

HOURS OF
PRAYER

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A JOURNEY WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

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BELIEVERS EASTERN CHURCH

adheres to the orthodox faith

HOURS OF
PRAYER

Faith and Tradition Series

HOURS OF PRAYER
Faith and Tradition Series
(English)

August 15, 2015

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Table of Contents

Preface	7
Introduction	9
What are the Hours of Prayer?	11
The Heart of the Hours of Prayer	13
The Hours of Prayer Explained	17
Each Hour Explained	23
Liturgy of the Hours of Prayer	31
Hours of Prayer in a Seminary	35
Daily Psalm Readings for Morning and Evening Prayer	49
Hours of Prayer in a Ministry Office	57
Psalm Readings for Hours during the Day	65
A Sample Day	69
Aspects of the Liturgy of the Hours of Prayer	93
Implementing the Hours of Prayer	99
Appendix	107

Preface

*In the name of the Father, the Son
and the Holy Spirit ✠*

Our faith and tradition are the two major factors that define our identity in Christian living. Faith stands for what we believe as a church and tradition denotes how we live according to our faith.

As a church, the faith of Believers Eastern Church is deeply rooted in the Holy Bible, which is the foundation of our life and spirituality. Our tradition is the practices of what the apostles, the composers of the New Testament showed and later was perfected by the vision of the early church fathers.

My hope is that the 'Faith and Tradition' series will bring renewal and life to our Christian life and our church, to know

Hours of Prayer

Jesus, who gave His life and loved us, more intimately.

✠The blessings of the Triune God be with you all forever.

Synod Secretariat
August 15, 2015

✠Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan
Metropolitan

Introduction

*“Pray continually.”*¹

*“Three times a day [Daniel] got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”*²

Our greatest desire as Christians must be to love God with all our hearts, souls and strength. To do so, it would be helpful for us to look at the examples of pious people from the Bible, church history and around us today. Apostle Paul encouraged people to imitate him as he imitated Christ. Our individual prayer life is often one of the best ways to measure our devotion to God, and the greatest means for its revival.

¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:17

² Daniel 6:10

Hours of Prayer

When we look in the Old Testament, one man who stands out as living a righteous life, always devoted to the ways of God is Daniel. We find his life story written in the Book of Daniel, much of which is a record of his prayer life. Could Daniel's prayer life be the secret of his godliness?

In Daniel chapter 6, we find him to be one of the three leaders who supervised the 120 governors of Babylon. The other leaders in Babylon were jealous of Daniel but knew that they could not find anything wrong with him “unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”³ They knew that because Daniel loved God so much, he would pray three times each day, even if a law forbade it. He was committed to following the specified Hours of Prayer.

³ Daniel 6:5

What are the Hours of Prayer?

In the church, prayer is the foundation for revival, whether at a personal or communal level. This makes prayer one of the highest priorities of the church. The Hours of Prayer is rooted in the tradition of gathering as the Body of Christ at specific times throughout the day to worship and seek God. They are drawn from the Old and New Testaments. They have been practiced since the time of the apostles, and given form and structure by church fathers throughout time.

According to the Bible and the church's tradition, the specified times to pray together include the morning and the

Hours of Prayer

evening, and the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day. Our church follows this tradition of praying at the biblically specified times. When we gather, we devoutly worship God by reading the Psalms and seeking the Lord through intercession. We pray the Lord's Prayer and are showered with God's blessings.

One of the goals of the early church was to abide in Christ through continuous prayer.⁴ Even though this greatly depended on the prayer life of each believer, they realized that praying together at the times indicated by the Scriptures would help the church to abide in Christ. Thus they continued to develop the Hours of Prayer until they became a formalized tradition followed by the church and the monastic communities.

The ultimate goal of the Hours of Prayer is to instill in us a church tradition that is truly centered on worshipping God. This will help each believer lead a life of constant prayer and achieve true devotion.

⁴ I Thessalonians 5:17

The Heart of the Hours of Prayer

The ancient tradition of the Hours of Prayer is, first and foremost, an act of worship. Each hour of prayer is a time to pause our busy days, to remember why and for whom we live and follow our vocations. In effect, we are saying to God, “You have chosen me for this job, but You are my first love. You are more important to me than any work. You are the reason why I do my job, and without You, I cannot do it. In truth, worshipping You is my primary vocation, and I do my job as an act of worship.”

When we gather for prayer, we turn our heart’s focus back to God. While joining

Hours of Prayer

together for prayer, we need to put aside all our concerns regarding work, and say to God, “You are more important.” At the beginning of each Hour, take a moment to clear your thoughts, and then tell the Lord that your only concern and thought for the next 15 minutes will be Him.

The Hours of Prayer are meditative in nature. We read the Psalms as an act of worship, thinking about God’s goodness and the value of worship. We say them slowly and reverentially, allowing our minds and hearts to think deeply about what we are reading. We expect the glory and the help of God to reach us when we read the Psalms. The same is true of the Lord’s Prayer.

When we say, in prayer, the words “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit...” we say them slowly, to seek a meaningful encounter with God, instead of simply going through the motions.

The Hours of prayer may seem repetitive, but so is every day of our lives. Think about it. You and I would not be alive if it weren’t

Hours of Prayer

for the constant repetition of a thousand visible and invisible events that happens in our life. The earth keeps rotating, a daily repetition so we can survive with days and nights. The earth's revolutions, steady and dependable, give us seasons. Our hearts keep beating, in a rhythm that keeps us alive. Almost everything that we do - eating, drinking, brushing our teeth, bathing and a hundred other things - depends on the steady cycle of repetition to keep our bodies and minds healthy. So does it not follow that for the nourishment of our souls, that soothing rhythm of repetition, too? Repetition can be boring but when we understand the value of it, we are glad for it.

Spiritual life is maintained by our habit of prayer and meditation, which like breathing itself, should become natural. This repetition is intentional and it helps the rhythm of the Hours of Prayer to become a natural part of our days. We experience the grace of God as we receive spiritual nourishment for our souls through prayer.

The Hours of Prayer Explained

Biblical Roots

*“Seven times a day I praise You for Your
righteous laws.”⁵*

One of God’s demands as part of His covenant with Israelites, His people, was to establish worship. This included both individual and communal aspects of worship. The tradition of morning and evening offerings institutionalized by God was upheld throughout the Old Testament ages and followed as an everlasting statute.⁶ Praying daily at a specific time as a church pleases God.

