

DB0P0JDBM! I PVST!

The **canonical hours** get their names from segments of the "Divine Office", a canon of prayers which were offered at specific times, particularly by the clergy and certain religious orders during our period. Originally there were four **Watches** or **Vigils** during the night: 6PM-9PM, 9PM-Midnight, Midnight-3AM, and 3AM-6AM. Later these were organized into three **Nocturnes**: 9-Midnight, Midnight-3AM, 3AM-6AM.

Matins followed these vigils or nocturnes, and eventually the night prayers came to be called "Matins" as well. Prior to that **Lauds** (which means "the Praises") and Matins were both observed at dawn. When the night vigils started being called Matins, the sunrise prayers became known as Lauds.

Six AM was apparently considered the first hour of the day since it is called **Prime**. Nine AM was the third hour after that, or **Terce** (which rhymes with "worse.") (I've had days like that... how about you?) Noon would have been the sixth hour, or **Sext**. Three PM was the ninth hour: **None** (which rhymes with "stone".) **Vespers** was the prayer service at sunset, while **Compline** (which is pronounced as though the final "e" isn't there) came at the completion of the day, ie bedtime.

There was bound to have been a certain amount of seasonal variation in when these prayers were offered. On the other hand, the Church strove to minimize such variations by every timekeeping method available. There were sundials, water clocks, hourglasses, candles which burned at measured rates, and later mechanical clocks. These told the religious authorities when it was time for each portion of the day's prayers to be recited, and cathedral or church bells would relay that information not only to the members of religious communities but to everyone within hearing distance of the bells.

For our purposes, the following table is a concise though NOT precise list of equivalents. In an age without wrist watches, alarm clocks, and the like, time references had little need to be precise. This handout, for example, was written twixt Compline and Matins on the Feast of All Hallow's Eve during the reign of Rurik and Elsbeth in the 37th year of the Society.

12AM (Midnight)	Matins
3 AM	Lauds
6 AM	Prime
9 AM	Terce
12 PM (Noon)	Sext
3 PM	None
6 PM	Vespers
9PM	Compline