

Dear Friends,

As we begin this Lenten season, I would like for you to consider a beautiful and ancient experience of prayer known as Vespers (or Evening Prayer). This particular prayer comes out of the Monastic Tradition, and is, to this day, a most important part of the Church's rich treasure of prayer experiences. As a Roman Catholic Priest, I have made a promise to pray Morning and Evening Prayer each day. This prayer was designed, however, to be sung in a communal way. Sometimes when I go to visit my parents, I will stop at the New Melleray Abbey Cistercian Monastery near Dubuque, Iowa, for Vespers in their chapel because they are hauntingly beautiful.

This Lent, we will offer Sunday Vespers at 7:00 P.M. in our Daily Mass chapel. We are not a monastery, and I don't know Chant well enough to lead the singing of this prayer. But we will pray the Psalms and Canticles of Sunday Vespers throughout the seasons of Lent and Easter, each Sunday Evening. I would like to quote from the GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS, paragraph 14.

**“Those taking part in the Liturgy of the Hours have access to holiness of the richest kind through the life-giving word of God, to which it gives such great importance. The readings are drawn from Sacred Scripture, God's words in the psalms are sung in his presence, and the intercessions, prayers and hymns are steeped in the inspired language of Scripture.**

**Hence, it is not only when those things are read ‘that are written for our instruction’ (Romans 15:4), but also when the Church prays or sings, that faith is deepened for those who take part, and their minds are lifted up to God, so that they may offer him spiritual worship and receive grace from him in greater abundance.”**

During Lent we are encouraged to fast, give alms and pray. Besides the Stations of the Cross, and the Thursday evening Mass, soup supper and talk, and other private devotions you may wish to use, I would like to invite you to come to this quiet, gentle and truly beautiful experience of prayer that has been such a rich part of Church life for centuries. I think you will find that it will help you come to a deeper appreciation of the Psalms and Canticles of the sacred Scriptures.

In joyful hope,  
Fr. Tim Seigel