

## *The Divine Office Hymnal: Hymns for Compline*

The *Liturgy of the Hours, Second Edition* will follow the text and organization of the hymns found in the Latin typical edition, which will represent a significant change from what is found in the current U.S. version of the breviary. Continuing the introduction of *The Divine Office Hymnal*, this article aims to shed light on the hymns for Compline, or Night Prayer, and on the editorial decisions made concerning them in the forthcoming hymnal.

Perhaps surprisingly, the typical edition of the *Liturgy of the Hours* provides only three hymns for Compline for the entire year. During Easter Time the hymn is *Iesu, redemptor saeculi*, translated by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) as *Jesus, Redeemer of the World*. The text is believed to date to the tenth century. The Compline hymns for the rest of the year alternate between the other two texts, both of which probably date to the fifth or sixth century. One is *Te lucis ante terminum*, translated as *To You before the Close of Light*. This hymn is used in the first part of Advent, from Christmas to the Epiphany, weeks 1, 3, and 5 of Lent, and as one option during Ordinary Time. The other hymn is *Christe, qui, splendor et dies*, translated as *O Christ, Resplendent as the Day*. This hymn is assigned to the final days of Advent, Christmas Time from the Epiphany, weeks 2 and 4 of Lent, Holy Week, and as the other option during Ordinary Time. Authorship of all three hymns is generally considered to be unknown, although various attributions have been suggested over the years.

Having only three hymns for Compline for an entire year might seem quite limited, especially to those who only recite the text in private prayer. One reason for this limited selection can be deduced from the suggestion of the *General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* (no. 88) that some will pray Compline from memory, so the limited number of texts would facilitate that choice. More importantly, however, the “mind of the Church” is that the hymns are to be sung, as a rule, and the Church’s liturgical tradition is that the melodies to be used for these hymns will vary according to season and rank of celebration. This musical variety serves not only to break up repetitiveness, but can also, through the style of music, support the “mood” or theme of a season or celebration. The Gregorian melodies of the *Liber hymnarius* and the metrical tunes chosen aim to do just that.

All three Compline hymns are in long meter (LM, or 8 8 8 8), like many of the hymns of the *Liturgy of the Hours*. The metrical version of the Easter hymn, *Jesus, Redeemer of the World*, has been set to the tune named DEUS TUORUM MILITUM. The two hymns that are used for the rest of the year, *To You before the Close of Light* and *O Christ, Resplendent as the Day*, share the same melodies, according to this pattern:

Advent:	HERR JESU CHRIST	Ordinary Time Sundays and weekdays; Solemnities:	TALLIS’ CANON
Christmas:	A LA VENUE DE NOËL	Feasts:	DUGUET
Lent:	O WALY WALY	Memorials:	ELY

The plainsong melodies of the *Liber hymnarius* follow an analogous pattern, although with even more variety since distinct melodies are provided for Ordinary Time Sundays, Ordinary Time weekdays, and Solemnities. ICEL’s musicians chose to provide a single metrical tune for those three circumstances.

Naturally, the tunes proposed in *The Divine Office Hymnal* are provided as a resource and suggestion, but there is always freedom to use some other melody that is deemed appropriate. It is also to be hoped that composers will continue to create new melodies to support the prayer of the Church.

