

# VESPERS CUSTOMARY

*For Sung Vespers with the Benedictine Oblates of Mary  
accompanied by Cappella*

**P**raying the Liturgy of the Hours is an ancient, monastic custom developed and preserved especially by the Benedictines. Vespers, prayed in the evening, commemorates the death of Jesus as the sun sets each day. Thus, it is fitting for Vespers to be solemn.

At the University of Mary, Vespers is sung Monday through Thursday at 4:30 pm in Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel. It is no accident that the chapel itself was designed for the Liturgy of the Hours. When the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery lived in the Benedictine Center, they would fill the choir stalls each day to pray the psalms – and in fact, they still do so at their Monastery just south of the chapel!

Therefore, it is truly right and just to sit in the choir stalls for Sung Vespers as the psalms are chanted antiphonally, that is, alternating between sides. Please look to see where the empty stalls are (often on the west side) and fill in the spots so that sung prayer is equal and balanced.

In order for us to rightfully engage in this communal, liturgical worship, there are some important practical notes to follow:

## MONDAYS, TUESDAYS, & THURSDAYS

**E**ach *Mundelein Psalter* has a half-sheet *Ordo* which notes the necessary page numbers for that day's Vespers. Be sure to have the correct pages marked before Vespers begins. When the bell rings, incense will be imposed in front of the Book of the Gospels while all remain seated. This is a moment to call to mind that we are in the presence of God. After a brief moment of silence, all stand with the cantor, face the altar, and make the sign of the cross while the cantor intones:

*O God, come to my assistance.*

All chant in reply:

**O Lord, make haste to help me.**

Then all turn to face each other and make a "profound bow," **bending at the waist**, while the cantor continues:

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*

All stand erect while chanting in reply:

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**  
*(The Alleluia is omitted during Lent and Holy Week.)*

The hymn is sung. All are seated after the hymn.

The cantor will remain standing, alone, and intone the first antiphon and the first line of the psalm. Whichever side the cantor is sitting on is Side 1. After the first line, the cantor will be seated, and Side 1 comes in immediately. Then the psalms are



chanted back and forth between the two sides. When chanting, it is important to remember that no one voice is intended to be distinguished above the rest. Listen carefully to the nearby voices so as to blend one's voice as much as possible. It is important to keep the chant supple in performance, easily and lightly moving from note to note.

The italicized syllable indicates the place where one changes notes. So, stay on the beginning note until the italicized syllable, and then change notes with each remaining syllable given to each remaining note. There is a small breath between the two lines of the psalm, and the other side starts immediately as the other side finishes.

**A special caution** – a cross symbol (†) at the end of a line means that it is a line of three. When chanting a line of three, one stays on the first note for the entire first line and makes a small pause before proceeding to the next line.

At the end of each psalm or canticle, all stand and make a profound bow for the “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,” standing erect again for the, “As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.” (The Alleluia is never sung at the end of the psalms/canticles). Then, all repeat the antiphon together.

The reading and responsory are recited. All respond to the responsory together.

All stand with the cantor for the *Magnificat*. The cantor will chant the *Magnificat* antiphon and the first line of Grassi's *Magnificat* while all make the sign of the cross. Then, the *Magnificat* is sung in four-part harmony while incense is imposed in front of the Book of the Gospels. The more these words of Mary can be sung joyfully from the heart, the better! Again, the music should move joyfully forward, and not drag. If needed, the music is found in the back inside cover of each *Mundelein Psalter*. Again, all make a profound bow for the *Gloria Patri* ... at the end. Then, all repeat the antiphon together.

The intercessions are introduced by the cantor. The italicized phrase directly underneath the introduction to the intercession is skipped when all in attendance have books (its purpose is for those who do not have the words of the response to be able to contribute which does not pertain to us). The intercessions are then recited by the reader, and all respond to each intercession together with the phrases following the dash.

Then, the cantor intones the *Pater Noster* (which is again found in the inside back cover). Little lines either at the top or in the middle of the music bar indicate places to pause for a breath. Do not pause for a breath outside of those indications (the biggest culprit is a breath between “nostrum” and “quotidianum” in the line “Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie ...”).

Finally, the cantor prays the closing prayer, followed by (while everyone makes the sign of the cross):

*May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.*

And all reply:

Amen.



## WEDNESDAYS

**O**n Wednesdays, Vespers begins with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. As Father enters the sanctuary from St. Gabriel's chapel, all kneel and face the monstrance. As Father places the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance, all sing together the *O Salutaris Hostia*, while Father kneels in front of the altar. Afterward, all stand as Father stands.

Everyone continues to face the monstrance and makes the sign of the cross while Father intones:

*O God, come to my assistance.*

All chant in reply:

**O Lord, make haste to help me.**

Then all turn to face each other and make a profound bow (bending at the waist) while Father continues:

*Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.*

All stand erect while chanting in reply:

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.**

*(The Alleluia is omitted during Lent and Holy Week.)*

Vespers continues as usual except the following:

- All face the monstrance during the *Magnificat*, intercessions, and *Pater Noster*.
- Instead of a final prayer, all kneel and face the monstrance while Father makes his way to the altar and kneels.
- The *Tantum Ergo* is sung together.
- All make the sign of the cross during Benediction.
- The Divine Praises are recited or chanted:

**Blessed be God.**

**Blessed be His Holy Name.**

**Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true Man.**

**Blessed be the Name of Jesus.**

**Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.**

**Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.**

**Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.**

**Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.**

**Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most Holy.**

**Blessed be her Holy and Immaculate Conception.**

**Blessed be her Glorious Assumption.**

**Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.**

**Blessed be St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse.**

**Blessed be God in His Angels and in His Saints.**

- Father exits the sanctuary in silence.