

Part II: The Structure of the Office

We will now turn to the structure of our Office, examining the primary offices of Matins (or Morning Prayer) and Vespers (or Evening Prayer). One of the first things to mention is that our Office, and the manner in which we have assembled *The English Office Noted*, is that our services are designed to facilitate congregational participation. While it is probably inevitable that first time visitors will find things confusing, we have endeavored to make the Office accessible and easy to follow. We have attempted to make the rubrics understandable. Congregational responses are clearly indicated in bold type, and many of the sung responses repeat the melody sung by the officiant. We have tried to

Saturday, October 8

First Vespers of Pentecost XVI

Commemoration of Ss Denys, Rusticus & Eleutherius, Martyrs

The Reading from the Martyrology for October 9

R. Thanks be to God

Psalms for the 8th Day at Evening Prayer, p. 77

(After the 1st lesson) Office Hymn: 16

(After the hymn) R. And let thy mercy come down upon us.

The service continues with the Magnificat on p. 18

Hymn after the collects: Hymn 23

The service continues with The General

Thanksgiving on p. 26.

Marian Anthem: 177

minimize the need for members of the congregation to turn pages back and forth within the book, other than the need to find the psalms and the Office Hymn in *The St. Ambrose Hymnal*. At St. Gregory's we provide a few lines in the Sunday bulletin for information needed at Matins, and we provide a separate bulletin for Saturday Vespers containing what is needed on a monthly basis (*see example at left*). We do what we can to encourage participation in our common prayer.

My seminary liturgics professor was fond of saying that "there are only three problematic points in the liturgy: the beginning, the middle and the end." While he was speaking of the entrance rite, the Offertory and the conclusion of the Mass, we can see a similar phenomenon with the Office in terms of how we get started, the hymns and antiphons at the middle, and how we bring things to a conclusion. A number of things

may happen before the Office, the most obvious being preparatory prayer. We pray that God will open our minds and hearts that we may approach Him with a right spirit. These prayers help us make the transition from the distractions of this life, to focus on things eternal. Two forms are provided: the traditional prayers from the *Diurnal* on p. ii (including the Lord's Prayer, Apostles Creed and Hail Mary), and shorter forms on p. 238 that might be prayed in the Sacristy. Note that we have not included the General Confession from the *Book of Common Prayer* at Matins or Vespers, though it is present at the office of Compline, as we expect our people to make their own confessions, as needed, and none of us experience the overwhelming numbers of penitents which led St. John of Kronstadt to use a form of General Confession. At St. Gregory's we have added a reading from the *Martyrology* for the following day before Vespers begins, as we have not been present for the office of *Prime* where it normally occurs within the monastic practice, and it gives us a reminder of the heroic witnesses to the faith who have gone before.

In brief, the Office now typically consists of:

Morning Prayer (or Matins)

1. (Optional Opening Sentence)
2. Opening versicles and responses (*Preces*)
3. Psalms, preceded by Ps. 95 or a variation
4. An Old Testament reading

5. The 1st canticle - *Te Deum* or *Benedicite*
6. A reading from the New Testament
7. The Office Hymn, versicle & response
8. The 2nd canticle - *Benedictus* w/antiphon
(during which the Altar may be censed)

9. The Apostles Creed
10. Three-fold Kyrie
11. Our Father
12. Versicles & responses (*Suffrages*)
13. The Collect of the Day
14. Other collects, as appointed
15. Closing versicles & responses

16. Marian Anthem, if Mass does not follow

Evening Prayer (or Vespers)

1. (Optional Opening Sentence)
 2. Opening versicles and responses (*Preces*)
 3. Psalms
 4. An Old Testament reading

 5. Office hymn, versicle & response
 6. The 1st canticle - *Magnificat* w/antiphon
(during which the Altar may be censed)
 7. A reading from the New Testament
 8. The 2nd canticle - *Nunc dimittis*

 9. The Apostles Creed
 10. Three-fold Kyrie
 11. Our Father
 12. Versicles & responses (*Suffrages*)
 13. The Collect of the Day
 14. Other collects, as appointed
 15. Closing versicles & responses

 16. Marian Anthem, if Mass does not follow
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The Opening Sentences, found on page 246ff of the Officiant's copy only, are sentences of Scripture which vary by the season or feast day, which may be sung or said, and which serve to set the tone and introduce the Office. During the seasons after Epiphany and after Pentecost, the common Sentence for Vespers is "Let my prayer be set forth in thy sight as the incense; and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice" from Psalm 141. In addition to those found in the Book of Common Prayer, Sentences have been added to our book for a number of feast days and other occasions.