⁵ Psalm 119:164

⁶ Exodus 29:34-46; 2 Chronicles 2:4-8; 2 Chronicles 31:3; Ezra 3:3; Ezekiel 46:13-15

Hours of Prayer

Maintaining specific times for worship has also been part of the individual prayer lives of the saints, especially during morning and evening.⁷ “Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice.”⁸ Rising up early for prayer was also a common practice.⁹

By the time of Jesus, Jews had not only kept up the ritual of Morning and Evening sacrifices, but also developed two Hours of Prayer alongside them, specifically at the third hour (9 AM) and the ninth hour (3 PM).¹⁰ Jesus was often in the Temple meeting fellow believers to partake in communal prayer, and the early church continued those practices: “Every day they continued to meet together in the temple

⁷ See Psalm 5:3; 88:13; 92:2, and 141:2

⁸ Psalm 55:17

⁹ Abraham (Genesis 19:27), Isaac (Genesis 26:31), Jacob (Genesis 28:18), Moses (Exodus 24:4; 32:6; 34:4) and Joshua (Joshua 3:1; 6:12,15; 7:16). Gideon, Elkanah and Hannah, Samuel, David and Daniel.

¹⁰ The hour is based on a sunrise between 6 and 7 AM. The first hour of sunlight would have been the first hour, the one after that the second etc. Though technically, the time of sunrise changes, the times were later standardized and the third hour begins at 9 AM.

courts.”¹¹ When the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, it was during the third hour of prayer;¹² Peter prayed during the sixth hour,¹³ and it was during the ninth hour that Peter and John went to the Temple to pray.¹⁴

The church fathers were sensitive to these practices and noted how they were connected to Christ’s crucifixion. The process of crucifixion started at the third hour,¹⁵ darkness came upon the land at the sixth hour¹⁶ and He died at the ninth hour.¹⁷

A Tradition of the Church

It is clear that the church followed the tradition of the Hours of Prayer from the very beginning. The earliest writing of the church fathers, the *Didache*, tells us that they prayed the Lord’s Prayer, and noted

¹¹ Acts 2:46

¹² Acts 2:15

¹³ Acts 10:9

¹⁴ Acts 3:1

¹⁵ St. Mark 15:25

¹⁶ St. Matthew 27:45

¹⁷ St. Matthew 27:46

Hours of Prayer

that we should “pray this way three times per day.” This work is considered to be a compilation of the teachings of Jesus’ Apostles. References to the observance of hours of prayer can be found in the writings of the church fathers including Tertullian, Cyprian, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, and Basil the Great. The Council of Nicaea verified that the hours of prayer were not only a part of the monastic practice but also a part of the life of the church.

As monasticism began to flourish in the fourth century, it brought about a change in the structure and content of the Hours of Prayer. The Hours of Prayer became the central practice of monasteries across the world. St. Benedict, the Father of Western Monasticism, considered prayer to be the primary work of the church and referred to the Hours of Prayer as the ‘Work of God’. He said, “Let nothing be preferred to the Work of God.”¹⁸

Each day, monks gathered seven times to praise God: “Seven times a day I praise

¹⁸ St. Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, chapter 43

Hours of Prayer

You.”¹⁹ They would gather twice at the beginning of the day, i.e. while it was still dark, and at dawn; twice at the end of the day, i.e. when darkness fell, and at bedtime. They would also gather once every three hours during the day.

Christians near the monasteries would also take part in the hours of prayer. They would pray the Lord’s Prayer during the Hours if they could not join the monks in the monasteries. As it was difficult for believers to participate in prayer during working hours, churches in the East and West organized communal prayers in the morning and the evening. Prayer vigils are a common tradition that resulted from the Hours. The earliest devotional books were actually the Liturgies for the Hours of Prayer for monks who had to be away from the monastery.

(For a full list of Scriptures and references by Church Fathers, see the Appendix)

¹⁹ Psalm 119:164

Each Hour Explained

Each of the Hours of Prayer has a different name and purpose. They have generally remained unchanged through the centuries. The goal of the Hours is to center our lives and communities on the worship of and dependence on God. They

Hour	Time	Purpose/Heart of Hour
Vigils	3-6 AM	Seek the Lord to breathe life into our lives and day, hear from the Holy Bible
Lauds (Morning)	6-7 AM	Start the day by worshipping God through praise and intercession

Hours of Prayer

Third Hour	9 AM	Ask God to fill us with His Spirit for that day's work
Sixth Hour	12 AM	Reorient ourselves to God and ask for strength
Ninth Hour	3 PM	Worship, dedicate work hours to Him
Vespers (Evening)	6 PM	Thank God for what He has done, finish official day in worship
Compline	Night-time	Examine conscience, give thanks and commit our lives to God

are designed to be the outward expression of an inner reality, and as a device to help cultivate that inner reality in the lives of individuals.

Vigils (Before Dawn, 3-6 AM)

"At midnight I rise to give You thanks for Your righteous laws."²⁰

Vigils focus on rising while it is still night time and to seek the Lord. Vigils bring

²⁰ Psalm 119:62

forth the idea of the prayer watch, i.e. rising from sleep for the specific purpose of praying. It is also associated with the resurrection of Christ which took place before dawn. Therefore, during this time we must focus our hearts on our need for Christ, and must believe that He will give life to our mortal bodies.²¹ We need to acknowledge that we cannot live a spiritual life without God's blessing. Vigils also strongly focus on hearing from the Scripture.

Lauds: Praising God during the First Hour

"In the morning, Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait expectantly."²²

The word 'Lauds' means 'praise.' This hour is at sunrise, and is observed to praise God at the beginning of the day. It is the commemoration of how the light of Christ overcame darkness, remembered

²¹ Romans 8:11

²² Psalm 5:3

at the time of the day that He rose from the dead. Lauds is a time for us to acknowledge God's greatness and proclaim that He is worthy of our worship. It is also a time for us to humble ourselves and declare our dependence upon Him. Therefore, Lauds is also a time of intercession to convey our requests to God.

Third Hour (9 AM)

"They were all together in one place... and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit..."²³

The three Hours of Prayer during the day are known as the "Little Hours", and are designed to be shorter as they happen during working hours. The Third Hour correlates with both the beginning of the working day and the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day. Therefore, this Hour focuses on asking God to fill us with His Spirit and empower us for fruitful ministry. It also has a strong focus on "being of one accord"²⁴, just like the Apostles at Pentecost.

