

The Evening Divine Services

The Ninth Hour, Vespers and Compline comprise this structure of the Divine services.

The Ninth Hour

In our notation the ninth hour corresponds to 4, 5 and 6 o'clock in the afternoon¹. In this hour the Lord Jesus Christ, hanging on a tree and having exclaimed, yielded up His spirit to God (Mt. 27:46-50). The service of the 9th Hour is established in commemoration of the great agonizing suffering and death of the Savior. The commandment to pray at the 9th Hour in commemoration of the humility of the Lord is clearly stated in decisions of the Apostles. St. Basil the Great attributes an apostolic establishment to the service (Refer to Acts. 3:1). St. Pachomius the Great selected the psalms for this service, and St. Basil the Great wrote the troparia and the prayer in the Ninth Hour.

The ninth hour is usually sung before Vespers². In Great Lent the 3rd and 6th Hours are done together, and then the 9th Hour follows, after which the Typical Psalms and Vespers are sung. In the Compline of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany the 9th hour is done together with all the other hours (The Royal Hours). The 9th Hour is done between 3 and 6 o'clock (and separately from Vespers) on Wednesday and Friday of Cheese Fare Week if there is a Prefeast of the Meeting or a feast day of the temple on these days (Ustav [Typikon] for Feb. 1; ch. 28 on the temple). See pp. 697-698.

Chapters 1 and 9 of the Ustav [Typikon] clearly states that the Ninth Hour is sometimes done in the temple, sometimes in the Narthex. On the days of the Fast the 9th Hour is done in the temple (Ustav [Typikon] Nov. 14; Mon. of the first week of Great Lent). See more below.

Vespers

As in the beginning the creation of the world began with evening, so the Holy Church in the Divine service of Vespers first of all glorifies God as the Creator and Providence for the good of creation and providence for man. Moreover, remindful of the fall of the forefathers, she guides and raises believers to consciousness of sin and prayer before the Lord for their healing. Finally, pulling together the evening of the day with evening of our life, she reminds us about having death overtake us.

The present order and structure of the Vesper Divine service mainly carries in itself the stamp of extreme antiquity. Already the apostolic regulations (book II, 59, VIII, 35) lays out the Vesper Divine Service in lines rather similar to the present order. Here the bishop is commanded to gather the people at the approach of evening. St. Basil the Great mentions a custom of the fathers to offer thanksgiving at the approach of the evening light as an old custom, and confirms

that although his is the name of the creator of those praises which are read during the time of the Prayers of the Light, many remain as unknown authors, however the people, uplifting them, repeat an ancient voice. Thus, already at the time of St. Basil the Great the main parts of the present Vesper Divine Services were old.

There are three types of Vespers: daily, little and great.

Daily Vespers is done on those days when there is no holiday with a Polyeleon or Vigil. On the eve of feasts it may be only done when they fall during Cheese fare week or during the weeks of Great Lent (e.g. Jan. 30, Feb. 24, Mar. 9 and Ustav [Typikon] on the temple ch. 35, 36). The Ustav [Typikon] on Daily Vespers, not served in Great Lent, is found in the Priest's Service Book, the Horologion, the Augmented Psalter and the Typikon ch. 9. The Ustav [Typikon] on Daily Vespers served in Great Lent is found in the order of the evening of Cheesefare Sunday and Monday of the 1st week of Great Lent, maintained in the Typikon (see also "the order of Vespers" in the Horologion and Augmented Psalter and being met in this order of instructions: "if it is lent").

Little Vespers is served only before the Vigil beginning with Vespers. There is no Little Vespers before the Vigil beginning with Compline. Little Vespers is understood as being a shortened Daily Vespers. In it there are no Prayers of the Light, Great Litany, verses of the Psalter, Little Litany sung with no more than 4 stichera, the Aposticha is not sung, in the Litany: "Have mercy on us, O God" are only three petitions, the Litany "Let us complete our evening prayer" is dropped and there is a little Dismissal instead of the great Dismissal (Ustav [Typikon], chapters 1 and 9). The Ustav [Typikon] on Little Vespers is found in the Priest's Service Book (in some editions), in the Octoechos and in chapter one of the Typikon.

Great Vespers is a festal vespers. It is served on the eve of the feast and sometimes on the feast itself. Great Vespers, served on the eve of feasts, or served separately from Matins³, or in combination with Matins (All Night Vigil), in compliance with the instructions of the Ustav [Typikon], which thus gives freedom to the rector (see ch. 6 of the Ustav [Typikon]), sometimes made with the remarks: "If the rector wishes, we serve a vigil"⁴.

