

DIVINE SERVICE

14. Short Hours

As Saint Symeon of Thessalonica explains, the Church has set certain times for prayer to help us toward our goal of unceasing prayer. The following prayers have been called the "Short Hours." They are short enough that any or all could be prayed even in the busiest workplace. We bring God to our remembrance, and remember ourselves, as it were, to God. First Hour roughly corresponds to 6:00 a.m. (not to replace one's morning prayers); Third Hour, 9:00 a.m.; Sixth Hour, noon; Ninth Hour, 3:00 p.m. Along with the Hours, one might remember the saint(s) of the day.

[This chapter has been reformatted for Internet distribution to place the Hours all on one page.]

First Hour*Monday, Tuesday, Thursday*

The most glorious Mother of God, more holy than the holy angels, let us hymn unceasingly with our hearts and mouths, confessing her to be the Theotokos, for truly she gave birth to God incarnate for us, and prayeth unceasingly for our souls.

Wednesday, Friday

Hasten to our aid, ere we be enslaved to the enemies that blaspheme Thee and threaten us, O Christ our God. By Thy Cross, destroy them that war against us. Let them learn the might of the Orthodox Faith; through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O only Lover of mankind.

Third Hour

Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise, by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of mankind, glory be to Thee.

Glory.

Grant speedy and steadfast consolation unto Thy servants, O Jesus, when our spirits are become despondent. Depart not from our souls when they be in afflictions, nor be Thou afar from our minds when they be in tribulations, but do Thou ever go before us. Draw nigh unto us, draw nigh, O Thou Who art everywhere present: even as Thou wast ever with Thine apostles, so also do Thou unite Thyself to them that long for Thee, O Compassionate One, that, being one with Thee, we may praise and glorify Thine All-holy Spirit.¹

Both now.

The hope and protection and refuge of Christians, the unassailable battlement, the storm-free haven of the weary art thou, O immaculate Theotokos. But as thou art one that savest the world by thine unceasing intercession, remember us also, O all-hymned Virgin.

Sixth Hour

Thou hast wrought salvation in the midst of the earth, O Christ God; Thou didst stretch out Thine immaculate hands upon the Cross, thereby gathering all the nations that cry to Thee; O Lord, glory be to Thee.

Glory.

We worship Thine immaculate icon, O Good One, asking the forgiveness of our failings, O Christ God; for of Thine own will Thou wast well-pleased to ascend the Cross in the flesh, that Thou mightest deliver from slavery to the enemy those

¹ The first two troparia of the Third Hour are the troparion and ikos of Pentecost.

whom Thou hadst fashioned. Wherefore, we cry to Thee thankfully: Thou didst fill all things with joy, O our Saviour, when Thou camest to save the world.²

Both now.

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday

As thou art a well-spring of pity, count us worthy of compassion, O Theotokos. Look upon a sinful people; show forth, as always, thy power. For hoping in thee, we cry Rejoice to thee, as once did Gabriel, the Supreme Commander of the Bodiless Hosts.

Wednesday, Friday

Most glorified art thou, O Virgin Theotokos; we praise thee, for by the Cross of thy Son, Hades was cast down and death slain. Having been put to death, we were raised up, and were deemed worthy of life. We received paradise, the ancient bliss. Wherefore, in thanksgiving, we glorify Christ our God, since He is mighty and alone abundant in mercy.

Ninth Hour

Seeing the Author of life hanging on the Cross, the thief said: Were it not God incarnate Who is crucified with us, the sun would not have hid its rays, nor would the earth have quaked and trembled. But do Thou Who endurest all things remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom.

Glory.

In the midst of two thieves, Thy Cross was found to be a balance of justice; for the one was borne down to Hades by the weight of his blasphemy; the other was raised up from his sins to the knowledge of theology. O Christ God, glory be to Thee.

Both now.

When she who bare the Lamb and Shepherd and Saviour of the world beheld Him on the Cross, she said with tears: The world rejoiceth at receiving redemption, but my bowels burn as I see Thy crucifixion which Thou endurest for all, O my Son and my God.

² This troparion, "We worship Thine immaculate icon," and the Theotokion, "As thou art a well-spring of pity," are the prayers that clergy use when greeting the icons as they enter the Church. It is a good practice for laity as well.

The Source

These so-called "Short Hours" are the kontakia of the Hours during Great Lent but are appropriate to read year-round. This translation is taken from *The Unabbreviated Horologion or Book of the Hours* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997), 90, 117, 128, 178–9. Reprinted [and placed on the Internet] with permission.