²³ Acts 2:1,4

²⁴ Acts 1:14; 2:1,46

Sixth Hour (12 noon)

“You will not fear ... nor the plague that destroys at midday.”²⁵

The Sixth Hour happens at the beginning of the heat of the day. By this time it is common to have our minds and hearts cluttered with the affairs of the world. Our physical bodies need nourishment.

The focus is, therefore, on reorienting ourselves back to God. We must acknowledge our spiritual need ahead of our physical need, and pray for the strength to overcome any obstacle. It is a good time to examine our consciences for anxieties or other worldly concerns, and spiritually replace them with God as the center of our lives.

Ninth Hour (3 PM)

“One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.”²⁶

The Ninth Hour is considered a minor Hour. It is a time to pause and remember

²⁵ Psalm 91:5, 6

²⁶ Acts 3:1

the Lord, to set apart time just for the sake of worshipping Him. Seek to finish the last few hours of the working day with His blessing.

Vespers (6 PM)

“May my prayer be set before You like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.”²⁷

Vespers (Latin word for evening) is generally associated with the end of the day and dusk. Though traditionally it was said during the setting of the sun, nowadays, the prescribed time for Vespers is around 6 pm. As it is observed at the close of the day, it is a great time to focus on what the Lord has done for us; to thank Him, praise Him and to have hearts filled with joy.

Evening prayers are normally an extended time for praising God. It is a time when we remember that the purpose of our lives is to worship God. We begin the day at

²⁷ Psalm 141:2

sunrise with His worship, we remember Him throughout the day, and we finish our day by worshipping and thanking Him.

Compline (9 PM or Night-time)

“On my bed I remember You; I think of You through the watches of the night.”²⁸

Compline (Latin word for ‘completion’) is mainly said as we get ready to rest for the night. The darkness of night reminds us that we need the Lord to watch over us. As we reach the end of each day, we are reminded of our own weaknesses and our sins. We realize that our lives will come to an end someday, and that the light we have comes only from God.

The day’s end is a time for reflection and commitment. We reflect on how we stumbled during the day. We commit ourselves to the Lord’s will. We confess our sins and by faith receive forgiveness. Through prayer, we hand over our

²⁸ Psalm 63:6

concerns and anxieties to God, and we commit our body, soul, and spirit into the Lord's care, knowing that He will take care of us. As we lay our heads on our pillows, we acknowledge that our day is done and we receive the respite that only His caring sovereignty can give.²⁹

In monasteries, when the Compline ends, the Great Silence begins. The Great Silence is a time when no talking is allowed, but each person directs their attention on God. The next time they speak is when Vigils starts the next day. We often need to talk throughout the day, but this is a time to remain silent and place ourselves completely in God's care.

²⁹ Psalm 127:2

Liturgy of the Hours of Prayer

The Hours of Prayer are liturgical, which means that they follow a pattern designed to help us to connect with God more effectively. Our liturgy is based on how the Hours of Prayer have been prayed since the time of the early church.

Each hour has a leader or presider, who is often a priest, a spiritual leader, or the person designated as the leader of that group. The presider's portion in the liturgy is marked "P" while the portion meant for the congregation is marked "C". It is good to take turns to preside over the Hours.

Hours of Prayer

The Psalms are prayed responsively, which means that the leader will read one verse, and everyone else will read the next verse until the Psalm reading is completed. If the last verse of the reading is an odd number, this verse is read by everyone. Psalms should be uttered as prayers to worship God. After the reading, everyone silently meditates on it. The Psalm is normally read by someone other than the presider. There is a prescribed Psalm for each Hour of Prayer. The schedule for Psalm-reading is four weeks long and should be repeated cyclically (See page 50-52).

During the Morning and Evening Prayers, there is a responsorial prayer which is repeated three times:

P: Holy are You, O God.

C: Holy are You, Almighty.

P: Holy are You, Immortal.

C: Crucified ✠³⁰ for us, Lord Messiah,
have mercy on us.

³⁰ The Sign of the Cross to be made wherever the symbol of the cross is seen. The significance of the sign of the cross, its meaning and an explanation of how and why we make it is explained in the book *The Sign of the Cross*, part of the 'Faith and Traditions' series, and is available from the church.

Hours of Prayer

This is an ancient prayer known as the Trisagion. It is repeated three times because you are saying it to worship each entity of the Holy Trinity - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

During the morning and evening prayers, there is also time for singing. The congregation sings up to three songs. However, that number depends on your chapel service.

The Scripture readings included in the Morning and Evening Prayer meetings are to be either a portion of Scripture from the Old and the New Testaments, or part of a one-year Bible reading plan. Reflect on what you have read, and pray to the Lord to increase His Word's reach and your obedience to it. If the Evening Prayer is part of a chapel service, this reading can be replaced with a devotional talk which usually is part of the chapel service at our seminaries.

Prayer, as part of the Morning and Evening Prayers, can be either a just closing prayer or include a time of

Hours of Prayer

intercession as well. It is left to the discretion of the leader to decide which suits the congregation.

The Lord's Prayer and Benediction are normally led by the most senior member of the clergy or leader present.

Hours of Prayer in a Seminary

This chapter explains how to observe the Hours of Prayer in a seminary or a similar environment. The Hours of Prayer for a seminary include:

- **Morning Prayer:** There are two liturgies available for the Morning Prayer; one for the use of an entire congregation and another for the use of an individual.
- **Third Hour of Prayer:** Said around 9 AM, this Hour is commonly prayed in the classroom or office setting.
- **Sixth Hour of Prayer:** Said around mid-day, this Hour is commonly prayed in the classroom or office setting.

Hours of Prayer

- **Ninth Hour of Prayer:** Said around 3 PM, this Hour is commonly prayed in the classroom or office setting.
- **Evening Prayer:** This liturgy is designed to be used during the evening chapel service, or on its own.

Instructions on how to organize the Hours in your seminary can be found in the chapter “**Implementing the Hours.**”

Morning Prayer (as a congregation)

P: ✠ Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠ As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

P: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord Almighty,
heaven and earth are filled with Your
glory. Hosanna in the highest!

C: Blessed is He who has come and is
to come in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

P: Holy are You, O God.*

C: Holy are You, Almighty.

P: Holy are You, Immortal.

