

## OBLATE RETREAT - Praying the Psalms: Living in the Divine Current - MASTER NOTES

Ps 92, 72, 95, 120-122 - Sept 23-25, 2022 - Fr. John Paul Le, O.S.B.

### I) 2ND CONFERENCE, SATURDAY MORNING, VESPERS

#### A) Church United to Christ in the Liturgy

##### 1) Church united to Christ in Liturgy

**Christ loves the Church** as a man loves his wife. All that he has, he gives to his beloved, and all that he does he allows his beloved to take part in. Thus, Jesus allows us to be united to him in his prayer to the Father. Marmion writes,

“**Jesus** does not wish to remain alone in this prayer, however; **he gives the Church a share in his own mission**, which includes that of praising his Father” (CLS 391, CIM 297).

GILH - ‘Hence all who perform this service are not only fulfilling the duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the **greatest honor accorded to Christ’s spouse**, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God’s throne in the name of the Church their Mother.’ (GILH 15). Like being asked to sing national anthem at the Super Bowl. Going into royal palace, such as singing for Queen Elizabeth.

“Dowered with the riches of Christ, the Church, **His Bride, is introduced** by Him into the **palace of the King** of Heaven, into the Father’s presence, and there united to Jesus Christ, she sings” (CIM 297).

“Christ in uniting Himself to the Church, gives her His power of adoring and praising the Father; this is the **liturgy**. It is the **praise of the Church united to Jesus**, supported by Jesus; or rather it is the **praise of Christ**, the Incarnate Word, **passing through the lips of the Church**” (CIM 2).

Marmion notes that Christ says to us,

“**Lend me your lips and hearts** that I may prolong My prayer here below while in Heaven I offer My merits to the Father” (CIM 324).

Prayer of St. **Teresa of Avila**

“**Christ has no body now but yours**. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.” We can add, Christ has no voice, no lips now, but yours. Yours are the voice and lips with which he sings his praise to the Father. He asks to use our voice and lips. Will we refuse?

This sharing in the prayer of Christ is possible through our baptism,

“The **baptized**, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated into a spiritual house and a **holy priesthood**. (GILH 7) They become capable of taking part in the

worship of the New Testament, not thanks to themselves, but to the gift and merits of Christ" (GILH 7). St. Peter writes, "you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises' of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pt 2:9)

Marmion writes,

"the Church, which is His mystical body, has to associate herself here below with this work of reverent love, and of praise, that the humanity of Christ renders to the Father" (CLS 393). "We must **prolong and complete the homage which Christ rendered** to the Father" (CIP 258).

And so, when we pray, it is really Christ who is praying. St. Augustine explains the three-fold prayer of Christ in the Divine Office. He writes,

"It is the one savior of his body, our **Lord Jesus Christ, who prays for us, prays in us, and is prayed to by us**. He prays for us as our priest. He prays in us as our head. He is prayed to by us as our God. Let us recognize therefore our voices in him and his voice in us (St. Augustine)." (GILH 7).

This union with Christ reaches new heights as our daily praying of the Liturgy of the Hours brings us into deeper and deeper intimacy with him. The words of Marmion sound a bit too amazing to be true. He writes,

"[The Church] makes us enter – in so far as created beings can enter – **into the soul of Christ**, in order that, reading there His inner dispositions, we may share them and be more **intimately united** with our Divine leader" (CLS 405). It is not merely a rational union but a deep and true union of persons. How does this happen?

Marmion notes that the Gospels "often give no more than a purely historical account" in their presentations of Jesus's life (CLS 404). In the liturgy of the hours, however, these accounts are supplemented by "those psalms, those prophecies, those passages in the letters of St. Paul, in which there is an indication of the feelings of Jesus" (CLS 405). In this way the Church teaches the faithful about Jesus; she "lift[s] for us a corner of the veil" which hides the **interior life of Christ**" (CLS 404). For example, **Psalm 88** sheds light on Christ interior trial during his passion when it reads, "You have put my dear ones and my friends far away from me. My one companion is Darkness."

[from Our Lord to St. Melchilde, prayer before divine office] "**Lord**, in union with the attention wherewith then upon earth **Thou didst observe the canonical Hours** in honor of the Father I celebrate this Hour in Thy honor" (CIM 324).

