations, and in the last hour” (WA *Tischreden* 5, no. 6288).

Do you find yourselves asking the same question the disciples asked of Jesus, “Teach us to pray?”

Most people struggle with developing a regularized life of prayer, and that is true for pastors, seminary professors, and seminarians as well. Pastors are encouraged to take time out of their busy lives to read and meditate on Scripture, to pray for their people, their family, their friends, and for the world. A rich devotional life nourishes pastors in their pastoral work. And what is good for pastors is helpful for everyone. In our busy lives, however, it is difficult for all of us to find those quiet, reflective moments to address our Father in heaven with our petitions. So often it seems that we do not know quite how to say what we want to say to Him. We do well to consider how Christians have struggled through the centuries to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). On Pentecost, after three thousand souls were added to the church through Holy Baptism, it says that “they devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to fellowship in the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.” Again, the word here for prayers is *petitionary* prayer, and most likely what they prayed that first Pentecost was the Lord’s Prayer.

From the beginning, early Christians prayed the Lord’s Prayer regularly. For example, in the *Didache*, a church order used by missionaries from Antioch to plant churches, written between 40 and 60 A.D., the faithful are instructed to pray the “Our Father” three times a day. Not only is the Lord’s Prayer *the prayer* for early Christians, but early on the main principle for a disciplined prayer life is simple: if one assigns hours for prayer, one will pray daily and regularly. Already in Rome during the



From the very beginning, Christians set aside certain hours for prayer. Already in the third century, the hours of the day formed the structure of prayer in the life of the believer. What is most remarkable about early Christians is that the rhythm of prayer was associated with the passion of Jesus (the third, sixth, and ninth hours), the death and resurrection of Christ (prayer at sunrise and sundown), and the last things (prayer before bedtime that looks forward to the end times).

time of Hippolytus (around A.D. 215) these hours of prayer were associated with the passion of Christ and the history of Israel. Hippolytus’ instructions in the “*Apostolic Tradition*” are for all members of his congregation, and they mark the beginning of the Liturgy of the Hours, the Daily Office, and the foundation for the church’s devotional life.

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rhythm of prayer was associated with the passion of Jesus (the third, sixth, and ninth hours), the death and resurrection of Christ (prayer at sunrise and sundown), and the last things (prayer before bedtime that looks forward to the end times). This is a strenuous regimen of prayer that the faithful were encouraged to attend to as part of their daily devotion to the Creator and Redeemer of all things.

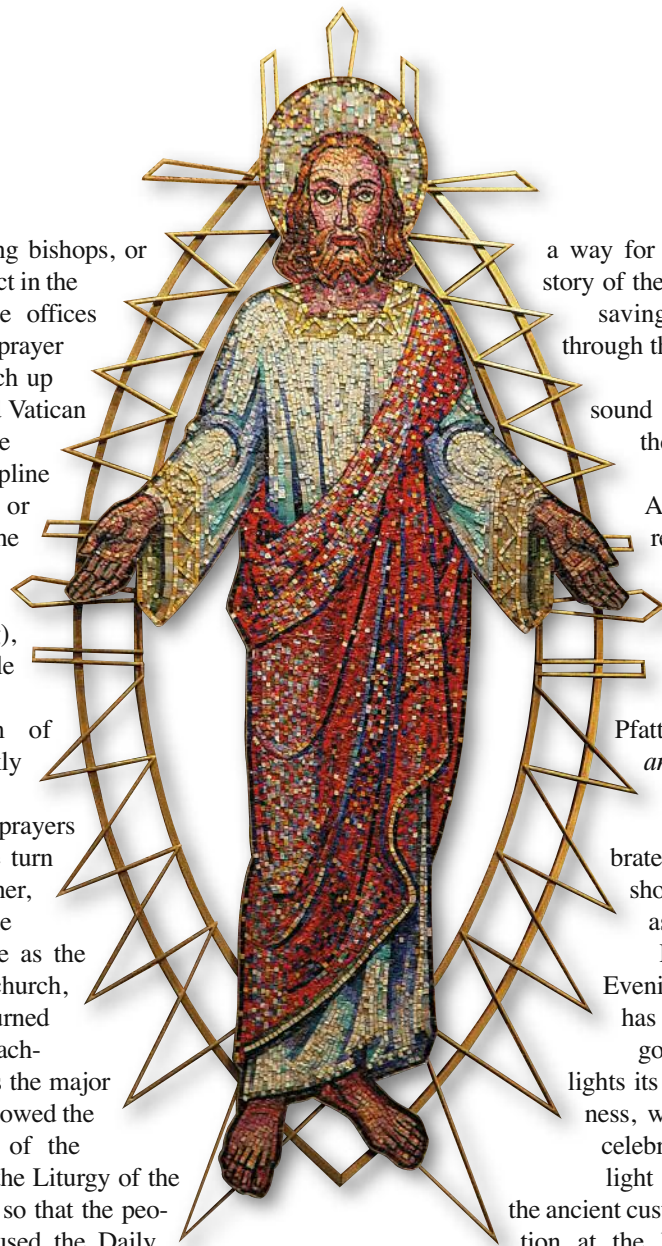
By the fourth century, Hippolytus’ suggestions became what James White calls “the cathedral office . . . [the] daily services in the chief church of a city for the instruction in the Word, praise of God, and common prayer of all Christians” (*James White, Introduction to Christian Worship* [Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980], 116). In this cathedral office, we see the origins of