As we go through the Office, we will see that many parts are known by their Latin names, quite simply because "we've always done it that way." Psalms and Canticles are known by their Latin *incipit* (meaning "it begins"), or the first few words; hence *Magnificat*, *Benedictus*, *Gloria Patri*, *Te Deum*, etc.

The actual beginning of the Office is called the *Preces* (the Latin plural for "prayer"). The *Preces* consist of Versicles (or short verses, typically from the psalms) and Responses. Our first set are from Psalm 51:15 (*V.* O Lord, open thou our lips. *R.* And our mouth shall show forth thy praise.), as we acknowledge that we need God's assistance, even to rightly sing his praises. Note that *V.* & *R.* are often used to indicated Versicle and Response. It is customary to make a small sign of the cross here upon our lips, asking that our prayers be blessed. Our second set of versicles and responses are from Psalm 70:1 (*V.* O God, make speed to save us. *R.* O Lord, make haste to help us). Here we make a full sign of the cross upon our bodies. This second set was omitted from the 1928 BCP, but was present in the monastic use and in the English prayer books.

Next we have the *Gloria Patri*, known as the "lessor or little or minor doxology," to distinguish it from the *Gloria in excelsis* found in our Mass and in Matins of the Byzantine Rite. This proclamation of praise for our Triune God, in a manner shaped by the Council of Nicaea, is one of our most commonly used prayers, used to conclude Psalms and Canticles and hymns, and used here and at the introit of the Mass to declare our worship of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The second half of the *Gloria Patri* has differed in the West from the form used in the East, at least from the 7th century,

perhaps as a denial of lingering Arianism, stating that the glory of all three persons of the Trinity is eternal: past, present and future, until the end of time. It is customary to bow at the *Gloria Patri*, though many will make the sign of the cross instead, in the Eastern manner (and this was historically the practice in Germany as well). The opening of the office concludes with the versicle and response, “*V.* Praise ye the Lord. *R.* The Lord’s Name be praised.”, echoing the admonition of Psalm 113:1 “Praise the Lord, ye servants; O praise the Name of the Lord.”

The Psalms follow. The Psalms are the basic prayer book for the people of God. Here we find every sort of human condition, emotion, and need poured out before God. Christ and his disciples prayed from the Psalms, as has the Church throughout the ages. In a quote often attributed to St. John Chrysostom, recalling that the Psalms have historically been attributed to King David, we read:



If we keep vigil, in the Church, David comes first, last and midst. If early in the morning we seek for the melody of hymns, first, last, and midst is David again. If we are occupied with the funeral solemnities of the departed, if virgins sit at home and spin, David is first, last, and midst... In monasteries, amongst those holy choirs of angelic armies, David is first, midst, and last. In the convents of virgins, where are the bands of them that imitate Mary; in the deserts, where are men crucified to this world, and having their conversation with God, first, midst, and last is he.

Praying through the Psalms on a regular basis has always been a primary focus of the Office. In earlier times it was expected that Bishops have the entire psalter memorized! In the monastic use the psalter is read through once each week; in the English prayerbooks and in our Office the psalter is read through once each month. Reading the Psalms in this manner means that we eventually hear the entire Psalter, even if we are only reading Saturday Vespers and Sunday Matins. Our translation of the Psalms is originally from *The Great Bible* of 1539 (the ‘authorized’ Bible at the time of the first English Book of Common Prayer in 1549), itself based upon a 1535 translation of Thomas Coverdale. The translation has been frequently ‘corrected’ and updated through the centuries, but it maintains a majesty and beauty befitting our prayers. As Orthodox

syllables go with which notes (and we will look at this in some detail in the final section of this presentation).