## B) Vespers in General

From **Quigley** pages 209-217:

"**Vespera** or **Espera** was a name given to the star Venus, which rising in the evening was a call to prayer." "It had several synonymous names. It was called **Duodecima Hora** . . . because it was said at the twelfth hour of the day, six o'clock . . . It was known, too, by the

names *Lucernarium, hora lucernalis*, the hour of candles; because at this hour a number of candles were lighted [**Cuernavaca Compline**] . . . It was sometimes referred to as *hora incense*, from the custom of burning incense at this evening service, and sometimes called *gratiarum action*, because it gives thanks to God for the graces given during the day . . . And in the sixth century it was celebrated before daylight had gone and before there was any need for artificial light.”

St. Benedict echoes this saying, “Let Vespers be celebrated early enough so that there is no need for a lamp while eating, and that everything can be finished by daylight” (RB 41:8).

“**Antiquity.** The Jews honored God by special and solemn evening service. Their feasts by God’s command began in the evening. ‘From evening unto evening you shall celebrate your Sabbaths”

“**Why** do we offer up public prayer in the evening? The old liturgists reply: 1. To **imitate** the devout Christians of **apostolic times**. 2. To honor Jesus, the true Sun of the world, Who hid Himself at His incarnation, and in His life, and Whose glory was hidden in His Passion. 3. To thank Christ for the **Eucharist**, which He instituted in the evening of His earthly life . . . At this vesper service, too, Christ and His apostles celebrated the divine praises” [after Last Supper meal, “Then after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Mt 26:30)] . . . 4. In the evening our **Lord’s body was taken down from the cross**. 5. At the approach of evening Christ appeared to His disciples at Emmaus and revealed to them His divinity.”

“The **hymns** at Vespers date for the most part from the sixth century. They are of great beauty and have the peculiar characteristic of telling of the **days of creation.**” [Sunday light; Monday separation of land and water; Wednesday creation of sun and moon; Thursday fish and birds; Friday beast of earth]

For vespers we can think about the mystery of the incarnation and the gift of the Eucharist in which we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Scripture verses to ponder are: “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19) or “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:13). And we can pray for an increase of devotion to the Most Holy Eucharist and Marian devotion.

## 1) Element of Vespers

Introduction- “Let my prayer arise, O Lord, like incense before you like the evening sacrifice be the raising of my hands.” This is a unique element at Mount Angel

The General Introduction notes,

“We also call to mind our redemption, through the **prayer we offer like incense** in the sight of the Lord’, and in which ‘the raising up of our hands’ becomes ‘an **evening sacrifice**’. This ‘evening sacrifice’ ‘may be more fully understood as that true evening sacrifice which was given in the evening by **our Lord** and Savior when he instituted the most holy mysteries of the Church at **supper** with his apostles; or which on the following day he offered for all time to his Father by the **raising up of his hands** for the salvation of the whole world.” (GILH 39).

Connection with Mass. **Psalm 141**[vv 2-4] used to be prayed when the priest incensed the altar during the offering of the gifts right before the prayer of consecration. This psalm links the lifting up of hands with the evening sacrifice. It reads,

“let my prayer rise up before thee; when I lift up my hands, be it acceptable as the evening sacrifice. Lord, set a guard on my mouth, post a sentry before my lips; do not turn my heart towards thoughts of evil, and deeds of treachery; never let me take part with the wrong-doers, and share the banquet with them.” Banquet, last supper. Eucharist pointing to sacrifice of Christ.

In this little introduction, we are brought to the Mass and see Christ raising his hands on the cross as the evening sacrifice.

## C) Psalm 72 (Vespers for Saturday)

### 1) Introduction

“In fact, it is a brief but intense blessing that was to seal the **second of the five books (42-72)** into which Judaic tradition divided the collection of the 150 Psalms: this second book began with **Psalm 42[41], the Psalm of the thirsting deer**, a vivid symbol of spiritual thirst for God. So, **a song of hope in an age of peace and justice concludes the sequence of Psalms** and the words of the final blessing are an exaltation of the Lord's effective presence, both in the history of humanity where he "works wonders" (Ps 72[71]: 18) and in the universe he created, which is filled with his glory (cf. v. 19).” (JP II).

“Composed for a royal **anniversary**, most likely of the **king's enthronement** . . . The human person of the king, like the human words of Scripture, became the point of contact between Israel and God, the mediator and symbol of God's blessings and even of God's presence” (Stuhlmüller 21.319).

“a royal hymn on which the Fathers of the Church meditated, reinterpreting it in a **Messianic key**” (JP II)

“Following this path, the Fathers took the whole **psalter** and explained it as a **prophecy about Christ** and his Church; and for this same reason psalms were chosen for the sacred liturgy. . . the Fathers and the liturgy rightly heard in the psalms Christ calling out to his Father, or the Father speaking to the Son; they even recognized in them the voice of the Church, the apostles and the martyrs.” (GILH 109).

