



The Little Office of Our Lady: A Treatise Theoretical, Practical, And Exegetical

Ethelred L Taunton, Brother Hermenegild TOSF

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Part of the Sabbatine Privilege is for those who can read to recite daily the Little Office of Our Lady. And yet, this recitation can be dry as dust without a proper understanding of these holy prayers. Although this book has been written primarily for the use of religious, I have borne in mind the wants of that everincreasing number of the laity who prefer to find their devotion in the Church's prayers, where all is staid and sober and short, rather than in the utterances of private individuals, which are often the reverse. In days gone by the Little Office in English was the favourite devotion of our Catholic forefathers. Happy for England when our prayers once more take such forms, and we build our spiritual life on the simple direct spirit of Holy Mother Church, instead of 011 those so-called devotions which the late saintly Cardinal Manning was wont to count as some of the greatest evils of the Church to-day. As to the book itself. I have divided the treatise into three parts :- In the THEORETICAL part, I inquire into the nature and excellence of Liturgical Prayer; and then discuss the materials which compose the Little Office; lastly, I give an historical account of the growth and development of the Prayer as we have it to-day. In the PRACTICAL part, I consider the best means of saying the Office with fruit and according to the mind of the Church, and I also make various suggestions to this end, and treat of some difficulties. The EXEGETICAL part consists of a full and complete Commentary, drawn from the Fathers and great mystical writers, on every verse of the Psalms, together with a full explanation of the hymns, lessons, responsories, antiphons, versicles, and prayers. To this is added by way of Appendix a Ceremonial and the latest decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites upon the subject. As to the use to be made of this book. It is not intended to be read through once and then laid aside, as a mere book of reference. But, as the Office is a daily work, so should this treatise be made a daily handbook for reading and studying now one part, and then another. I recommend that first of all the book be read through, in order to grasp the general subject. Then that portions of the Third Part be studied daily. On retreat days, the First and Second Parts may be read with advantage. Again, a verse of a Psalm with its commentary may be usefully taken as the subject of mental prayer, and the lights which are gained during the recitation will prove abundant food for this time. And for spiritual reading, slow and thoughtful, what can be better than a commentary on the Psalms; for here we have the Holy Ghost speaking to us directly in the words of the Scripture i and His saints explaining them to us. The main point I want to arrive at with those who use this book is the value of the Public Prayer above all private prayer, and the consequent necessity of making a deliberate study thereof.

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Darren Perez:

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John Davis:

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