

can ask: "What do I need to let go of so I can re-focus on what's most important this afternoon?"

None - None is nine: the ninth hour of the day - mid to late afternoon. It is the fading part of the day, the time of decline, when shadows begin to lengthen. The fading of time brings home death and impermanence and the need to connect with something transcendent (beyond time). This perspective helps us connect with what is most important. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the limits of our lives

Vespers - Celebrates the 'lighting of the lamps' as darkness descends and the contradictions of the day are examined, reconciled, and replaced with serenity. The way we can actively bring the spirit of Vespers into everyday life is to light whatever lights we can in this dark world. As the Paulist motto has it, "it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness."

Compline - Brings completion to the day. We close the day, starting with an examination of conscience and asking for forgiveness, and thereby making a clean transition into night and sleep. Faith is the virtue of Compline; it is the basic trust by which we give ourselves to God's protection during the night. At Compline we invoke our faith to give us courage amidst our terrors - real or imagined.

Excerpts from the book: Music of Silence: A Sacred Journey Through the Hours of the Day, by David Steindl - Rast OSB & Sharon Lebell.

DIVINE OFFICE

I Shall Praise You Seven Times a Day

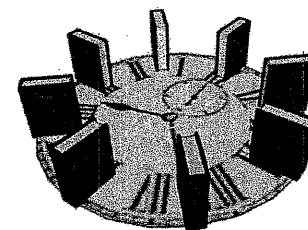
The Divine Office - Liturgy of the Hours - Work of God

Rule of Benedict

16:1-2 As the Prophet says, "Seven times a day I have praised you." We will fulfil the sacred number if we satisfy the duties of our service at the time of Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. (Psalm 119:164)

43:3 Therefore, nothing should be put ahead of the Work of God.

Accordingly, the Liturgy of the Hours is to be celebrated by the community which, in union with the Church, fulfils Christ's priestly function offering to God a sacrifice of praise and making intercession for the salvation of the whole world. (Constitution 19)



What is the Liturgy of the Hours?

The Liturgy of the Hours is the prayer of the whole People of God. In it, Christ himself "continues his priestly work through his Church." His members participate according to their own place in the Church and the circumstances of their lives. The laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office either with the priests, among themselves, or individually.

The hymns and litanies of the Liturgy of the Hours integrate the prayer of the psalms into the age of the Church, expressing the symbolism of the time of day, the liturgical season, or the feast being celebrated. Moreover, the reading from the Word of God at each Hour with the subsequent responses or *troparia* and readings from the Fathers and spiritual masters at certain Hours, reveal the deeper meanings of the mystery being celebrated, assist in understanding the psalms, and help one prepare for silent prayer.

The Liturgy of the Hours, which is like an extension of the Eucharistic celebration, does not exclude but rather (in a complementary way) calls forth the various devotions of the People of God, especially adoration and worship of the Blessed Sacrament.

Source: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part Two, Section One, Chapter Two.

The Monastic Observances

Vigils - 'The night watch', the early morning hour is when mystery and darkness reign. Vigils, is the hour that calls us to set aside time outside the practical demands of the day and to connect with that dark but grace filled mystery in which we are immersed. Once the bright light of day dawns and the demands of the day begins, it is easy to forget the sacred, timeless dimension of our lives.

Lauds - Acknowledges the 'coming of the light.' Lauds takes us out of the darkness into the light. It starts us off with the attitude that the day is a gift - allowing us to see the appropriate response to this given world of gratefulness. When we greet the new day as a gift, a sense of gratefulness can carry us through the hours that follow. The day is present to us as something to give away to others hour by hour. Someone who experiences the early morning sun as a gift is more likely to go around like a little sun shining on other people. We can smile. We can warm other people. We can brighten their day.

Terce - Terce (or tierce) means "third." It is the third hour of the day. It is a short mid-morning break where spiritual blessings provide the energy to reawaken.

Sext - Sext means six - and this time is reserved for the sixth hour of the day: noon. A "time of transition, rousing us to stay the course, not be lured by the devil of depression - slipping resolve." Sext is also associated with crisis - where we face a barrier or challenge and need guidance to know what to let go of to be able to make it to the other side. We