

Services of the Daily Cycle

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The services of the Daily Cycle are divided into three groups of three services each, conveniently entitled: Evening Service (9th Hour, Vespers and Compline), Morning Service (Nocturns, Matins and 1st Hour), and Midday Service (3rd Hour, 6th Hour and Divine Liturgy or Typical Psalms). In addition, on Saturday evenings, as well as on Major Feasts, All-Night Vigil, which consists of a joining of Great Vespers and Matins into one Service, may be served. In ancient times and now in many monasteries, this service literally lasts all night (from early evening until daybreak of the following day), but in parish life, as well as certain cathedrals and monasteries, the All-Night Vigil may last for only two to four hours.

9th Hour.

The first service of the Evening Service is the 9th Hour, which is usually appointed to be said at 3:00 p.m. (the 9th Hour in antiquity). The structure of each of the canonical Hours is basically the same. The 3rd and 9th Hours begin with the full beginning O Heavenly King..., the Trisagion, etc., since they begin their respective Service groups whereas the 1st Hour (joined to Matins) and the 6th Hour (joined to the 3rd Hour) begin with the next part of all the Hours, Come, let us worship... and then three Psalms appropriate to that Hour. Then follows the Troparion of the day (connected with the Yearly or Weekday Cycle), the Theotokion (a hymn in honor of the Mother of God), the Trisagion and Lord's Prayer, the Kontakion of the day, Lord, have mercy! (40 times), the Prayer of the Hour, Thou Who at every season and every hour..., and the concluding prayers (one is especially appointed for each Hour). The general theme of the 9th Hour is the Passion and Death of Our Lord: And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?...And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit (Matt. 27:46-50).

Vespers.

The Church invites all her faithful children to make a journey with her, passing through the millenniums by Divine Providence in order to re-enter into communion with God's love and, by retracing the long way already trodden, to live again the sacred events of our salvation. Thus, the next service in the Evening Cycle, Vespers, begins with the exclamation, Blessed is our God... without the Trinitarian invocation of the All-Night Vigil, Glory to the holy, consubstantial and life-creating Trinity..., symbolizing that as yet, the name of the Holy Trinity has not been manifested. Vespers will lead through the Old Testament to the New and thus, appropriately, after the exclamation, the beautiful hymn of Creation, Psalm 104, is read.

At the All-Night Vigil, this Psalm is sung while the Priest censes the entire church, signifying that at the Creation, the Spirit of God, the True Light and Incense to the elect, moved over the face of the waters: And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters (Gen. 2). The opened Holy Doors (closed at Daily Vespers) signifies that from the creation of the world, man was appointed to dwell in Paradise. This blessed condition, however, was of short duration, and the closing of the doors at the

conclusion of the singing of Psalm 104, symbolizes the expulsion of man from Paradise and the barring of its gates by cherubim and a flaming sword: [God] drove out man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:24).

During the reading of Psalm 104 at Daily Vespers and at the conclusion of the censuring at the All-Night Vigil, the Priest stands before the Holy Doors, reading silently the Prayers of Light, with head uncovered. He symbolizes Adam sorrowing before the closed gates of Paradise in penitence and humility. These prayers originally were called the Lamp-lighting Prayers, since the lamps in the church were lit at the setting of the sun. In these prayers the Lord Who dwells in the Ineffable Light is glorified as the Priest prays for the material light and the illumination of the soul.

This is followed by the Great Litany, which is sometimes called the Litany of Peace, since from the very first petition, In peace let us pray to the Lord, this theme is evident. Except for Sunday evenings and the evening after a Great Feast, the Great Litany is followed by a specially-appointed Kathisma (from *kathizo* I sit), one of the twenty divisions of the Psalter. On Feast Days and Saturday nights, the 1st Kathisma, Blessed is the man..., is sung either in part or in its entirety. This Psalm refers to the Savior and in it we sing, Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God..., which is addressed to the coming Resurrection.

