

THE DIVINE OFFICE.

HOW TO SAY IT DEVOUTLY.

HOW TO MAKE IT A PLEASURE.

BY

E. D. M.

My dear Father O'Sullivan.

I give my hearty approval to the little book:
The Divine Office.

"How to say it devoutly."

"How to say it with pleasure."

It is my sincere wish that the priests of the Patriarchate will read it, not once only but many times, for I am convinced that they will derive much benefit from its perusal.

The theses it defends are admirable and the proofs adduced are clear and convincing.

Not less happy are the quotations from the Saints and Holy Doctors.

I remark with special pleasure the following practical conclusions:

"Priests should strive to say their Office with pleasure."

"The priest who says his Office devoutly is a holy priest, a happy priest and an efficient priest. Such a one will do more for God than a hundred others, who rush through the Office."

"By the devout recitation of the Office priests can save the World from many and dire calamities."

"The ruin of the Office is its hasty recitation."

I feel sure that the little book will make a profound impression on its readers and will be the means of greatly intensifying their devotion to the Office.

I remain, my dear Father O'Sullivan,

Yours devotedly in Christ.

† *Emmanuel, Cardinal Patriarch.*

Octave Day of the Assumption 1937.

NONCIATURE APOSTOLIQUE

AU PORTUGAL.

Lisbon, June 30th 1937.

Dear Father Paul O'Sullivan.

On the feast of St. Paul, the model and exemplar of zealous priests, it gives me great satisfaction to acknowledge the receipt of your precious little book on the Divine Office.

Your book has certainly achieved the object that you had in view for it shows one how to say the Office devoutly and how to make it a pleasure.

It will be a powerful help and incentive to those who read it to say their Office well, as it convinces the reader of the vast importance of saying this great Prayer devoutly and it makes clear what countless advantages the priest reaps not only for himself but for others.

On the other hand it calls attention to the lamentable consequences of saying the Office hurriedly, merely as a matter of routine.

The book is short, clear and incisive. Its every chapter takes a message straight to the heart.

No priest can read it without deriving the greatest pleasure and benefit from its perusal, especially if, as you suggest, it is read as spiritual reading from time to time.

Accept, dear Father O'Sullivan, my congratulations and, with them, my heartfelt blessing.

† *Peter Ciriaci, Archbishop of Tarsus,*
Apostolic Nuncio in Lisbon.

To the Rev. Father Paul O'Sullivan

Lisbon.

The Divine Office

“How to say it with devotion,
How to say it with pleasure.”

We have read this beautiful book with the devotion that it merited. When we had finished it our soul remained full of a sweet spiritual pleasure that its reading had awakened.

It will most certainly do great good to those who read it attentively.

We approve it with our whole heart and earnestly recommend it to the faithful of the Archdiocese and very especially to the Clergy.

† *Anthony, Archbishop of Braga and Primate.*

ST. MARY'S PRIORY

CORK

My dear Father Paul.

On my return home I found the little book you so kindly sent me on the Divine Office.

Let me congratulate you on how you put together such an interesting plea for the worthy recitation of the Church's great prayer.

Seeing that the Office is all that you say, it is a truly Apostolic service to promote its proper use. If even one priest took heart of grace from reading your book the labour of producing it would be well repaid. But, in truth, nobody who reads it can fail to be impressed.

I can wish you nothing better than its wide diffusion.

God bless you and your work.

Yours very sincerely

† *Finbar*

Archbishop of Gabula.

EPISCOPAL PALACE
COIMBRA
29TH AUG. 1937

Dear Father O'Sullivan

I am grateful for the little book you sent me on the Divine Office, with which I am very pleased. I am convinced that it will do much for the glory of God, the salvation of souls and the sanctification of the Clergy.

Its teaching is very beautiful and the counsels it gives are eminently practical. They will be of considerable help to those who read them to say the Office *digne, attente ac devote*.

After Holy Mass there is nothing more effective than the Office for bringing souls to God.

I am, with the highest esteem,
Yours devotedly

† *Anthony, Bishop of Coimbra.*

EPISCOPAL PALACE
GUARDA
SEPT. 8TH. 1937

Dear Reverend Father

I thank you sincerely for the book on the Divine Office which you kindly sent me. You have done a real service to the Clergy. It is with the greatest pleasure and most lively interest that I recommend the little book to my priests because the reading of it cannot fail to secure a devout and attentive recital of the Divine Office, which will thus be a fount of precious graces for both priests and people.

