

THE SAINT HELENA BREVIARY

MONASTIC EDITION



The Saint Helena Breviary

Monastic Edition

As used by the Order of Saint Helena

Advent 2005

The quotations from the Bible that are used in *The Saint Helena Breviary* are based on the NRSV. Some adjustments have been made for meter and for inclusive language.

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Alleluia, sing a new song to God!

*To the glory of God,
and in memory of our Founding Sisters,
who taught us not to be afraid of change.*

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FOREWORD

Is there a future for monasticism in the 21st century?

Yes, if this new breviary from the Order of Saint Helena has anything to say about it. And it does. In fact, the **Saint Helena Breviary** speaks eloquently to the vibrancy and vision of the monastic life in our generation. For one thing, it speaks in a decidedly contemporary voice.

The Sisters of Saint Helena have been very intentional in their efforts to speak in a language that captures both the beauty and the reality of our time. In so doing, they have offered a gift to Christianity that is beyond words alone. Liturgy is theology embodied in worship. The theology that emerges from this breviary offers a clear image of God that is arising from deep within the monastic experience. It is the experience of a God who is as complex as the times in which we live: both accessible and transcendent in the same moment. The **Saint Helena Breviary** reminds us that our search for theological meaning in an age of instant responses and intimate globalism means that we must seek a God who can be both as personal as prayer but as universal as the human village. That God is on every page of this Breviary.

And yet, as much as the **Saint Helena Breviary** is a work of creative, inclusive and adaptable reality in the postmodern sense, it is equally the product of ancient tradition. The balance the Sisters have achieved is a question of values. Their monastic value of tradition weaves through this Breviary like the chants that are the acoustic signature of this rich book of communal prayer. For any of us who have been longing for a genuine depth in worship beyond the novelty of shallow experimentation, the **Saint Helena Breviary** is like a gift from ages past made new just when we needed it most.

Is there a future for monasticism in the 21st century? You are holding part of the answer in your hand. And it is a response filled with many surprises, many opportunities and many blessings for those who would put it to use. I pray that every congregation will become familiar with this breviary as a marvelous gift from the monastic family in our church. I would encourage congregations to use it and to delight in it as it inspires us all to discover God in our time and to worship God in our place. The Sisters of Saint Helena have shown us that the monastic vision is timeless and, therefore, an enduring gift to any of us who would sing the praises of our God.

The Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston, D.D.
 President and Dean of Episcopal Divinity School
 and
 Bishop Visitor of the Order of Saint Helena

Advent 2005

PREFACE

The process of revision of **The Saint Helena Breviary** began in the 1970s. At that time the Episcopal Church was revising its **1928 Book of Common Prayer**, and the Order of St. Helena and the Order of the Holy Cross were working together to revise their worship book along the same lines. In 1976 they jointly produced **A Monastic Breviary**, which was in essence the Daily Office of the **1979 Book of Common Prayer** with additions and interpolations. **A Monastic Breviary** was used in both communities until the late 1980s, when the Order of St. Helena became increasingly uncomfortable with sexist language. By 1990, the sisters had produced (but not published) a book which introduced inclusive language in their daily worship. This book was in use in all the St. Helena convents for the next ten years.

About 1998, Sister Linda Julian, OSH, working almost alone, began work on a revised Psalter, based on the **1979 Book of Common Prayer**. She drew on resources of all kinds, especially studying other efforts to use inclusive language. Her intent was to eliminate all references to God as “he” and to greatly reduce masculine imagery, even to finding an appropriate substitute for “Lord.” Thus began early drafts with inclusive language in the Psalter, which were tried in the actual praying of the Office in our convents for several months. These initial efforts captured the imagination and won the support of the rest of the sisters. By 1999, the Order officially endorsed a full revision of the 1990 book, and a committee to work on it was appointed.

The committee was directed to stay as close to the Prayer Book translation of the Psalter as possible, keeping in mind the importance of being able to continue to sing the psalms in traditional monastic chant. They were well aware of the tension between following strict academic faithfulness to the original texts versus offering a freer translation or interpretation in order to make the psalms both more accessible and also reflective of contemporary worship. It was particularly helpful to have several sisters with knowledge of Hebrew to help with this work.

The committee was also encouraged to keep in touch with the revisions already in place by the Episcopal Church’s Commission on Liturgy and Music, following their lead but not feeling bound by it. Once **Enriching Our Worship** was approved for use by the General Convention in 1997, the committee incorporated much that it contained, including the new canticles found in it. They also began to search for other suitable material in order to expand our worship imagery.

