

INTRODUCTION TO THE MONASTIC DIURNAL

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WHAT IS THE MONASTIC DIURNAL?

The Monastic Diurnal is a liturgical book of the Western Rite, containing the Day Hours of the Monastic Divine Office¹: that is, all of the canonical Hours of Prayer recited by Benedictine monks throughout the day, except the Office of Matins (also called Vigils or Nocturns)². A “Breviary”, as opposed to a “Diurnal,”³ is a much larger book (usually split up into two or four seasonal volumes) because it contains materials for Matins as well as the Day Hours.

The Diurnal is called “Monastic” because the form of the Divine Office it contains is that which was celebrated for centuries in monasteries, from the time of Saint Benedict of Nursia, the Patriarch of Western Monasticism (c. 480-543). The basic outlines of the Monastic Office are described in some detail by Saint Benedict in his famous and influential monastic Rule. When we pray the Monastic Office, we are doing what countless Saints and pious monastic souls have done for centuries.

The Benedictine Monastic Divine Office, of course, was faithfully and carefully preserved down through the centuries within the Roman Catholic Church. In the modern period, even some Catholic-minded Anglicans began praying this form of the Office. But the Benedictine Monastic Divine Office is not merely “Roman Catholic” or “Anglican.” It is a venerable, ancient form of prayer whose origins predate the tragic separation between the Eastern and Western churches by many centuries. The development of the Western Rite’s Divine Office began in the very earliest years of the Church’s life after Pentecost, and it developed into its current, essential form by the time of Saints Benedict and Gregory the Great.

The Monastic Office is the official daily prayer of the Western Rite Vicariate in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. Clergy are normally directed to use it for their daily prayers.⁴ Parishes which celebrate the Mass of Saint Gregory normally celebrate their public Offices according to the monastic rite. The native language of the Monastic Office is Latin. In the Western Rite Vicariate, the Office can be recited in the original Latin, or in an approved English translation. The Oxford University Press edition of the Diurnal⁵ is recommended by the Vicariate

¹ From the Latin *Officium Divinum*, meaning a “divine service” or “divine duty.” Saint Benedict calls the Office the *Opus Dei*, or “The work of God.”

² Matins is a very long and complicated Office, and so in its full form it’s not often recited outside of monasteries. However, for those who are interested in it, an English translation of Monastic Matins is forthcoming from Lancelot Andrewes Press, Glendale, Colorado. It should also be noted that the Monastic Diurnal does contain Matins for a few occasions of the year: namely, during the Sacred Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday) and in the Office of the Dead.

³ The word “Diurnal” derives from the Latin word *diurnalis*, meaning, “of, or pertaining to, the day.”

⁴ The only exception being those priests who normally celebrate the Mass of Saint Tikhon. They use a version of the Daily Office of the *Book of Common Prayer* publicly; and they can use either this or the monastic Office for their private obligation as well. See Title V of the “Liturgical Notes” in the annual Vicariate Ordo.

⁵ This volume is available in a handsome reprint by Lancelot Andrewes Press, Glendale, Colorado (<http://www.andrewespress.com>).

(assuming, however, that a few elements contrary to Orthodox theology are corrected, according to the usage of the Vicariate).

The fact that this is a “monastic” form of prayer does not mean that others cannot adopt it as the core of their personal rule of prayer. Many non-monastics find that praying some or all of the Hours from the Diurnal gives their life a profound sense of spiritual peace, structure and discipline.

Many people who pick up the Diurnal for the first time and page through it are immediately intimidated and discouraged at its apparent complexity. Admittedly, the traditional Divine Office is a complex system of psalms, antiphons, responds, versicles, hymns, collects and rubrics. The Divine Office is always overwhelming to beginners. It is not exactly intuitive, and takes a lot of work to figure out and get used to. Above all, if you truly desire to master the Monastic Diurnal, you will need a lot of courage, patience and hope. Admittedly, there is a considerable learning curve, but in the end, it’s worth it!

This tutorial, an introduction to the Diurnal for beginners, is not meant to be exhaustive. It’s impossible to communicate everything you need to know about the Office in such a small space. There are many things about the Diurnal that can only be learned through experience. However, it is hoped that this document will give make the Monastic Divine Office a little less mysterious to beginners.

THE MONASTIC DAY HOURS

The Church’s canonical Hours of prayer are based on the ancient divisions of the day. The Jews, the Greeks and the Romans all divided the day up into twelve parts, from sunrise to sunset. Both the ancient Jews and the early Christians devoted certain of these times to prayer. Saint Benedict traces the Church’s times of prayer to two scriptural verses: “Seven times a day I have given praise to thee” (Psalm 119:164), and “At midnight I arose to confess to thee” (Psalm 119:62). The “seven times” correspond to the Day Hours, and the prayer at “midnight” corresponds to the Office of Matins.

Lauds is the Church’s morning prayer (it corresponds to Orthros in the Byzantine Rite). In monasteries, it is recited very early in the morning, at sunrise, immediately following Matins. Its name is derived from the Latin word for “praise,” which is also the first word of the last three Psalms of the hour (Psalms 148, 149 and 150). The climax of this Hour is the recitation of the Cantic *Benedictus*, or the Song of Zacharias, from the Gospel of Saint Luke.

Prime comes from the Latin word for first, because it is the “First Hour” (according to the ancient manner of reckoning the hours of the day). It is traditionally recited around 6 AM. Prime developed originally as a second morning prayer service in monasteries, in which the monks asked for a blessing on the work of the day.

The next three Hours are commonly known as “the Little Hours.” Structurally, they are identical triplets. *Terce* (pronounced like “terse”) is the “Third Hour,” recited around 9 AM; *Sext* is the “Sixth Hour,” recited around noon; and *None* (rhymes with “bone”) is the “Ninth Hour,” recited around 3 PM.