A cantor will typically sing the first verse to establish the tone. In some places the Psalms will be sung throughout in unison. More typically the Psalms will be sung *responsorially* (the cantor alternating verses with the people) or *antiphonally* (with two groups of participants alternating verses, e.g. those sitting on the Gospel side of the church singing the odd-numbered verses and those sitting on the Epistle side of the church singing the even-numbered verses). In the monastic use it is common to sit after the first half of the first verse is sung, then to stand before the *Gloria Patri*. In the English use it is more common for those who will sing the Psalms to stand. Each Psalm, or division of Psalm 119, will typically be concluded with the *Gloria Patri*, the exception being Psalm 114 when Psalm 115 follows. In many places it is common for all to sing the *Gloria Patri* at the end of each psalm together, though in the monastic use it is common to maintain the alternation. Again it is customary to bow, or sign oneself with the sign of the cross at the *Gloria Patri*.

In the monastic office psalm antiphons are provided for almost every day, but most of these are quotations from the psalms themselves. We have only provided psalm antiphons in *The Antiphoner* for major feasts, as these often provide further commentary on the occasion. These may be sung as needed, one before and after each Psalm, or they could be sung all at once in the form of a *Psalm Prose* immediately before the psalms in some convenient manner.

Psalm Antiphons for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

1. Whom saw ye, O shepherds? Speak! Tell us! Give us the tidings; who is this that hath appeared on earth? * we beheld a new-born Child, and choirs of Angels shouting allegiance to him as Lord, alleluia, alleluia.

2. Lo, a maiden hath borne the Monarch whose Name is everlasting: she hath both the joy of a mother and honor of a virgin: * before her hath none been seen like her, nor shall there be after, alleluia.

After the Psalms the first lesson, which is always from the Old Testament, is read. This is a great blessing, as the first reading at Mass is most often from the New Testament Epistles, or from the Acts of the Apostles. How are we to understand the New Testament properly, if we do not know the Old? The structure of the English Office provides the opportunity to hear a significant amount of Scripture, much more than we would hear at monastic Lauds and Vespers. The lectionary given in *The Antiphoner* is that of the 1928

Book of Common Prayer (and not the revision of 1943), with the addition of proper lessons for a number of feast days. The lectionaries of the Anglican prayer books changed frequently through the centuries, and the changes were often the creation of entirely new systems. While we could argue the relative merits of one lectionary over another, the 1928 lectionary was adopted when the English Use was given a home in canonical Orthodoxy, and so it remains until bishops tell us otherwise. This particular lectionary does present us with many of the great stories of our faith. The lessons are introduced with the words, “Here beginneth the ___ verse of the ___ chapter of the Book (of)_____” and concluded with, “Here endeth the first (or second) lesson.” The response “Thanks be to God,” which comes from more modern Roman Catholic and Anglican sources, is not part of our older tradition.



Up to this point the structure for Matins and Vespers is the same; now we have a slightly different arrangement due to the placement of the Office Hymn, which precedes the second canticle at Matins and precedes the first canticle at Vespers. For simplicity’s sake we will look at the Office hymns, then the Versicles and Responses, and then the canticles, some with their proper antiphons. The Office Hymns and Antiphons supply many of the missing elements, noted in the report of the Russian Synod on the Prayerbook. In preparing the *St. Ambrose Hymnal* (named for the great 4th century bishop of Milan, who is often called the ‘father of Western hymnody’) we provided over eighty office hymns taken from the Roman and Sarum Breviaries, as well as the Marian Anthems (traditionally sung at the end of the Office). The great majority of these hymns were written before the schism of the 11th century, and come to us from the pens of St. Ambrose, St. Gregory, St. Bede, Prudentius and other teachers of the Church who were also gifted poets and musicians. By singing this cycle of hymns which provides explanation of the day or season, we return to the understanding of the Fathers of the Church. In addition to *The St. Ambrose Hymnal*, these hymns may also be found following *The Antiphoner*, duplicated for the convenience of the officiant.

