The Development of the Royal Hours in the Byzantine Rite and their Meaning for Today

Introduction

In the Byzantine tradition, the first, third, sixth, and ninth hours—commonly known as the little hours—are a simple affair. Each hour consists primarily of three unchanging psalms and several fixed prayers, and the hours are normally chanted *recto tono* by a single reader, most often as a preamble or conclusion to another service.[1] There is no singing, no scriptural readings (apart from psalmody), little in the way of clerical participation,[2] and the assembly participates simply by listening.

Three times a year, however, on the eves of Christmas and Theophany, and on Great and Holy Friday,[3] the *Royal* or *Great Hours* are celebrated.[4] At this office the four little hours are cele-

1 The full text of the little hours of the Byzantine rite can be found in several English translations, including Joseph Raya and José de Vinck, eds., *Byzantine Daily Worship* (Allendale, NJ: Alleluia Press, 1969); Isabel F. Hapgood, ed. and trans., *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church*, 6th ed. (Englewood, NJ: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, 1983); *The Unabbreviated Horologion, or Book of the Hours* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997); *The Great Horologion, or Book of Hours* (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1997); *The Horologion, or Book of the Hours* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2000); and *The Horologion* (Boston: Sophia Press, 2009).

2 The limited role of ordained clergy in the little hours is evident in the few pages that cover these services in liturgical books used by the clergy. For example, in the *Hieratikon: Office Book for Priest and Deacon*, ed. Hierodeacon Herman and Vitaly Permiakov (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Monastery Press, 2014), only sixteen pages (out of 322) cover the priest's role in the little hours, and the majority of these pages actually treat the office of typica and the different order of the little hours during Great Lent and other penitential periods.

3 In the 16th century, Great Hours were written by the Protopriest Nicholas Malaxos for the feast of Pentecost. These Μεγάλαι Ὧραι τῆς Παραμονῆς τῆς Ἁγίας Πεντηκοστῆς, which appeared in published Pentecostaria of 1552 and 1579, were assigned to the Friday before Pentecost. However, they do not exist in the current texts of the Orthodox or Byzantine Catholic Churches. Carolina Lutzka, *Die Kleinen Horen des byzantinischen Stundengebetes und ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung,* Forum Orthodoxe Theologie 7 (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010), 113

4 For an English text of the Royal Hours on the eve of Christmas and Theophany, see Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, trans., *The Festal Menaion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969) 221-51 and 314-36; for the Royal Hours on Great and Holy Friday, see idem., *The Lenten Triodion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 600-11. The different terminology for these services ("Great" vs. "Royal"), reflects a difference between

brated together as a single unit. Moreover, the structure and content of each hour is significantly modified: two psalms from each hour are replaced by two different psalms, selected for their relation to the occasion; three *stichera* or *troparia* are sung, inserted following the troparion and theotokion; and a prokeimenon, Old Testament reading, Epistle, and Gospel reading are inserted into each hour. The Royal Hours also involve ritual actions: incensations, hymnody, the ministry of a deacon, and the vestments of the priest all contribute to the solemnity of the office.

What is the origin of this infrequent, and theologically rich, service? And what can the migrations and transformations of the Great Hours can tell us about the enrichment of one liturgical tradition by another (in this case, that of Byzantium by the liturgy of Jerusalem)? Briefly, the historical origins of the Royal Hours are as follows: the readings and hymnody of the Royal Hours of Great and Holy Friday come from fourth century Jerusalem, and are described by Egeria and the Armenian and Georgian lectionaries. Subsequently, these readings and hymns were incorporated into the structure of the Little Hours, likely in the ninth or tenth centuries. A third development saw the spread of this office to Constantinople, where the number of readings was reduced and the Great Hours of Christmas and Theophany were developed, modelled after those of Good Friday. Finally, the introduction of special psalmody for the Great/Royal Hours, replacing most of the ordinary psalms of the little hours, brought this process of evolution to a conclusion. As for liturgical cross pollination, if the adage that "more is better" trumps other considerations, than such enhancement is a given. But I want to suggest, somewhat tentatively, that the transfer of the Royal or Great Hours is a story not only of enrichment, but also of marginalization, of the migration of an office

medieval Byzantine and modern Greek liturgical books (the later continue to use the designation "Great," as in "Ἀκολουθία τῶν Μεγάλων Ὡρῶν"), and liturgical books in Church Slavonic, where the appellation "Royal" appears for the first time. The designation of this service with the term "Royal" may arise from the presence of prayers and a *polychronion* for the civil authorities, as is evident from several medieval and early modern manuscripts and printed liturgical books. See Lutzka, *Horen*, 112-3, and Getcha, *Typikon*, 131.

from the center of one liturgical family to the periphery of another.