Vespers is the Church’s evening prayer, traditionally recited around sunset. Its climax is the recitation of the Cantic *Magnificat*, or Song of the Blessed Virgin Mary, from the Gospel of Saint Luke.

Structurally, it is a “twin” with Lauds. The Church regards Lauds and Vespers to be her most important Hours of Prayer.

Compline is the last Hour of the day, recited after sunset as a sort of “bedside” Office. It was introduced by the ancient monastic fathers as a prayer for protection from dangers and temptations during the night.

THE RUBRICS

Looking through the Diurnal, you will notice that the black texts of prayers and psalms are often accompanied by smaller red texts. These red texts scattered throughout the book are called “the rubrics” (from the Latin word, *ruber*, “red”). They are detailed directions which tell you exactly how to pray the Office correctly. Hence the saying: “Say the black, do the red.”

There’s also a section of the Diurnal, in the very front, called the “General Rubrics.”⁶ This section is meant to be a sort of general orientation to the Office, something that you will probably refer to often while learning the Office.

DIFFERENT DAYS AND RANKS

The traditional Western Rite liturgical year is full of different sorts of daily observances. There are three basic types of days in the Office: Sundays, Feasts and Ferias.

The cycle of *Sundays*, as we know from attending Mass every Sunday, revolve around two of the Church’s great feasts: Christmass and Pascha.

Feasts are normally *fixed*, that is, always celebrated on the same dates, year by year (e.g. Christmass is always on December 25, the Assumption is always on August 15, All Saints’ Day is always on November 1, etc.) Other Feasts are *moveable*, like the observances dependent on the date of Pascha (e.g. Ascension or Corpus Christi).

“*Feria*” is basically another word for “weekday.” They do not correspond to fixed *dates* but to days in a week (e.g. the Wednesday in the Third Week of Lent).

All of these days are assigned a particular rank in the kalendar, because in the Church’s consciousness they differ in importance. And so we rank all of these days differently so that we know how to order them properly. Very often, two observances coincide in the Office and we have to know how to reconcile them.

Obviously, feasts of Our Lord or the Mother of God are far more important than feasts of the Saints. Likewise, the kalendar treats some Saints’ feasts as more important than others. Sundays tend to be more important than most feasts. Even certain weekdays are more important than certain kinds of feasts.

⁶ In the Western Rite Vicariate, we follow the more traditional form of the rubrics, found on pp. xxvii-xxxiii, the table on pp. xxxix-xlii, and the charts on xlv-xlv.

Sundays can either be First Class (e.g. Pascha, the Sundays in Lent, Pentecost), Second Class (e.g. the pre-Lenten Sundays), or ordinary (basically, every other Sunday in the year). The Office of Sundays begin with Vespers of Saturday and end with Compline of Sunday.

Feast days are ranked according to one of these categories:

- Doubles of the First Class (D1)
- Doubles of the Second Class (D2)
- Greater Doubles (GD)
- Ordinary Doubles (D)
- Semi-Doubles (SD)
- Simples (S)

Double Feasts have both First and Second Vespers. This means that the feast begins on the evening before its date as listed in the kalendar, e.g. the feast of Saint Augustine begins with First Vespers on the evening of August 27. A Double Feast begins with First Vespers and ends with Second Vespers and Compline on the day of the feast itself. The Antiphons on Double Feasts are “doubled” (hence the name of the rank; this is explained more fully below).

Semi-Double Feasts likewise begin with First Vespers of the evening before and end with Compline of the evening of the feast itself. The Antiphons, however, are not “doubled” but merely “announced” (see the explanation below).

Simple Feasts begin with Vespers of the day before and end with None of the day itself. Antiphons are not “doubled” but merely announced.

Ferias also have different ranks, according to their importance. Most ferias are of “simple rite”, but there are greater ferias:

- Privileged, First Order (e.g. Ash Wednesday, first three days of Holy Week)
- Privileged, Second Order (e.g. Ember Days, days in Lent)
- Privileged, Third Order (e.g. days in Advent or Pre-Lent)

Two other kinds of days should be mentioned here. (1) An *Octave* is the prolongation of a very important feast for eight days. The eighth day itself is called “the Octave Day” and the days between the feast and the Octave Day are called “days within the Octave.” Feasts such as Pascha, Pentecost, Epiphany, Corpus Christi, Christmass, Ascension, the Conception of Our Lady, the Assumption of Our Lady, the Nativity of Saint John Baptist, Ss. Peter and Paul, and All Saints have major Octaves. (2) A *Vigil* is an anticipation of a major feast, celebrated on the day before the feast. Vigils have a penitential character (expressed in the Mass by purple vestments, and the absence of the *Gloria*), and some of them are accompanied by fasting and abstinence (the Vigils of Pentecost, Assumption, All Saints, and Christmass).

When observances in the kalendar conflict (e.g. if Ash Wednesday coincides with the Feast of Saint Gregory the Great), we learn how to deal with the conflict by reference to the detailed General Rubrics in the front of the book, and especially to the tables of occurrence and concurrence (pp. xlv-xlv).

DIVISIONS OF THE DIURNAL

There are four basic divisions of the Diurnal: (1) The Psalter (with the Ordinary of the Office); (2) The Proper of the Season; (3) The Proper of the Saints; and (4) The Common of the Saints. Before beginning to pray with the Diurnal, we must thoroughly familiarize ourselves with these parts and how they interact with each other.

The Psalter is truly the core of the Divine Office. As you can see, it contains not only the text of the Psalms, organized by days of the week and hours of the day, but also those basic parts of each Hour which are repeated daily. The Psalter is organized as follows:

- (1) Prime (Monday through Saturday)
- (2) Lauds (Sunday through Saturday)
- (3) Sunday Prime⁷
- (4) The Little Hours (Terce, Sext, None):
 - (a) On Sunday
 - (b) On Monday
 - (c) Throughout the week
- (5) Vespers (Sunday through Saturday)
- (6) Daily Compline

The Proper of the Season contains the proper (i.e. changing) parts (antiphons, chapters, hymns, responds, collects, etc.) for Sundays and more important ferias throughout the year. So, this section provides proper materials with *days* in the weeks of the year rather than fixed *dates* (with a few exceptions⁸).