The Office Hymn is always followed by a versicle and response; these too are found in *The Antiphoner*. Changing with the season or feast day, these provide a succinct



At Matins the second lesson, now from the New Testament, follows the first canticle. The high point of Matins is the great canticle *Benedictus*, the Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79). The *Benedictus* praises God for the coming of the Messiah, and recalls the role of the fore-runner, John the Baptist, in preparing the way for Christ, in essence serving as a bridge between the Old and New Covenants. The Canticle comes to us from monastic Lauds, placed there by St. Benedict. We typically cense the altar, the clergy and the people during the *Benedictus* at Solemn

Matins, even as we cense during the *Magnificat* at Solemn Vespers. Both Canticles are fixed proclamations of the Gospel, and incense is offered, even as we offer incense at the Gospel at Mass. We mark ourselves with the sign of the cross at the start of all three Gospel canticles: the *Benedictus*, the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc dimittis*.

Both the *Benedictus* and *Magnificat*, as the principal canticles at Matins and Vespers, are also accompanied by antiphons. Originally an *Antiphon* was something sung alternately by two cantors or choirs. Gradually this term came to be applied to sentences sung before and after the canticle which convey the emphasis of the occasion. For example, at Vespers for the First Sunday in Lent the Antiphon on the *Magnificat* is: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation: let us therefore in these days approve ourselves as the servants of God, in much patience, in watchings, in fastings, and by love unfeigned.” These Antiphons, which are sung by the cantor(s), most often give a brief meditation on the Gospel for the Mass of the day, or the theological teaching the Church wishes to illumine. Like the Office hymns, the antiphons offer brief teachings and help convey the mind of the Church. The antiphons in *The Antiphoner* are drawn from *The Monastic Diurnal*, *The Anglican Breviary*, *The Sarum Antiphoner*, *The Prayerbook Office* and other sources.

At Vespers the Office Hymn follows the Psalms, then the versicle and response, and then the *Magnificat* with its antiphon. The *Magnificat*, of course was first declared by

the Blessed Virgin Mary (Luke 1:46-55), at her Visitation to her cousin Elizabeth. John the Baptist leapt in the womb, with joy, at the presence of the Word made flesh. Mary is our Mother in the faith; as with all aspects of her life, Mary's song points us towards God and a right relationship with Him. In this great canticle we praise God for His mighty acts, for His mercy, and for His steadfast faithfulness to His people - and we remember that this very God chose one young woman, who so found favor with God by her manner of living, that she could become the Mother of God, the Mother of our Salvation. All generations have rightly called her blessed. At Matins in the East and at Vespers in the West, day after day for nearly two thousand years, the Church has repeated her song in countless churches and homes. Her song has become our song, as we give thanks and remember.



At Vespers, following the *Magnificat* we sing the *Nunc dimittis*, the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32). It comes to us, not from the monastic Office, but from the Roman and Sarum offices of Compline, where it has a proper antiphon, “Preserve us, O Lord, while waking, and guard us while sleeping...” The words of the Holy Prophet Simeon speak to us of the salvation which God has prepared for His people, and of our longing for God. They speak to us of the light of Christ which has come into our world to banish the darkness of ignorance, deception and despair - light that brings hope - for God is now with us. We have given alternate tones for the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* on page 28 with the suggestion that these tones be used in penitential seasons; this conveniently gives us the proper Tone II, with its second ending, for the *Magnificat* to match the Great “O” antiphons in the days leading up to Christmas. While the 1928 Prayerbook presents alternate canticles for both Matins and Vespers, we have only retained the traditional canticles for these offices.

After the canticles the structure for Matins and Vespers is once again the same. The Apostles Creed is now sung, unless omitted when the office precedes a Mass at which the Nicene Creed will be sung. During the middle ages it was commonly held that



the Apostles Creed was written by the Apostles themselves, each of the twelve contributing a phrase. It is more likely an ancient Roman Baptismal Creed. Tertullian and St. Ireneaus in the second century and numerous Western Church fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries spoke of early forms of this Creed; however, the final form, as we have it today, appears to date from the seventh century. This Creed is a succinct statement of our faith, which is still used at Baptisms and within the Paschal Vigil, and appropriate at this time after we hear the Good News proclaimed in Scripture. When we host pan-Orthodox services, some prefer to chant the Nicene Creed at this point, and on Trinity Sunday some of our parishes substitute

the Athanasian Creed, the *Quicumque Vult*, most likely written by someone in the West, influenced by the teaching of St. Athanasius, no later than the 6th century (see page 503 in *The Antiphoner*). As with the Nicene Creed, it is customary to mark ourselves with the sign of the Cross at the conclusion of the Apostle's Creed. Various explanations for this include that it is a reminder of our Baptisms (as when we take holy water upon entering the church), and that the sign of the Cross is a sort of Creed-in-miniature (as we recall our belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit). We also make the sign of the Cross to make this faith our own and to pray for the blessings of this faith.