This is followed by a censuring of the whole church and the singing of Psalms 140, 141, 129 and 116, Lord, I have called upon Thee, hear me.... This expresses Adam's repentance for his sins, as well as his request for the Paradise which he had lost; it also is his exhortation to his posterity that they should utterly obey the will of God. The prophetic verses from the Psalm, Bring my soul out of prison... symbolizes Old Testament humanity awaiting liberation from the darkness of the Old Covenant. To these verses are joined special Stikhera (hymns) which expand the particular theme of the day (Monday angels, Tuesday St. John the Baptist, etc.). In addition, there are compositions of praise for a particular Saint or Saints venerated on that day. The Stikhera may expand on a particular Feast which may be celebrated on that day, or expound upon the Resurrection Gospel which will be read at Matins (if it be Saturday evening). These Stikhera are taken from the Octoechos and/or the Menaion. (During the time of Triodion and the Pentecostarion, special Stikhera from these books are also sung here.)

The censuring, at this point, has particular significance apart from that done at the singing of Psalm 104 of the All-night Vigil. It is the expression of our desire that our prayers, which after the Fall were unable to ascend to heaven without the mediation of Christ the Son of God, now by His intercession, like the smoke soaring upwards from the censer, ascends to the Lord God. It symbolizes that the Holy Spirit, by Whom the censer is blessed, is always present in the church and particularly enlightens us at the time of prayer. It signifies that the angels bear our prayers to God by means of the censer: And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden cense; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne... (Rev. 8:3). It also is an imitation of the Old Testament ritual wherein God, through Moses, commanded Aaron to make such a censuring in the tabernacle day and night (Ex. 30:7-8). The censuring can also be seen as an image of the divine glory which came on the Tabernacle in the time of Moses (Ex. 40:27-35).

The last Stikheron, now sung at Now and ever... on Sundays or Great Feasts is called the Dogmatic,

since, in addition to praise of the Most-Holy Theotokos, it contains certain dogmatic teachings concerning the person of Jesus Christ. On ordinary days, a Theotokion, a hymn of praise to the Theotokos, is sung at this point, which reminds us that the Theotokos was the Mediatrix of our salvation.

At the All-Night Vigil and Feast Days, the Holy Doors are opened and an entrance is made by the Priest, preceded by a Deacon with the censer and a Candle-Bearer. The opened Holy Doors symbolize that with the coming of the Lord the gates of Paradise have been opened. The Deacon precedes the Priest (who is an Icon of Christ) as if he were St. John the Forerunner, and the candle going before denotes the spiritual life brought to earth by the Savior.

The hymn, O Jesus Christ, the Joyful Light... (O Gladsome Light... in some translations), as the first ray of the New Testament light, is now sung. It tells us that the light of the sun, the created, creature light, is not the same as the light uncreated and divine. The golden light of evening is a symbol pointing to another Divine Light, in the same way as the world below is an image and likeness of the primary world above.

From this moment of the prayer, O Jesus Christ..., Vespers becomes more and more oriented towards the Savior and salvation. If, up till now, the prayers of Vespers have been basically penitential in character and have expressed the mood of the old nature which belongs to [the] former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts (Eph. 4:22) and has consisted of Psalm-singing and readings, largely from passages written before the birth of Christ, so now the captivity of the soul is coming to an end: the darkness is dispersed by the rising light of the New Testament.

Solemnly and joyously the Church glorifies the humble event of the Incarnate Word. The Old Testament supplications to and hope in the ever-springing fountain of life and truth are answered in the fulfillment of the New Testament, in the entry into the world, into the prayerful foregathering of believers, of the true Light of Life Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The entrance bearing a lantern which symbolizes the invisible rising and presence amongst the worshippers of Christ Himself and the singing of the prayer, O Jesus Christ, the Joyful Light... which teaches the true meaning of this light-symbolism are together the central moment of the Vesper Service.

At last peace reigns in the soul; the world sinks into darkness but the wondrous light in the soul grows and widens; and the Christian can no longer tear away his marveling eyes. Our eyes are lifted up to the Lord our God Who this day has shown great bounty towards us.

