

## *Praying the Hours*

The Jewish practice of reciting prayers at set times of the day was continued by Christians (see, for example, Acts 3:1). Seven times of prayer became quite widespread, with different practices in different places. Early Celtic monastic churches kept such practices alive. In later centuries Books of Hours developed for use by individuals. The Jewish practice of reciting prayers at set times led to some people dedicating themselves to pray seven times a day (e.g. psalm 119:164). Seven times of prayer became quite widespread, with different practices in different places. There are New Testament references to the hours of prayer in the temple (Acts) and to 'the hours' in relation to the time Jesus was on the Cross (The Gospels).

Early Celtic monastic churches kept such practices alive. In later centuries Books of Hours developed for use by individuals. In recent times the 24/7 prayer movement has sometimes incorporated this practice. (Roman) Catholics refer to the Canonical Hours and The Liturgy of the Hours. The Orthodox Church sometimes refers to these as The Divine Services. These have come to mark each of the eight three hour periods in a day.

Here we provide a theme for prayer for each of the eight three hour periods in a day.

### 03.00 am Matins

Lord Jesus Christ, who rose from death early in the morning while it was still dark, shine on all who sleep but know you not, and give your living touch to all who cannot sleep.

Jesus was raised from death 'very early in the morning while it was still dark' *Matthew 28:11*.

### 06.00 am Prime

I arise today in the joy of the Birther of the vast expanses, the rolling hills and ... (name something you see)

### 09.00 am Terce

As day follows night may we be bathed in your light, and be alert to the possibilities that lie before us.

### 12.00 Sext

As the press of work pauses at noon, may your rest be upon us. As the sun rides high at noon, may the Sun of Righteousness shine upon us. As the rain refreshes the stained, stale streets, may your Spirit bring rain upon our dry ground.

### 3.00pm Nones

Jesus, as at this hour you died on the Cross, help me and these I name .... to put to death our destructive cravings and remain true to you.

### 6.00 pm Vespers

As shadows fall and lights shine light up our hearts with the fire of your love.

### 9.00 pm Compline

We place our souls and bodies under your guarding this night, O Christ,  
O Son of wounds and compassion, may your cross this night be our shield.

### 12.00 Midnight

At midnight your people were led out of slavery. Shepherd of souls, watch over us - come as a surprise in the night.

### *Further sources:*

*The Celtic Prayer Book volume 1: Prayer Rhythms* Ray Simpson (Kevin Mayhew)

On-line

*The Orthodox easy to access texts for the 8 hours are on:*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical\\_hours](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canonical_hours) Then click 'horoglion texts in word format'

[www.explorefaith.org/prayer/prayer/fixe/pray\\_the\\_hours.php](http://www.explorefaith.org/prayer/prayer/fixe/pray_the_hours.php)

[www.bookofhours.org](http://www.bookofhours.org)

*The Community of Aidan and Hilda* [www.aidanandhilda.org](http://www.aidanandhilda.org)