Great Vespers is always prescribed in a Vigil, except in those cases, when it begins with Great Compline⁵. The Ustav [Typikon] about the Great Vespers served separately from Matins is found in the Priest's Service Book, the Horologion, and the Augmented Psalter and in chapter 7 of the Typikon. The Ustav [Typikon] about Great Vespers combined with Matins are in some editions of the Priest's Service Book, in the Octoechos and in chapter 2 of the Typikon⁶.

Besides Matins, Vespers may be combined with the 3rd, 6th and 9th Hours and with the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in Great Lent, with the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great on Great Thursday and Great Saturday and with the Liturgy of

St. John Chrysostom on the feast of the Annunciation if it falls on some days of Great Lent (see pp. 120-121).

Compline

In the service of Compline, served "on all days", are expressed in general the feelings of a Christian, going to sleep at the end of the day, guided by the light of the Gospel and with the help of grace. Besides this, with the service of Compline the Holy Church combines the memory of the descent of Jesus Christ into Hades and freeing the righteous from the power of the prince of darkness, and these memories will lead us to gratitude for all the blessings of God, and to prayer for the forgiveness of sins and granting of the Kingdom of Heaven. For this the Holy Church especially inspires us to diligently ask the All-Holy Theotokos for an intercession, as in all of life, so especially on the day of the exit of the soul from the body.

There is both Little and Great Compline.

The order of Little Compline is found in the Horologion and in the Augmented Psalter. Little Compline is served every day of the year, except on the week days of Great Lent and some other days in the year when it is necessary to serve the Great Compline. Sometimes it is served in the kellia (see p. 524).

Great Compline is served both separately from Matins and combined with it. The rules for Great Compline are found in the Horologion, the Augmented Psalter and in the Typikon (Jan. 6, Mar. 25, Monday of the 1st week of Great Lent and in other places). Great Compline is served separately from Matins on Tuesday (Wednesday) and Thursday (Friday) of Cheesefare week (except for cases pointed out in the Ustav [Typikon] for Feb. 2 and in chapter 28 for the temple), on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday (except for Wednesday and Friday of the 5th week) on all the Sundays of Great Lent and on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Holy Week⁷. Great Compline is combined with Matins on March 24 and on the eve of temple feasts and the imperial days if these feasts fall on those weekdays of Great Lent, which do not follow the feast. Also Great Compline is always combined with Matins on December 24 and January 5⁸.

*S. V. Bulgakov, **Handbook for Church Servers**, 2nd ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900), pp. 0691b-0695.
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¹ Judea during the life of the Savior divided the night into 4 parts, or watches, the first watch (from sunset) is the evening, the second is the midnight, the third is the cockcrow, the fourth is the morning; the day is also divided into 4 parts: first, third, sixth and ninth hours.

Jewish division of the weekday	Evening	Midnight	Cockcrow	Morning	First Hour	Third Hour	Sixth Hour	Ninth Hour
Typikon Hours	Night				Day			
	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9	10 11 12	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9	10 11 12

Our Hours	After noon			After Midnight				After noon	
	7 8 9	10 11 12		1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9	10 11 12	1 2 3	4 5 6

² Though, according to the Ustav [Typikon], one must read the 9th Hour together with Vespers, but it concerns the Divine service of the coming rather than the passing day, as Vespers. But that is why where daily Divine services are not done, when they wish to serve a liturgy on some kind of day, before which there was no service, the Divine service on the eve of this liturgy usually does not begin with the 9th Hour, but directly with Vespers and consists only of Vespers and Compline. The 9th Hour is already read the next day before the liturgy itself after the 6th Hour. In such order the daily services are also listed in the Uchitelnoye Izvestiye [Teacher News] (Nikolayev, p. 75).

³ Great Vespers not in a Vigil is served on the following days of feasts: on the first and on the all other days of Pascha, on Thomas Sunday, on the Lord's feasts of the twelve major feasts, on the eve of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany and on Great Friday.

⁴ Besides the 68 vigils appointed in the Ustav [Typikon] (by the number of Sundays and feasts), "there are also other vigils", which are specially specified in the Ustav [Typikon], "in their order where it is written, if those present will it, if they see that by their churchlike boldness they care about their salvation. There also are other vigils for this holy temple, in the hermitage, which must exist, and in no way remains in its memory" (Ustav [Typikon], ch. 6).