The Proper of the Saints contains the proper (i.e. changing) parts (antiphons, chapters, hymns, responds, collects, etc.) for the feasts on fixed dates throughout the year.

The Common of the Saints is a sort of auxiliary to the Proper of the Saints. It contains parts for various fixed date feasts which are common to certain classes of Saints (so that the Proper does not have to repeat these elements every time they are needed). As one teacher of the Divine Office put it, the Common is “like a reserve which can be drawn upon when we have a deficit.”⁹ When we are saying the Office of a feast, we have to look at the Proper first, which will direct you to the Common for the missing elements.

In order to be able to maneuver the Diurnal properly and efficiently, it is necessary to set the ribbons at the appropriate places before we pray any given Hour. There are six ribbons, which should be more enough to place one or two in each major section of the book. But you may also find it helpful to place holy cards or page tabs at places that you will visit daily – e.g. the beginning of the Psalter (p. 1), the

⁷ It's hard to say why Monday Prime is printed at the beginning of the Psalter, and why Sunday Prime is separate and printed after Lauds. My best guess is that Monday Prime is first because it begins with Psalm 1; as for Sunday Prime, I have no idea.

⁸ The Proper of the Season does traditionally include the fixed feasts from December 24 through January 1.

⁹ Rev. John J. Murphy, *The Practical Method of Reading the Breviary* (New York: Blase Benziger, 1921), p. 16.

beginning of Lauds (pp. 29-30), Psalms 148-150 at Lauds (pp. 37-38), the *Benedictus* at Lauds (pp. 41-42), the *Magnificat* at Vespers (p. 115), and the Suffrage of All Saints (pp. 145-146). It may also help, when needed, to place a ribbon, a card, or tabs at the “Ordinary of the Ferial Office” during Advent (pp. 162-166), Lent (pp. 250-251), and Paschaltide (pp. 372-377).

COMMON ELEMENTS OF THE HOURS

It is customary (but not ordered by the rubrics) to say the two prayers of preparation “Open my mouth” and “O Lord, in union” (p. xlvi) before you begin the day’s Office (that is, before Lauds, or Prime, whichever one you pray in the morning). Likewise, the prayers “To the holy and undivided Trinity”, and “Blessed is the womb” are may be said after the last day’s Office.

The rubrics (see p. 1) order the “*Our Father*” and the “*Hail Mary*” to be said “secretly”¹⁰ before Lauds and the other Hours, except Compline. Before Prime, the Apostles’ Creed is said as well.

Each hour ordinarily¹¹ begins with the *Opening Versicles*, said as follows:

- “O God, make speed to save us. / O Lord, make speed to save us.”
- “Glory be to the Father ... / As it was in the beginning ...”
- “Alleluia” (or, “Praise be to thee, O Lord, King of eternal glory.”¹²)

Psalms and Canticles recited with *Antiphons* form the core of each Hour. The Antiphons may be described as “short sentences, either extracted from Scripture or composed by the Church, calculated to excite piety or to show why such a psalm has found place in the Office.”¹³ Antiphons are said before and after each Psalm or Canticle, or group of Psalms. We always recite the entire text of the Antiphon *after* the Psalm, but we don’t always recited the entire text of the Antiphon *before* the Psalm. Antiphons are said in one of two ways, based on the rank of the feast or observance being celebrated.

- (1) When we are celebrating an observance of “Double” rank, we “double” the Antiphon: that is, we say the whole Antiphon both before *and* after the Psalm.
- (2) But when the observance is of a lower rank (Semi-Double or Simple), we merely “announce” the Antiphon: that is, before the Psalm, we say only the words of the Antiphon up to the asterisk (*) or a dagger (†). But after the Psalm, we say the entire text of the Antiphon.¹⁴

¹⁰ This is obviously a direction for the common recitation of the Office in choir. However, when the Lord’s Prayer is directed to be said “secretly”, “Amen” is added to it. Otherwise, “Amen” is not said at the end, even when the Office is read privately.

¹¹ There are two occasions when Opening Versicles are not said: (1) During the Sacred Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday); and (2) in the Office of the Dead.

¹² “Praise be to thee” replaces “Alleluia” from Compline of the Saturday before Septuagesima until Compline of Wednesday in Holy Week, inclusive.

¹³ Vigourel, *Synthetic Manual of Liturgy*, as quoted in Murphy, p. 18.

¹⁴ Later versions of the rubrics did away with the practice of “announcing” the Antiphon, and directed that the Antiphon be said in full both before and after. In my opinion, it would certainly be appropriate for a lay person to adopt this simplified practice in his private recitation of the Office.

Occasionally, the text of the Antiphon which we recite before the Psalm is the exact same text as the beginning of the Psalm. When this happens, we say the Antiphon text, but we don't repeat the identical words in the first verse of the following Psalm.¹⁵

The *Gloria Patri* ("Glory be to the Father ... / As it was in the beginning ...") is always added to the end of Psalms and Canticles, unless the rubrics specifically state otherwise.¹⁶

Each Hour contains a *Hymn*. At Lauds and Vespers, these Hymns are variable (that is, they change based on day of the week, or season, or feast). At Prime, the Little Hours, and Compline, the Hymns are fixed (e.g. Compline always has *Te lucis ante terminum*, "To thee before the close of day").¹⁷

Occasionally, according to the rubrics, the ordinary Doxology (or last strophe) of any given Hymn may be changed to a proper Doxology text. So, for instance, in place of the regular Doxology of the Hymn at Prime ("All laud to God the Father be ..."), there are proper Doxologies for Christmaside, Feasts of Our Lady, the Epiphany, Paschaltide, Ascension, and Pentecost (see p. 3).¹⁸ Note also that this applies only to Hymns of the same meter (i.e. four iambic verses of eight syllables). The Hymns of Prime, the Little Hours, and Compline always have this meter, but certain proper Hymns at Lauds and Vespers may not.

