

A view for the pew

Many people sense that being Carmelite means somehow being caught up with a life of prayer – and they would be correct. But what does this freely chosen lifestyle consist in? Essentially, as a community, we gather each day to recite and sing what is called the Prayer of the Church. Two primary hours that are celebrated are in the morning and in the evening. This consists in a simple structure: we gather in our private Herman Cohen chapel, each morning and evening, to praise and petition God. We listen to God's word proclaimed and steep this word in silent recollection to move our hearts.

The praise is in the form of recitation of psalms and canticles from sacred scripture. The petitionary form is similar to the Prayers of the Faithful you often hear at mass. So we listen to a reading from God's word and we reflect on that reading in silent reverence. Is that all we do? Not all, but I thought I'd introduce you to the simplicity of some part of our way of praying. Our togetherness in prayer encompasses the mind of the Church through this simple Prayer of the Church. Some of you may even remember Evensong or Vespers, as it is commonly called today. We still celebrate these prayerful moments as part of our commitment to a life of prayer, for the Church, for you as perhaps busy schedules form habits difficult to make space and time to be present to God. We are called to hallow these hours for the Church, for the Order, for everyone if only to symbolise the rising and dying of Christ. By our fidelity to these hours that can become dry and difficult for all kinds of reasons, we stammer, struggle and strain to ponder God's word – ever ancient, ever new.