Understanding the Daily Office

Everything you wanted to know about Morning, Noonday & Evening Prayer:
A guide by the Reverend Matthew Mead
Make two thousand years of tradition your own: pray and worship as Christians have for millennia, immerse yourself in the same psalms Jesus himself prayed, and hear and read passages of the Bible for the first time or for the fiftieth time.

Experience and understand the Daily Office!
About the Daily Office at Saint Mary’s

The Daily Office is the daily public prayer of the church. It is different than Mass (also called the Holy Eucharist). In the Roman Catholic Church the Daily Office is known as the Liturgy of the Hours. In other churches the Daily Office is sometimes referred to as the Divine Office.

In Anglican and Episcopal churches the Daily Office is comprised of Morning Prayer (sometimes called Matins), Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer (sometimes called Evensong), and Compline. The term, “Daily Office” is used to describe these regular times of prayer.

Ideally every Office is prayed publicly by members of a church community. Realistically, however, it can be difficult for any community (outside of a monastic setting) to pray every Office together. For this reason a great number of Christians pray all or part of the Office privately.

At Saint Mary’s public Morning Prayer is said every day of the year except Saturdays and Federal Holidays. On Sundays and Major Feast Days in the church year Morning Prayer is sung and referred to as Matins.

Noonday prayer is said every day of the year except Sundays and certain feast days throughout the year (when as Solemn Mass is offered instead).

Evening Prayer is said every day of the year except federal holidays. On Sundays Evening Prayer is sung and referred to Evensong. At Saint Mary’s Evensong is followed by Exposition & Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (a different service that will not be covered in the guide).

At Saint Mary’s we use the Book of Common Prayer (1979) and use the Rite II form for Morning Prayer, Noonday
Prayer, and Evening Prayer. These services, like those of the Rite I services and those found in earlier Prayer Books, are rooted in ancient Christian tradition. These aren’t just services and prayers made up by a committee in 1979. They have a rich history and a saintly legacy; many of the prayers we pray in the morning and in the evening were also prayed by the saints throughout history every day in the morning and in the evening.

A Brief History

The Daily Office is rooted in the prayer traditions of the Jewish synagogue and of the early Christian communities. Throughout Jewish and Christian history, certain times of the day have been set aside for private and public prayer. It is thought that by the time of Christ, some synagogues held daily public prayer services in the morning and in the evening, and it is known that as early as the second century Christians were observing certain times in the morning and evening with similar services. The morning service consisted of Psalms, Canticles (in general a canticles is a song taken from Scripture), occasional scripture readings, and prayers. The evening service was similar but also often included a blessing of light. In addition to these public services, the practice of private prayer at certain other hours – the 3rd, 6th and 9th hours of the (Roman Calendar) day – was prevalent in both Judaism and Christianity. Early Christians associated these times with events in the Passion. They also added prayers at cockcrow or midnight. Thus, in very early Christian circles there were six hours for prayer. It is helpful to understand that these prayers did not take the entire hour; they marked the beginning of the hour.

As Christianity spread and became more accepted and established, more formal services for these “hours”
developed. These set services were called Offices, for they were the daily work of the Christian – the English word, “office” is taken from the Latin, *officium* (one’s service, duty or ceremony). At the same time (but in different ways) both congregational and monastic Offices developed on these hours.

Public congregational prayer services were held two times a day. The morning service was called Lauds and the evening service was called Vespers. These services included selections from the Psalms, (occasionally) readings, and prayers. The other hours might be observed privately in informal ways.

Monastic life obviously lent itself to formally observing more than just two hours. In different places different practices for the observance of these hours developed: for example, Eastern monks recited the entire Psalter daily; Roman monks weekly, and Galican months every fortnight. Accordingly these same hours had more or less psalmody, prayer, scripture and hymns – depending on where you were.

Over time, the Eastern Churches and the Western Churches developed somewhat different ways of doing the same things. Today, most Roman Catholic and all mainline Protestant churches are considered Western churches. Most Orthodox and a few Roman Catholic churches are considered Eastern churches. Saint Mary’s is part of the Western church, therefore this guide will look at the history of the Western tradition in order to better understand why we do what we do at the Daily Office.

The Western tradition of daily prayer can be summed up as follows. There were originally six Daily Offices: **Matins** (at midnight or cockcrow); **Lauds** (the public morning service); **Terce** (the 3rd hour or 9:00 AM); **Sext** (the 6th hour or Noon); **None** (the 9th hour or 3:00 PM); and **Vespers** (the public evening service). To these six, two more were eventually
added: **Prime** (the 1st hour, said after early morning monastic duties had been finished) and **Compline** (said before bedtime). It is worth noting that what now is commonly called Matins is closest to what originally was called Lauds. The reason for this name change will be explained below.

At first, monastic life and congregational life often intersected. The entire Christian community might pray Lauds and Vespers, but only the monks gathered for the other Offices. Thus an average Christian might attend only two services: Lauds and Vespers; but a monk would regularly attend all eight. As churches centered more and more around monastic communities, the laity had less and less influence, and soon all of the Offices were designed for monastic use.

During the middle ages the Offices continued to develop even as widespread variety crept into the services as a whole. Offices in different regions might seem quite different yet still be grounded in the exact same tradition. More complicated calendars (which varied greatly in different regions) developed and the readings, psalms, and prayers reflected observing certain feast days and seasons. This coincided with the inclusion of creeds and prayers at certain Offices. Also, due to changes in monastic life and the saying of more regular daily masses for saints and the departed, Offices were occasionally grouped together. Matins, Lauds, and Prime were said together and simply called “Matins”. Vespers and Compline became “Vespers” or sometimes “Evensong”. All this did not change the fact that the official daily prayer of the church was a prayer life that was too rigorous and time consuming for anyone who did not lead a life devoted solely for prayer in Latin. For most laity Mass eventually became the only form of public worship and prayer.