Historical Origins of the Royal/Great Hours

The earliest evidence for what eventually becomes the Great Hours is found in the late-fourth century diary of Egeria, the Spanish nun and pilgrim to Jerusalem, in her description of the liturgy of Good Friday. According to Egeria, the daytime services of Good Friday began in the early morning with the veneration of the cross; this was followed by an office celebrated from noon until three o'clock. Egeria's description of this office, which I will call the "Jerusalem Passion Service," follows below:

> [T]he whole time between midday and three o'clock is taken up with readings. They are all about the things Jesus suffered: first the psalms on this subject, then the Apostles (the Epistles or Acts) which concern it, then passages from the Gospels. They then read the prophecies about what the Lord would suffer, and the Gospels about what he did suffer. And in this way they continue the readings and hymns from midday till three o'clock, demonstrating to all the people by the testimony of the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles that the Lord actually suffered everything the prophets had foretold…and between all the readings are prayers, all of them appropriate to the day.[5]

What Egeria is here describing is the main Good Friday service in Jerusalem: she is impressed by the large number of people in attendance, claiming "there is not even room to open a door, the place is so crammed with people." (37.4-5) While her description is brief, it contains the nucleus of subsequent versions of the "Jerusalem Passion Service": readings from the psalms, prophets, Epistles,[6] and

5 Egeria, *Itinerarium* 37.5; English translation from John Wilkinson, ed. and trans., *Egeria's Travels: Newly Translated with Supporting Documents and Notes* (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips, 2002), 1.

6 It is true that while Egeria mentions the Acts, "legitur et de apostolo siue de epistolis apostolorum uel de *actionibus*, ubicumque de passion Domini dixerunt" (*Iter.*, 37.5), the Armenian and Georgian lectionaries offer no readings from this book. Pierre

Gospels, along with hymns and prayers, "appropriate to the day." Less than a century after Egeria's account, rubrics for this Jerusalem Passion Service appear in the Armenian Lectionary, a group of lectionary manuscripts that attest to the liturgical practice of Jerusalem in the first half of the fifth century.[7] The service consists of a lengthy series of readings and prayers divided into eight units, each comprising a psalm with an antiphon repeated as a refrain, a reading from the prophets, an epistle, and a concluding prayer recited while kneeling; in the last four cycles, a passage from one of the Gospels is added before the concluding prayer.[8] Here we see for the first time the readings that make up the "Jerusalem Passion Service," and it is not unlikely that some of these pericopes were already in use in Egeria's time. The readings provided in the Armenian Lectionary, given in the table below, will remain remarkably consistent in the subsequent history of this office.

Readings of the "Jerusalem Passion Service" in the Armenian Lectionary[9]

	Psalm and Antiphon	Old Testament Reading	Epistle	Gospel
First Set	Ps. 34, Ant. 34:11	Zech. 11:11-14	Gal. 6:14-18	*No gospel reading during the first four sets*
Second Set	Ps. 37, Ant. 37:18	Isa. 3:9b-15	Phil. 2:5-11	

Maravel, trans., and ed., Égérie*: Journal de Voyage (Itinéraire)*, Sources Chrétiennes 296 (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 286.

7 S. Janeras, *Le Vendredi-Saint dans la Tradition Liturgique Byzantine: Structure et Histoire de ses offices*, Studia Anselmiana 99/Analecta Liturgica 13 (Rome: Saint Anselmo, 1988), 36.

8 The text is available in Armenian with a French translation: Athanase Renoux, trans., *Le Codex Arménien Jérusalem 121*, vol. 2, *Édition Comparée de Texte et de Deux Autres Manuscrits,* Patrologia Orientalis XXXVI, 2, No. 168., (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1971), 280-293.

