



“Elijah and his disciples, leaving their tents and their caves, gathered devoutly in the house of prayer that Elijah had built on Mt Carmel three times a day.

They came not for bodily refreshment or other corporal necessities, but humbly to praise the Creator of all with litanies and prayers, and of that each of them might say with the prophet: “In the evening and at dawn and at noon I will speak and proclaim, and he will hear my voice” (Ps 54,18).

They used to gather there as one, singing psalms, canticles and hymns in their hearts and with their lips, giving praise to God with their musical instruments, hearing readings from the books of the Law and the Prophets from their Father and also reading them themselves.

And they all strove to follow these exercises and practices – designed to lead to the perfect and blessed life – in the solitude of Mount Carmel, following the form of monastic life given to Elijah by God.”

*Institution of the First Monks,  
Book 3, chapter 3*



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### Liturgy and Prayer Commission

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## CELL AND CELEBRATION

Liturgy and Prayer as a school of love: a series from the Liturgy and Prayer Commission





## Cell and liturgy

In Carmel, our life of prayer expresses itself and grows in the right balance between cell and oratory. Our Rule invites us to remain in our cell day and night pondering the Word of God and keeping vigil in prayer. Yet, it places the oratory at the centre of our dwelling place and of the way of life it proposes. There, every morning, the brothers come together to celebrate the Eucharist, and throughout the day they gather several times to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours. The Liturgy for us is truly “the summit and source” (SC, 10) of our consecrated life.

Cell and liturgical celebration flow into each other (cf. Const. 72). A good celebration of the Liturgy requires silent personal prayer in our cell. Without that, our Liturgy, be it the Eucharist or the Liturgy of the Hours, will become simply the fulfilment of an obligation, a routine that builds up neither the individual friar nor the community.

A well-celebrated Liturgy, on the other hand, sends us back to our cell to ponder the mystery celebrated and deepen our relationship with the Lord that reaches its summit in the Eucharist. Our saints and mystics, in their writings, witness to this fruitful osmosis between liturgical and personal prayer.

## Learning to build an inner cell

In our own times, with cell phones and internet in our cell, we must endeavour to cultivate the sacred nature of the cell. The cell is not primarily my private quarters. It is the place where I constantly engage in spiritual battle and where I stand alone before God. As we embrace silence in the solitude of our cell, we learn to listen to “the noises, obsessions and illusions that fill our souls” and thus “become imbued with the awareness of our own nothingness and learn to wait attentively on God in naked surrender. Silence creates in us a completely empty space where we can meet God and others in their otherness, not reducing them to our own categories, images, and expectations.” (RIVC 36).

As we strive to truly inhabit our cell, we learn to build an inner cell “at the heart of our inner selves; therein dwells God, who invites us to enter and seek the One who is” (RIVC 35). We must learn to live in our inner cell even in the midst of our community and of the people, in our everyday occupations and in our ministries.

Without this personal relationship with the Lord, our liturgies, remain empty words and dry rituals. With it, the Eucharist truly becomes for each of the brothers a privileged moment of listening to the Lord who speaks to us in his Word, of intimate union with him in communion, and of letting oneself be transformed in him as we share in his Paschal mystery.

Accompanied by personal prayer the Liturgy of the Hours becomes a privileged moment of praise and intercession in union with Christ, with the heavenly assembly and with the Church.

## Becoming truly community

At the same time, as we leave our cells and gather in the oratory or church, we truly become community. Listening together to the Word of God and sharing the one bread and one cup of the Body and Blood of the Lord, we ourselves become his body through the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Eucharist both expresses and builds community; it is the sacrament of our communion (cf. Const. 73; RIVC 39). As we celebrate as community the Liturgy of the Hours, we manifest “our participation in the Church at prayer” (Const. 75), sustain each other in our prayer life, and become “the visible sign of the Order at prayer” (RIVC 39).

We are invited to continuously revive both personal and liturgical prayer that characterizes the Carmelite way.

