

night service, like Compline, concludes with mutual forgiveness and intercessions for all the living and deceased.

550 In the Hours, which have a biblical and patristic theological foundation, the faithful commemorate salvific events narrated in the Scriptures. They also ask the Lord for the grace to complete their everyday affairs and the labours of the day in a Christian manner.

551 The usual daily Hours, just mentioned, are the prayer of the faithful who are aware of the difficulties and dangers of the day, and thus beseech the Lord for help. During the Great Fast (Lent), these same Hours have additional elements. In the Lenten Hours, the faithful contemplate the Crucified Christ, drawing from him the strength to bear their daily cross, in order to become participants in the redemption of humankind. There is also another form of Hours. The Royal Hours, celebrated in anticipation of three great feasts, direct the attention of those praying to these major salvific events: the Birth of Christ, the Theophany, and the Passion and Resurrection.

552 The First Hour³⁸² is celebrated at the end of Matins, since together with Matins it is a prayerful beginning of the day: "O Christ, the true Light, you enlighten and sanctify everyone who comes into the world; let the light of your countenance be signed upon us, that in it we may see your unapproachable light."³⁸³ The Third Hour serves to commemorate the hour when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles. Saint Basil teaches:

At the third hour, the brethren must assemble and betake themselves to prayer, even if they may have dispersed to their various employments. Recalling to mind the gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the apostles at this third hour, all should worship together, so that they also may become worthy to receive the gift of sanctity. And they should implore the guidance of the Holy Spirit in what is good and useful, according to the words: "Cast me not away from Your face and take not Your Holy Spirit from me" [Ps 50[51]:11]. Again, it is said elsewhere: "Your good spirit shall lead me into the right land" [Ps 142[143]:10]. And having prayed thus, we should again apply ourselves to our tasks.³⁸⁴

553 At the Sixth Hour, the Church commemorates Christ's Passion on the cross. The psalms of this Hour, which describe the sufferings of a just man who placed his hope in the Lord, prophetically point to the suffer-

³⁸² The names "First," "third," "Sixth," and "Ninth" Hours reflect the Roman imperial system and correspond approximately to our 6:00 am, 9:00 am, 12:00 pm, and 3:00 pm.

³⁸³ Horologion, First Hour, Concluding prayer.

³⁸⁴ BASIL THE GREAT, *The Longer Rules*, 37, 4: PG 31, 1009.

ings of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour's example shows that our salvation is joined to struggles and possible sufferings. They become for each of us the daily crosses from which we should not shrink. Instead, we must bear them boldly until the moment of our own passage to eternity. Therefore, at the Lenten Sixth Hour we entreat the Lord: "O you who on the sixth day and at the sixth hour nailed to the cross the sin which the presumptuous Adam committed in paradise: tear asunder also the record of our sins, O Christ God, and save us."³⁸⁵ The Lenten Sixth Hour has other particular features. It includes daily readings from the prophet Isaiah and from the ascetic roadmap-7he Ladder of Divine Ascent by Saint John Climacus (whose appellative means of the Ladder).

554 In the Ninth Hour we prayerfully commemorate the life-giving death of the Saviour on the wood of the Cross (see Mk 15:30). We entreat him in prayer: "O Lord, who for our sake endured bodily death at the ninth hour, mortify the desires of our flesh, O Christ our God, and save us."³⁸⁶ In praying the Ninth Hour we overcome the fear of death, because we know that death cannot annul God's will for us.

2. The Weekly Cycle (the Octoechos)

555 According to the Book of Genesis, during six days God did the work of creation, then "blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation" (Gn 2:3). Consequently, people also ordered their life according to a similar rhythm of seven days. Six days of the week they work, as God did. And then they set aside their cares to celebrate "the day of the Lord."

556 Sin, and together with it, death, which entered into history through humanity's Fall, indicates the transitory, and therefore incomplete, nature of the seven-day cycle. As people grew in their awareness of the lack of plenitude of historical time, this lead to a spiritual quest for a new Lord's Day, an extraordinary, exceptional eighth day, in which the plenitude of time would be renewed. This quest is evident already in the time of the Old Testament prophets.

557 This Day of the Lord became the Death and Resurrection of Christ Bringing to fulfilment the Old Covenant, Christ accepted death on the Cross on the sixth day of the week (Friday). On the seventh day, the Sabbath, he rested in the tomb "from all the work he had done" (Gs 2:2). The Church sings of this on Great and Holy Saturday: "What is

³⁸⁵ Horologion, Sixth Hour, Lenten troparion.

³⁸⁶ Horologion, Ninth Hour, Lenten troparion.