9 Renoux, *Codex Arménien*, 2:280-293; cf. Janeras, *Vendredi-Saint,* 191-192.

Third Set	Ps. 40, Ant. 40:7b	Isa. 50:4-9	Rom. 5:6-11	
Fourth Set	Ps. 21, Ant. 21:9	Amos 8:9-12	1 Cor. 1:18-31	
Fifth Set	Ps. 30, Ant. 30:6	Isa. 52:13-53:12	Heb. 2:11-18	Matt. 27:1-56 (Matt. 27:3-56)[10]
Sixth Set	Ps. 68, Ant. 68:22	Isa. 63:1-6	Heb. 9:11-28	Mark 15:1-41 (Mark 15:16-41)
Seventh Set	Ps. 87, Ant. 87:5b-6	Jer. 11:18-20	Heb. 10:19-31	Luke 22:66-23:49 (Luke 23:32-49)
Eighth Set	Ps. 101, Ant. 101:2	Zech. 14:5-11	1 Tim. 6:13-16	John 19:16b-37 (John 19:25-37)

The third stage of development of the noon-to-three-PM Jerusalem Passion Service is found in the manuscripts collectively known as the Georgian Lectionary, which give evidence for liturgy in Jerusalem between the fifth and eighth centuries.[11] The readings found in the Georgian Lectionary are almost identical with those in the Armenian Lectionary, although with some differences in

10 The four Gospel pericopes in brackets are those of Manuscript "P;" of the three manuscripts Renoux used to create the critical edition of the Armenian Lectionary, "P" tends to provide shorter pericopes.

11 Janeras, *Vendredi-Saint,* 37. Janeras expresses some skepticism about the reliability of the Georgian Lectionary. However, the text of the critical edition was established with the aid of four manuscripts (from the tenth and eleventh centuries) and two fragments (from the beginning of the seventh century and the eighth century), and Janeras appears alone among scholars of Jerusalem liturgy in his doubts. For the critical text and Latin translation, see Michel Tarchnischvili, ed., *Le Grande Lectionnaire de L'Église de Jérusalem: (V^e^-VIII^e^ Siècle)*, vol. 1 and 2 (Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1959 and 1960).

length.[12] What is new in the Georgian lectionary is the provision of twelve *troparia* or *stichera*,[13] that are sung during the service.[14] These troparia quickly came to be seen as a defining element of the Passion Service, and various manuscripts mention them in the title for the service; they are still used in the Great Hours of Good Friday, and, as we shall see, similar sets of troparia/stichera were eventually composed for the Great/Royal Hours of Christmas and Theophany.[15]

By the tenth century, we arrive at our fourth stage of development, in the 'Anastasis Typicon': here, the noon-to-three PM service has been divided into four parts, with each part inserted into one of the four Little Hours.[16] In this new format, each hour follows the same structure: a single psalm from the ordinary of the hour is followed by three troparia and four readings from the Armenian-Georgian lectionaries, followed by a Gospel from the same collection. After this, the ordinary of the hour is resumed.[17] However, the hours appear to be celebrated consecutively rather than separately, at the times their names would imply,[18] and this is the model eventually adopted in the *textus receptus* of the Byzantine rite. This joining together of the hours may have arisen because of a desire to maintain the unity of the Passion Service, despite the fact that it was now spread over four theoretically independent ἀκολουθία.

For the next stage of development of the Royal Hours, we turn from Jerusalem to Constantinople, where the Passion Service

12 Janeras *Vendredi-Saint,* 192-193 and 200.

13 These are called *ude* or *trupayune* in the later Syriac texts, Janeras, *Vendredi-Saint,* 235.

14 Tarchnischvili, *Le Grande Lectionnaire*, 1:96-104.

15 Note that their sequence in the Georgian lectionary is quite different from that in the textus receptus of the Byzantine Triodion. Tarchnischvili, *Le Grande Lectionnaire*, 2:109-114.

16 Gabriel Bertoniere, *The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church* (Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute, 1972), 17. On this point, Bertoniere is following, R. Zerfass, *Die Schriftlesung im Kathedraloffizium Jerusalems* Liturgiewissenshaftliche Quellen und Forshungen 48 (Münster, 1968), 63-83.

17 A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, "Τυπικὸν τῆς ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις Ἐκκλησίας: (Cod. XLIII S. Crucis)," in *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας*, vol. 2 (1894: repr., Brussels: Culture and Civilization, 1963), 154-155. This sticheron, in Tone 5, is found in the textus receptus as the *doxasticon* of the Aposticha at Tuesday Evening Vespers during the fourth week of Lent.

