



## The Daily Office

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*"I choose to think about every word of a prayer before I vocalize it. Prayer without interior feeling is not very effective either for the one who recites it or for the one who listens to it: everything depends on interior life and on attentive prayer! But how few people are occupied with the interior activity! The reasons for this is that they don't really want it; they have no yearning for spiritual life and interior enlightenment." (Anonymous priest from The Way of the Pilgrim)*

### Biblical History of daily prayer hours

- Daniel 6:10 - Daniel prayed 'three times a day'
- Acts 2:15 - On the day of Pentecost Christ's disciples had assembled for prayer at "the third hour" (9 am)
- Acts 10:9 - When the Holy Spirit came upon them with dramatic force. Peter went up to the flat roof of the house to pray at "the sixth hour" (noon)
- Acts 3:1 - When he had a vision when led him to welcome the Gentile, Cornelius, into the Christian church. The apostles Peter and John went up to the temple at "the ninth hour" (3 pm) and healed a cripple on the way.

### Daily Rhythms of Prayer

These come from a long tradition in the church that goes back to the early centuries and the desert fathers. They drew upon Psalm 119:164, "Seven times a day I praise you for your righteous laws" as one indicator of a daily pattern of prayer. They took this literally and designed seven times of prayer each day:

- Lauds--at sunrise--about 6:00am
- Prime--first hour of the day
- Terce/Midmorning--third hour of the day (about 9:00am)
- Sext/Midday--sixth hour of the day (about 12:00pm)
- None/Midafternoon--ninth hour of the day (about 3:00pm)
- Vespers/Evening--sunset (about 5:00pm)
- Compline/Night--just before tiring for bed (about 7:30pm)

In addition to this daytime pattern of prayer, the early desert fathers and many who have followed in their footsteps have also arisen in the middle of the night (at about 2:00am) for vigils. They drew this pattern from Psalm 119:62, "At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws." The Benedictine communities developed the pattern of praying a dozen Psalms every night at this time.

### Resources

- [www.northumbriacommunity.org/praytheoffice](http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/praytheoffice)
- *Celtic Daily Prayer: Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community*

*"But if rotteness is a danger, it is also the way liturgy works.  
When you don't have to think all the time about what the words you are going to say next,  
you are free to participate in the life of God."  
(Lauren F. Winner, Mudhouse Sabbath)*