C: Crucified ✠ for us, Lord Messiah, have
mercy on us.

*[*Repeat this three times]*

Hours of Prayer

P: Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Lord, be gracious to us. Lord, have mercy on us and accept our adoration and service.

P: Praise to You, O Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Creator.

All: Praise to You Lord, our Messiah, for being merciful to us sinners. Bless O Lord.

Daily Psalm Reading

Songs of Praise

Scripture Reading

Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Morning Prayer (as an individual)

“Hasten, O God, to save me; come quickly, Lord, to help me.”³¹

✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Personal Worship Time

[Sing a praise song or spontaneously worship God, or do both.]

Daily Psalm Reading

(Taken from page 50-52)

Scripture Reading

Read a portion of the Scripture from the Old and New Testaments, or follow a one-year Bible reading plan. Reflect on

³¹ Psalm 70:1

Hours of Prayer

what you have read and pray for the Lord's blessing to help you follow His words.

Prayer

Time for personal prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

✠ In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Third Hour (9 AM)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠ Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit

C: ✠ As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Dedicate your office/seminary/
department's work that day to the Lord
as an act of worship. Confess your
dependence on Him, and thank Him for
being with you.

Daily Psalm Reading

(Taken from page 50-52)

Hours of Prayer

Each person takes time to meditate on the Psalm reading and silently pray in response.

P: Pray to the Lord to fill all of you with the Holy Spirit and empower you for your service to Him that day.

Prayer

Two prayer requests for either your work/studies, or any urgent/timely needs of the church/mission field.

Concluding Prayer

Dedicate work and prayer to the Lord.

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Sixth Hour (12 noon)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠ Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠ As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Ask the Lord to reorient your hearts to Him so that the demands of the day do not distract you from Him. Ask Him to search your hearts and show you if you have stumbled in any way today.

Daily Psalm Reading

(Taken from page 50-52)

Hours of Prayer

Each person takes time to meditate on the Psalm reading and say a silent prayer of response.

Prayer

Prayer requests for your department/class.

Prayer requests for Diocese or mission field.

Pray for your seminary and leaders.

Concluding Prayer

Thank God for His forgiveness, and pray for His guidance.

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Ninth Hour (3 PM)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠ Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠ As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Commit your day to the Lord, asking for His help to faithfully finish the day's work with His blessings.

Daily Psalm Reading

(Taken from page 50-52)

Each person takes time to meditate on the Psalm reading and silently pray in response.

Hours of Prayer

Prayer

Two or three people will come forward to thank the Lord for specific things that have happened that day.

Pray for our missionaries in the field and the believers in your Diocese.

Concluding Prayer

Thank God for being with us and for answering our prayers. Ask for His abiding presence in our lives.

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Evening Prayer

P: ✠ Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠ As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

P: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord Almighty,
heaven and earth are filled with Your
glory. Hosanna in the highest!

C: Blessed is He who has come and is
to come in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

P: Holy are You, O God.*

C: Holy are You, Almighty.

P: Holy are You, Immortal.

C: Crucified ✠ for us, Lord Messiah,
have mercy on us.

*[*Repeat this three times]*

Hours of Prayer

P: Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Lord, be gracious to us. Lord, have mercy on us and accept our adoration and service.

P: Praise to You, O Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Creator.

All: Praise to You Lord, our Messiah, for being merciful to us sinners. Bless O Lord.

Songs of Praise

Daily Psalm Reading

Scripture Reading or Devotion

Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Daily Psalm Readings for Morning and Evening Prayer

Different Psalms are used over a four-week period as part of the daily psalm-reading. Use the following tables to pick the correct Psalm for each week, day and according to the corresponding Hour of Prayer. After four weeks, start over.

The weeks do not coincide with the secular monthly calendar, but the Liturgical Calendar. Based on the Sundays of the year, the first week of the liturgical calendar should match the first week of the daily Psalm reading and rotate every four weeks throughout the entire year. Liturgical Sundays 1, 5, 9, 13, 17 etc. follow Week 1 of the Hours of Prayer. Sundays 2, 6, 14, 18,

Hours of Prayer

etc. are Week 2; Sundays 3, 7, 11, 15, 19 etc. are Week 3; and Sundays 4, 8, 12, 16, 20 etc. are Week 4.

Use the following tables to understand which Psalm is to be used for the daily Morning and Evening Prayers.

Week 1	Morning	Evening
Sunday	3	110
Monday	148	111
Tuesday	2	112
Wednesday	149	113
Thursday	150	114
Friday	67	115:1-11
Saturday	51	115:12-18

Hours of Prayer

Week 2	Morning	Evening
Sunday	5	116:1-9
Monday	4	116:10-19
Tuesday	34:1-7	129
Wednesday	34:8-14	130
Thursday	34:15-22	131
Friday	95	132:1-9
Saturday	16	132:10-18
Week 3	Morning	Evening
Sunday	67	133
Monday	118:1-9	135:1-6
Tuesday	118:10-17	135:13-21

Hours of Prayer

Wednesday	118:19-29	136:1-9
Thursday	143	136:1-3,10-16
Friday	3	137
Saturday	51	138
Week 4	Morning	Evening
Sunday	95	139:1-6
Monday	12	139:7-16
Tuesday	23	139:17-24
Wednesday	24	140:1-7
Thursday	27:1-6	140:8-13
Friday	27:7-14	142
Saturday	5	144:1-10

**Psalm Readings for Hours
during the Day**

Week 1

	9 AM	Noon	3 PM
Sunday			
Monday	17:1-7	119:1-8	120
Tuesday	17:8-15	119:9-16	121
Wednesday	29	119:17-24	122
Thursday	30:1-7	119:25-32	123
Friday	30:8-12	119:33-40	124
Saturday	31:1-8	119:41-48	125

Hours of Prayer

Week 2

	9 AM	Noon	3 PM
Sunday			
Monday	31:9-18	119:49-56	126
Tuesday	31:19-24	119:57-64	127
Wednesday	32:1-7	119:65-72	128
Thursday	42	119:73-80	107:1-9
Friday	43	119:81-88	107:33-43
Saturday	47	119:89-96	10:1-6

Hours of Prayer

Week 3

	9 AM	Noon	3 PM
Sunday			
Monday	57	119:97-104	120
Tuesday	61	119:105-112	121
Wednesday	62	119:113-120	122
Thursday	63	119:121-128	123
Friday	64	119:129-136	124
Saturday	65	1	125

Hours of Prayer

Week 4

	9 AM	Noon	3 PM
Sunday			
Monday	89:1-8	119:137-144	145:1-9
Tuesday	95:1-7	119:145-152	145:14-21
Wednesday		100	119:153-
160	146		
Thursday	103:1-8	119:161-168	147:1-7
Friday	111	119:169-176	147:7-12
Saturday	150	36:1-9	147:12-20

Hours of Prayer in a Ministry Office

This chapter explains how to observe the Hours of Prayer in a Diocesan office or a similar environment. The Hours of Prayer for a ministry office include the following:

- **Third Hour of Prayer:** Said around 9 AM, this Hour is commonly prayed in the office setting.
- **Sixth Hour of Prayer:** Said around midday, this Hour is commonly prayed in the office setting.
- **Ninth Hour of Prayer:** Said around 3 PM, this Hour is commonly prayed in the office setting.