At the conclusion of this hymn, the Prokeimenon (Alleluia at certain other times e.g., the Service for the Dead on Memorial Saturdays) is appointed to be sung. These verses from the Psalms normally preceded Scripture Readings and here is a remnant of the ancient practice of reading Old Testament lessons (preserved only on Great Feasts and the weekdays of Great Lent) at Vespers. There are appointed special Prokeimenon verses for each day of the week, which are connected with the particular theme of that day. For example, on Saturday evening the Prokeimenon, The Lord is king... stresses the coming of the Lord Who reigns in supreme beauty and majesty.

The Old Testament Readings (Paramaea Parable) which are read at this point on Great Feasts contain prophecies of the event commemorated on that day, or certain relevant materials pertaining to the

Saint whose festival it is. [For certain Apostles, e.g., Sts. John, Peter, James and Jude, selections from their New Testament Epistles are read.]

At Great Vespers (All-Night Vigil) the Litany of Fervent Supplication is now chanted (characterized by the three-fold Lord, have mercy), although at ordinary Vespers it is transferred to the end of the Service. In this Litany we entreat mercy for all Christians.

After the Prokeimenon (Daily Vespers) or the Litany of Fervent Supplication (Great Vespers), the prayer, Grant, Lord, that we may be kept this evening without sin... is read. In abbreviated form, it corresponds to the Doxology which is read (Daily) or sung (Festal) at the end of Matins. After Grant, Lord... the Evening Litany (or Litany of Supplication) is chanted, wherein we specify which mercies we desire, and is characterized by the refrain, Grant it, O Lord!

After the Litany of Supplication, special hymns are sung in honor and memory of the person or event to which the services of that day are dedicated. These hymns are separated by verses taken from various parts of Holy Scripture which are related to the Saint or Feast and thus are called the Apostikha (or Stikhera (Verses) on Verses).

At Great Vespers (All-Night Vigil) the Apostikha is preceded by the Litya (Lity a fervent prayer). The Litya, characterized by many repetitions of Lord, have mercy! is celebrated in the porch of the church or on the steps, or sometimes in the back of the church itself. In ancient times this was done in order that the Catechumens and Penitents who stood in the porch might participate in the gladness of the festival. The faithful and clergy came out with candles (symbolizing the Light of Christ come to sinners) to signify their humility and brotherly love towards those who had sinned. In our times the Litya serves to remind us that we must take care for our souls so that we may be worthy to enter into the House of God. After the Litya, the clergy return to the center of the church.

When the singing of the Apostikha has ended, the dismissal prayer of St. Simeon, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace... (Luke 2:29-32) follows. Only now that we have traveled the long, hard road and seen at last the dawn of a new life, has our Christian soul acquired the right to ask leave to depart. The prayer is followed by the Trisagion and Lord's Prayer, after which are sung the Troparia (hymns) relating to that day of the week or celebration, as well as a hymn of praise (Theotokion) to the Mother of God.

On Feast days, at this point, before a table on which have been placed five loaves of bread and three vessels one with wheat, one with wine, and one with oil the Priest makes the Sign of the Cross over the loaves and prays that the Lord may bless and multiply them. In the early Church, when the All-Night Vigil lasted until the morning, it was customary to distribute the common offerings of bread, wine and oil after the Vespers. Thus the faithful who intended to remain throughout the Service would be strengthened and refreshed. After the Priest had pronounced the final Blessing upon the people, he and the Deacon descended from the Altar, and sitting down with the people, they consumed with them the food which had just been blessed, during this time selections from the Acts of the Apostles, or from the Epistles, were read aloud. The distribution of the blessed bread during Feast-Day Matins to the faithful who have received the blessing by the anointing with the blessed oil, commemorates this in ordinary churches.

Vespers then concludes with the Litany of Fervent Supplication and the usual Dismissal (if Daily Vespers) or the response to the petition, Blessed be the Name of the Lord, henceforth and for evermore The blessing of the Lord be upon you... (if Great Vespers). The Vesper Service is thus filled with memories of the Creation, the Fall, the Expulsion from Paradise and the anticipation of the Coming of the Savior Who brings light to the world.

In this way the whole of Vespers, beyond which lies a new kind of creation, of spiritual life in God, passes beneath the Sign of the Cross, of repentance, of separation from the old, and ends in expectancy and acceptance of the new, true Light that is Christ. This Light shone steadily and peacefully, drawing to itself those who had formerly wandered in darkness and who had been sunk deep in the night, experiencing what it is to be apart from God, that they might come to a true awareness of their own weakness and learn humility.