The Chapter, found in every Hour, is simply a short extract from Scripture, chosen for its appropriateness to the Hour, Day, or Feast. The Chapter is always followed by "Thanks be to God." *The Short Lesson*, similar to the Chapter, is found at the beginning of Compline and at the end of the Capitular Office at Prime. The proper response to the Short Lesson is always: "But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us / Thanks be to God."¹⁹

The Prayers leading up the Collect (appearing in all Hours) are as follows:

- Threefold "Kyrie"²⁰
- "Our Father ... Deliver us from evil."
- "The Lord be with you / And with thy spirit."

¹⁵ If, however, in an Office of Double rank, the entire Antiphon text is the same as the beginning of the Psalm, but "Alleluia" is at the end of the Antiphon, in this case both the words of the Antiphon and the first words of the Psalm are said.

¹⁶ "Glory be" is not said after Psalms and Canticles during Passiontide, and in the Office of the Dead (when it is replaced by "Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord / And let light perpetual shine upon them.")

¹⁷ The only exception: On Pentecost and throughout its Octave, the Hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* is said in place of the ordinary Hymn at Terce.

¹⁸ Again, a later reform of the rubrics did away with these proper Doxologies. This may be a helpful simplification to help individual lay persons in their private recitation of the Office.

¹⁹ At Prime in the Monastic Office, the Short Lesson is merely a replacement for a chapter of the Rule of Saint Benedict. When the Rule is read, the response is the same.

²⁰ The Oxford University Press Diurnal has the threefold Kyrie in English. Reciting them in the original Greek – "Kyrie eleison / Christe eleison / Kyrie eleison" – seems more appropriate, at least to this writer.

- (or, “O Lord hear my prayer / And let my cry come unto thee.”)²¹
- “Let us pray.”

Each Hour has a **Collect**. At Lauds, the Little Hours, and Vespers, this Collect is proper (ordinarily, it should be the same Collect that you have heard in the Mass of the day). Usually, you will find the proper Collect of the day printed after Lauds in the Proper of the Season or of the Saints. At Prime and Compline, the Collect is a fixed one appropriate to the Hour’s theme. Collects have different endings, which the Diurnal does not print in full (to save space). It will, however, give you a hint at the end of the Collect. Here are the rules for Collect endings:

- (1) When the Collect is addressed to God the Father: “*Through thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end.*”
- (2) If the God the Son has been mentioned toward the beginning of the Collect: “*Through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end.*”
- (3) If God the Son is mentioned at the end of the Collect: “*Who with thee in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end.*”
- (4) If the Collect is addressed to God the Son: “*Who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth God, world without end.*”
- (5) If the Holy Spirit has been mentioned in the Collect: “*... in the unity of the same Holy Spirit ...*”

Each Hour ordinarily ends with the **Closing Versicles**, said as follows:

- “The Lord be with you / And with thy spirit.”
- (or, “O Lord hear my prayer / And let my cry come unto thee.”)
- “Let us bless the Lord / Thanks be to God.”
- “May the souls of the faithful ...”
- The Lord’s Prayer said “secretly”²²
- “The Lord grant us his peace ...”

When the Office is recited privately, the rubrics order that the **Final Antiphon of the Blessed Virgin Mary** be said at the end of Lauds (or, if Lauds is immediately followed by another Hour, at the end of the last Hour), and always at the end of Compline. There are four different Antiphons, each assigned to a particular quarter of the Church Year:

1. *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Advent to February 2)²³
2. *Ave, Regina caelorum* (February 2 to Wednesday in Holy Week)
3. *Regina caeli* (Pascha through Pentecost Week)
4. *Salve Regina* (Trinity Sunday until Advent)

²¹ Only a Priest or a Deacon is allowed to say “The Lord be with you ...” Others, when reciting the Office, say “O Lord, hear my prayer ...” whenever “The Lord be with you ...” is printed. However, “The Lord be with you” is immediately preceded by “O Lord, hear my prayer”, the latter is not repeated.

²² It is omitted, however, if another Hour immediately follows (except Compline after Vespers, and Lauds after Matins).

²³ With two conclusions (Versicle and Collect): One before Christmass, and one after Christmass.

During the *Sacred Triduum* (that is, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday), the Divine Office is pared down to its bare essentials. Opening Versicles, Chapters, Short Responds, Hymns and proper Versicles are not said during this time; and there are fewer Antiphons. This is also the case with the Office of the Dead (recited annually on All Souls' Day, and additionally in the Monastic Office on the day in commemoration of the Faithful Departed of the Benedictine Order).

REGARDING CEREMONIES

When individuals recite the Divine Office privately (i.e. "Out of Choir"), the ceremonies that pertain to the communal recitation of the Office are not obligatory. It is, however, praiseworthy to make the customary Signs of the Cross, bow the head at the "Glory be" (as well as the Names of Jesus, Mary, and the Saint of the day), and recite the "Preces" at Prime and Compline kneeling (when kneeling is appointed by the rubrics). Signs of the Cross are customarily made:

- At the beginning of the Canticles *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*;
- At the words "O God, make speed to save me" in the Opening Versicles;
- At the words "Our help is in the Name of the Lord"
- At the absolutions following the Confession at Prime and Compline
- At the blessings in Prime and Compline

THE STRUCTURE OF LAUDS

- Before Lauds, **Our Father** and **Hail Mary** (*said "secretly"*) [*Psalter, p. 1*]
- **The Opening Versicles** [*Psalter, pp. 29-30*]
- **Psalm 67**²⁴ (*said daily, without antiphon*) [*Psalter, p. 30*]
- **The Psalms** [*Psalter, pp. 30-80*] with **Antiphons** [*Psalter, Common, or Proper*] –

| Sunday | Festal | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 51 | 93 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 51 | 51 |
| 118 | 100 | 5 | 43 | 64 | 88 | 76 | 148a |
| 63 | 63 | 36 | 57 | 65 | 90 | 92 | 148b |
| OT Cant. 148-150 | OT Cant. 148-150 | OT Cant. 148-150 | OT Cant. 148-150 | OT Cant. 148-150 | OT Cant. 148-150 | OT Cant. 148-150 | OT Cant. 148-150 |

