

The Midnight Office of Holy Saturday

The Midnight Office begins between 11.00 and 11.15 at night. At the heart of the Midnight Office on this night is the Canon of Holy Saturday. This is a prayerful reflection on the burial of the Saviour in the tomb. Yet it is filled with hope in Christ's promise of the Resurrection, which forms the culmination of this service.

If the weather is such that the overhead heaters have been switched on, they are switched off at the beginning of this service so that the church may be in darkness. The only lights to be lit are those around the tomb of the Saviour. Hand-held candles are given to all of the people, who stand as they are able.

- Priest: Blessed is our God...
- People: Amen
- Reader: "Glory to Thee", "O Heavenly King...", and the Trisagion Prayers
- Reader: The Call to Prayer
- Psalm 50 (concluding with "Glory...Both now...Alleluia x3")
- The Canon of Holy Saturday

This night is the one occasion in the whole liturgical year outside of Matins that the Canon is called for in its entirety, with each of the biblical canticles (odes) read in full and the troparia sung accordingly with the appointed repetitions. This can be done if desired.

In usual parish practice, however, the canticles are omitted and the troparia are read rather than sung, each one read only once. The refrain is "Glory to Thee, our God; glory to Thee!". The irmos of each ode is, however, sung, and is repeated as a katavasia at the end of each ode. The ikos is read after Ode 6 and the acclamation is sung as usual after the final troparion of Ode 8.

*At the beginning of Ode 9 (or perhaps slightly earlier), the clergy come into the nave and perform the censing of the tomb. During the katavasia at the end of Ode 9, "Do not weep for me, O Mother", the burial shroud is taken solemnly into the altar and laid on the Holy Table. This katavasia must be sung **very** slowly in order to cover this action. The lifting of the shroud from the tomb should ideally coincide with the singing of the words "for I shall arise".*

Once the shroud has been set on the Holy Table, and the Holy Doors and veil have been closed, a server or layperson extinguishes all of the lamps and candles that had been lit around the tomb, and the church is in complete darkness. A penlight or other small lamp may be used by the choir.

- Reader: The Trisagion prayers and "Our Father"
- The Dismissal Troparion: Of the Resurrection, in tone 2
- The Litany of Fervent Supplication *(in its short form)*
- The Dismissal