I remain, dear Reverend Father,
Yours sincerely in J. C.

† *Joseph, Bishop of Guarda.*

30 th. May 1937.

V. Rev. Paul O'Sullivan, O. P., Corpo Santo, Lisbon.

My Dear Father Paul.

I thank you for your presentation copy of "The Divine Office". My perusal of it has convinced me of its utility to priests and religious who desire to reap the fullest fruits from their daily recitation of the great official prayer of the Church.

Your book, while not pretending to be a scientific treatise, has the distinct advantage of containing such practical advice as will ensure to those who read it a greater love of the Office and a keener appreciation of its value.

You prove most convincingly that the devout recitation of this "opus Dei" spiritualises the priest, not only in his own person but in his works for the salvation of souls.

The rules he must observe and the faults he must avoid in his use of the Breviary are set down with the greatest clarity.

Your book will furthermore be of value to preachers who are engaged in conducting Retreats for their brethren in the ministry, and who wish to give sound advice on a matter of such vital importance as the daily recitation of the Divine Office.

I strongly recommend "The Divine Office" to the good Fathers of our Province, and, through them, to fellow-priests both secular and regular, so that as many as possible among the clergy may enjoy the benefits to be derived from the study of its pages.

With kindest regards

Yours v. sincerely in S. Dominic

J. W. Stephens, O. P., Provincial.

ARCHIEPISCOPAL PALACE
NOVA GOA

1st January 1941.

My dear Father O'Sullivan.

I received your beautiful book on the Divine Office and send you my warmest congratulations on having given to the Clergy a book so full of golden thoughts. I find in its every page admirable considerations, elevated thoughts and practical counsels.

Its frequent perusal, which I earnestly recommend to my Clergy, cannot fail to enkindle in their hearts real devotion and pleasure in the recital of the Office. Like the Angels they will thus glorify the Lord and chant His praises with joy and exultation.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus shower on you abundant graces.

I remain, dear Father O'Sullivan,

Your sincere friend

† *Theotónio*, Patriarch of the East Indies
Archbishop of Goa and Damão

SANTA SABINA
AVENTINO
ROME

My dear Father O'Sullivan.

Many thanks for your kind letter and for your beautiful little book on the Divine Office.

Though intended especially for priests it will be welcome to all who recite the Divine Office particularly nuns for whom the Office is not only the great liturgical prayer but a real spiritual recreation.

I remain, dear Father O'Sullivan.

Yours very sincerely and fraternally in St. Dominic.

Louis Nolan O. P. S. T. M.

THE DIVINE OFFICE

How to say it devoutly, how to make it a pleasure.

By E. D. M.

This is not a mere addition to the already rapidly increasing liturgical library. It is a book written with a practical outlook: to show the importance and delights of the Divine Office in the daily life of the priests. "It does not claim to be exhaustive or erudite. It is merely a compendium of the beautiful lessons left us by the Saints." It is a compendium in which the reader will find nothing new but the old and eternal truths which custom and familiarity may have clouded. They are piled together in systematic order coupled with the sayings of saints and saintly people.

The power of the Divine Office as a prayer, the part it plays in the personal sanctification of the priest and its influence on the work of the Sacred Ministry are laid before the reader with clearness and conciseness. The priest who peruses this book and meditates on the compelling thoughts presented will never consider or call the obligation of the Divine Office a burden. It will become for him the pleasure and solace of a lonely life, the mouthpiece through which Almighty God will speak to his heart and the source from which he will receive inspiration and light to discharge his manifold labours.

This little book we heartily recommend to all who recite the Divine Office and we do so without any reservations, knowing that for ourselves it has done much to show us "how to say the office devoutly and how to make it a pleasure."

B. K.

EPISCOPAL PALACE
ANGRA
18TH SEPTEMBER 1937.

Dear Father O'Sullivan.

It is with the greatest pleasure that I approve, recommend and bless the precious little book: **The Divine Office.** "How to say it devoutly". "How to make it a pleasure".