- **The Chapter** [*Psalter, Proper, or Common*]; response "Thanks be to God"
- **The Hymn** [*Psalter, Proper, or Common*]
- **Versicle and Response** [*Psalter, Proper, or Common*]
- **The Canticle *Benedictus*** [*Daily, from Psalter, p. 41*] with **Antiphon** [*Psalter, Proper, or Common*]
- **Prayers leading up to the Collect** [*Psalter, p. 42*]
- **The Collect of the Day** [*Proper, or Common*] with appropriate ending
- **Commemoration(s)** of lesser observances, when required
- **The Suffrage of All Saints, or Commemoration of the Cross** [*Psalter, pp. 145-7*], when required

²⁴ The numbering of the Psalms in the Oxford University Press Diurnal, and in this tutorial, follow the Hebrew system, as opposed to the Septuagint/Vulgate system more traditionally used in the Greek and Latin Churches.

- **The Closing Versicles** [*Psalter*, p. 43]
- **The Final Antiphon of Our Lady** [*Psalter*, pp. 153-6], unless Prime immediately follows
- **Our Father** (said secretly), unless Prime immediately follows

SOME NOTES ON LAUDS

Regarding the Psalms – Psalm 51 is recited as the first Psalm every day, except on feasts. The fourth psalm is always a Canticle from the Old Testament; each day has two – festal and ferial – which you choose from based on whether the day is a feast or a feria. Psalms 148 and 150 are always recited daily, in the last place, and always under one Antiphon. “Glory be” is only said at the end of Psalm 150, not after 148 or 149.

The Short Respond appears in both Lauds and Vespers. It is usually printed in an abbreviated format, but it is always said in the following manner:

R. “Heal my soul, * For I have sinned against thee.”
Repeat: “Heal my soul, * For I have sinned against thee.”
 V. “I said, Lord, be merciful unto me.”
Repeat: “ * For I have sinned against thee.”
 “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.”²⁵
Repeat: “Heal my soul, * For I have sinned against thee.”

In Paschaltide, the Short Respond is said in this manner:

R. “The Lord is risen from the tomb, * Alleluia, alleluia.”
Repeat: “ The Lord is risen from the tomb, * Alleluia, alleluia.”
 V. “Who for our sakes hung upon the tree.”
Repeat: “ * Alleluia, alleluia.”
 “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.”
Repeat: “ The Lord is risen from the tomb, * Alleluia, alleluia.”

Regarding Commemorations – Whenever the Office of the day has overtaken (so to speak) a lesser feast or observance, the rubrics direct that we still take note of this lesser observance by means of a Commemoration at Vespers and Lauds, recited after the Collect of the day. We make Commemorations in the following manner:

- (1) First, we say the Antiphon on *Benedictus* (or, the *Magnificat*, at Vespers) which would normally have been said if we were celebrating the Office of the lesser observance.
- (2) Next, we say the Versicle and Response (after the Hymn) which we would have said for the lesser observance;
- (3) Finally, we say the Collect of the commemorated observance.

The Suffrage of All Saints is a commemoration (consisting of Antiphon, Versicle and Collect) which is made at Lauds and Vespers when the Office of the day is of Semi-Double or Simple rank. It is not said

²⁵ “Glory be” is omitted in the Short Respond during Passiontide.

in the period from Advent through the Epiphany Octave; nor is it said on Passion Sunday, Palm Sunday. It is said on all Sundays, except when a Double or an Octave (even of Simple rank) is commemorated. Likewise, it is not said during Paschaltide (from the II Sunday after Easter through the V Sunday after Easter), when it is replaced by the *Commemoration of the Cross*. In the Collect of the Suffrage of All Saints, the red letter “N.” stands for the name of the titular Patron Saint of your Church.²⁶ Members of the Benedictine Order (including Oblates of Saint Benedict) may read the bracketed words “our blessed Father Benedict.”

THE STRUCTURE OF VESPERS

- Before Vespers, **Our Father** and **Hail Mary** (*said “secretly”*) [*Psalter, p. 1*]
- **The Opening Versicles** [*Psalter, p. 110*]
- **The Psalms** [*Psalter, pp. 111-143; or from Proper or Common*²⁷] with **Antiphons** [*Psalter, Common, or Proper*] –

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|----------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| 110 | 114 | 130 | 135 | 139a | 142 | 145b |
| 111 | 115 | 131 | 136 | 139b | 144a | 146 |
| 112 | 116a | 132 | 137 | 140 | 144b | 147a |
| 113 | 116b/117 | 133 | 138 | 141 | 145a | 147b |

- **The Chapter** [*Psalter, Proper, or Common*]; response “Thanks be to God”
- **The Hymn** [*Psalter, Proper, or Common*]
- **Versicle and Response** [*Psalter, Proper, or Common*]
- **The Canticle Magnificat** [*Daily, from Psalter, p. 115*] with **Antiphon** [*Psalter, Proper, or Common*]
- **Prayers leading up to the Collect** [*Psalter, p. 115*]
- **The Collect of the Day** [*Proper, or Common*] with appropriate ending
- **Commemoration(s)** of lesser observances, when required
- **The Suffrage of All Saints, or Commemoration of the Cross** [*Psalter, pp. 145-7*], when required
- **The Closing Versicles** [*Psalter, p. 117*]
- **The Final Antiphon of Our Lady** [*Psalter, pp. 153-6*], unless Compline immediately follows
- **Our Father** (*said secretly*), unless Compline immediately follows

N. B. Everything said above for Lauds regarding the Short Respond, Commemorations, and the Suffrage of All Saints applies also to Vespers.