Besides this, the All Night Vigil should be served on the high festal days from Pascha to September 15th (P. S. Z., № 20416).

For good reason (for the sake of an icon honored, e.g.,) the rector may replace the Polyeleon service with the All Night Vigil (Tserkovnie Vedomosti [Church News] 1896, 6).

To serve the All Night Vigil on the eve of Pascha goes against church rules and it is not in agreement with the idea of the feast (Tserkovnie Vedomosti [Church News] 1895 1; Refer to p. 568-569).

The Ustav [Typikon] offers (see ch. 2) the usual All Night Vigil (i.e. a Great Vespers combined with Matins) to serve in the evening. That is why it is not in agreement with the Ustav [Typikon] and appears to be unnatural to serve this Vigil in the 7th - 8th hour in the morning (See Litovskii Eparkhialniia Vedomosti [Lithuanian Diocesan News] 1895, 6).

⁵ Instructions in the 6th and 9th chapters of the Ustav [Typikon] (and equally also canon 51 of the Council of Laodicea) are so firm that they eliminate any assumption of the possibility of serving All Night Vigils on weekdays of the Holy Forty Day Fast. It is true that in the 6th chapter of the Typikon there is a reservation that All Night Vigils for Sundays and for the Lord's and other great feasts, "there are also other vigils, as specified by name in the Ustav [Typikon] in its order where it is written", but also this reservation should not cause any confusion about the possibility or impossibility of serving All Night Vigils on week days of the Holy Forty Day Fast, as "in the Ustav [Typikon] in the order" that on the week days of the Holy Forty Day Fast nowhere is it mentioned that the All Night Vigil is served on these days (Rukovodstvo dlia Selskikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1890, 6).

⁶ In ancient times, when the diligence of Christians for prayer was at full strength, the All Night Vigil began after the setting of the sun ("after which the sun becomes little"), it says in the Ustav [Typikon] about the beginning of the All Night Vigil, "the candle lighter goes out" and "strikes the great bell") and it continued to the very dawn. Eventually the zealousness of Christians for All Night Vigils, prayer and church chanting weakened. Therefore the Holy Church, in condescension to the weakness of its children, has considerably reduced the All Night Vigil (reduction in the quantity of church chanting, psalms, so-called authorized readings, faster execution of singing and so forth). The ancient structure of the All Night Vigil remained in inviolable integrity. And in its present view, the All Night Vigils (without the replacement in them of the singing by reading, at the performance of the singing with a canonarch and at the observance of the instructions concerning the authorized readings) in some of our monasteries differ in their length (see, e.g., part 3, p. 110). There are especially long All Night Vigils on Mt. Athos where they are served for 10 or 12 hours without interruption. In these All Night Vigils good voiced singers, experts in their competence, who by their skilful performance charm the ears of those praying and support "the good spirit" in "their impotent flesh". The constant alternation of singing with reading, during the time of which it is necessary to rest on the seats in the stasidion [sedile], the transitions from the unison and heavy chants to the powerful and fast, the twilight change (in which people seem like shadows) to a flood of light, instantly all the chandeliers and lampadas are lit, the replacement by turns of the hieromonks and the hierodeacons at the exits of the entire cathedral by the hieromonks and hierodeacons in shining vestments and so forth, - even all this makes a deep impression on the usual visitor, encouragingly acting and contributing to his further consciousness. (See the Works of the Kievan Theological Academy 1892, 11).

⁷ In some city churches even on weekdays of the Holy Forty Day Fast is performed the Great Lent Compline combined with Great Lent Matins and the First Hour in the evening, during which there is considerable reduction in the order of these services, but the Midnight Office is completely dropped so that the Divine service was not very long and, hence, tiring for both of those who serve and those who pray. But with such a combination of Great Lent services with the shortening of their order and even with the omission of one of them, although it was called the living condition of city parishioners, it is impossible to look at this approvingly and consequently there, where (in rural parishes) it is accepted, but it is not the present custom on weekdays of the Holy Forty day fast to perform the Great Lent Compline combined with the Great Lent Matins and the First Hour in the evening. It also is better not to go into this custom (Rukovodstvo dlia Selskikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1890, 6).

⁸ According to the Ustav [Typikon] for the feast of the Annunciation this Compline begins "at the first hour of the night", but on the Nativity of Christ and Theophany it is "at the 10th hour of the night" (Refer to p. 692, note 1).