

The Excellence of The Roman Breviary

***The Roman Breviary is excellent; first, in itself; and secondly, in comparison with all other breviaries.

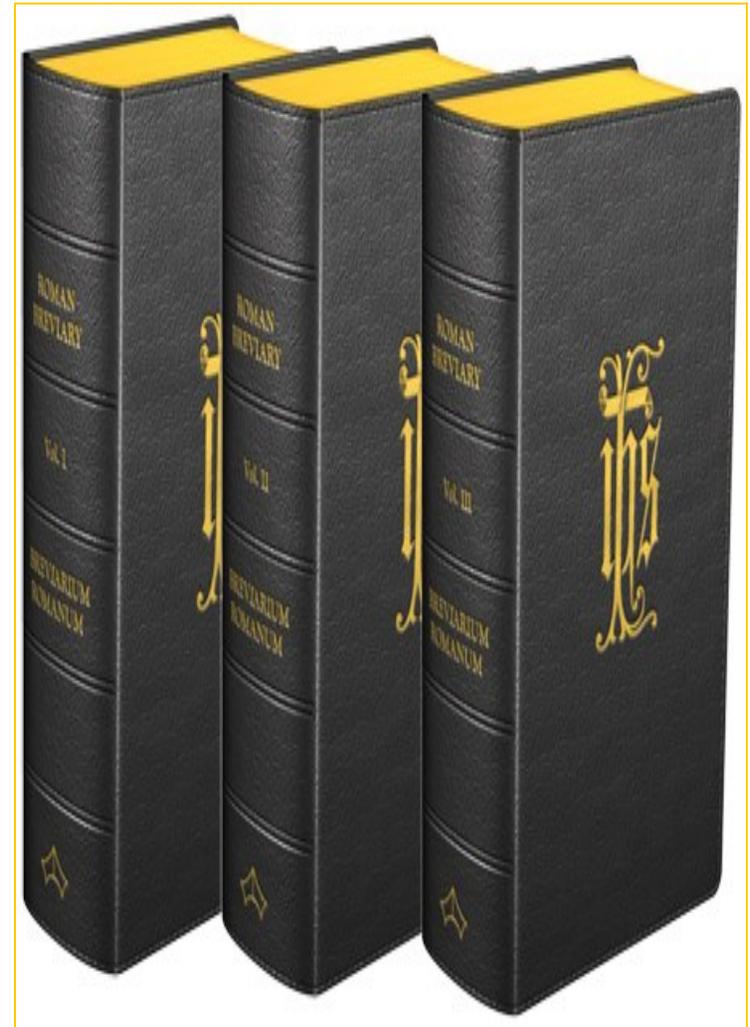
It is excellent in itself: in its antiquity, for in substance it goes back to the first ages of Christianity; in its author, for it has been constructed and imposed as an obligation by the supreme pontiffs, the vicars of Jesus Christ, the supreme pastors of the whole Church; in its perpetuity, for it has come down to us through all the ages without fundamental change; in the universality in its doctrine; in the efficacy of Sacred Scripture, the words of the Fathers and the lives of God's saints; in its style and form, for the parts of each hour, the antiphons, psalms, canticles, hymns, versicles, follow one another in splendid harmony.

In comparison with every other breviary (e.g., Aberdeen, Sarum, Gallican), no other breviary displays the antiquity, the authority, the doctrine, the sublime matter, the beautiful order, which the Roman Breviary presents. It was for these reasons that the emperors, Pepin (714-768), Charlemagne (742-814), Charles the Bald (823-888), adopted the Roman rite (Gueranger, *Institutiones Liturgiques*, tom.i). Grandicolas (1772), an erudite liturgist, but a prominent Gallican (French) with no love for Roman rites, declared that the Roman Breviary stands in relation to other breviaries as the Roman Church stands in relation to all other Christian bodies, first and superior in every way (Com. Hist in Brev. Rom., cap.2). St. Francis de Sales, applied to his Breviary, the words of St. Augustine on the Psalter: "Psalterium meum, gaudium meum." *** (excerpted from www.sanctamissa.org)

Spiritual Benefits

Besides uniting one-self with the prayers of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, reciting the Divine Office as outlined in Learning the New Breviary, written by Bernard A. Hausmann, S.J., with an Imprimatur by Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, April 18, 1961; page 9, states that clerics in Holy Orders who devoutly recite the entire Divine Office, even when separated into parts, before the Blessed Sacrament, whether exposed for public adoration or reserved in the Tabernacle, are granted a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions. Those who recite only a part of the Divine Office, receive a partial indulgence for each Canonical Hour (up-dated to reflect changes made by Pope Paul VI on (Jan.1, 1967). An indulgence for the remission of all faults committed through human frailty in the recitation of the Office is attached to the Antiphon finalis B.M.V., with which the Divine Office concludes. It is the customary practice of the Church to also extend these blessings to the laity.