THE STRUCTURE OF PRIME

- Before Prime, **Our Father, Hail Mary** and **Apostles’ Creed** (*said “secretly”*) [*Psalter, p. 1*]

²⁶ Exceptions to this rule (for instance, in case your Church is not named after a Saint) may be found in the rubric on p. 146.

²⁷ On some occasions, you will find Psalms for Vespers in places other than the Psalter. For instance, the Proper of the Season appoints proper Vesper Psalms for Christmass and Corpus Christi. The Common of the Saints has special Vesper Psalms for an Apostle, Many Martyrs, a Confessor Bishop, Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Office of the Dead (and occasionally, some of these sets of Psalms are also directed to be used for other classes of Saints).

- **The Opening Versicles** [*Psalter, p. 2*]
- **The Hymn, *Jam lucis orto sidere*** [*Daily, from Psalter*]
- **The Psalms** [*Psalter, pp. 4-29; pp. 81-83*] under one **Antiphon** [*Psalter, Common, or Proper*] –

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| 119a | 1 | 7 | 9b/10 | 13 | 16 | 18b |
| 119b | 2 | 8 | 11 | 14 | 17 | 19 |
| 119c | 6 | 9a | 12 | 15 | 18a | 20 |

- **The Chapter** [*Daily, from Psalter, p. 6*]; response “Thanks be to God”
 - ▶ “Now unto the King” (*on Sundays, Feasts and in Paschaltide*)
 - ▶ Or, “Love the truth” (*on Ferias out of Paschaltide and Vigils*)
- **Versicle**, “O Christ, arise, help us” [*Daily, from Psalter, p. 7*]
- **Threefold Kyrie and Lord’s Prayer** [*Daily, from Psalter, p. 7*]
- **The ‘Preces’** [*Psalter, pp. 7-8*], when appointed –
 - ▶ Apostles’ Creed
 - ▶ Versicle, “Our help is in the Name of the Lord ...”
 - ▶ General Confession and Absolutions
 - ▶ Versicle, “Vouchsafe, O Lord, this day ...”
 - ▶ Versicle, “O Lord, hear my prayer”
- **The Collect of Prime**, “O Lord God Almighty” [*Daily, from Psalter, p. 9*]
- **The Closing Versicles** [*Psalter, pp. 9-10*]
- **The Capitular Office** [*Psalter, pp. 10-14*], not required outside of religious houses –
 - ▶ Reading from Roman Martyrology
 - ▶ Versicle, “Right dear in the sight of the Lord ...”
 - ▶ Collect, “May holy Mary and all the Saints ...”
 - ▶ Versicle, “O God, make speed to save me ...” (thrice)
 - ▶ “Glory be ... / As it was ...”
 - ▶ Prayers and Versicles leading up to Collect
 - ▶ Collect, “O Lord God, King of heaven and earth ...”
 - ▶ Blessing, “The Lord Almighty ...”
 - ▶ The Short Lesson, or Reading from the Rule of Saint Benedict
 - ▶ Conclusion and Blessing, “The Lord bless us ...”
 - ▶ Prayers for the Faithful Departed

SOME NOTES ON PRIME

Regarding the Hymn – As noted before, according to the rubrics, the Doxology of the Hymn changes on certain occasions. The proper Doxologies for these occasions (which are used for all hymns in the Divine Office of the same meter) may be found in the order for Monday Prime (p. 3).

The Antiphon on the Psalms at Prime may be ordinary, seasonal, or proper/common. The ordinary Antiphon (“Throughout the Year”) and some of the seasonal Antiphons (for ferias in Lent, Passiontide, and Paschaltide) are printed conveniently with the Psalms of Prime in the Psalter (e.g. see pp. 4-5). Other Antiphons appointed for Prime will be found in the Proper of the Season, the Proper of the

Saints, or the Common of the Saints. When the Prime Antiphon is from the Proper or the Common, it is almost always²⁸ taken from the first Psalm Antiphon of Lauds. Likewise, the proper Antiphon of Terce is almost always the second Antiphon of Lauds, the Antiphon of Sext is the third Antiphon of Lauds, and the Antiphon of None is the fifth Antiphon of Lauds²⁹ (the fourth Antiphon of Lauds, used at Lauds with the Old Testament Canticle, is never used as an Antiphon at any other Office).

The Preces (pronounced “preh-chehs”) are extra prayers that are added to Prime and Compline only on certain days. According to the rubrics, they “are *not* said on Doubles or within Octaves, on Simple Octave Days, on the Vigils of Epiphany and Pentecost, on Friday after the Octave of the Ascension, nor on days on which a Double has been commemorated at Lauds. On other days throughout the year and in Paschaltide they are always said” (p. 7). Stated positively, the Preces *are* said on the following days:

- Ferias throughout the year (except on the Friday after the Ascension Octave)
- Feasts of Semi-Double and Simple rank (except Semi-Double or Simple Octave Days)
- Sundays *below* the Double rank (except when a Double or Octave is commemorated at Lauds)
- On Vigils (except those of Epiphany and Pentecost)³⁰

When you pray the Office in private (or corporately among laypeople), you will use the version of the **General Confession** (*Confiteor*) and Absolutions under the rubric “Out of Choir” (see p. 8, or at Compline, p. 148). Do not use the shorter version of the Confession under the rubric “[Or this:]”

The proper version of the **Collect of Prime** is the one printed first on p. 9 (“O Lord God Almighty”) rather than the one titled “P B Collect.” The first is a closer translation of the original Latin, while the second is a paraphrase from the Book of Common Prayer. Likewise, in the Capitular Office immediately following Prime, the first Collect starting on p. 10 (“O Lord God, King of heaven and earth”) is to be preferred over the second on p. 11 (“O Almighty Lord”).