The original committee worked for three years, and by the summer of 2003, most of the initial revision was finished. A smaller committee then fine-tuned what had been done to date. The last step was the community’s insistence on using the book in xeroxed three-ring binder form, praying it in the Daily Office in every convent for two full liturgical years before

releasing the psalms for publication. The sisters prayed the revised Daily Office for still another year, completing the three-year liturgical cycle, before agreeing to the present bound book.

Regarding text changes in the psalms, the most obvious ones were those that eliminated all references to God as masculine. Wherever possible, a phrase was reworked, either avoiding a masculine pronoun for God or substituting another term, such as “Holy One” or “Mighty One”, or something similar. Sometimes substituting “who” for “he”, or moving from the singular to plural (“he” to “they”), offered a graceful solution. A few psalms were put into the second person, but that option was followed only as a last resort. After much debate, the committee felt they could not maintain the distinction between LORD (YHWH), Lord (*Adonai*), and God (*Elohim*) and still remain inclusive because of the need for the text to be both poetic and singable.

There was also an attempt to eliminate other specifically masculine nouns, for example, substituting “sentries” for “watchmen”, “ruler” for “prince”, and “monarch” or “sovereign” for “king” (except where the king was clearly a reference to David). In addition to the masculine references, the committee tried to use alternate terms for such words as “heathen” or “alien” (which have negative connotations today), using instead “nations” or “foreigners”.

Since all the psalms or psalm groups in previous breviaries ended with the traditional doxology: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit”, the committee wanted to find a substitute for this. Drawing on the doxology suggested in **Enriching Our Worship**, they modified it slightly and chose “Glory to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God”. However, a number of sisters preferred a slightly adapted version of the doxology used by the Franciscan community in England, “Glory to God, Source of all being, Incarnate Word, and Holy Spirit”. Thus two doxologies are used in **The Saint Helena Breviary**, the Franciscan one at Matins and the **Enriching Our Worship** one at the other three Offices.

In addition to the psalms, the committee worked on the texts of hymns, canticles, antiphons, and other parts of the Office, following the same principles. Here more freedom was permissible, allowing the committee to eliminate unnecessary war imagery, many punitive and vindictive adjectives, and to emphasize instead God’s love and mercy. In many instances, biblical verses from the NRSV were substituted for older translations, and even with biblical texts the committee worked to avoid the use of masculine language and imagery. In some cases, totally new biblical selections were substituted for previous ones.

In the New Testament, a suitable substitute for “Father” might be either “Creator” or “Maker”, but what was most difficult was finding a substitute for “Son”. The committee used a number of different options, sometimes simply “Word”, but also “Holy One”, “Anointed One”, “Promised One”,

“Beloved One” or “Only-begotten One”. Usually the context, plus musical considerations, determined the ultimate choice.

Since the Offices of Diurnum, Vespers, and Compline are ordinarily sung, the antiphons assigned to the Diurnum and Vespers Psalter throughout the church year posed a particular challenge, as did the Vespers canticles. Every text change in an antiphon or canticle affected the music, which then had to be re-written or adjusted to fit the new texts. The inclusion of over forty totally new canticles necessitated the writing of new music in the medieval modes for those assigned to Vespers.

In working with revised hymn texts, much effort went into updating archaic theology and phraseology, especially emphasizing God as love rather than God as judge, and stressing redemption rather than sin. Furthermore, not only did the rhythm of the poetry in the hymns have to be kept, but all text changes had to fit the existing medieval hymn tunes.

The Order of St. Helena follows the liturgical year of the Episcopal Church, keeping all the saints included in **Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2003** in addition to some of particular interest to the community, such as John of the Cross (December 14), Pachomius (May 14), Helena (August 18), and the Founding of the Order of St. Helena (November 8). However, many of the collects from **Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2003** were reworded or replaced with entirely new ones, such as the ones for Brigid (February 1) and Sergius of Moscow (September 25). All reworded collects followed the same principles mentioned above.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the whole revision process was the degree of involvement and participation by all the sisters. At every stage of trial use, all members of the community were invited to make suggestions, to comment and to critique. Although this inevitably caused frustration at times, we know it has produced a better book, and we would not have had it any other way. The present **Saint Helena Breviary** is indeed a work of the entire community. The committee members unanimously agree that it has been a truly rewarding work that the Order of St. Helena is pleased to make available to all who would “sing to God a new song” in the Daily Office.