Now we have the ancient salutation “The Lord be with you” and the response “And with thy spirit.” In this Scriptural greeting (Ruth 2:4, Galatians 6:18, etc.) we wish one another every blessing, for what could be better than to be with God? Hippolytus mentions its use by the Church in 215. Here we have expressed the desire of the priest that the people entrusted to his care be with God, and in return the desire of the people that their priest be with God, as he prepares to offer prayers on their behalf. Furthermore some have argued that the reference to the priest's spirit here is an intentional calling to mind of the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the priest at his ordination. A deacon may

receive a blessing to use this salutation in the absence of a priest, but traditionally a Subdeacon, Reader or layman leading the office should use the versicle, “O Lord, hear our prayer,” to which the response is, “And let our cry come unto thee.” Likewise, if we are reading the office privately, this later exchange is perhaps more appropriate.

The American Episcopal prayer books omit the customary *Kyrie* at this point, but we have retained it, with the option to use either the Greek or English text. Our custom at St. Gregory’s is to use the Greek form when the *Kyrie* will be sung in the Mass to follow, using the English at other times. The form *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison* is distinctly Western, established well before the time of Pope St. Gregory the Great at the end of the 6th century. Some have argued that the first *Kyrie* is addressed to the Father, the *Christe* clearly addressed to the Son, and the final *Kyrie* to the Holy Spirit. It also may be the remnant of a longer litany, retaining only the responses. It is a feature of the *Preces* in all seven of the monastic day offices.



The *Our Father* comes next, the prayer taught by God our Savior himself during the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:9ff). This prayer occurs in the traditional prayers of preparation before every office, and it occurs again towards the end of every office, so we should understand that it is a prayer which we should pray frequently - again and again. In the monastic office it is common for the Officiant alone to chant the Lord’s Prayer, or for it to be said ‘silently’, but in congregational use it is appropriate for all to pray it together. Again we may make the sign of the cross at the end, praying for the blessings of this prayer, and in remembrance that the sign of the cross is always effective to “deliver us from evil.”

The versicles and responses which follow are often called *The Suffrages*, a Middle English word referring to prayers offered on behalf of another. Our set was adapted by Cranmer from those at Lauds and Vespers in the Sarum Rite, which in turn were largely derived from the Psalms. We pray for the State, which certainly needs our prayers, rather than for the Queen, as our British friends and other members of the Commonwealth do.

We in America also have a different response to the fifth versicle; while the English sing, “Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God,” we sing “For it is thou, Lord, only, that makest us dwell in safety” from Psalm 4:9. Unlike the American prayer book, however, we have kept the English custom of repeating the same set of Suffrages at both Matins and Vespers.



The Suffrages lead us directly to the Collects and prepare us for the petitions to come. The word Collect is derived from the Latin *collecta*, referring to the gathering of people. So the Collect is the prayer said over the gathered people, and it gathers together the prayers of the people. The term Collect comes to us from the Gallican use; the Tridentine Missal simply uses the word “*Oratio*” or “prayer” to refer to these petitions. Latin collects tend to be brief and direct, following a defined pattern: there is an address (“O God), then a reminder of a divine attribute, a mystery of faith, or an example of saintly living (“who for our redemption gave thy Son to the death of the Cross”); then a request connected to what has just been called to mind (“grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may live forever in thy kingdom”); and the collect is concluded by saying that we pray this through our Savior Jesus Christ (“through the same Christ our Lord. Amen”), but which may continue on with a Trinitarian ending (“who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.).