Antiphon - “I have made you the light of all nations, to carry my salvation to the ends of the earth.” Light - darkness at Vesperal hour. *Nunc Dimittis*. Simeon - “My eyes have seen your salvation . . . a light for revelation to the Gentiles” (Lk 2:30, 32).

Psalm title - “The Messiah's royal power.” Linking to prophecies.

Christological Text - “Opening their treasures they offered him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh” (Mt 2:11). Referencing to Three Kings/Magi

From Abbot Jeremy:

“Who is speaking to whom?” Me, Community, Christ, Father. (161)

<p>O God, endow the king [David/Christ] with your judgment, and the king's son [Solomon] with your justice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- judgment – Solomon, wisdom</li> <li>- <i>sol justitiae</i>, time of injustice, oppression,</li> <li>- Christ came to serve and give his life as ransom for many</li> <li>- “It is easy to perceive how, after the collapse of the monarchy of Judah (sixth century B.C.), <b>tradition replaced the frequently disappointing figure of the Davidic king with the glorious, shining features of the Messiah</b>” (JP II).</li> </ul>
<p>That he may govern your people with justice, and your oppressed ones with judgment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- temptation to corruption</li> <li>- “Just as the Lord rules the world with justice (cf. Ps 36[35]: 7), so the king, who in the ancient biblical conception is his visible representative on earth, must conform to the action of his God.” (JP II)</li> </ul>
<p>May the mountains bear your people peace and the hills, justice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- how can mountains bear peace?</li> <li>- Christ is the prince of peace</li> </ul>
<p>May he bring about justice to those who are oppressed among the people; may he deliver the children of the poor and crush the extortioner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peace and justice. John XXIII, “There is no peace without justice.”</li> <li>- are we just toward God, giving Him His due.</li> <li>- “If the rights of the poor are violated, . . . this is also an act against God, a religious crime, for the Lord is the custodian and defender of the poor and the oppressed, of widows and of orphans (cf. Ps 68[67]: 6), that is, of those who have no human protectors” (JP II).</li> </ul>
<p>May he <b>(Christ)</b> reverence you <b>(Father)</b> as long as there is a sun, and until the moon passes away, generation after generation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- May King reverence you/God the Father.</li> <li>- How is this possible if the king will die after 10 years unless this king will live forever?</li> <li>- When will sun and moon go out?</li> </ul>
<p>May he be like rain falling on dry stubble, like showers on parched land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use imagination</li> <li>- “but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst” (Jn 4:14).</li> <li>- parched land. Psalm 63, “My body pines for you more than ground that is parched and dry and waterless.” Psalm 107, “He changed the desert into ponds of water, and parched soil into springs;”</li> </ul>
<p>May the just man thrive in his days: may prosperity abound until the moon is no more.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- just man lives forever</li> <li>- do just men usually thrive or the wicked.</li> <li>-Plato, “What they will say is this: that such being his disposition the just man will have to endure the lash, the rack, chains, the branding-iron in his eyes, and finally, after</li> </ul>

	every extremity of suffering, he will be crucified." ( <i>Republic</i> 2.361e - 2.362a)
May his sovereignty extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.	- "A universal dimension comes into play here, which extends from the Red Sea or from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, from the Euphrates, the great "River" of the East, to the very ends of the earth (cf. v. 8), also called to mind by mentioning Tarshish and the islands, the most remote western territories according to ancient biblical geography (cf. v. 8). This gaze sweeps across the whole map of the world as it was then known, which included Arabs and nomads, the kings of remote States and even enemies, in a universal embrace of which the Psalms (cf. Ps 47[46]: 10; 87[86]: 1-7) and prophets (cf. Is 2: 1-5; 60: 1-22; Mal 1: 11) frequently sing" - meaning? Earth is 75% water. Better than shore to shore. - "the battle bow shall be broken, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth" ( <i>Zec</i> 9: 9-10; cf. <i>Mt</i> 21: 5).
May the Bedouin bow down before him, and may his enemies taste the Mud of the world below.	- who is Bedouin? Nomadic Arab tribes. - Mud/world below – death Sheol
May the kings of Tarshish and the islands pay him tribute, and the kings of Sheba and Arabia offer him gifts.	Tarshish – ships - Epiphany – king bringing gifts - Islands? - Queen of Sheba going to Solomon
May all <b>kings prostrate themselves</b> before him; may all the nations become his slaves.	- <i>Mt</i> 2:11, "and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" - slaves, Hebrew people, servants/handmaid
If he <b>rescues the poor man</b> when he cries for help, and the needy man when he has no one to help him;	- "If" repeated three times in a row. - rescue – save. Poor – anawim - "poor" and "needy" repeated twice - "'Life" and "blood" are the fundamental reality of the person; they represent the rights and dignity of each human being, which are frequently violated by the powerful and domineering of this world" ( <i>JP II</i> ).