our Matins and Vespers, our Morning and Evening Prayer, our Compline. For 130 years, from 330 to 460, this cathedral office became the foundation for the devotional life of such major church fathers as Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Cyril and Athanasius of Alexandria, and Cyril of

Jerusalem who were busy being bishops, or theologians, or both. St. Benedict in the sixth century formalized these offices into the monastic pattern of prayer that lasted in the Roman Church up until the 1960's and the Second Vatican Council, i.e., "Vespers (at the end of the working day), Compline (before bedtime), Nocturns or Vigil or Matins (middle of the night), Lauds (at daybreak), Prime (shortly thereafter), Terce (middle of the morning), Sext (at noon), and None (middle of afternoon)" [White, 119].

The Benedictine rhythm of prayer was rigorous, and quickly became disassociated from the laity and became the exclusive prayers of the clergy. This unfortunate turn of events was reversed by Luther, who restored the Liturgy of the Hours back to its proper place as the prayer services of the whole church, laity and clergy alike. He returned the reading of Scripture and preaching back to its original place as the major part of the liturgy from which flowed the Psalms, hymns, and prayers of the Daily Office. The canticles of the Liturgy of the Hours were also made simpler so that the people could sing them. Luther used the Daily Office as the foundation for his own devotional life and his prayers.

We would be in good company if our private devotional life found its place within the context of the church's common prayer. To do this, all we need to do is to return to using the Daily Offices as the foundation for our devotional life. After all, James White's description of the cathedral office contains the essence of what we might consider the components of our devotional life, i.e., "instruction in the Word, praise of God, and common prayer," and the theological rationale of the Divine Office is worth considering as we contemplate our own devotional life. The Liturgy of the Hours arose early in the Christian Church as



There is something fundamentally sound about the theology of the Liturgy of the Hours that calls us back to it as the source of our private devotional life. Morning Prayer and Matins celebrate the newness of the morning that shows the triumph of light over darkness as Christ triumphed over the grave as He rose from the dead. As we pray Evening Prayer, we remember that Christ has conquered death and darkness by going into the tomb for us.

a way for Christians to rehearse and retell the story of the world, to praise God for His mighty saving acts, and to petition the Father through the Son in its common prayer.

There is something fundamentally sound about the theology of the Liturgy of the Hours that calls us back to it as the source of our private devotional life. As we pray Morning Prayer, we remember the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and give thanks that He is the "rising Sun" of Malachi, the "true light of the world" of John's Gospel, and the "dawn from on high" of Zechariah's Benedictus (see P. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990], 373).

Morning Prayer and Matins celebrate the newness of the morning that shows the triumph of light over darkness as Christ triumphed over the grave as He rose from the dead. As we pray Evening Prayer, we remember that Christ has conquered death and darkness by going into the tomb for us. As the world lights its lamps and brings light into the darkness, we celebrate in the evening what we celebrated in the morning—that Christ is the light of the world. Evening Prayer recalls the ancient custom of Israel's life of prayer and devotion at the lighting of the lamps by families, described in Exodus 30, which became a Christian custom from the liturgy of Jerusalem (Pfatteicher, 352).

Since Christians are the only ones in the world who know about the new creation in Christ, what better way for them to tell the world the story of this new creation than to daily enter the rhythm of creation in their daily prayers and their church year observances. If our devotional life is set by the daily cadence of Morning and Evening Prayer, and by the pulse of the Church year, then we will rehearse for ourselves every day the marvelous good news of the Father's love in sending His Son to redeem us from our sins.

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