The Breviary Committee

INTRODUCTION

Below is the Introduction written by the Rev. Bonnell Spencer, OHC, which appeared in **A Monastic Breviary**, edited by the Order of the Holy Cross and the Order of Saint Helena in 1976. It is reproduced here with only minimal editing to update it and make it consistent with the present edition.

The sanctification of time is one of the functions of the Divine Office. Its recitation has traditionally been associated with the daily course of the sun. Matins anticipated the dawn, which Lauds greeted. Prime celebrated sunrise, and the three divisions of the day – the third, sixth, and ninth hours – were hallowed by Terce, Sext, and None. Vespers was recited at sunset and Compline at nightfall. When people lived by the sun, all this was appropriate and meaningful.

But today we live not by the sun but by the clock. When we schedule things at specific hours, they no longer have any relationship to the course of the sun. The first Office of the day may in winter come before dawn and in summer after sunrise. A different association with time is called for. Its two chief components will be before and after the normal working day.

That was recognized by the first **Book of Common Prayer** in 1549 and has determined its structure of the Office ever since. This has commended itself for both parish use and individual recitation by clergy and lay persons. But of late two other occasions for which a form of corporate prayer similar to the Office is found desirable have been recognized. One is the noontime pause in the course of the day's activities. The other is the end of the evening. Accordingly, the **1979 Book of Common Prayer** provides adaptations of the traditional Offices for these times.

This breviary has a similar fourfold scheme. Matins and Vespers are based on Morning and Evening Prayer, with the psalms, two lengthy scriptural readings, and the canticles. These give us the opportunity to consecrate the beginning and ending of the day by lending our lips and our minds to the Church to be used in lifting up its ageless praise and prayer to God as it hears the Word and commits itself and us to God's will. Diurnum, which corresponds to the Service for Noonday, is closer in form to the traditional daytime Offices. As it is recited in the midst of the day's work, it emphasizes the more active aspects of the Christian vocation. Compline is a quiet, restful Office, with little variation, expressing our grateful and confident repose in God at the close of the day.

Another aim of the first Prayer Book was to simplify the Offices, which the elaboration by medieval monastic communities had made unmanageable even by them, not to mention others. But the reduction of the Office to its barest essentials eliminated much of the variety which gave relevance, not only to the Church Year, but also to the days of the week. Thus the wider ranges of the sanctification of time were lost. In this breviary elements from the older Offices – antiphons, hymns, responds, and additional canticles – have been included in order that some of the traditional richness may be restored.

The **Book of Common Prayer** reduced the recitation of the Psalter from once a week to once a month. Recent American revisions have assigned a still shorter selection of psalms to each day in the Table of Lessons. For ordinary parochial or private use this is adequate. But monastic communities, and others for whom the recitation of the Office is a major feature of each day, may desire to give the Psalter a more dominant and extensive part in it. This breviary, by assigning different psalms to each Office every day on a two-week plan, with no repetitions, utilizes the entire Psalter in that period.

But even for those who follow the **Book of Common Prayer** organization of the Psalter, the antiphons, canticles, hymns, etc., included in this book may prove useful. They can give added emphasis and enrichment to the appropriate devotional themes which the Prayer Book, by its more careful selection of psalms, lessons, and other variable items, is trying to provide for the major feasts and principal seasons of the Church Year.

THE SHAPE OF THE OFFICE

Although the four Offices differ from each other in tone and purpose, and Matins and Vespers are about twice as long as Diurnum and Compline, there is a common pattern that characterizes them all.

Entrance into the Presence

The prayer ‘O God, open our lips’, is reserved to Matins as the beginning of a new day. A plea for God’s help is substituted in the other Offices. This is always followed by an act of praise in the Glory to the Trinity, and except in Lent, Alleluia.

At Matins the keynote of the day is first sounded in the invitatory verse that goes with the *Venite*. The shortened form of the *Venite* provided in the **Book of Common Prayer** is printed in the Office. But the full Psalm 95, which may be desired on penitential occasions, and the *Christ our Passover*, to be used, if wished, in Eastertide, are also provided.

The *Phos hilaron* appropriately greets the approach of dusk and darkness at Vespers with the thought of Christ as our abiding Light. At Diurnum and Compline the hymns set the tone of the Office. Those from the four traditional little hours are assigned to different days of the week for Diurnum. Compline, as is fitting at the end of the day, opens with an act of penitence, and its unchanging hymn stresses the humble faith with which Christians surrender themselves to God for the night.

The Psalter

The text of the Psalter that of **The Saint Helena Psalter**, published by Church Publishing, Inc., in November 2004. It is the 150 psalms as in the **1979 Book of Common Prayer**, revised and adapted to be in inclusive and expansive language.

