

The Morning Divine Services

The Midnight Office, Matins and the First Hour go into structure of the morning Divine services.

Midnight Office

The Midnight Office designates a church service which is served at midnight or at any hour from night to the morning. The Christian custom to consecrate midnight with a Divine service or in general the night time, undoubtedly, is based on the example of Jesus Christ Himself (Lk. 6:12; Mt. 26:30) Whom the Apostles imitated (Acts. 16:25) and through them contemporary Christians (1 Cor. 14:26; Col. 3:16). During the persecutions this custom developed because the night time was safest for the Divine services in general. At the same time the Holy Church always had in view that midnight is mainly the convenient time, in its quietude, for prayerful conversations with God and for reflection on sins and their correction. In this way St. Basil the Great looks at the establishment of the midnight Divine services (2nd letter to Gregory Nazianzus). According to the opinion of commentators on the divine services, the Holy Church established the Midnight Office. According to 1) it was in order to remind believers of the prayerful midnight ordeal of Jesus Christ before His departure to His voluntary suffering. According to the 2) it is for the constant reminder to the believers about the terrible day of the second coming of Christ and following that, the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment, and in this way the second coming of Christ, in the general belief of the Holy Church based on the parable of the Savior about the ten virgins, needs to be at midnight. According to the 3), finally, it was to call believers even at the midnight hour in imitation of the angels, who openly glorify the Lord.

There are Daily, Saturday and Sunday Midnight Offices.

The rules for them are found in the Horologion and the Augmented Psalter. Besides this, there are rules in the Typikon about the daily (Monday of the first week of Great Lent) and the Sunday (chapter 7) Midnight Office. This or the other Midnight Office is served in accordance with the day of the week and the rules of the Ustav. The Midnight Office is not needed if an All Night Vigil is served, but also in some other cases (see Ustav ch. 2, 7; Friday and Saturday of the 5th week of Great Lent, Wednesday of Passion Week).

Sometimes the Midnight Office is served not in the temple but in the kellia (see pp. 524, 537, 585).

Matins

Matins received its name from the time when it is served. According to its content it is divided into three parts. In the first part we confess our sins and we ask the mercy of God for the coming day. In the second part we glorify the persons or events agreeing with the commemoration of the day. In the third part we glorify the

Lord Himself.

It is undoubtedly an ancient custom to enlighten the dawn of the day with hymns corresponding to its time. Eusebius names the psalms and songs, by which the divinity of Jesus Christ is glorified in the morning Divine Services and since ancient times were established and composed (Book V, chapter 28). St. Basil the Great mentions a way of reading or singing the psalms, distinguishing them from Prayers and Psalms of repentance (Letter 204). The main content of the Matins Divine Services consisted of the Psalms of Praise from which the service was also called the Office of Praises (Lauds). We find the instructions on the use of the Great Doxology in the Apostolic Regulations, equally with those by St. Athanasius the Great. In the process of the development of Christian hymns, the structure of the Matins Divine Services was expanded. Especially in this respect are the remarkable works of St. John of Damascus as the composer of canons.

Matins exists: without a Polyeleon and Great Doxology (non-festal Matins), i.e. when the latter is read, but not sung¹; with the Great Doxology which is sung, but not read, with the Polyeleon and the Paschal Matins. The rules of non-festal Matins² are found in the Priest's Service Book, the Horologion, in chapter 9 and other places in the Typikon. The rules of festal Matins are found in some editions of the Priest's Service Book, the Horologion, the Augmented Psalter, and the Octoechos and in chapters 2, 3, 4.2 and other places in the Typikon. One or the other Matins is served in accordance with the instructions of the Typikon.

The First Hour

The service of this hour corresponds to 7, 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning in our notation. This service is mentioned as a morning prayer or a prayer at dawn by the Apostolic Regulations (Book VIII, 4) and St. Basil the Great. The exact mention of the service of the First Hour belongs to 5th century. For Christians this hour received special meaning in the power of the memory of how during this hour Jesus Christ was led from Caiaphas to Pilate, was slandered by enemies and condemned.

According to the Ustav [Typikon] the First Hour is served either in the temple or in the narthex. The First Hour is served in the temple: on a non-festal weekday, on Wednesday and Friday of Cheesefare week and during the Holy Forty Day Fast. The departure to the narthex on these days is prescribed after the First Hour (Ustav [Typikon], Chapter 9, the Order for Cheesefare Wednesday and Monday of the first week of Great Lent).

The First Hour is served in the narthex: a) on the Resurrection days (Ustav [Typikon] ch. 2, 3, 4 and 5); b) on feasts with signs: ☩ and ☩ when the Ustav [Typikon] either says directly to serve a Vigil, or says: "the Vigil is served, as the rector directs" (Jan. 1, 17, 20, 25, 27, Feb. 12, 24, Apr. 23, May 8, 9, Jun. 24, 29, Aug. 26, Sep. 26, Oct. 26, Nov. 13 or Dec. 6); c) on the major Lord's and Theotokos feasts, on whatever days they fall on (Ustav [Typikon], Jan. 6, Sep. 8, Dec. 26).

¹ However, sometimes the Great Doxology is sung even during a non-festal Matins: "It is possible", it is said in the Typikon and as the Ustav expresses, "to even sing the words for the sung Osmoglasnik [Music book of the eight tones] and for the Lord and to also do (i.e. to sing instead of read) the Great Doxology" (see Ustav [Typikon] for Sept. 23).

² In this Matins we either sing "God is the Lord" or "Alleluia" after the Six Psalms. Often met in the Ustav [Typikon] are the expressions: "God is the Lord" and "when the Alleluia is sung" but also "an Alleluia or Troparion" is specified not only as a particular feature in Matins, but also in other church services. The Ustav [Typikon] speaks about these features: in the 9th ch., in the 48th ch. (mainly for Nov. 14) and in the Offices of Cheesefare week and the first week of Great Lent (see about this and the Saturday Divine Services below). In general the Ustav [Typikon] designation that on a given day "Alleluia" is sung designates a mournful and penitential character of the church services served that day. If the Ustav [Typikon] appoints to sing "God is the Lord" it designates that the church services that day carry, compared to the first sort of services (i.e. when the "Alleluia" is sung) a more joyful and solemn character".