	-St. Augustine - <b>"But our Savior humiliated the slanderer and entered the house of the powerful, carrying away his vases after leaving him in chains. He "has set the unfortunate free from the powerful, and the poor who had no one to save them'. Indeed, no created power could have done this: neither any just man nor an angel. There was no one who could save us; and behold, he came in person and he saved us"</b> (JP II quoting Augustine. See 71, 14: <i>Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana</i> , XXVI, Rome, 1970, pp. 809, 811).
If he has pity on the needy and the lowly, and <b>saves the lives of the poor;</b> If he redeems their lives from oppression and violence and removes the idols from their sight,	- oppression – extortioner - <b>"St Cyril of Alexandria . . . Moreover, it is precisely we who are the "wretched" and the "children of the poor" whom this king rescues and saves: . . . justifying us and making us holy in the faith though the Holy Spirit"</b> (JP II).
Then long may he live. May the gold of Sheba be given him. May prayer be offered for him perpetually.	- "Then" after three "ifs" - live very long - gold symbol of divine
May he be blessed all the day long. May there be a surplus of grain in the land, rustling on the mountain heights.	- God bless you; we bless the Lord - grain – bread, Eucharist - bread from heights/heaven
May his fruit trees blossom like Lebanon, flourishing like the grass on the ground.	- fruit trees – garden of Eden - Lebanon – the great tree - grass – weed that quickly withers and fades
<b>May his dynasty live to eternity.</b> May they bear children until the sun fades away.	- Hebrew- other dynasties, do they last and how long? - Christ he son of Joseph, Son of David - <b>Spiritual children through baptism</b> - sun fades again, eternity awaits us
May his dynasty be blessed through him; may all nations be made happy by him.	- we are blessed through God's deed in Christ - beatific vision, ultimate happiness
Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, the only One who works marvels. Vs 18	- verses 18 and 19 are later additions - shift from king to God - received blessing
Blessed be his name and his glory forever. May all the earth be filled with his glory. Vs 19	- on earth as it is in heaven.

## D) Magnificat

### 1) Background

Quigley (214-217) – “the Magnificat is the **crown of the Old Testament** singing, the last canticle of the Old and the **first of the New Testament**. It is an **ecstasy of praise** for the

inestimable favor bestowed by God on the Virgin, for the mercies shown to Israel, and for the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham and the patriarchs. It is found universally in the ancient liturgies and affords a proof of the apostolic and universal praise of the Blessed Virgin.

Durandus gives some **reasons** for the assignment of the **Magnificat to Vespers**. Because Vespers is the **grandest liturgical Hour**; because Mary probably **arrived at the house of Elizabeth in the evening . . . [quoting St. Bede] . . .** in order that the **recalling of the Lord's incarnation [from Our Lady]**, by this means, may the oftener incite the souls of the faithful to devotion . . . and through the wholesome reminder may hasten to cleanse itself, by the prayers and tears of the night, from everything useless or harmful which it had contracted by the business of the day.

Intentions: conversion of sinners . . . Eucharistic devotion . . . deep devotion to Mary . . . devotion to the Passion.

<p><b>My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior</b> for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.</p>	<p>-Benedict XVI – personal prayer of Mary through frequent use of “my” - Great song of praise - Mary needs Christ as savior even though she is immaculate.</p>
<p>He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.</p>	<p><b>“he has” repeated 9 times shows forth God's power in the past and today.</b> PBXVI – “His plan is one that is often hidden beneath the opaque context of human events that see “the proud, the mighty and the rich” triumph.”</p>
<p>He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.</p>	<p>PBXVI – “Yet his secret strength is destined in the end to be revealed, to show who God's true favorites are: “Those who fear him”, faithful to his words: “those of low degree”, “the hungry”, “his servant Israel”; in other words, the community of the People of God who, like Mary, consist of people who are “poor”, pure and simple of heart.”</p>
<p>He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.</p>	



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