I earnestly desire that so opportune a work find its way into the hands of all priests and that they put into practice the salutary counsels it gives. I wish that, for the greater glory of God, it have the largest possible circulation and I most strongly recommend it to my clergy.

I remain, dear Father O'Sullivan,
Yours very sincerely in Christ.

† *William Augustine*
Bishop of Angra

PORT OF SPAIN
2ND OCTOBER 1937.

Dear Father O'Sullivan.

Your book on the Divine Office is a very valuable contribution towards the heartfelt recitation of the inspired official prayer of the Church.

I took the book with me to the Diocesan Synod and earnestly recommended it to the Clergy as a great help towards saying the Divine Office with profit and pleasure. It is solid, clear and fervent.

I also suggested to the Catholic Truth Agency the necessity of stocking it and trust they have done so.

Many priests say the Office through routine and so miss the soul treasures it contains.

With best wishes.

I remain, dear Father O'Sullivan,

Yours sincerely in J. C.

† *John Pius*

Archbishop of Port of Spain.

EPISCOPAL PALACE

FUNCHAL, MADEIRA

20TH NOV. 1937.

The excellent little work: **The Divine Office.** "How to say it devoutly". "How to make it a pleasure" is, indeed, most welcome. I hope and pray that it be warmly received by all those for whom it was written.

It reached me on the eve of the Retreat for the Clergy, and I gave orders that it should be read in the Refectory. The effect of the reading was clearly visible in the marked devotion with which the priests recited the Office during the Retreat.

I therefore, approve it and desire that it be read and re-read by those who are about to receive Holy Orders and by all priests who recite the Divine Office in public or in private. This great prayer is a source of most precious graces for both clergy and people.

Yours very sincerely in J. C.

† *Antonio*

Bishop of Funchal.

FOREWORD.

The object of this little work is to put clearly and briefly before those who say the Divine Office more especially young priests, the abundant graces they receive if the Office is well said and, on the other hand, the countless blessings they lose, if the Office is carelessly gone through, as alas! so frequently happens.

There are, no doubt, many books written on the subject, but these, for the most part, are lengthy, profuse and expensive. Consequently they are not always as available and practical as a smaller book, which can be picked up in one's leisure moments, or, better still, used for meditation or spiritual reading once or twice every month.

The frequent perusal of a small book presents no difficulty, especially when we remember that, in exchange for this small sacrifice, we get a guarantee of saying the Office well, or, at least, we receive considerable help towards doing so.

On the other hand, to read or study a book of several hundred pages demands an effort which many are not prepared to make. Furthermore, did they do so, much of what was read is sure to be forgotten, and it is not likely that the ordinary, hard-working priest will read a book of this kind a second time. Certain it is, he will not do so frequently, and yet it is imperative that his attention should constantly be called to the importance of saying his Office well, otherwise he is

likely to get into the way of reciting it rapidly, irreverently and without devotion.

We do not for a moment deny that every priest should be thoroughly versed in all that relates to the Divine Office, and that he should be conversant with the best available literature on the subject, we merely contend that, since many priests may not possess the larger and more learned works, it is well to have a smaller and simpler one which they can more easily obtain and more readily peruse.

Our aim.

The following pages pretend to nothing very original. The idea of the Author is to recall to the mind of his readers some simple but striking facts, the frequent consideration of which will eventually produce that atmosphere of comprehension and devotion which is necessary if the Office is to be well said.

Our aim, in a word, is to help priests to say their Office with devotion and pleasure.

The facts and arguments adduced are in great part culled from the writings of the Doctors of the Church, from the sayings of the Saints and other holy Writers.

The words of an old priest.

A conversation, too, with a venerable old priest impressed the Author deeply, and gave him the urge to publish this little book.

“I do, indeed, believe,” said the good priest, “that what some of the Saints say regarding the recital of the Office is unfortunately too true, viz., that many priests say their Office badly, that

is to say hurriedly and distractedly, due to their lamentable ignorance of its importance. Hence their indecent haste in getting it over as quickly as possible.”