Regional customs (for Mass and the Office) evolved in such a way that regional Rites developed. These regional Rites were occasionally recognized by the Church. The dominant Rite in
the Western Church was and remains the Roman Rite. However, in many places the regional Rite took precedence. One of these Rites, the Sarum or Salisbury Rite, was particularly prominent in England at the time of the Reformation. The Sarum Rite was an adaptation of the Roman Rite begun in Salisbury Cathedral. Over a few hundred years this adaptation took on a life of its own. After the Reformation the Sarum Rite fell out of use, and today nearly all liturgical churches in the West use adapted forms of the Modern Roman Rite. At the time of the Reformation, however, the Sarum Rite was a Rite that was particularly English and was therefore an obvious primary source for what would become the Book of Common Prayer.

At the Reformation, many Protestant churches, including the Church of England, made an effort to reclaim public worship for the laity: prayer was not to be done for the people but by the people. This, combined with an effort to remove all perceived excesses in the Roman Mass, resulted in many different styles of worship. Some were traditional, many were not. In the Church of England, the task of producing a reformed Prayer Book fell primarily to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. He attempted to work with the tradition that he knew while eliminating elements that seemed excessive and restoring elements that were ancient. His work in the Daily Office was rooted in his experience of saying the Offices found in the Sarum Rite. It is likely that he also experienced saying the Offices in their combined form of “Matins” and “Evensong”.

For the Daily Office portion of the first Prayer Book (1549) Cranmer took the combined morning Offices, “Matins”, and the combined evening Offices, “Evensong”, and edited them down to two services of manageable size. He expanded the short scripture passages that had been read at Matins and Lauds to a chapter each of the Old and New Testaments. He set a fixed thirty day cycle for saying the Psalter. He kept
specific psalms, readings, canticles, creeds, and prayers in their customary places. The result was not a digest of the Offices, but two complete Morning and Evening Prayer services in English that were somewhat long yet accessible. The laity could in theory attend and participate in both Morning and Evening Prayer.

To many, the 1549 Prayer Book was only a first step in a movement towards a more Reformed and Protestant religion. The second Prayer Book (1552) saw a number of changes. The perceived excesses of the Mass and Roman Eucharistic theology, brought about general abandonment of the Mass in many Reformation churches. Because there were really no provisions for Daily Mass – there was no Daily Mass lectionary – Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer were adapted to include certain elements from Mass. Notably, the bulk of the private prayers said by the priest before Mass, including the confession, were inserted at the beginning of Morning Prayer. Prior to this, only the Office of Compline had contained a public confession.

Over time, Matins and Evensong became the quintessential Anglican services, Matins often replacing even Sunday morning Mass. However, because of a recent reemphasis on Sunday Morning Mass the current Prayer Book allows for a greater variety in the Daily Office so that the Daily Office, as it has historically been, does not supplant Mass but goes hand in hand with it. In many ways we have come full circle. The Reformation helped to clean out many excesses and problems of the church, just as time has helped to restore much that over-zealous Reformers needlessly removed.

The major differences between the current form of the Daily Office and the first English versions are the allowance for more options, the use of a lectionary that does not require the reading of four chapters of scripture each day, and the (re)additions of an Order for Noonday Prayer and Compline.
It is possible to say Morning Prayer almost exactly as Cramner said it, it is possible to say it almost exactly as it was said when it was the main service on a Sunday morning, and it is possible to say it every day in about fifteen minutes. All that is required is a Prayer Book, a Bible, and an understanding of the tradition. Knowing why we do what we do allows for a greater appreciation the prayers that we say.

The Daily Office is not something that is said only by Anglicans. After the Reformation the Roman Catholic Church moved toward preserving the more monastic form of the Office. The Roman Daily Office is known as the Liturgy of the Hours. It too has evolved over time to meet the needs of the church, and is not all that different from what is found in the Book of Common Prayer 1979.

**Morning Prayer**

At Saint Mary’s Morning prayer is offered Sunday through Friday at 8:30 AM. It is said in the choir stalls at the high altar. On (non-summer) Sundays and some major feasts we offer Sung Matins, which is sung from a bulletin.

At Morning Prayer the officiant will stand and announce that service begins on page 80 in the Prayer Book. When the officiant stands, all rise and the service begins.

You may notice that the Prayer Book service for Morning Prayer actually begins on page 75. We omit the opening Scriptural sentences, Exhortation, and the Confession. We do this because they are “recent” additions to Morning Prayer dating specifically to the 1552 Prayer Book and reflect a movement away from Daily Mass said in conjunction with the Offices and toward the primacy of the Offices. Before the Reformation, a confession was never said at every service.
It was said daily by the priest alone before Mass and by all who attended Compline. Since, we say a general confession at daily Mass every day of the week except on major feast days, it would be both redundant and out of line with tradition to say a confession all the Offices.

We begin on page 80 with the opening sentences. It is customary to make the sign of the cross over the lips when the officiant says “Lord open our lips.” Then, the people respond “And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.” These opening sentences are actually Psalm 51:16. They are used as the opening sentences in the morning in all ancient extant Western morning services. It is notable that Psalm 51 has also always been said at the beginning of Eastern Morning Prayer services.

The *Gloria patri* (Latin for “Glory to the Father”) is then said. It is customary to bow the head at the invocation of the Holy Trinity; in doing this we reverence the true revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Alleluia” (loosely translated “Praise ye the Lord”) is added after *Gloria patri* is said, unless it is the season of Lent. The church has traditionally viewed Lent (and the now suppressed season of Pre-Lent) as a season of penitence and abstention, thus words of joy such as Alleluia are refrained from until Easter.

The opening sentences followed by the *Gloria Patri* serve the purpose of introducing the reading of the Psalter. Quite literally, when we gather together for Morning Prayer, our day begins by singing (or saying) the praises of God as the gathered Body of Christ.

Next, one of the Invitatory Psalms (*Venite* or *Jubilate*) or, in the Octave of Easter (or throughout Eastertide as is the custom at Saint Mary’s), the canticle Christ our Passover (*Pascha nostrum*) is said. Before and after the Invitatory Psalms
(but not before the canticle Christ our Passover) an antiphon is said.

**Antiphons** are short verses which are particularly appropriate for certain days and seasons. The use of antiphons before and after the *Venite* goes back at least to Saint Benedict who directed such use. Over time, appropriate antiphons were appointed for numerous Saint’s days and Seasons. On page 81 and 82 of the Book of Common Prayer 1979 there are a number of antiphons appropriate for the seasons and feasts of the year. Since there are three separate options for antiphons on weekdays our custom at Mary’s is simply to rotate through them during the week. The officiant says the first phrase of the antiphon and the people respond with the second phrase.