18 Janeras, *Vendredi-Saint,* 226-227. Several texts give rubrics suggesting that the hours are served together, not to be split up. Cf. Arranz, *Le Typicon,* 238, 240.

is found included in *The Synaxarion of the Evergetis Monastery*, dated to the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century.[19] In this *Typikon,* the entire Passion Service is incorporated as a single unit into the Third Hour:[20] after the three ordinary psalms of the hour, three troparia from the Passion Service are sung, followed by a deacon's synapte, a prokeimenon, and three readings (a Prophecy, an Epistle, and a Gospel).[21] This pattern is repeated four times, so that all twelve troparia are sung in four sets, followed each time by three readings, after which the service concludes with the remaining portions of the Third Hour.[22]

Several issues in the Evergetis Typikon are worth noting. First, the number of prophecies and epistles has been reduced from eight to four, an abbreviation that will continue in subsequent versions of the Great/Royal Hours. Second, the whole passion service is incorporated into a single hour, rather than spread over all four hours; yet this change does not stand the test of time, and even within the Evergetis Typikon rubrics and titles hint at the spread of these texts over all four Little Hours.[23] Thirdly, we

19 John Thomas, Angela Constantinides Hero, and Giles Constable, eds., *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 454.

20 Lutzka, *Horen,* 103. In fact, the troparia and readings of the Passion Service were incorporated into the Studite liturgy in Constantinople in another place and manner as well; a "service of the twelve troparia of the holy sufferings," was celebrated in the Studite tradition on Holy Tuesday, at the tenth hour of the day. Job Getcha, *The Typikon Decoded: An Explanation of Byzantine Liturgical Practice*, trans. Paul Meyendorff (Yonkers, New York: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 219. Getcha thus suggests that the Passion Service continued to exist independently of the Little Hours in some parts of the Byzantine world until the spread of the Sabaitic Typikon in the fourteenth century, Getcha, *Typikon*, 221.

21 All of these readings are now found in the *textus receptus* of the First Royal Hour.

22 Robert H. Jordan, trans., *The Synaxarion of the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis: March – August; The Moveable Cycle,* (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 2005), 493. The Ninth Hour is served later in the day.

23 For example, the gospel readings from Mark and Luke on Great and Holy Friday are identified as those of "the Third Hour" and "of the Sixth Hour" respectively, while the first group of three troparia of the same day is referred to as "the three of the First Hour." Similarly, on December 24 the hymns are referred to as "the troparia of the First Hour, the Third, the Sixth, and the Ninth together." It is clear that while the editor of the Evergetis Typikon chose to incorporate the troparia, prokeimena, and readings of the Jerusalem Passion Service into the Third Hour alone, he was aware that, in other

see here the first evidence for the celebration of the Great Hours on the eves of Christmas and Theophany:[24] these services have no antecedent in the texts from Palestine, but they are clearly modelled on the Jerusalem Passion service in its abbreviated form – twelve troparia and four sets of readings, inserted into the Third Hour.[25] Finally, the Evergetis Typikon gives several indications of the solemnity of the Great Hours: the rubrics indicate that the Third Hour is served inside the nave of the Church, rather than in the narthex where the little hours were often recited,[26] and the priest and deacon are "robed" and candles are lit "at the customary holy icons," indicating a greater degree of ritual than normal.[27] The role of the deacon is also outlined in each of the services: besides commanding attention before the readings, he intones four small litanies, and an ektene after the final Gospel.[28] The final stage of development of the Great or Royal hours can be found in the *Typikon of the Monastery of the Holy Savior in Messina*, from twelfth century Sicily.[29] Here, the hours for Great Friday and the eves of Christmas and Theophany are so close to those found in the *textus receptus* that one can speak about the modern version of the Great Hours without any anachronism. The Great Hours in the Mesinna Typikon follow the pattern of the Evergetis Typikon – a unit of three troparia, a prokeimenon, and three readings

places, these texts had already been placed into the context of all four Little Hours. See Jordan, *Synaxarion – Moveable Cycle,* 491, 493; idem., *The Synaxarion of the Monastery of the Theotokos Evergetis: September – February* (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 2000), 321.

24 These two services are identifiably the same as the Royal Hours of the *textus receptus*, albeit with variations in the order of the troparia and in selection of the readings (especially the prophetic texts).

25 Lutzka, *Horen,* 99, 107.

26 Jordan, *Synaxarion – Moveable Cycle,* 488; Jordan, *Synaxarion – September,* 322.

27 Jordan, *Synaxarion – September,* 323, 407. However, there is no corresponding rubric in the text of the service for Great Friday, perhaps simply because it was overlooked by the editor of the Typikon, or because the Good Friday service had less solemnity.