Hours of Prayer

Morning and Evening Prayer times are excluded only because the working schedule of most Diocesan offices makes it difficult for the staff to join together in morning and evening prayers. However, individuals are encouraged to use the Morning and Evening Prayer schedules found in the Seminary section to help them in their personal devotional life.

Instructions on how to organize the Hours in your office are given in a later chapter, “**Implementing the Hours.**”

Third Hour (9 AM)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠ Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠ As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Dedicate your office/department's work that day to the Lord as an act of worship. Confess your dependence on Him and thank Him for being with you.

Daily Psalm Reading

(Taken from page 65-68)

Each person takes time to meditate on the Psalm reading and silently pray in response.

Hours of Prayer

P: Pray to the Lord to fill all of you with the Holy Spirit and empower you for your service to Him that day.

Prayer

Prayer requests for either your work or urgent/timely needs of the church/mission field.

Concluding Prayer

Dedicate your work and prayer to the Lord.

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Sixth Hour (12 noon)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠ Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠ As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Ask the Lord to reorient your hearts to Him so that the demands of the day do not distract you from Him. Ask Him to search your hearts and show you if you have stumbled in any way that day.

Daily Psalm Reading

(Taken from page 65-68)

Hours of Prayer

Each person takes time to meditate on the Psalm reading and silently pray in response.

Prayer

A prayer request for your office.

Prayer requests for your Diocese or the mission field.

Pray for your office and leaders.

Concluding Prayer

Thank God for His forgiveness, and pray for His guidance.

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Ninth Hour (3 PM)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Commit your day to the Lord, asking for His help to faithfully finish the day's work with His blessing.

Daily Psalm Reading

(Taken from page 65-68)

Each person takes time to meditate on the Psalm reading and silently prays in response.

Prayer

Two or three people will come forward to thank the Lord for specific things that have happened that day.

Pray for our missionaries on the mission field and the believers in your Diocese.

Concluding Prayer

Thank God for being with us, and for answering our prayers. Ask for His abiding presence in our lives.

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Psalm Readings for Hours During the Day

Week 1

	9 AM	Noon	3 PM
Sunday			
Monday	17:1-7	119:1-8	120
Tuesday	17:8-15	119:9-16	121
Wednesday	29	119:17-24	122
Thursday	30:1-7	119:25-32	123
Friday	30:8-12	119:33-40	124
Saturday	31:1-8	119:41-48	125

Hours of Prayer

Week 2

	9 AM	Noon	3 PM
Sunday			
Monday	31:9-18	119:49-56	126
Tuesday	31:19-24	119:57-64	127
Wednesday	32:1-7	119:65-72	128
Thursday	42	119:73-80	107:1-9
Friday	43	119:81-88	107:33-43
Saturday	47	119:89-96	10:1-6

Hours of Prayer

Week 3

	9 AM	Noon	3 PM
Sunday			
Monday	57	119:97-104	120
Tuesday	61	119:105-112	121
Wednesday	62	119:113-120	122
Thursday	63	119:121-128	123
Friday	64	119:129-136	124
Saturday	65	1	125

Hours of Prayer

Week 4

	9 AM	Noon	3 PM
Sunday			
Monday	89:1-8	119:137-144	145:1-9
Tuesday	95:1-7	119:145-152	145:14-21
Wednesday	100	119:153-160	146
Thursday	103:1-8	119:161-168	147:1-7
Friday	111	119:169-176	147:7-12
Saturday	150	36:1-9	147:12-20

A Sample Day

Here is a sample day to demonstrate how the prayer would be said using Wednesday of Week 3.

Morning Prayer (Congregation)

P: ✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

P: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord Almighty, heaven and earth are filled with Your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

C: Blessed is He who has come and is to come in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Hours of Prayer

P: Holy are You, O God.*

C: Holy are You, Almighty.

P: Holy are You, Immortal.

C: Crucified ✠ for us, Lord Messiah,
have mercy on us.

*[*Repeat this three times.]*

P: Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Lord, be gracious to us. Lord, have
mercy on us and accept our adoration
and service.

P: Praise to You, O Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Creator.

All: Praise to You Lord, our Messiah, for
being merciful to us sinners. Bless O
Lord.

Daily Psalm Reading (Psalm 118:19-29)

P: Please turn with me in your Bibles to
Psalm 118, verses 19-29. We will be
reading verses 19-29 responsively. We
will read the last verse together.

Hours of Prayer

- P:** Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.
- C:** This is the gate of the Lord through which the righteous may enter.
- P:** I will give You thanks, for You answered me; You have become my salvation.
- C:** The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;
- P:** The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.
- C:** The Lord has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.
- P:** Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success!
- C:** Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless You.
- P:** The Lord is God, and He has made His light shine on us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.

Hours of Prayer

C: You are my God, and I will praise You;
You are my God, and I will exalt You.

All: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is
good; His love endures forever.

P: With our Bibles open, let us take
a few moments to reflect on these
verses and strengthen ourselves on the
promises of God.

[Pause for time of reflection]

Songs of Praise

*[One or more songs, depending on the schedule for the
day]*

Scripture Reading

*[Scripture is read in the same way as during Sunday
morning worship.]*

Prayer

[One or two intercessory prayers for the day]

Heavenly Father, we thank You for giving
us another day to worship You, serve You,
know You and suffer for You. We commit
this day to Your glory, and request You to
fill each of us with Your Spirit so that we
can bring glory to Your name. In Jesus'
name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Priest: Our Father in heaven,

All: Hallowed be Your name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory, forever. Amen.