After the antiphon, the **Invitatory Psalm** is said. At Saint Mary’s the invitatory Psalm is said antiphonally, that is, alternating from side to side; monastic communities have said psalms antiphonally for nearly two thousand years. The officiant begins, then all join in on the second half of the first verse after the asterisk. From the second verse and continuing, the verses are said from side to side. The side opposite the officiant says verse two. Verse three is said by the officiant’s side, and so on. *Gloria Patri* is said by all at the conclusion. As before, it is customary to bow at the mention of the Trinity. Following *Gloria Patri*, all repeat the antiphon together.

There are two Invitatory Psalms. The first, called the **Venite** (Latin for “come”) is said at Saint Mary’s on most days outside of Eastertide. The *Venite*, found on page 82, is actually Psalm 95:1-7; Psalm 95 was traditionally the introduction to the Psalter at the Matins. When Matins, Lauds, and Prime were combined by Cranmer, it remained as the introduction to the Psalter at “Matins”.

The second Invitatory Psalm is called the **Jubilate** (Latin for “rejoice”), and it can also be found on page 82. The *Jubilate* is
actually Psalm 100. It was traditionally used as an opening psalm at Lauds on Sundays and feast days and daily at Prime. In the 1552 Prayer Book it was provided as an alternative to the Gospel Canticle, *Benedictus*. In keeping with the long standing custom of using the *Venite* as the Invitatory Psalm, at Saint Mary’s *the Jubilate* is used only on the nineteenth day of the month (except during Eastertide and on Major Feast Days), when Psalm 95 is part of the Psalter at Morning Prayer.

During the Easter Octave (the first 8 days of Easter) or throughout all of Eastertide, the canticle *Christ our Passover* (*Pascha nostrum*) is said in place of the antiphon and Invitatory Psalm. At Saint Mary’s the canticle is said antiphonally and *Gloria Patri* is said by all at the conclusion. The *Pascha nostrum* is a combination of the two traditional Easter anthems (Romans 6:9-11 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-22) that were used at Morning Prayer on Easter Day. Its use has varied from being allowed only on Easter Day to being allowed throughout the Eastertide.

After the Invitatory Psalm (or in Eastertide the Easter anthems), a selection of *Psalms* is said. At Saint Mary’s the psalms are recited antiphonally with a slight pause at every half-verse asterisk (other methods of reciting the Psalter are found on page 582 of the BCP 1979). *Gloria Patri* is said by all at the conclusion of the selection of psalms appointed for the day. Psalms from different parts of the Psalter may be appointed. In that case, *Gloria Patri* is said at the conclusion of each psalm selection. As before, it is customary to bow at the mention of the Trinity. During Lent, the word Halleluiah is not spoken when it occurs in the psalms. Each portion of the Psalter is said seated: we sit down after the first half verse and rise at the asterisk in the final verse.

Early on the practice of sitting during the Psalter was common. Reading the psalms almost always takes time and there is no particular reason to stand for them: since the advent of seats in
Church it has been normal to stand for all prayers and for the proclamation of the Gospel at Mass. Kneeling was originally a penitential action. It was only until a sense of exclusion and unworthiness developed in the Congregation that it was seen as a sign of adoration and prayer. At Saint Mary’s we do not kneel at any Office. We stand to pray and to say canticles and we sit for everything else, including the Psalms.

Historically there are a number of ways to say the entire Psalter. For obvious reasons the daily reading of the complete Psalter has little following. The practice of reading the Psalms over a week was maintained by monastic communities in the West throughout the Middle Ages, but the practice was unwieldy at best as numerous feast days often interrupted the cycle with the result that certain psalms were read over and over while others were very rarely read at all. For this reason, the BCP 1979 provides two more reasonable methods of dividing up the Psalter in the hope that the entire Psalter will be read frequently.

The first and easier method allows for the entire Psalter, which is located in the Prayer Book beginning on page 585, to be read from start to finish over the course of thirty days. One simply starts at Psalm 1 on the morning of the first day, and on the evening of the thirtieth day the last few psalms are being read – the rest being read in sequence during the thirty days at Morning and Evening Prayer. This cycle was invented by Thomas Cranmer who so divided the psalms to facilitate the reading of the complete Psalter over a reasonable time. Major Feasts did and still do interrupt the cycle, but the interruption at most delayed the reading of any given psalm for a month. Over time, more feast days and whole seasons given proper psalms meant that the old problem of certain psalms being read far more than others crept back in.

In an attempt to remedy this problem, the BCP 1979 assigned proper psalms to every single day of the year. In general the
entire Psalter is read over a seven week cycle. Appropriate psalms are appointed for certain times of day and for certain days and seasons. “Difficult” psalms are read regularly but are in general reserved for the Offices said on Saturday Morning and Evening. This solution is laid out in the Daily Office Lectionary (found on page 933 of the BCP 1979) and requires a complete understanding of that lectionary to use. It is somewhat impractical because multiple psalms must be announced and multiple pages must be found at every service. The attempt to “hide” difficult texts by placing them on days and at hours that many churches would never consider holding a public service is troubling.

At Saint Mary’s we use the standard thirty day cycle because is straightforward and because it is in line with the traditional method saying the Psalter in sequence. Headings are listed throughout the Psalter indicating where each selection begins. For example, if it is the twelfth calendar day of the month, the psalms for Morning Prayer would begin with Psalm 62 on page 669, under the heading which reads, “Twelfth Day: Morning Prayer.”

Of course, we too have exceptions to this rule. On the 31st day of the month, we reread the psalms assigned to the 30th day. Out of concern for time, on Sundays when Matins and Evensong are sung we use the appointed psalms from the Daily Office Lectionary. Also, in keeping with the tradition of celebrating major feasts and seasons, we occasionally depart from the cycle to read certain appointed psalms. Clearly no method is perfect and without some confusion, but it seems that for most of the year the thirty day cycle avoids a significant amount of confusion. In any case, at Saint Mary’s the officiant will always announce the psalms to be recited each day.

