

Vespers (Evening Prayer)

Vespers, also called Evening Prayer, is part of the Liturgy of the Hours, also known as the Divine Office. In the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church fulfills Jesus' command to "pray always" (Luke 18:1; see also 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Through this prayer, the people of God sanctify the day by continual praise of God and prayers of intercession for the needs of the world.

The Liturgy of the Hours includes several specified times of prayer. The most important times, called the "hinge hours," are Morning Prayer (which takes place upon rising) and Evening Prayer (which takes place as dusk begins to fall). The other hours are the Office of Readings (a service with a biblical reading and a reading from the Fathers or Church writers or a reading related to a saint which may take place at any time of day), a Daytime Prayer (which may take place at Midmorning, Midday, or Midafternoon), and Night Prayer (said before going to sleep).

Bishops, priests, deacons, and many men and women in consecrated life pray the Liturgy of the Hours each day. Their work is organized around this prayer, keeping God always at the center of their days. Lay people are encouraged to pray the Liturgy of the Hours as well, especially Morning and Evening Prayer. Many parishes in the United States schedule communal Morning and Evening Prayer on a regular basis.

Evening Prayer gives thanks for the day just past and makes an evening sacrifice of praise to God (see Psalm 141:1).

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