Benediction

Priest: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and forever. Amen.

All: ✠

[People leave the place after marking the Sign of the Cross]

Third Hour (9 AM)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit

C: ✠As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen

Opening Prayer

P: Heavenly Father, we thank You for the privilege of being Your children and for the grace to serve You. We declare that all that we do today will be for Your glory, and we ask You to remind us of Your immense blessing in our lives so that we can humble ourselves in Your presence. We need You, Lord, and we cannot do anything without Your guidance. Thank You that we can go through this day with the confidence that

Hours of Prayer

You are with us. We ask these things for the glory of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Daily Psalm Reading (Psalm 62)

P: Please turn to Psalm 62 in your Bible. I repeat, Psalm 62. We will be reading the whole chapter responsively. We will read the last verse together.

P: Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from Him.

C: Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

P: How long will you assault me? Would all of you throw me down- this leaning wall, this tottering fence?

C: Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place; they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse.

P: Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from Him.

C: Truly He is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

Hours of Prayer

- P:** My salvation and my honor depend on God; He is my mighty rock, my refuge.
- C:** Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge.
- P:** Surely the lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie. If weighed on a balance, they are nothing; together they are only a breath.
- C:** Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.
- P:** One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard: "Power belongs to You, God..."
- All:** ...and with You, Lord, is unfailing love;" and, "You reward everyone according to what they have done."
- P:** With our Bibles open, let us take a few moments to reflect on these verses and strengthen ourselves on the promises of God.

[Pause for a time of reflection]

Hours of Prayer

P: Father, it was at this hour that You first poured out Your Spirit upon Your church. We ask You to have mercy on us and fill us with Your Spirit just as You did to Your Apostles 2000 years ago. Thank You for Your promise and our heritage, and we know that You desire us to bear much fruit so that Your name would be glorified. We ask for Your blessing on us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer

[Prayer requests for either your work or urgent/timely needs of the church/mission field]

Concluding Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for spending this time with us and for receiving our worship and adoration, and for answering our prayers and pouring out Your Spirit upon us. We wish that all that we do and say would bring You glory and honor today, and that the work of our hands would build Your kingdom. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Priest: Our Father in heaven,

All: Hallowed be Your name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory, forever. Amen.

Benediction

Priest: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and forever. Amen

All: ✠

[People leave the place after marking the Sign of the Cross]

Sixth Hour (12 noon)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Father, at this time when our bodies need food, we wish to come to You first and say that we want and need You more than anything else in our lives. We have already gotten distracted throughout the day, Lord, and have not acknowledged You in all possible ways. We turn our hearts back to You, and plead You to show us the ways in which we have stumbled today. Draw

our hearts back to You, and please be with us in a special way at this Hour. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm Reading

P: Please turn to Psalm 119, verses 113-120, in your Bible. I repeat, Psalm 119, verses 113-120. We will be reading verses 113-120 responsively.

P: I hate double-minded people, but I love Your law.

C: You are my refuge and my shield;
I have put my hope in Your word.

P: Away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commands of my God!

C: Sustain me, my God, according to
Your promise, and I will live;
do not let my hopes be dashed.

P: Uphold me, and I will be delivered;
I will always have regard for Your
decrees.

C: You reject all who stray from Your
decrees, for their delusions come to
nothing.

Hours of Prayer

- P:** All the wicked of the earth You
discard like dross;
therefore I love Your statutes.
- C:** My flesh trembles in fear of You;
I stand in awe of Your laws.
- P:** With our Bibles open, let us take
a few moments to reflect on these
verses and strengthen ourselves on the
promises of God.

[Pause for time of reflection]

Prayer

Prayer requests for your class/office.

Prayer request for our mission fields.

Prayer dedicating you and your leaders to
God's service.

Concluding Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for being with us, for
Your kindness to us and for hearing our
prayers. We trust You, and look forward to
what You have planned for our lives and in
response to our prayers.

The Lord's Prayer

Priest: Our Father in heaven,

All: Hallowed be Your name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory, forever. Amen.

Benediction

Priest: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and forever. Amen

All: ✠

[People leave the place after marking the Sign of the Cross]

Ninth Hour (3 PM)

P: Hasten, O God, to save me.

C: Come quickly, Lord, to help me.

P: ✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for being with us throughout the day. We are grateful that You have kept Your promise of never forsaking us. Thank You, for blessing the work of our hands and allowing us to be the vessels of Your glory. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Psalm Reading

- P:** Please turn to Psalm 122 in your Bible. I repeat, Psalm 122. We will be reading verses 1-9 responsively, and we will read the last verse together.
- P:** I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”
- C:** Our feet are standing in Your gates,
Jerusalem.
- P:** Jerusalem is built like a city that is
closely compacted together.
- C:** That is where the tribes go up- the
tribes of the Lord- to praise the name
of the Lord according to the statute
given to Israel.
- P:** There stand the thrones for judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.
- C:** Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May
those who love You be secure.
- P:** “May there be peace within Your walls
and security within Your citadels.”
- C:** For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”

Hours of Prayer

All: For the sake of the house of the Lord
our God, I will seek your prosperity.

P: With our Bibles open, let us take
a few moments to reflect on these
verses and strengthen ourselves on the
promises of God.

[Pause for a time of reflection]

Prayer

*[Two or three people will come forward to thank the
Lord for specific things that have happened today.
Pray for our missionaries on the field.]*

Concluding Prayer

Thank You, God, for being with us and for
answering our prayers. We ask You to be
with us throughout the rest of the day and
bless us with Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus'
name, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Priest: Our Father in heaven,

All: Hallowed be Your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

Hours of Prayer

Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory, forever. Amen.

Benediction

Priest: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and forever. Amen.

All: ✠

[People leave the place after marking the Sign of the Cross]

Evening Prayer

P: ✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

C: ✠As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

P: Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord Almighty,
heaven and earth are filled with Your
glory. Hosanna in the highest!

C: Blessed is He who has come and is
to come in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

P: Holy are You, O God.*

C: Holy are You, Almighty.

P: Holy are You, Immortal.

C: Crucified ✠ for us, Lord Messiah,
have mercy on us.

*[*Repeat this three times]*

Hours of Prayer

P: Lord, have mercy on us.

C: Lord, be gracious to us. Lord, have mercy on us and accept our adoration and service.