All are seated after the Psalms, and the first of two readings from scripture is read. Laypersons are invited to read the
lessons from the lectern. Each reading is announced before it is read: “A reading from…” At the conclusion of the reading, the reader says, “The Word of the Lord,” to which the people respond, “Thanks be to God.” (An alternate conclusion “Here ends the reading.” is listed as an option in the BCP 1979). These announcements are the obvious traditional way of informing the people of what is being read and when the reading is over.

Selections of readings are called lections, and there is a table in the back of the Prayer Book called a lectionary which assigns particular readings for every day of the year. The Daily Office Lectionary begins on page 933 of the Prayer Book. It instructs that the first reading (if two are to be used) is to be from the Old Testament. The second reading is to be from the New Testament. This lectionary covers two years, (conveniently called Years One and Two). Because the lectionary assigns only three lessons for each day, special instructions are given directing the use of the alternate year’s Old Testament reading if two readings desired at both Morning and Evening Prayer. The “extra” reading is to be used as the first lesson at Evening Prayer. Additionally, special instructions direct that the Gospel lesson provided is to be used as the second reading at Evening Prayer in Year One and as the second reading at Morning Prayer in Year Two.

At Saint Mary’s we read all lections from binders that have been carefully prepared so that all special instructions are followed. The lessons in these binders include all announcements any reader would need to say and they include the correct incipit. An incipit is a reworking of the introduction of any reading. For example, a verse which read “And then he went from there and came to Galilee” would be reworked to “Jesus went from Jerusalem and came to Galilee”. The incipit does not change the meaning, it merely puts the reading into context so that it can be better understood.
After the first reading a **canticle** (Latin for “song” or “little song”) is said or sung. At Saint Mary’s all canticles are announced and then begun by the officiant. The people join in on the second half of the opening verse, and say the canticle antiphonally. It is customary to make the sign of the cross at the start of all Gospel canticles. *Gloria Patri* is said after each canticle.

Most of the canticles in the BCP 1979 are songs taken directly from scripture. The ones which are not taken directly from scripture (the *Te Deum* and the *Gloria in excelsis*) are ancient Christian hymns. Canticles, like all hymns, are songs, however, unlike hymns, they hold a status that is somewhat more like the psalms of the Psalter because they are songs the earliest saints sang.

Some canticles are traditionally associated with certain worship services. A Mass without either the *Gloria in excelsis* or the *Kyrie eleison* would be unthinkable to most Christians in the world today, just as it would have been unthinkable hundreds of years ago. The canticles at the Daily Office are no different, and they too have strong associations with certain times of day, days of the week, or seasons of the church year.

The BCP 1979 offers a suggested Table of Canticles (page 144-145). This table is useful in ensuring that all of the canticles are regularly used, and it assigns some canticles to their traditional day or season, but it generally ignores that certain canticles were associated only with certain Offices. It also lowers the importance of the Gospel canticles, an importance which was regarded so highly at times that some felt they were too important for regular use by mere laity, while others felt that their importance merited their continued regular use and preeminence. Regardless of this, the table simply gives them as options no more or less important than any other canticle.
At Morning Prayer at Saint Mary’s the canticle after the first scripture is always **Canticle 16, the Benedictus** (found on page 92). The *Benedictus* is the Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79), and it is about John the Baptist and Jesus. In the same way that the story of John the Baptist’s birth (and John the Baptist himself) acts as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, so also the canticle bridges the Old and New Testament Lessons read at Morning Prayer. Traditionally the canticle was used after the Gospel lesson at Lauds. Since there was only one reading at Lauds, it made sense that the canticle would follow. When Cranmer combined the old Offices and two lessons, each followed by a canticle, became the norm at Morning and Evening Prayer, he placed the *Te Deum* after the first lesson (except in Lent when the *Benedicite* followed the first lesson) and kept the *Benedictus* after the New Testament lesson. However, as more and more canticles were added as options, it made sense both to keep this canticle within the Office that it had traditionally been associated with and to use it as bridge canticle between the Old and New Testaments; thus we say the *Benedictus* after the Old Testament and before the New Testament reading.

All sit for the second reading from the New Testament which follows the *Benedictus*. Following this reading all stand and say the second canticle. *Gloria Patri* is said by all at the conclusion or most canticles. Since numerous canticles have been associated with different days, we follow tradition wherever possible, and opt for variety by following the Prayer Book Table of Canticles everywhere else. At Saint Mary’s we have developed our own schedule of canticles to avoid confusion.
Schedule of Canticles at Saint Mary the Virgin

AFTER THE FIRST LESSON
- Always Canticle 16

AFTER THE SECOND LESSON
- Major Feasts Canticle 21
- During the days after the Epiphany and Pentecost
  - MON Canticle 9
  - TUE Canticle 13
  - WED Canticle 11
  - THU Canticle 19
  - FRI Canticle 10
  - SAT Canticle 12
  - SUN Canticle 21
- During Advent
  - MON, WED, FRI Canticle 11
  - TUE, THU, SAT, SUN Canticle 12
- During Christmastide
  - Everyday Canticle 21
- During Lent
  - MON, WED, FRI Canticle 10
  - TUE, THU, SAT Canticle 14
  - SUN Canticle 13
- During Easter Week
  - Everyday Canticle 21
- During Eastertide
  - MON, WED, FRI Canticle 8
  - TUE, THU, SAT, SUN Canticle 21
At Saint Mary’s the canticles are said during appropriate times and seasons. All of the canticles are used at Morning Prayer except for canticles 15, 17, 18, and 20.

**Canticle 8, the Song of Moses or Cantemus Domino,** has been associated with the morning in various Eastern and Western traditions on Sundays and during Eastertide. Generally in the West it did not share the same preeminence for Sunday use as canticle 21, the *Te Deum*, therefore its use is limited to three times a week during Eastertide; it is not used on Sundays.

**Canticle 9, The First Song of Isaiah or Ecce Deus,** was appointed for use on Mondays at Lauds in Roman breviaries (a breviary is a portable book of the Offices used by religious). At Saint Mary’s we follow this tradition and continue its use on Mondays during ordinary time after Epiphany and Pentecost.