Compline.

Compline, most often served in monasteries, is the Service of Prayer before retiring to bed and thus it is sung after Supper (Greek Apodeipnon after supper). As sleep is the image of death, Compline is filled with the thought of death and repentance. On Great Feasts and Saturday evenings, if All-Night Vigil is served, Compline is omitted. There are two types of Compline: Great Compline and its shorter form, Small Compline.

Great Compline consists of three parts, each of which begins with the introductory Come, let us worship... and ending with a concluding prayer and the Priest's blessing. The first part begins with a special set of six Psalms and then the special hymn, God is with us..., taken from the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Savior Who was to come into the world. Then follows prayers addressed to the Holy Trinity, the Creed, the Invocation of the Theotokos and all the Saints and the Prayer of St. Basil the Great. Thus, in this first part of Compline, we give thanks to God for the day that has just passed and we express the hope that He will grant us a restful sleep during the coming night, as well as a peaceful repose after death with all the Saints.

The second part of Compline is penitential, and here we find the penitential Psalm of David, Have mercy on me, O God... (Ps. 51) and the moving penitential Prayer of Manasseh the King, followed by the hymns (based on Ps. 51), Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us....

The third part of Compline consists of glorification of God and His Saints. A Canon is sung in honor of the Saint of the Day or the Mother of God and shortly after, the hymns, O Lord of Hosts, be with us.... This part ends with the Prayer of the Hours, Thou, Who at every season and every hour..., a prayer to the Undeified Theotokos, as well as a prayer to Christ, asking for a peaceful sleep.

The Small Compline is considerably shorter, and is simply an abridgment of the Great Compline. Besides the usual beginning, it consists of three Psalms, the Small Doxology (read), the Creed, a Canon to the Theotokos or Saint of the Day, Troparia of the Day or Feast (if it be), the Prayer of the Hours, the two final prayers of Compline to the Theotokos and the Savior, and the Dismissal. Small Compline usually replaces Great Compline in parish use and is prescribed on the weekdays outside of Great Lent. Thus the Evening Service is ended.

Nocturns.

Nocturns (or the Midnight Service) is the first service of the Morning Cycle. This is a service of prayer which is appointed to be said at Midnight in remembrance of Our Lord's Midnight prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. It also reminds us of the angels who glorify God, night and day. A primary theme of Nocturns is death and judgment, and thus it serves to remind us that we must always be ready to give an answer at the dread Judgment of Christ, Who will come unexpectedly, just like the bridegroom who comes in the night in the Gospel Parable (Matt. 25:1-13).

There are three types of Nocturns (besides the very special Resurrection Nocturns celebrated once a year just before the Paschal Matins): Daily, Saturday and Sunday Nocturns. Daily Nocturns consists of two parts, each beginning with the customary Come, let us worship.... After the exclamation, Blessed is our God... and the usual introductory prayers, the first part begins: Come, let us worship..., Psalm 51, and the 17th Kathisma, Blessed are the undefiled..., which, in parish life, is usually recited in full only at the Lamentations Service of Holy Saturday and in part at the burial of laymen and Priests. Then follows the Creed, the Troparia, Behold, the Bridegroom comes at midnight..., two morning prayers, the Prayer of the Hours, and the final prayer of this first section. The second part begins with two Psalms (121 and 134) and a prayer for the dead, serving to remind us of the Last Judgment and death. Then follows a short litany and the Dismissal.

On Saturdays, the 17th Kathisma is replaced by the 9th, and other Troparia are sung in place of Behold, the Bridegroom.... Certain other prayers are also changed, in keeping with the diminished penitential character of the weekend services. Sunday Nocturns has no Kathisma at all, but after Psalm 51 there follows a Canon to the Most-Holy Trinity as well as Trinitarian Troparia. This Sunday Service ends with a long prayer to the Holy Trinity.

Matins.