P: Praise to You, O Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Creator.

All: Praise to You Lord, our Messiah, for being merciful to us sinners. Bless O Lord.

Psalm Reading

P: Please turn to Psalm 136, verses 1-9 in your Bible. We will be reading verses 1-9 responsively; I will read the first part of each verse, and you will read the second part.

P: Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.

C: His love endures forever.

P: Give thanks to the God of gods.

C: His love endures forever.

P: Give thanks to the Lord of lords:

C: His love endures forever.

Hours of Prayer

- P: To Him who alone does great wonders,
C: His love endures forever.
- P: Who by His understanding made the heavens,
C: His love endures forever.
- P: Who spread out the earth upon the waters,
C: His love endures forever.
- P: Who made the great lights—
C: His love endures forever.
- P: The sun to govern the day,
C: His love endures forever.
- P: The moon and stars to govern the night;
C: His love endures forever.
- P: With our Bibles open, let us take a few moments to reflect on these verses and strengthen ourselves on the promises of God.

[Pause for time of reflection]

Songs of Praise

[One or more songs depending on the schedule for the day]

Scripture Reading

[Scripture is read in the same way as during Sunday morning worship.]

Prayer

[One or two intercessory prayers for the day]

Heavenly Father, we thank You for giving us another day and for being with us throughout the day. You have blessed us and provided for our physical, emotional and spiritual needs. You are an amazing and Holy God. We worship You with all our hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Priest: Our Father in heaven,

All: Hallowed be Your name.

Your Kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

As we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation,

But deliver us from the evil one.

Hours of Prayer

For Yours is the Kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever.

Amen.

Benediction

Priest: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and forever. Amen

All: ✠

[People leave the place after marking the Sign of the Cross]

Aspects of the Liturgy of the Hours of Prayer

All the Hours follow a similar liturgy with deviations depending on the specific hours. The different aspects of the liturgy are

1. **Opening Prayer.** The sign of the cross and the Gloria³² are a usual part of this.
2. **Worship through the Psalms and songs.** The focus on worship of God through the Psalms is central to the Hours. They are often read or sung responsively.
3. **Scripture.** Depending on the Hour, the reading might be a short verse to meditate on or a longer passage. Each

³² ✠Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Hours of Prayer

reading should be considered a special message from the Lord to each person in the congregation.

4. **Prayer.** Intercession helps breathe life into the Hours.
5. **Closing.** This often includes a concluding prayer, the Lord's Prayer, and Benediction.

The Hours have a rhythm on a daily and weekly basis. Many of the earliest monks would pray through the entire Book of Psalms in one day, having memorized it. However, as monastic and church communities adopted the Hours, they began to adapt their religious practices to be a part of a more diverse lifestyle of knowing and serving God. Reading and meditating on the Scripture play an important part in a believer's devout life and are crucial to the Hours.

The normal spiritual reading can be done as part of or separate from the Hours. They are often included in Vigils, but Vigils is usually done individually. However, the meditation on the Scripture reading

has always been considered a practice for individuals. Even if the Scripture reading for the day is done as part of a communal time of Vigils (or other Hour), it is imperative for each individual to meditate on those Scriptures during their own personal time with the Lord.

It is also very helpful to have a voluntary Bible reading plan that will take you through the Scriptures in a year. The ones that are most helpful are planned alongside the lectionary to complement the readings. Encourage believers to discuss the readings with each other as part of their times of fellowship.

One reason why we read the Psalms and the Scripture prior to the time of intercession is to build faith in those who are praying. The promises in the passages should be comprehended for encouragement and for motivation.

Praying the Psalms

The reading of the Psalms needs to be done as an active form of prayer. It might

be that people read the Psalms not as their own prayers and simply as words that someone else wrote. As we do with worship songs, encourage individuals to comprehend the true essence of these words and make them their own heartfelt expressions of praise and prayer.³³ They are prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit, and express God's thoughts, feelings and will. They are the best way to train believers to pray in the Spirit and according to God's will.

The cycle of praying the Psalms can be accomplished in one or two weeks. Believers Eastern Church opts for a four-week cycle. If all the Hours are diligently observed, a person will pray through most of the Book of Psalms every four weeks. (See page 51).

Get to the Heart of the Matter

Just like any truly meaningful spiritual activity, the Hours may become empty

³³ The Psalms have always been considered the prayer book of the church and the primary way to train people to pray.

Hours of Prayer

and hollow if individuals do not encounter God through them. People must be reminded occasionally that praying the Hours, in itself, does not make them spiritual. It is only a means of grace and an opportunity for encountering God. It is also helpful to encourage believers to abide in Christ and to pray without ceasing, and teach them how the Hours contribute to these goals.

Hearing from Him and praying to Him are important to feel the true impact of the Hours. Each believer should consider each Hour to be a time for God to breathe life into us, and should try to have a meaningful encounter with Him. When practiced correctly, next to the Holy Communion, the Hours offer the greatest expression of the relationship between God and His Bride that there is.

Implementing the Hours of Prayer

Each Hour is both a means to an end and an end in itself. We gather as a body around Christ to have fellowship with Christ. He breathes life into us so that we can be His life; so that we can be the light in a dark and dying world. However, the Hours form a framework for us to serve God throughout our lives and to pray without ceasing. Each Hour should always be an aid in our relationship with God, and not a taskmaster. Jesus reminded the Pharisees, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”³⁴ He wanted them to remember that the real goal was the true worship of God.

³⁴ St. Mark 2:27

Choose Hours that Help You Serve God

Historically, churches have kept a morning and evening time of prayer while religious communities have sought to keep the majority of the Hours. The three Hours that occur during most people's workdays (Third Hour, Sixth Hour and Ninth Hour) are called the 'Little Hours' because they are designed to be brief and concise, since their times fall when individuals serve Christ through work. Many churches often disregard them altogether.

During the Middle Ages, it was common practice in some areas for the church bell to signal the beginning of each Hour (some churches still ring their bells every hour, through the day, though they are not connected to the Hours of Prayer). Many believers might not be able to come to the church and participate in the Hours but would pray a memorized Psalm and/or the Lord's Prayer wherever they are.