**Canticle 10, the Second Song of Isaiah or Quaerite Dominum,** has no known association to the Office. It is part of one of the readings at the Easter Vigil and suggested in the Prayer Book Table (page 144-145) for use on Friday mornings and Tuesday evenings. At Saint Mary’s we use it in Lent and on Fridays in ordinary time. The Canticle has a preparatory and penitential theme to it which naturally lends it to these times.

**Canticle 11, the Third Song of Isaiah or Surge illuminare,** was associated with Lauds in the Mozarabic Rite on Epiphany. The Prayer Book Table (pages 144-145) recommends it for Wednesday mornings outside of Lent and Sunday in Advent. The text of the Canticle lends itself to the season of Advent and at Saint Mary’s we use it on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in Advent and on Wednesdays in ordinary time.

**Canticle 12, a Song of Creation or Benedicite,** from the Song of the Three Young Men, an apocryphal portion of the
Book of Daniel. It is the song sang by the three men when they are thrown into the fire by King Nebuchadnezzar. It has been associated with morning since the fourth century. This association is broad and has no specific attachment to any day or season. The 1549 Prayer Book required its use in place of the Te Deum during Lent. At Saint Mary’s we use it on Saturdays during ordinary time (Morning Prayer is not currently offered on Saturdays, but in the event it is and for the sake of our members who say Morning Prayer privately, we are prepared!) and on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays during Advent. The Prayer Book allows for the Canticle to be said in parts; we always say the whole canticle at Saint Mary’s.

Canticle 13, a Song of Praise or *Bendictus es, Domine*, is the first part of the same hymn that makes up *Benedicte*, Canticle 12, from the Song of the Three Young Men. Traditionally it has rotated with the *Benedicte* on Sundays and feast days during Lent. It also has a strong associating with mornings in Eastern churches. The Table in the Prayer Book on pages 144-145 lists it as appropriate on Tuesday mornings and Friday evenings. At Saint Mary’s we use it at Morning Prayer on Sundays during Lent and Tuesdays in ordinary time.

Canticle 14, a Song of Penitence or *Kyrie Pantokrator*, is a classic song of repentance and is from the apocryphal Prayer of Manasseh. It has strong associations with Lent in the Mozarabic and Byzantine Rites. At Saint Mary’s we use it at Morning Prayer during Lent on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Canticle 15, the Song of Mary or *Magnificat*, has traditionally been the canticle at Vespers in the West. This association is at least from the time of Saint Benedict. When the various Offices were combined it was logically used at Evensong. It is given as an option in the Prayer Book because it is associated with the morning in Eastern Churches. The
obvious reason we do not use it at Morning Prayer is because Saint Mary’s is not an Eastern Church, and while we may use some Eastern traditions and even some Eastern Canticles to enrich our worship there is no reason to move away from an already rich Western tradition for the sake of variety.

Canticle 16, the Song of Zechariah or Benedictus Dominus Deus, is always used at Morning Prayer after the first lesson. See above for more information on the canticle.

Canticle 17, The Song of Simeon or Nunc Dimitis, has traditionally been associated with Compline; that it would be used as the last canticle before bed seems obvious from the words. Like the Song of Mary is was used at Evensong when the Offices were combined. It was associated with Lauds in the Mozarabic Rite. Again, the obvious reason we do not use it at Morning Prayer is because Saint Mary’s is not a church that uses the Mozarabic Rite.

Canticle 18, a Song to the Lamb or Dignus es, is not associated with the Morning. It has traditionally been associated in the evening on the feasts of martyrs and on Tuesdays. If it were listed in among the canticles of the Evening Prayer service as found in the Prayer Book, we would use it on feasts of martyrs at evening prayer.

Canticle 19, the Song of the Redeemed or Magna et mirabilia, has no traditional association with any Office or time of day and first appears in the 1970 Roman Breviary on Friday evenings. The Table in the BCP 1979 on pages 144-145 suggests it use during the mornings on numerous days and seasons. We loosely follow that at Saint Mary’s and it is used on Thursdays in ordinary time.

Canticle 20, Glory to God or Gloria in excelsis, is one of two canticles not from Scripture. In Eastern Churches in has been used at Morning Prayer since at least the fourth century.
In the West it had been used with some frequency at a number of Offices (notably Sunday mornings) until the twelfth century. Its use in the Office gave way in the twelfth century when it became a regular part of Mass, at that time it was completely dropped from Daily Office use and replaced by the *Te Deum*. At Saint Mary’s we do not use it at Morning or Evening Prayer because it is so frequently used as Mass (both daily and on Sundays) and because the Western church has for eight hundred years reserved its use only at Mass.

**Canticle 21, You are God or Te Deum laudamus**, like the *Gloria in excelsis* is not from scripture. The hymn dates at least to the fourth century and it has traditionally been used at morning Offices on feast days, festal seasons, and Sundays outside of Advent and Lent, and that is how it used at Saint Mary’s.

After the second canticle the **Apostles Creed**, found on page 96, is said. The Creed has been associated with one morning Office and one evening Office since at least the eighth century. However, its use up until the Reformation was silent and as a meditation only. The 1549 Prayer Book mandated its use aloud and in Anglican Churches it has remained a constant part of both Morning and Evening Prayer ever since. At Saint Mary’s all join in saying the Creed.

Next, the Lord’s Prayer is preceded by a **salutation**. The salutation: “The Lord be with you; and also with you,” is a traditional call to attention which began the Mass. As the entrance rite became more developed, and other salutations were added, this particular salutation became associated with once again calling the people to attention before the Gospel, the Eucharistic prayer, the dismissal, and Collects or Prayers. The association to the Prayers and collects naturally was also attached to those said at public prayer services.
The 1552 Prayer Book moved the salutation from before the Collects (its traditional place) and placed it before the Lord’s Prayer in an attempt to group the entire portion of Morning and Evening Prayer as “The Prayers”. This location of the salutation, somewhat of an anomaly, has remained in all subsequent Anglican Prayer Books.

The Lord's Prayer is then said. At Morning Prayer at Saint Mary's we always use the contemporary language version of the Prayer. Most English speaking Christians are familiar with the traditional version of the Prayer, so we use that version at every other service during the day. However, we try to be on the cutting edge of the best current liturgical thinking, so we do use the contemporary version, which is a slightly more accurate translation of the text.

