

THE SERVICES
OF THE
HOURS
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THE
GREAT
BOOK
OF THE
HOURS
-
GREAT
HOROLOGION

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EXCURSUS ABOUT THE ROYAL HOURS

The Royal Hours are served on Great, and Holy Friday before Pascha, and on the eves of the Nativity, and of the Theophany of Christ.

All four of the main daily canonical hours – first, third, sixth, ninth – are served together (customarily) as one service, with the Typica appended. The psalms are varied from the usual ones, and there are additional scripture readings, and liturgical texts, besides the expected tropars, and kontakia. It is necessary to consult the Festal Menaion, or Triodion, in order to follow the services. The service is served mostly in the midst of the temple, at an analoy on which the Gospel Book rests during most of the service. The service is called “Royal” because of the former presence of the Emperor, as was the custom.

The exact placement of the Royal Hours at Nativity, and Theophany may vary, depending on the day of the week the Feast may fall ; although Great Friday’s service is prescribed for the morning of that day only. Should the Nativity be celebrated on a Saturday, or Sunday, the Royal Hours are served on the preceding Friday. Should the Theophany be celebrated on a Sunday, or Monday, the Royal Hours of the eve are served on the preceding Friday.

The presbyter serving vests in epitrachil, cuffs, and phelon ; he opens the curtain, and the Royal Doors, takes up the Gospel Book, carries it (preceded by the deacon carrying a movable candle) to the analoy in the midst of the temple, and he there begins as usual. Another custom is to begin, as usual, at the Holy Table, and to take the Gospel Book to the analoy at the reading of the psalms (If there be no presbyter, then only the curtain is drawn open). The candle is placed behind the analoy, towards the Altar. During the reading of the psalms of the First Hour, there is a complete censuring of the temple, beginning at the Gospel Book. At the Third, and Sixth Hours, there is a lesser censuring (or at least some censuring) during the reading of the psalms. At the Ninth Hour, there is again a great censuring. If there be no presbyter, then incense may simply be placed in the censer, before the readings, at each hour. After the reading of the Gospel at the Ninth Hour, the Gospel Book is taken by the presbyter back to the Holy Table, and the Royal Doors, and the curtain are closed ; the presbyter removes the phelon, and concludes the services on the Solea. All is concluded, as usual, with the Great Dismissal, and the “polychronion”.

The Psalms of Great, and Holy Friday :

First Hour –	5, 2, 21
Third Hour –	34, 108, 50
Sixth Hour –	53, 139, 90
Ninth Hour –	68, 69, 85

The Psalms of the Nativity of Christ :

First Hour –	5 , 44, 45
Third Hour –	66, 86, 50
Sixth Hour –	71, 131, 90
Ninth Hour –	109, 110, 85

The Psalms of the Theophany of Christ :

First Hour –	5 , 22, 26
Third Hour –	28, 41, 50
Sixth Hour –	73, 76, 90
Ninth Hour –	92, 113, 85

The psalm in bold is the fixed psalm of that hour.

[THE END OF THE EXCURSUS ABOUT THE HOURS]