The Capitular Office is a little addition to the Office of Prime. It is done in monastic communities, but it is not obligatory when the Office is said privately, i.e. “Out of Choir.” If you want to read the Capitular Office, you will need a copy of the Roman Martyrology in English³¹, edited to be in conformity with the usage of the Vicariate.³² Benedictine Oblates may also desire to read the appointed daily portion of the Holy Rule at the appropriate place in the Capitular Office. Those who don’t read the Rule at this point will read the “Short Lesson,” which is taken either from the ordinary of the Capitular Office (pp. 11-12), or, if the rubrics direct, from the Chapter of None as found in the Proper or Common.

²⁸ Exceptions: Ferias in Advent; the Pre-Lenten and Lenten Sundays.

²⁹ This is why, in the Proper and Common, the Lauds Antiphons are usually called Antiphons “For Lauds and the Hours.”

³⁰ The Vigil of the Nativity is already a First Class Double.

³¹ The Roman Martyrology is an official liturgical book of the Roman Rite. It is basically a catalogue of Saints’ anniversaries arranged in calendar order. There is one English translation of the traditional Roman Martyrology currently in print, available from Angelus Press in Kansas City, Missouri (<http://www.angeluspress.org>).

³² The Western Rite Vicariate in the Antiochian Archdiocese does not yet have its own official version of the Martyrology, which would omit certain Saints in the original Roman version and perhaps add some Saints from Eastern Orthodox sources.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LITTLE HOURS – TERCE, SEXT, NONE

- Before the Office, **Our Father** and **Hail Mary** (*said “secretly”*) [*Psalter, p. 1*]
- **The Opening Versicles** [*Psalter, p. 2*]
- **The Hymn** [*Daily, from Psalter*] –
 - At Terce: *Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus*³³
 - At Sext: *Rector potens, verax Deus*
 - At None: *Rerum Deus tenax vigor*
- **The Psalms**³⁴ [*Psalter, pp. 4-29; pp. 81-83*] under one **Antiphon** [*Psalter, Common, or Proper*] –

At Terce:

| Sunday | Monday | Through the Week |
|--------|--------|------------------|
| 119d | 119m | 120 |
| 119e | 119n | 121 |
| 119f | 119o | 122 |

At Sext:

| Sunday | Monday | Through the Week |
|--------|--------|------------------|
| 119g | 119p | 123 |
| 119h | 119q | 124 |
| 119i | 119r | 125 |

At None:

| Sunday | Monday | Through the Week |
|--------|--------|------------------|
| 119j | 119s | 126 |
| 119k | 119t | 127 |
| 119l | 119u | 128 |

- **The Chapter** [*Psalter, Proper or Common*]; response “Thanks be to God”
- **Versicle** [*Psalter, Proper or Common*]
- **Threefold Kyrie and Lord’s Prayer** [*Daily, from Psalter*]
- **The Collect of the Day** [*Proper or Common; the same as at Lauds*]
- **The Closing Versicles** [*Psalter*]
- **Our Father** (*said secretly*), unless an Hour immediately follows

SOME NOTES ON THE LITTLE HOURS

The Antiphon on the Psalms at the Little Hours may be ordinary, seasonal, or proper/common (just as at Prime; see comments above). Likewise, the *Chapter* and the *Versicle* may be ordinary, seasonal, or

³³ On Pentecost and throughout its Octave, the Hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* is said in place of the ordinary Hymn at Terce.

³⁴ Notice that Psalm 119, the longest Psalm in the Psalter, is divided into twenty-two portions and spread out over Prime, Terce, Sext and None on Sunday and Monday.

proper/common. The *Collect* at each of the Little Hours is always the first proper Collect which has been said at Lauds. As at Prime, the *Doxology* at the end of the Hymn may change.

Notice that *Psalm 119*, the longest Psalm in the Psalter, is divided into twenty-two portions and spread out over Prime, Terce, Sext and None on Sunday and Monday. Notice also that the Psalter only gives Psalms at the Little Hours for Sunday, Monday, and “Throughout the Week” (meaning, Tuesday through Saturday).

THE STRUCTURE OF COMPLINE

- Compline begins immediately with the **Blessing**³⁵ and the **Short Lesson** [*Psalter*, p. 147]
- **The General Confession and Absolutions** [*Psalter*, p. 148]
- **Versicle**, “Turn us then ...” and **Opening Versicles** [*Psalter*, p. 149]
- **Psalms 4, 91 and 143**, said daily, without antiphon [*Psalter*, pp. 149-151]
- **The Hymn, *Te lucis ante terminum*** [*Psalter*, p. 151]
- **The Chapter**, “Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us ...” [*Psalter*, p. 151]
- **Versicle**, “Keep us, O Lord ...” [*Psalter*, p. 151]
- **Threefold Kyrie and Lord’s Prayer** [*Psalter*, p. 151]
- **The ‘Preces’** [*Psalter*, pp. 152], when appointed –
 - Apostles’ Creed
 - Versicle, “Our help is in the Name of the Lord ...”
 - General Confession and Absolutions
 - Versicle, “Vouchsafe, O Lord, this night ...”
 - Versicle, “O Lord, hear my prayer”
- **The Collect of Compline**, “Visit, we beseech thee ...” [*Psalter*, p. 152]
- **The Closing Versicles** [*Psalter*, p. 152]
- **The Blessing**, “The Almighty and merciful Lord ...” [*Psalter*, p. 152]
- **The Final Antiphon of Our Lady** [*Psalter*, pp. 153-6]
- **Versicle**, “May the Divine Help ...” [*Psalter*, p. 153]
- **Our Father, Hail Mary and Apostles’ Creed** (said secretly) [*Psalter*, p. 1]

SOME NOTES ON COMPLINE

The only variations to worry about in Compline are (1) the “Alleluia” in the Opening Versicles (as at other Hours, it’s replaced by “Praise be to thee, O Lord, King of eternal glory” after Septuagesima until Easter); (2) the Doxology to the Hymn which occasionally changes (see comments above under “Common Elements” and Prime); (3) the “Alleluias” added to the Versicle “Keep us, O Lord ...” in Paschaltide; (4) the “Preces” (see the comments under Prime above); and (5) the seasonal Final Antiphon of Our Lady.