The Lord's Prayer is traditionally said at this point in the Office by all. Older English Prayer Books had an additional Lord’s Prayer to start the Office. This was placed into the service because it was part of the pre-office prayers said by the clergy. Since Cranmer was used to starting the Office with the Lord’s Prayer, he simply added it into his version. This additional Lord’s Prayer has been removed from the BCP 1979.

One of two sets of Suffrages follows; the officiant says the versicle (marked V.) and the people say the response (marked R.). Suffrages A were part of Prime in the Sarum Rite and were included in the 1549 Prayer Book at Morning Prayer and at Evening Prayer. They are in essence Psalms 85:7; 20:9; 132:9; 28:11; 122:7; and 51:11a and 12b.

Suffrages B have had a more interesting journey. In the BCP 1979 they are used after the Lord’s Prayer. They were originally attached to the Gloria in excelsis when it was used at the Office. When the Gloria was replaced by the Te Deum, they essentially became part of it. The 1979 Prayer Book is the first English Prayer Book to separate Sufferages B from the Te
Deum and restore them as Suffrages. This second set of suffrages are in essence Psalms 28:11; 145:2; 123:4; 33:22; 31:1; and 71:1.

At Saint Mary’s we alternate between Suffrages A and B during the weekdays. Suffrages A are used on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Suffrages B are used on Tuesday and Thursday. In keeping with longstanding tradition that associates Suffrages B with the Te Deum, Suffrages B are always used whenever the Te Deum is said at Morning Prayer. Thus, Suffrages B are used on all major feasts and on all Sundays outside of Advent and Lent. Suffrages A are used on Sundays in Advent and Lent.

After the Suffrages are the Collects. Collects are prayers. Some are traditional, others are new. They are designed to express in clear terms some special theme of the day’s services. The Traditional number of Collects at the end of the Office is three. The 1549 Prayer Book allowed for no options. First the Collect of the Day was to be said, then a Collect for Peace, and last a Collect for Grace. Over time, and as more and more collects have been written, the desire for and allowance of options has crept into the Prayer Book. The Collect for Peace and Collect for Grace remain in our service as options. Aside from the many Collects of the Day listed in the Prayer Book in contemporary language beginning on page 211 and the seven suggested collects on pages 98-100. A number of collects for use at various occasions and days are listed beginning on page 814.

At Saint Mary’s the first collect is always the Collect of the Day. The Collect of the Day from the previous Sunday is always used unless a major feast or fast is being celebrated. The officiant says the entire collect and the people respond: Amen. The Collect of the Day for a lesser feast would also be appropriate, but the impracticality of using multiple books at the Office prevents us (and many other churches who say the Offices daily) from using them outside of Mass.
The **Second Collect** is chosen from those listed on pages 98-100. There are seven collects listed so it is easy to follow a seven day cycle: The Collects for Sunday, Friday, and Saturday are said on their respective days; A Collect for the Renewal of Life is said on Mondays; A Collect for Peace is said on Tuesdays; a Collect for Grace is said on Wednesdays; and a Collect for Guidance is said on Thursdays. The officiant says the entire collect and the people respond: *Amen.*

The current Prayer Book requires that a **prayer for mission** be said unless the Eucharist or authorized intercessions (such as the Prayer of the People at Mass) is to follow. Because of this our Third Collect is said collectively by all of the people. The officiant will first read out the suggested petitions of the Diocese of New York Prayer Cycle and the Anglican Prayer Cycle and then ask the people to join in saying one of the three prayers for mission found on pages 100-101. These are simply rotated through during the week.

Occasionally at Sung Matins we will sing a hymn after the Collects.

We do not offer intercessions at Morning Prayer because we say Mass with intercessions every day. Also, we do not use the General Thanksgiving or the Prayer of Chrysostom at Morning Prayer because of time concerns and because we offer the Great Thanksgiving every day at Mass. The General Thanksgiving is used on Saturday evenings when there is no Mass following Evening Prayer.

Morning Prayer concludes with the **Dismissal**: “Let us bless the Lord; Thanks be to God”. This has been the customary way to conclude services for centuries. During Eastertide “Alleluia, alleluia” is added to the dismissal.

One of three Pauline passages of Scripture is added after the dismissal. These are rotated through during the week. It is
customary to make the sign of the cross during this final sentence from Scripture and to bow to those other members of the Body of Christ present at the Office.

**Noonday Prayer**

Noonday Prayer was restored to the Prayer Book in 1979. It is an adapted version of the three little Offices Terce, Sext, and None (the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day or 9AM, 12 Noon, and 3PM, respectively). These Offices were very short and the noonday Office contains the various elements that made them up and presents the basic form of these little Offices with options so that one could conceivably say all three Offices each day.

At Saint Mary’s Noonday Prayer is said Monday through Saturday at Noon. Before Noonday Prayer the *Angelus* (or *Regina Coeli* in Eastertide) is said, led by the Officiant. It is traditional that the *Angelus* (or *Regina Coeli* in Eastertide) be said in the morning, at noon and in the evening. Often, when it is said in the morning, it will be said silently by all so that the first words of the day spoken are those of Psalm 51:16. At Saint Mary’s, for the sake of visitors who may not know what is going on, we refrain from making a spectacle of silent prayer.

After the *Angelus* (or *Regina Coeli* in Eastertide) the officiant will then announce that the service begins on page 103 of the Prayer Book. The service begins with the opening versicle at all Offices (except the first Office in the morning) that has been traditional since at least the sixth century: “O God make speed to save us: O Lord make haste to help us.” These verses are based on Psalm 70:1.

Next follows a selection from the Psalms. The three selections from the Psalms listed are traditional to the three
little Offices. At Saint Mary’s we generally rotate through the Psalms listed. *Gloria Patri* is said by all at the conclusion of the Psalm.

Three short passages from scripture are listed. The length of these is similar to the reading from scripture that would have been read at a Medieval monastic Office. It is easy to see why the reformers felt more scripture at the Office was important.

The option of a reading or meditation is traditional. At Saint Mary’s we follow the tradition of reading a passage from the Early Church Fathers or from a Church Council. These readings are taken from the Office of Readings found in the Latin Liturgy of the Hours. Usually the readings are appropriate for the day and match the basic theme of the Gospel at Mass.