The Light of Christ which shone at Vespers now begins to shine at the next service of the Morning Cycle Matins. It shines faintly, at first, through the Star of Bethlehem, Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will to men! (chanted at the beginning of the Six Psalms) and then, as Matins proceeds, this Light gradually burns brighter and brighter and then flares up into an all-encompassing divine flame. It renews, communicates itself so that men may become bearers of light. It fills all creatures with love and tenderness; and then all Christians cry out anew to the Lord in gladness, Glory to Thee, Who hast shown us the Light! Here in the Great Doxology immediately following this exclamation, is the high point and culmination of the Matins cycle.

Daily matins begins with the exclamation, Blessed is our God..., and then two Royal Psalms (20 and 21) addressed to the rulers, according to the command of St. Paul on prayer for the Emperor and those who are in power (Rom. 13:1-7; cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-14). The Psalms are followed by the Trisagion and the Lord's Prayer, and then the Troparion and Kontakion of the Cross, followed by a short litany and then the beginning of Matins proper. At the All-Night Vigil, this introductory part is omitted.

Matins proper begins with the Trinitarian exclamation, Glory to the Holy, Consubstantial and Life-Creating Trinity... (transferred to the beginning of Vespers at the All-Night Vigil) which, in contrast to the Old Testamental character of Vespers, gives to Matins the content of a New Testament prayer.

This is especially seen in the opening exclamations of the Reader at this point, Glory to God in the Highest... (the Song of the Angels at the Birth of Christ Luke 2:14) and the verse from Psalm 51, O Lord, open Thou my lips.... Now follows the Six Psalms, which are penitential in character and refer to the wretched condition of the human race in the Old Testament days, as well as the hope of a Savior from on High. The Six Psalms concludes with a Psalm expressing the firm hope of the righteous in all hostile actions, on God's help.

The Six Psalms (during which the Priest reads special Morning Prayers) are followed by the Great Litany (just as at the beginning of Vespers) and then God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! [During the Great Lent and on Memorial Saturdays, this is replaced by Alleluia.] When the Lord revealed Himself to the people assembled beside the Jordan River, St. John the Baptist greeted Him with joy and reverence. At this point of Matins, the Priest (or Deacon) makes the proclamation beholding the Lord Himself coming to minister to the world. This is followed by Troparia dedicated to the Feast, Sunday or the Saints, depicting the flourishing of the Church after Christ's Coming to earth and it also constitutes the end of the first part of Matins.

The second part of Matins begins with the reading of the Kathismas, selections from the Psalter, at which the faithful are permitted to sit. This part of Matins, consisting of long, continuous readings of Psalms, interspersed only by brief doxologies in honor of Christ's coming into the world and in memory of the mercies which He brought by His coming, reminds us of the time when He already lived on earth, but was recognized by almost no one, while men continued waiting for His coming and prayed to God for mercy, listening in doubt and perplexity to the news that the Lord had already appeared on earth. Because of the primarily penitential nature of these Psalms, the Holy Doors are closed during this part of Matins.

At the conclusion of the Kathismas, there are appointed special Kathisma Hymns (Sessional Hymns Sedalens) related to the day or Feast. At the conclusion of the Kathisma readings, at the All-Night Vigil, the Polielely now follows. The Priest, preceded by a Deacon bearing a lit candle, comes out of the Altar and censes the whole church and the faithful. This reminds us of the time when the holy Myrrh bearing Women, as well as the other Disciples of the Lord, came early to His sepulcher, before the dawn, and there learning of the Savior's Resurrection, brought to the remaining Disciples the joyous news. The incense typifies the sweet spices which the women brought to the tomb of the Lord and the candle typifies the light and joy of the glad tidings of the Resurrection, and the light of faith therein and in our future life. The procession of the Priest around the inside of the church typifies the return of the Myrrh bearers and the Disciples from the grave of the Savior, bringing the good news to the remaining Disciples.

The Polielely, consisting of Psalms 135 and 136, is so called, from the Greek words poll (much) and elea (oil or mercy), because the word mercy is frequently repeated in these Psalms and because all of the lamps, filled with pure oil, are lit, while the Psalms are being sung. On Feast days the Polielely is followed by a short verse (the Magnification) magnifying the person or event celebrated, and is sung before an icon placed on a stand in the middle of the church. The Magnifications are interspersed with the singing of special selected verses from the Psalms, which illustrate the inner meaning of the Feast.