A series of Collects is offered. The first is the Collect of the Day, meaning the Collect for the Sunday or feast day (Pentecost XVI, St. Jerome’s Day, etc.), the same Collect which will be sung at Mass, repetition helping to emphasize the thought contained within the prayer. If a weekday is a *feria*, a free day when no feast day occurs, the Collect for the previous Sunday is repeated. If a Sunday or feast day is commemorated, its collect follows the Collect of the Day. The next two Collects at Matins and Vespers come to us from the 6th or 7th centuries, and are found first in the Gelasian and Gregorian Sacramentaries and later in the Sarum Office. At Matins, the second Collect is a “Collect for Peace” and the third is the “Collect for Grace”. At Vespers the second Collect is yet another “Collect for Peace,” the third a “Collect for aid against perils.” The final set

collect at both offices, added in the 1980's to *The St. Andrew's Service Book*, is the "Collect for Divine Protection," taken from the seasonal prayers of the Missal; composed by Pope Innocent III (d. 1198), but perhaps based on a collect from the Gregorian Sacramentary, and found in the commemorations of the Monastic office, it joins our prayers with the intercessions of the Mother of God, St. Joseph 'the betrothed', Saints Peter and Paul (patrons of both Rome and Antioch), of the patron saint of the parish (*N.*), and of all the saints. These are all very ancient prayers, tested and hallowed through the ages.



After these collects the rubrics direct that a hymn or anthem may be sung, according to local custom, though it is optional. In a large parish where a choir is present, a choir anthem might be sung here; in other places a hymn appropriate to the day or season might be sung. Our parish practice at St. Gregory's, at Saturday Vespers, is to sing a setting of the *Phos hilaron* at this time. The rubrics also specify that "additional collects may be added, if desired." A small selection of suitable collects is given on page 500ff of *The Antiphoner*, including prayers for the Clergy and People, for the President and all in Civil Authority, and for Missions. Unlike the earlier collects which should be sung, prayers in this location are more typically said.

The General Thanksgiving may be said together by the clergy and people, though we typically omit its use before vesperal Liturgies. We have not included this prayer within Matins, as we most often offer Matins before Mass (as the Eucharist is our greatest act of thanksgiving). This prayer was composed for the 1662 prayer book by the Anglican Bishop Edward Reynolds of Norwich, purportedly based on a private prayer of Queen Elizabeth I of 1596. As such, it is the newest composition within our office, but whatever its source, it is a beautiful prayer, filled with references from Scripture giving thanks to God for all He has done, and praying that we may live out our thanksgiving by the manner of our lives.

As we conclude the Office, we repeat the Salutation "The Lord be with you..." with its response (or "O Lord, hear our prayer, etc." for a Subdeacon or layman). "V. Let us bless the Lord. R. Thanks be to God." (*Benedicamus Domino*) is found at the end of every office, and also occurs at the end of Mass in penitential seasons. Rather than

sending us forth, it implies that we might stay in church and continue in our prayers to God. The Grace, from II Corinthians 13:14, gives us a final doxology at the end of the office, then we offer our prayers for the faithful departed who have gone before us.

If it is desirable to offer a list of names for prayers at the Office (e.g. for the departed, for the sick and suffering, etc.), such a list might be offered at this time, after the office has ended. At St. Gregory's we offer these before the icon of the Mother of God and then sing her Anthem.



The seasonal Anthems of Our Lady (also called the 'Marian Antiphons', though not true antiphons, as they are no longer sung with a Psalm or Cantic) are usually sung after the Office, unless Mass follows immediately. These great hymns to the Mother of God are the *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (Gracious Mother of our Redeemer), sung from Advent to the Feast of the Presentation (Feb. 2), the *Ave Regina Coelorum* (Queen of the Heavens we hail thee) sung from Presentation through Wednesday of Holy Week, the *Regina Coeli* (O Queen of Heaven, be joyful) sung during Paschaltide, and the *Salve Regina* (Mary, we hail thee) sung from Trinity Sunday till the Saturday before Advent. Both solemn and simple forms of Gregorian chant are available for each of the Anthems. The texts date to the 11th to the 14th centuries and are much loved.

Prayers are provided to pray after the Office; two forms are found on page 252, and it is customary in some places to also repeat the Our Father and the Hail Mary silently, a practice retained from the monastic use.