“I humbly confess,” he went on, “that I myself for many years found no pleasure whatever in saying the Office. It was a burden to me and I was very glad when I had finished it. I derived little benefit from its hasty recital. It is the deepest regret of my life, that I lost, during so many years, the graces, helps and consolations which I now feel that I am receiving from the recitation of my Breviary. My lack of appreciation of the Office was a consequence of ignorance. My priestly life, its joys and consolations began only when I got a real grasp of all that the Office means.”

“In one of the best retreats I assisted at, the good father who delivered the lectures gave expression to some very practical ideas. He spoke of the Office with such clearness, common sense and zeal, as made a profound impression on us all. He invited questions on the subject. These he answered in a special conference. Thus it was that I had my eyes opened, and, I venture to say, that many of my colleagues had a similar experience, judging from the warm approval which they gave to that lecture. Would to God that more attention were given to the Office in retreats!”

To our colleagues.

We invite our colleagues in the Sacred Ministry to accept this modest booklet in the spirit in which it is offered. It does not claim to be exhaustive or erudite. It is merely a compendium of some of the beautiful lessons left us by the Saints.

If these are meditated on, as suggested, a few times in the month, the Office will we feel sure, be said with devotion and pleasure.

The comments offered on the Our Father, Creed, Hail Mary, Confiteor, Gloria Patri and Canticles are merely suggestive. They may prove helpful to the reader, by awakening in his mind other similar thoughts. Every priest would do well to ponder on the different parts of the Office and find for himself considerations suitable to his own particular bent and devotion.

Should any of the ideas set forth by us jar on our readers let them attend to the gold dust and take no heed of the dross.

St. Anthony of the Desert by using this method reached an eminent degree of sanctity. He invariably studied the perfections and shut his eyes to the shortcomings of those with whom he came in contact.

Every true lover of Nature does the same. He gives all his attention to the flowers and makes no account of the weeds.

A word of thanks.

We wish to offer our grateful thanks to some of our reverend and dear colleagues who patiently perused the proofs, made a few kind comments and offered some useful suggestions.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to Whom these pages are lovingly dedicated, bless them abundantly that so they may be the means of kindling much love and devotion for the Divine Office in the minds and hearts of those who read them.

E. D. M.

SUMMARY.

The following are some of the points stressed in this little work.

The Divine Office is **the great prayer** of the Church. It is more efficacious than countless other prayers.

When saying the Office we are praying with hundreds of thousands of priests and religious all over the world; with all the Angels and Saints in Heaven; with Jesus Christ, Who is praying with us and for us; with the Holy Ghost whose very words we are using; we are reciting the Office in Union with the Masses being offered in the entire World, and, therefore, have a share in all these.

The Divine Office gives great glory to God, obtains abundant graces for men and saves the world from many and dire calamities.

The priest who says his Office well is a holy priest, a happy priest and an efficient priest.

One such will do more for God and his fellow-men than a hundred others.

The priest who says his Office devoutly will most likely become an earnest preacher, an able confessor, a prudent director of souls. His life will be full of merits, his work blessed by God and he will be like another Curé of Ars.

To say the Office well let us begin it well, say the preparatory prayers earnestly and strive to begin every psalm with renewed devotion.

Let us understand clearly that we are speaking directly, personally, intimately to God. He is

looking at us, listening to us, giving us all his attention. What a joy to speak thus with our God, as it were, face to face.

The ruin of the office is **hurry**. The Office must get abundant time.

Above all the Office must be a pleasure and not a burden.

When saying the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, Confiteor, the canticles and other parts of the Office, we ought not be content to recite them hastily, satisfied merely with pronouncing the words; we must dwell on their meaning and enjoy to the full our converse with God.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that the author of this little work cherishes the profoundest respect for his brother priests, whose holy, unselfish lives he has had so frequently occasion to admire. When he refers to imperfections in the recital of the Office or other defects in the conduct of certain priests he does not do so in a critical spirit, much less is it his intention to generalise or make sweeping statements.

It is not to be wondered at that among the hundreds of thousands of priests in the world there are, naturally, some, who because they have not made a thorough study of the Office, others because of the strenuous nature of their work and their distracting occupations, others again because of human frailty, to which we are all liable, have imperceptibly fallen into the habit of reciting the office hurriedly.

To these the author refers when he implies that priests, that is, **some priests**, do not say their office with all that fervour with which they ought.