The Polielely (and Magnifications, if any) are followed by a Little Litany, a short Kathisma Hymn glorifying the Saint or event commemorated, and then the 1st Antiphon of the 4th Tone, From my youth.... This moving hymn reminds us, in the midst of the festal celebrations, of how far we have fallen from the joys of the life with God that rejoices the soul, which we have lost because of our sins. Those who would wage war against God and His Church shall be put to shame by the Lord. And we, who have fallen, will again be enlivened by the Holy Spirit, be exalted and illumined by the bright radiance of the Holy Trinity.

On Sundays, whether a Great Feast or not, the Polielely (and Magnifications, if any) is followed by verses from Psalm 119, Blessed art Thou, O Lord... and special verses which speak of the Resurrection of Christ and invite the faithful to worship the Holy Trinity, ending with a hymn in honor of the Mother of God (Theotokion). These are followed by a Little Litany, the Ypakoe (a short hymn) and several Antiphons (sung alternately by two choirs in the ancient practice) according to the Tone of the Week.

On Great Feasts and Sundays, a Gospel Reading is prescribed, preceded by a Prokeimenon (as before all Scripture Readings). On Feast days, the text of the Reading is appropriate to the Feast, and on Sundays it is appropriate to the Resurrection. Our Lord Jesus Christ, after He had arisen from the dead, quickly showed Himself to His Disciples. Thus, the Church, by the reading of the Gospel after the Song of the Myrrh bearers, announces to the people one of the manifestations of the Risen Savior to His Disciples, in the form of eleven Resurrection Gospel Readings prescribed for Sundays.

At the conclusion of the Gospel Reading, on Sundays the Resurrectional Hymn, Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ... is sung, followed by Psalm 51 and special supplications to the Apostles and the Mother of God, as well as entreating the Lord to have mercy on us. On Great Feasts a special supplication is made to the Saint (s) commemorated that day and also a special Stikheron dedicated to the Saint (s) or event being commemorated. As at the Litya of Vespers, the Litya prayer, O God, save Thy people... is read. The faithful venerate the Gospel Book placed on a stand in the center of the church and if it be a Feast, the Icon of the day, after which, on Feast days, they are anointed with oil and given a piece of the holy bread (anointed with wine) which had been blessed at Vespers. On weekdays, the Polielely, Magnifications, Gospel, etc., are omitted and only Psalm 51 is read. This ends the second part of Matins.

The third part of Matins begins with the singing of the Canons. The Church has appointed to be sung the Nine Songs (or Odes) of the Canon, which contain the Hymns of those godly persons of the Old Covenant, from Moses to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, who magnified the Lord in spiritual songs. Each Song, in the vast number of Canons of the Holy Orthodox Church, is inspired by the Biblical Canticle appointed to precede it. These Canticles, however, are generally omitted, with the exception of the Song of the Theotokos, My soul magnifies the Lord..., which precedes Ode Nine. The second Song of Holy Scripture (Deut. 33) is not, properly speaking, so much a hymn as an announcement of God's judgments upon the Israelites. Therefore it is sung only on the Tuesdays of Great Lent.

In the shortened version of the Canons, as they are actually sung in modern practice, only the Theme Song (based on the Biblical Canticle which precedes it) is sung, here called the Irmos, and at the end

of each Ode, the choirs normally came down from the soleas into the center of the church to repeat the Irmos of the Ode (or sometimes a special Irmos) for which reason this repeated Irmos is called the Katavasia (descent).

The singing of the Canon is divided into three parts by Little Litanies after the 3rd, 6th and 9th Odes. After the 3rd, a special Kathisma Hymn is sung (sometimes a Kontakion, too, or an Ypakoe) and after the 6th, the Kontakion of the Saint or event of the Day (on Saturday night the Resurrection Kontakion is usually sung) and the Ikos, if there be one. On Great Feasts, the Song of the Theotokos (the Magnificat) is often replaced by special magnifications.