The prayers begin with the *Kyrie eleison* (“Lord have mercy”) which is traditional to the little Offices. This is followed by the **Lord’s Prayer**. Note that at the Noonday Office (and some other services including Compline) the Lord’s Prayer does not contain the doxology. In the 1662 Prayer Book, when the doxology was added to the Lord’s Prayer (due to then current thinking by Biblical scholars on the originality of that doxology), it was for some reason not added to places where the Lord’s Prayer was preceded by the *Kyrie*. The Lord’s Prayer is followed by the **versicle** “Lord, hear our prayer: And let our cry come to you” which is traditional to medieval Offices and has been in all English Prayer Books. This versicle is Psalm 102:1a. One **collect** follows: at the little Offices, one collect was traditional. At Saint Mary’s we rotate through the collects. The services concludes with the traditional **dismissal**.

Noonday Prayer is always followed by Low Mass at 12:15.
Evening Prayer

Evening Prayer is held every day of the week at Saint Mary’s at 6:00 PM on weekdays and at 5:00 PM on Saturday and Sunday. The structure of Evening Prayer is essentially the same as Morning Prayer. On Sundays outside of the summer months Evensong and Benediction are offered at 5:00 PM instead of Evening Prayer and Low Mass. Sunday Evensong is thought to be the second oldest regular gathering of Christians (Sunday morning Mass, or its equivalent, being the oldest).

Before Evening Prayer at Saint Mary’s the Angelus (or Regina Coeli in Eastertide) is said. We then begin on page 117 of the Prayer Book. As at Morning Prayer, we omit the opening Confession and begin immediately with the opening versicle: “O God make speed to save us; O Lord make haste to help us.” These verses are based on Psalm 70:1. The opening versicle from Morning Prayer: “Lord open our lips...” was for some unknown reason inserted into the service beginning with the 1552 Prayer Book. The current Prayer Book has removed that versicle which is both traditional specifically to and logically part of the morning service. At Evening Prayer it is customary to make the sign of the cross at the opening sentences. The Gloria Patri is said, all bowing at the mention of the Trinity, followed by Alleluia.

Then the Phos Hilaron (pronounced fos-hí-lar-on, Greek for “O Gracious Light,”) found on page 118 is said. The officiant begins and the people join in on the second half of the first verse and continue to say the Phos Hilaron in unison. This hymn is an ancient candle lighting hymn sung by Christians at evening services at least as early as Saint Basil in the fourth century and was traditionally sung to a number of different tunes. At Saint Mary’s we say this hymn at said Evening Prayer. On Sundays outside of the summer we sing the hymn; the tune and the translation depend on the season. The Phos
*Hilaron* serves the same purpose as the Invitatory Psalms at Morning Prayer.

The *Psalter* at Evening Prayer is next said. It is said exactly as at Morning Prayer. It is followed by a **reading from the Old Testament**. Which is followed by a canticle, said antiphonally. (For detailed information on the canticles please see above in section on Morning Prayer.) At Saint Mary’s the canticle after the Old Testament lesson is always the **Song of Mary or Magnificat**, found on page 119. The **Magnificat** is the traditional canticle said at Vespers and its use has been retained here. Although the Table on page 144-145 suggests other canticles (those listed in the Morning Prayer service), there is no reason to break with nearly two thousand years of tradition simply for a little variety.

The **Magnificat** is followed by a **reading from the New Testament**. This reading is followed by a canticle, said antiphonally. At Saint Mary’s the **Song of Simeon or Nunc Dimittis**, found on page 120, is always used. The **Nunc Dimittis** is the traditional canticle at Compline. One should note that it is placed in the Compline service as well as in the Evening Prayer service. When Cranmer combined the evening Offices, he kept both the **Magnificat** and **Nunc Dimittis** in their traditional places.

In Anglican tradition both have always been said at Evening Prayer and although the Table on page 144-145 suggests other canticles (those listed in the Morning Prayer service), there is no reason to break with five hundred years of Anglican tradition as well as nearly two thousand years of tradition simply for a little variety. It is customary to make the sign of the cross at the start of all Gospel canticles. *Gloria Patri* is said by all at the conclusion of each canticle.

As at Morning Prayer, the **Apostles Creed** follows after the second canticle, which is followed by the **Lord’s Prayer** and
Suffrages. Again two sets of suffrages are offered. Suffrages A are the same as Suffrages A at Morning Prayer. Suffrages B are from a traditional litany in the evening in the Eastern Church. At Saint Mary’s we always use Suffrages B simply because we use Suffrages A in the morning. Following Western tradition, the name of Saint Mary the Virgin, as well as the name of any saint whose feast it is, is always inserted into the final Suffrage.

The Suffrages are followed by two collects and a prayer for mission. Like Morning Prayer, three collects are traditional at Evening Prayer. Earlier Prayer Books required the Collect of the Day followed by two fixed collects (which are listed as options in our Prayer Book): the Collect for Grace and the Collect for Aid Against Perils. Because there are options listed we do exactly what we do at Morning Prayer. The first collect is always the Collect of the Day. The second collect and the prayer for mission are simply rotated through during the week.

On Saturday evening the General Thanksgiving is normally said. It is not said because throughout the rest of the week the Great Thanksgiving follows Evening Prayer. The Prayer of Saint Chrysostom is generally not used at Saint Mary’s due to time considerations.

The service concludes with a dismissal which is identical to that at Morning Prayer.
Compline & Private Prayer

It is not practical for Saint Mary’s to offer a public service of Compline, so Evening Prayer is the final Office said at the church. The fact that we do not offer all of the Offices is a pointed reminder that not all prayer is public. Our public prayer lives can enrich and strengthen our private prayer lives and vice versa. We are not simply rattling through these prayers so that we can feel confident that we are praying regularly. Central to Anglican spirituality and worship is the involvement and active participation of the people.

One must remember that public prayer is not the only Prayer Christians are called to. We take seriously Jesus’ instruction to pray in secret to the Father. The Daily Office cannot be a complete prayer life, it can however, help to complete a prayer life.