While it is important to try and observe as many Hours as possible, they must serve the mission to which God has called

Hours of Prayer

His believers. Some communities may disregard one or two Hours because they do not help them with their calling. They may only have a single morning Hour instead of two. They may only observe one evening Hour and/or might observe only one of the Little Hours during the workday. For example, instead of Vigils and Lauds, we just have the Morning Prayer. The Hours suggested for seminaries and ministry offices earlier in the book are examples of this. The key is to adopt the Hours that suit and serve your community better, and then, be consistent in maintaining the chosen Hours. However, the community has the freedom to observe certain Hours on weekdays only as long as it is consistent.

Be Reasonably Flexible Regarding Time

The time of each Hour can be slightly changed to suit our convenience. For instance, the Third Hour, traditionally held at 9:00 AM, is held at 8:45 AM by the Synod office because this allows everyone to start their workday at 9:00 AM. The

Hours of Prayer

Sixth Hour is at 11:45 AM instead of noon to facilitate lunch hours better.

However, each Hour should be observed around the time at which it was established. For example, you must not start Vigils around midday. One monastic community that had grown lax in devotion kept all seven Hours but crammed them into the first few hours of the day so that they could do as they pleased with the rest of their day. The goal of this arrangement was not to aid them in praying without ceasing or making God the center of their lives but to get the Hours over with as if they were mere chores and live for themselves.

As St. Augustine said, “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in You.”³⁵ True fulfillment and happiness can only be found in God who created us to reflect His life through us. The Hours of Prayer are a means for us to live in constant fellowship

³⁵ Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in *Confessions*, taken from the article ‘*Our Hearts are Restless*’ (Article # 15) by Dan Graves appeared in the Resources (In Context) of Christian History Institute.

Hours of Prayer

with this God who loves us and intends the best for us, always. So if we look at the Hours of Prayer - the times prescribed for us to commune with our loving God - as a chore, we become disrespectful to the godly tradition that has been handed to us by the Apostles and the church fathers.

However, when you decide which Hours to implement and when, they must be attended to without exception and not be changed. If you decide on 8:45 AM for the Third Hour, it should be prayed at 8:45 AM every day. The goal is to establish the Hours as a priority, and then practice them. They form the anchors of your day, lifting your eyes above the busyness of life and ministry, and return your hearts to God.

Some Personal, Some Communal

The last thing to note about the timings of the Hours and their implementation is to allow different ways of worship for each Hour. For instance, at our Major Seminary in Thiruvalla, the first Hour of prayer is a Family Prayer and the Second Hour

Hours of Prayer

is for individual prayer and study. One Hour may be done in the chapel, another in the classroom, and so on. The Tuesday Night Prayer meeting takes the place of Evening Prayer. Holy Communion is also held on Tuesday and Friday mornings. Each month, one Wednesday is observed as a day of silence, ending with an evening Hour of contemplative worship.

The context changes to fit the needs of the community but they are consistent, which helps to create a rhythm to the life on campus.

This can be accomplished in church life as well. Families may gather first thing in the morning for a short spiritual time, but each member of the family must also be encouraged to have personal prayer times. They, then, may have their Evening Prayer as a family around the dinner table, and may later observe Compline as individuals.

Hours of Prayer

The following are examples of differing contexts for a seminary and church:

Hour	Seminary	Church
Vigils	Family Prayer or Individual	Family Prayer or Individual
Lauds	Chapel, Family or Individual prayer	Morning Prayer at church
Third Hour	In chapel or classroom	Skipped
Sixth Hour	In classroom	Short individual prayer
Ninth Hour	In classroom	Skipped
Vespers	Family Prayer or chapel	Evening Prayer at church
Compline	Individual prayer	Family prayer

Personal Devotional Prayer

It is important for individuals to have personal times of worship, prayer and biblical meditation. The individual prayer life should fuel the Hours of Prayer and the Hours of Prayer should fuel the individual prayer life. When people meet with the Lord privately, it also means that they will be able to encounter God in a more meaningful way as a group. Since they consistently pray with others during the Hours, they are strengthened in their faith and individual prayer lives.

Personal meditation on the Scriptures and the meaningful times of intercession are vital to individual spiritual lives. The Hours should never substitute these but will only complement them with more of God's will and His Word on which you may contemplate during your personal time with God.

Appendix

Scriptural and early church references to Hours of Prayer

Hour of Prayer	Scripture Reference	Church Father or Writing
General	Ps. 55:17, 119:164; Eph. 6:18	St. Basil, St Benedict, John Cassian, Council of Nicaea
Vigils (or Matins)	Gen. 32:24-26; Ps. 119:62, 147-148; 130:6; Song. 5:2; Lam. 2:19; St. Mark 1:35; St. Luke 6:12; St. John 20:21; Eph. 5:14; Acts 16:25	Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian, St. Basil, St Benedict, John Cassian, John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo
First Hour (Lauds or Prime)	Ps. 5:3, 46:5, 63:1, 88:3, 92:2; Lam. 3:23; St. Luke 4:42	Apostolic Constitutions, Hippolytus, Eusebius, St. Basil, St Benedict, John Cassian

Third Hour (Terce)	Exodus 29:39; 1Chron.16:39-40; 2 Chron. 2:4-8; 13:11; Ezek. 36:13-15; Dan. 6:10; St. Mark 15:25; St. Luke 1:10; Acts 2:15	Didache, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Apostolic Constitutions, St. Basil, St Benedict, John Cassian, John Chrysostom
Sixth Hour (Sixth)	St. Luke 23:44; Acts 10:9; Dan. 6:10	Didache, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, St. Basil, St Benedict, John Cassian, John Chrysostom
Ninth Hour (None)	Exodus 29:39; Numb. 28:4; 1 Kings. 18:36; 1Chron. 16:39- 40; 2 Chron. 2:4-8; Dan. 6:10; 9:21; St. Matt. 27:46; 23: 44-46; Acts 3:1,10:3,30	Didache, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian, Apostolic Constitutions, St. Basil, St Benedict, John Cassian, John Chrysostom, Council of Nicaea
Evening (Vespers)	Ps. 42: 8, 55:17, 119:55; Isaiah 26:9; St. Mark 14:32-42	Tertullian, Cyprian, Eusebius, Apostolic Constitutions, St. Basil, St Benedict, John Cassian, Augustine of Hippo, Council of Nicaea

Night-time (Compline or Nocturns)	Ps. 63:6, 77:2-6, 92:2, 149:5; Song. 3:1-2	Origen, Hippolytus, St. Basil, St Benedict, John Cassian, John Chrysostom, Council of Nicaea
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