The psalms are distributed among the four Offices on a two-week basis. In determining the assignment of them, the effort was made, not only to fit

them to the time of day, but also to give certain days of the week a special tone. Thus worship and thanksgiving characterize the psalms selected for Sunday, and also for Thursday because of its association with the Eucharist and the Ascension. Friday, and to a lesser extent Wednesday, have been treated as penitential. The Incarnation and the part taken in it by the Virgin Mother are associated with Saturday.

As far as possible, each set of psalms is arranged so as to begin with our need, followed by God's answer and our gratitude for it. Many of the long psalms of historical or meditative character are assigned to Vespers. In this way our actions and failings, and God's mercies and providence are reviewed at the close of the day's work.

This systematic recitation of the Psalter is interrupted only at First and Second Vespers and at Matins of First Class Feasts, for each of which five festal psalms have been appointed. A chart showing how the psalms are distributed for regular use is given in the Appendix (see p. 870).

Antiphons are provided for the Psalter at all Offices except Compline. Those in the Ordinary of the Week pick the verse from the assigned psalms that seems to strike a characteristic and appropriate note in line with the thought of the day. For the major seasons of the Church Year, and for Second and Third Class Feasts, antiphons are appointed that relate the recitation of the Psalter to the occasion. This gives the regular repetition of the same psalms a helpful variety of tone and emphasis. On First Class Feasts five antiphons are provided to be used in order, one for each psalm at First and Second Vespers and at Matins.

The Word of God

In addition to the devotional use of the Psalter and canticles, the systematic reading of the Bible is an important feature of the Divine Office. The assignment of lessons at Matins and Vespers is that of the **1979 Book of Common Prayer**. For First and Second Class Feasts, where lessons are not assigned in the Prayer Book, they are given in this breviary on the day of the feast.

At Diurnum and Compline very short readings are provided. For seasons and feasts those at Diurnum have been chosen to state some aspect of their meaning. If longer readings are desired, they may be taken from the writings of the Spiritual Fathers and Mothers, the lives of the saints, or some other spiritual book.

Response

After each lesson, and if desired, a period of silence, there is a devotional response. At Matins and Vespers after the first lesson a canticle is ordinarily used, as appointed in the Ordinary of the Week or according to the Saint or Season.

The response to the New Testament lesson at Matins and Vespers is a hymn. These have been extensively rewritten and in some places new ones

provided. The purpose of the revision was not only to put them into contemporary language and to clarify their meaning; it also has endeavored to reflect a richer and more inclusive concept of the Christian life. Many of the traditional hymns suggest that spirituality consists solely in the avoidance of evil and sin, and are strongly world-rejecting. Although care has been taken to retain the penitential and disciplinary themes during Lent, an effort has been made to include the more affirmative and outreaching aspects of the life in Christ.

The hymns in the Ordinary of the Week emphasize at Matins our dependence on God for the coming day and review at Vespers the process of creation. Those provided for major seasons and for all feasts are particularly important since they give an opportunity for the most detailed commentary on the significance of the occasion. However, as some find the reading of hymns to be dull, they may be omitted when the Office is not sung.

During the Triduum in Holy Week and in the Office for the Departed, neither canticles nor hymns are used after the lessons, and a series of versicles and responds have been substituted.

After the brief scripture readings at Diurnum and Compline a short respond, set to the traditional medieval music, is given. An ordinary versicle and respond is also provided in case a spoken respond is preferred.

The New Testament Canticles

In reserving the *Benedictus* at Matins and the *Magnificat* at Vespers to be the climax of the Office, the pattern of the old Lauds and Vespers has been followed, rather than that of Morning and Evening Prayer. These canticles have been provided with the principal antiphons of the day, and during the singing of them on solemn occasions the altar may be censed. This arrangement gathers the whole Office into a final act of worship and praise.

Diurnum has no New Testament canticle. The *Nunc dimittis*, with its unchanging antiphon, has been placed at Compline, as in the **1979 Book of Common Prayer**, after the closing prayers to be the final act of commitment and worship before retiring for the night.

The Closing Prayers

The Kyrie, Lord's Prayer, and a collect form the closing devotions. At Matins and Vespers the added versicles and responds are optional. The collects are taken from the **1979 Book of Common Prayer, Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2003**, or **Enriching Our Worship**, although a few do come from other sources. All have been revised and/or adapted for use in this book. The collect is followed by a brief unchanging ending of each Office.

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