Also, there is a slightly different form of Compline on Easter and throughout its Octave, when the Canticle *Nunc Dimittis* (Song of Simeon, from the Gospel of Saint Luke) is added, with the Antiphon “In the end of the Sabbath” (see pp. 361-2).

³⁵ In private recitation, the reader’s verse “Sir, bid a blessing” is replaced by “Lord, grant a blessing.”

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR LAY BEGINNERS

If you are brand new to the Monastic Diurnal, you may just want to begin with the simplest possible Hour: Compline. It has the same psalms, the same hymn, and the same prayers, day in and day out, with the least seasonal variation. Once you have become a “pro” at praying Compline, then you might be bold enough to take on other Hours.

The real key to mastering the Diurnal is understanding (1) the structure of the Church Year (the different Sundays, Feasts, and Ferias), and (2) how the Church Year is reflected in each individual Hour. This means that you will have to be familiar with the four major sections of the book (Psalter, Proper of the Season, Proper of the Saints, and Common of the Saints) and how they fit together on any given day.

Your “homebase” in the Diurnal will always be the Psalter, because it contains the outline and the ordinary parts of each Hour. Depending on what kind of day it is in the Church Year, you will have to weave together certain “proper” or “common” elements from other parts of the Diurnal into the ordinary skeleton of each Hour. And so, each individual Hour on a given day will be composed of Ordinary, Proper and/or Common elements. The trick is blending them all together, guided by the rubrics.

Unless you are a Subdeacon, a Priest or a Deacon, or bound by monastic vows, you are not required to pray the entire Divine Office. If you do decide to make use of the Monastic Diurnal, the first rule of thumb is to be *realistic* about your time, your abilities, and your state in life. It’s best to start with a very humble prayer rule, get into the habit of following this rule daily, and then, once you have mastered your simple rule, you may want to gradually expand it.

If your state in life allows you to do so, you could pray all seven of the Day Hours at their “ideal” times (as listed above). Perhaps, more realistically, you may find it easier to pray the Hours in groups (for instance, Lauds and Prime together in the morning; Terce, Sext and None in the middle of the day; and Vespers and Compline in the evening). However, most busy laypeople may only be able to pray some of the Hours, maybe only one or two. There are several possibilities here.

The most important Hours to pray are Lauds and Vespers. Many people will find these to be suitable morning and evening devotions. Still others may find Prime and Compline more suitable, since they are shorter, simpler, and much less variable than Lauds and Vespers. Maybe some will find it possible to pray both Lauds and Prime in the morning, and both Vespers and Compline in the evening, but omit the three Little Hours in the middle of the day. Or, if mornings and evenings tend to be hectic, maybe one or more of the Little Hours could be said at a peaceful time in the middle of the day. Maybe the only really peaceful time of day is right before bed, and you can only handle daily Compline.

If you pray Lauds (the sunrise Office), it is best to do so as early as possible, after you get up and before you have breakfast. Realistically, you should set aside 25-30 minutes for Lauds.

Prime, the “first hour”, is ideally prayed after Lauds at around 6 or 7 AM, before the big work of the day starts. If you pray Lauds, it might be good to pray it together with Prime in the early morning. Prime will take between 10 and 15 minutes.

The Little Hours (Terce, Sext, and None) are ideally prayed separate from one another, at around 9 AM, 12 noon, and 3 PM respectively. A very common practice is to say all three Hours, one after the other, in the middle of the day, perhaps at noon. Or, it may be more realistic to pray just one of the Little Hours, perhaps Sext, at noon. The Little Hours are extremely short, and should take no more than 5-7 minutes each.

Vespers are ideally prayed sometime around sunset. For a layman, it may be possible to find some peaceful time to pray Vespers before supper. Or, it may be possible to pray both Vespers and Compline together, sometime after supper (although it is always wise not to wait too long, since the later it gets, the harder it will be to concentrate on your prayers). You should set aside 20-25 minutes for Vespers.

Compline, as the bedtime Office, is supposed to be the very last thing a monk or nun does before he retires each evening. It is a very short office, and should take no more than 5-7 minutes to pray.

Another possibility: A layman may also find it necessary to simplify the Office by ignoring the Propers and the Common and focusing only the ordinary, ferial Office of the week as contained in the Psalter. This could be a long-term practice, or it could be a beginner's strategy for getting used to the structure of the Hours.³⁶

THE ONLINE DIURNAL GROUP

If you have internet access and e-mail, you are more than welcome to join the "Diurnal" e-mail list. Members of the group, who range from beginners to veterans, can submit questions relating to the use of the Diurnal. Members also receive a weekly electronic "Ordo", prepared by the moderator, containing detailed directions on the daily recitation of the Hours, according to the usage of the Western Rite Vicariate. Though the moderator and many of the group's members are Orthodox Christians, the group is open to all Christians who are interested in the Monastic Diurnal.

If you would like to join the Diurnal Group, please visit the website at <http://groups.google.com/group/diurnal>. You will have to open a free account with the Google Groups service in order to join the group, to receive the weekly "Ordo," to participate in discussions, or to access all of the group's helpful files. If you need help joining the group, please e-mail the moderator at laudate@gmail.com.

³⁶ One last option for laymen, though outside of the purview of this tutorial, is the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is basically a simplified form of the Divine Office using only texts from the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is a largely identical cycle, week by week, although there are variable seasonal elements (e.g. in Advent, Christmas tide, and Paschal tide). The Little Office of Our Lady was a very popular devotion in the Middle Ages. A very fine new edition of the traditional Little Office, in both Latin and English, has been printed by Baronius Press in London, England (<http://www.baroniuspress.com>).