At the conclusion of the Canon and the following Little Litany, the fourth part of the Matins begins. Here is sung the Hymns of Light, which are also called the Exapostilaria. They are called Hymns of Light because their subject is chiefly the illumination of the soul from on High, and because the singing of them at Matins precedes the daybreak and the Doxology. They are called Exapostilaria because in ancient times a Cantor was sent out into the center of the church to sing them (Greek: Exapostilarion one who is sent forth).

These are followed by the singing of Psalms 148, 149 and 150 the Praises (on weekdays they are read), Let every breath praise the Lord.... All God's creatures are summoned to praise the Lord their Creator. On Feast days and Sundays, the final verses of the Praises are interspersed with special stikhera in honor of the Saint or event of the day and end with a hymn to the Theotokos (Theotokion).

The Exapostilaria had anticipated one more part of Matins which praises the Light, and which now immediately follows the Priest's (or Deacon's) exclamation, Glory to Thee, Who hast shown us the Light! the Doxology. On Feast days and Sundays, the Doxology is sung the Great Doxology; on ordinary days it is read the Small Doxology. Each begins with the words, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men! The Great Doxology ends with the Trisagion.

At the All-Night Vigil, the Great Doxology is followed by petitions for all Christians and the asking of special mercies in the words of the Litany of Fervent Supplication and the Morning Litany (just as did the Litany of Fervent Supplication and the Evening Litany at Vespers), after which the Dismissal is made. At Weekday Matins, the Doxology is followed by the Morning Litany, Apostikha, Trisagion, Lord's Prayer, Troparia and the Litany of Supplication, just as at Daily Vespers. At the All-Night Vigil the 1st Hour follows immediately after the Matins Dismissal and after the Litany of Fervent Supplications at Daily Matins. Thus we have now come into the full Light of Christ, the Dayspring from on High.

1st Hour.

The 1st Hour is served just as the 9th Hour (but beginning with Come, let us worship...), with its own Psalms. In it we thank God for the light of day which He has given us and we beseech Him that we may pass the day without sin. In Church time, the 1st Hour corresponds to about 7:00 a.m. Thus ends the Morning Service.

The next cycle of Daily Prayer is the Midday Service which consists of 3rd and 6th Hours, and the Divine Liturgy. If the Liturgy is not served, an abbreviation, Typical Psalms, is served in its place.

Here we must note, however, that in the Greek tradition, 3rd and 6th Hours are usually omitted before the Liturgy, which comes immediately after the Matins.

3rd and 6th Hours.

In structure the 3rd and 6th Hours are the same as the 9th and 1st Hours, corresponding to 9:00 a.m. (3rd Hour) and 12:00 Noon (6th Hour) in ancient times. The 3rd Hour, which has a full beginning, just as the 9th, commemorates the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Disciples at the Third Hour. When some of the assembled people supposed that the Disciples were drunk, Peter chided them, saying: Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the THIRD HOUR [emphasis added] of the day (Acts 2:14-15). The 3rd Hour also commemorates Pilate's judgment of Christ, as well as the scourging and mocking of the Lord. The 6th Hour commemorates the Crucifixion of Christ (death coming at the Ninth Hour). It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed (Luke 23:44).

Typical Psalms.

When the Divine Liturgy is not served, it is usually replaced by the Typical Psalms, which consists of Psalms 103 and 146 (the First and Second Antiphons of the Liturgy, including Only-begotten Son and Immortal Word of God...), as well as the Beatitudes (the Third Antiphon), the Creed, and certain other hymns and prayers. As this, in a sense, typifies or is a type of the Liturgy itself, it bears the title Typical Psalms.

Interhours.

In certain monasteries and cathedral churches, a further service, called the Interhours, is also served. These are constructed like the regular Hours and each has its own special three Psalms. These are celebrated between the regular Hours (hence the title Interhours) and bear the titles 1st Interhour, 3rd Interhour, etc.

Royal Hours.

On the Eves of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany, as well as on Holy Friday, all of the Hours, as well as the Typical Psalms, are sung as one Service, characterized by special Psalms and hymns, as well as special Old Testament, Epistle and Gospel Readings, relating to the particular Feast or events of that day. In ancient times, it was customary for the Byzantine Emperor to be present for the whole Service, hence the title Royal Hours.