BREVIARY



Origin of the Breviary

**The volume containing the daily hours of Roman Catholic prayer was published as the Breviarium Romanum (Roman Breviary) until the reforms of Paul VI, when it became known as the Liturgy of the Hours. However, these terms are used interchangeably to refer to the Office in all its forms. This article deals with the Breviary prior to the changes introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1974* *(excerpted from//en.wikipedia.org)

***The word breviary comes from an old Latin word, Breviarium, an abridgment, a compendium. The name was given to the Divine Office, because it is an abridgment or abstract made from holy scripture, the writings of the Fathers and the lives of the Saints. As the word Breviary is employed today, it means a book containing the entire canonical office, and appears to date from the eleventh century. It was probably first used in this sense to denote the abridgment made by Pope Saint Gregory VII (1013-1085), about the year 1080.*

Breviary is therefore defined as the collection of vocal prayers established by the Church, which must be recited daily by persons deputed for that purpose. "Prayers" is defined to include not only the prayers properly so called, but also, the whole matter of the Divine Office. The term "vocal," refers to the Church orders the vocal recitation, the pronunciation of each word. "Established by the Church," refers to the official prayers of obligation, distinguished from those which the faithful may choose according to their taste. The words must be "recited," for the recitation is strictly obligatory. They must be said "daily," for the Church has fixed these prayers for every day of the year, and even for certain hours of the day. The recitation is "by persons deputed" for that purpose. Those in holy orders, recite these prayers not in their own name, but as representatives of the universal Church.

Amongst the Latin rite community, the recitation of the Breviary is simply referred to as the Office (officium). That is, the duty, the function, the office; "because it is, par excellence," the duty, function and office of persons consecrated to God. This is the oldest and most universal name for the Breviary and its recitation. It was also called the Divine Office (officium divinum), because it has God for its principal object and is recited by persons consecrated to God. It is called the ecclesiastical office (officium ecclesiasticum), because it was instituted by the Church. Other titles were, Opus Dei; Agenda; Pensum servitutis; Horae; and Horae Canonicae.

Brief History

From all eternity the Godhead was praised with ineffable praise by the Trinity—the three divine Persons. The angels from the first moment of the creation sang God's praises. Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus. Dominus Deus, Sabaoth. Plena est omnes terra Gloria ejus. (Isaias VI 3)

** (excerpted from www.sanctamissa.org)

****The Divine Office owes its remote origin to the inspiration of the Old Covenant. God commanded the Aaronic priests (c. 1280 BC) to offer a morning and evening sacrifice (Ex. 29:38-29). During the Babylonian Exile (587-521 BC), when the Temple did not exist, the synagogue services of Torah readings and psalms and hymns developed as a substitute for the bloody sacrifices of the Temple, a sacrifice of praise. The inspiration to do this may have been the fulfillment of David's words, "Seven times a day I praise you" (Ps. 119:164). As well as, "the just man meditates on the law day and night" (Ps. 1:2).*

After the return to Judea, and the Temple was re-built, the prayer services developed in Babylon were brought into Temple use. In addition to Morning and Evening Prayer to accompany the sacrifices, there was prayer at the Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours of the day, as noted in The Acts of the Apostles (Third: Acts 2:15; Sixth: Acts 10:9; Ninth: Acts 10: 3,13).

Monastic and eremitical (hermit) practice as it developed in the early Church, recognized in the Psalms the perfect form of prayer and did not try to improve upon it. The practices were quite individual from monastery to monastery. Some tried to do the entire Psalter (150 Psalms) daily; but eventually that was abandoned for a weekly cycle built around certain hours of the day. Among the earliest Psalter cycles of which records exists belongs to St. Benedict in his Rule ch 8-19 (c.550), with canonical hours.

Although the Divine Office has gone through various forms, and reforms, including that of Vatican II, its basic structure, combining Psalms, prayers, canticles and readings, has been relatively constant since the 11th century. Originally the practice of monks, it was also used by the canons of cathedrals and other great churches. The Roman Breviary, perhaps as old or even older than the Benedictine, was originally the Office of the canons of St. Peters and the other Roman Basilicas. Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) extended its use to the Roman Court (curia). When the Franciscan Order was looking for a convenient one volume Office (Latin Only) for its much-traveled friars to use, it adopted this Breviarium Curiae, but substituting the Gallican (French) Psalter for the Roman. This modified Roman Breviary was then spread throughout Europe by the Franciscans. Pope Nicholas III (c 1270) would then adopt this popularized Franciscan version of the Breviary as the Breviary of Rome itself. After the Council of Trent, and its reforms, the Roman Breviary became the Office of the entire Latin Church. *** (excerpted from www.ewtn.com)