Ritual at the Daily Office at Saint Mary’s

The Church of Saint Mary the Virgin is a Western Church. The Western Church, though in many respects divided, has more in common than it has differences. We are mostly unified in the way we worship. When liturgical reform occurs it is not an isolated event. At the Second Vatican Council the Roman Catholic Church did not change things out of the blue. Many of the changes (vernacular, suppression of secret prayers, inclusion of the laity, etc) were already seen in all Protestant Churches. Likewise, the liturgical reforms seen in most Protestant churches during the second half of the twentieth century were heavily influenced by reforms enacted at the Second Vatican Council.

That Saint Mary’s follows, in general, the modern Roman Rite should come as no surprise – our entire Liturgy has always
been based on the Roman Rite as it has developed. Rather, it is surprising that in the face of so much unified reform many Anglo-Catholics hold on to Roman Catholic and Anglican ritual and customs that reflect a certain period in the church history: periods that were considered in great need of reform by the Roman Catholic Church itself and various Anglican churches themselves, respectively. It is also surprising that so many Christians of other denominations so often remark how similar other churches worship is. Of course it’s similar. The church does not exist in isolation. When one member of the Body of Christ stops speaking Latin, eventually the other members decide that they at least need to learn languages other than Latin.

Ritual and custom at Saint Mary’s are not based on whim. They are conscientiously thought out so as to be in line with what is currently the best thinking on liturgy. For this reason our primary sources are our own Anglican heritage, Western tradition, and current thinking in Anglican and Catholic churches. We do not deviate from the Book of Common Prayer; we also look to the modern Roman Rite for guidance in areas where the Prayer Book does not give detailed direction. Anglo-Catholics have always done this: being fully and truly Anglican while at the same time worshipping Jesus Christ the same way that the majority of Christians in the world worship. The second Vatican council and Prayer Book reform gave Anglo-Catholic Christians two options. The first was to accept that old cobwebs had thankfully been cleared away and the purity and simplicity of the Roman Rite restored for all Western Christians. The second was to reject the reforms as innovations and begin the endless task of curating a Rite that was in essence dead. If one of the primary concerns of Anglo-Catholics is to be in unity with the majority of the Western Church then it seems that the first option is the only way to go. At Saint Mary’s we recognize that the church is not a museum but an active house of worship for the living Body of Christ.
The Roman Rite has always been remarkably simple and to the point. The modern Roman Rite has continued magnificently in this tradition. At first glance the liturgy at Saint Mary’s may seem excessive to some, but if one actually follows the liturgy, it becomes crystal clear that the exact opposite is true. We do not do anything at all without knowing exactly why we are doing it, and we do only what is necessary. Call Saint Mary’s whatever you like; we call it precise, to the point, and fun! What we are about is worshipping our Lord Jesus Christ. We do that using the complete resources of the Western tradition, and we do not bother wasting time and energy on pointless “enrichment”, needless duplication, meaningless show. If you wonder why we do something, please ask.

Below are the customs followed at Saint Mary’s at the Daily Office.

**Bowing:** When we are standing, we bow at the mention of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), at the name of Jesus, at the name of our patron saint Mary, and at the name of any other saints on their feast days. We also bow to each other after every Office. We do not bow when we are seated.

**The sign of the cross:** We make the sign of the cross during the Angelus at the mention of the Passion. We make the sign of the cross during the opening sentences of every Office (at Morning Prayer over our lips), at the beginning of every Gospel Canticle, and at the final sentences of every Office. We do not make the sign of the cross during creeds, at the mention of the resurrection or of the dearly departed: these customs have been suppressed by all Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.

**Antiphonal recitation:** Except in extraordinary circumstances, we recite all scriptural canticles and psalms antiphonally. When reading the Psalter, a pause is observed at every asterisk.
Why pray the Office?

Prayer is the heart of faith. Though we can and do pray anywhere and everywhere, there is a different quality to our prayer when we pray together, our prayers mingling with the prayers of those who have come before us and with those who will come after.

Our Lord Jesus Christ attended the synagogue because regular communal prayer was and is an essential aspect of Jewish life. Saying prayers together, singing or saying psalms, and reading passages from scripture is what Jews and Christians have always done. Scripture, prayer, and worship have always been done together, not in isolated groups but in conjunction and in the tradition of those who came before us. As Christians we can quite literally trace a direct path to those who not only walked and talked with Jesus but prayed with him as well. The Christian community is built up by the study of scripture, by praying together, and by experiencing what it means to be part of the Body of Christ.

A year of the Daily Office guarantees saying the entire Psalter over ten times. A year of the Daily Office guarantees hearing the entire Bible – even the difficult passages we might otherwise avoid. A year of the Daily Office gives us a prayer life rooted in the words of Jesus, fluency in the hymns that our Lord knew and sang, familiarity with the prayers of the saints, and the experience of being part of the Body of Christ as we see faces and hear voices of those we know and those we do not know around us and beside us praying together. It is not difficult to feel the unity of the one Body of Christ when we pray together in ways that Christians have been praying together for two thousand years.
DAILY SERVICE SCHEDULE

Sundays:
Sung Matins: 8:30 AM  
Said Mass: 9:00 AM  
Sung Mass: 10:00 AM  
Solemn Mass: 11:00 AM  
Evensong & Benediction: 5:00 PM

Monday Through Friday:
Morning Prayer: 8:30 AM  
Noonday Office: 12:00 Noon  
Mass: 12:10 PM  
Evening Prayer: 6:00 PM  
Mass: 6:20 PM

Saturdays:
Noonday Office: 12:00 Noon  
Mass: 12:10 PM  
Evening Prayer: 5:00 PM  
Vigil Mass for Sunday: 5:20 PM

SUMMER DAILY SERVICE SCHEDULE

Sundays:
Morning Prayer: 8:30 AM  
Said Mass: 9:00 AM  
Sung Mass: 10:00 AM  
Solemn Mass: 11:00 AM  
Evening Prayer: 5:00 PM  
Mass: 5:20 PM

Monday Through Friday:
Morning Prayer: 8:30 AM  
Noonday Office: 12:00 Noon  
Mass: 12:10 PM  
Evening Prayer: 6:00 PM  
Mass: 6:20 PM

Saturdays:
Noonday Office: 12:00 Noon  
Mass: 12:10 PM  
Evening Prayer: 5:00 PM  
Vigil Mass for Sunday: 5:20 PM