28 "And after the end of the gospel, an ektene takes place during which, as is customary, we only remember the kathegoumenos with all the brotherhood and our fathers who have died before us." Jordan, *Synaxarion – September,* 329.

29 Miguel Arranz, S.J., ed., *Le Typicon Du Monastère du Saint-Sauveur à Messine: Codex Messinensis Gr. 115; A.D. 1131,* Orientalia Christiana Analecta 185 (Pontifical Oriental Institute: Rome, 1969), xviii-xx.

– but this time inserted into the context of all four little hours.

The most important development in the Messina Typikon is that unique psalmody is now assigned to each hour: for example, while the First Hour normally includes psalms 5, 89, and 100, at the First Royal Hour on Good Friday, psalms 89 and 100 are replaced by psalms 2 and 40, chosen to commemorate the Passion. Unique psalmody is also assigned to the Great Hours of Christmas and Theophany, and this incorporation of unique psalmody will continue in the *textus receptus*. The Messina Typikon is also important as the last of our sources that calls for diaconal litanies at each hour. This is consistent with the role of the deacon in the Armenian and Georgian lectionaries, and in the Evergetis Typikon. Eventually, however, these litanies will disappear; in the *textus receptus* the deacon's ministry has been reduced to exclamations prior to the readings and performing, or assisting the priest with, incensations.

Liturgical Migration and Marginalization

Having briefly surveyed some of the important highlights in the long history of the Great or Royal Hours, it may be helpful, in considering the movement of liturgical units from one tradition to another, to look at the significance (or perhaps insignificance) of the Royal Hours for Byzantine Christians today. After all, the Royal Hours are often left uncelebrated in parishes of the Byzantine rite, whether Orthodox or Catholic, and when they are celebrated, they are rarely as well attended as the other services of Christmas, Theophany, and Great and Holy Friday. Indeed, they are often served in a perfunctory manner. I once attended the Royal Hours of Christmas at a Russian Orthodox Church, where the service was performed almost entirely by a single reader who chanted all four hours *recto tono*—despite the abundant hymnody—apart from the final troparion at the Ninth Hour. While the priest was vested in phelonion, and performed the incensations and Gospel readings, the hasty way in which the psalms and readings were recited, the absence of a homily, and the fact that the Royal Hours were immediately followed by the Vesperal Liturgy gave the impression that this service

was peripheral, secondary, and inconsequential, especially when compared with the solemn Vigil celebrated later on Christmas eve.

Yet, as I hope this paper has shown, celebrating the Royal Hours in such a manner is far removed from the manner in which they would originally have been observed. The Great Hours find their origin in what was very likely the main service of Great and Holy Friday in Jerusalem, timed precisely to commemorate the hours of Christ's passion and death, and drawing large crowds who, according to Egeria, were deeply moved by the readings and hymns. It is difficult to deny the evidence from Egeria and the Armenian and Georgian lectionaries that the noon-to-three-o'clock Passion Service was the main daytime commemoration of Good Friday in Jerusalem for much of the first millennium.

When the Noon Passion Service of Jerusalem migrated into the Byzantine rite and was gradually transformed into the offices of the Great Hours for Christmas, Theophany, and Great and Holy Friday, it nonetheless failed to capture the imagination of the clergy and faithful in its new contexts, as it had during the first millennium in Jerusalem. Having been the primary office of Great Friday in the local church of Jerusalem, it was transformed into a secondary and even somewhat marginal office of the developing Byzantine rite. In the case of Great Friday, this probably had to do with the existence of other services, indigenous to the rite of Constantinople, that had already come to define the liturgical commemoration of Christ's Passion. Another factor may be the development towards the end of the Middle Ages of processions and other dramatic elements that eventually accompanied the Vespers and Matins services of Holy Week; in contrast to these services, the Royal Hours appear sober, and perhaps even unexciting. The gradual loss of the litanies—perhaps due to monastic influence, which sometimes downgrades the ministry of the deacon—also led to a decrease in the active participation of the assembly. Similarly, the shift of the Great Hours away from the hours of the Passion (noon until three PM, following the Matthean chronology) and into the morning, especially on Good Friday, is another factor in their marginalization. Yet the main factor may have simply been over-saturation:

the liturgy in Constantinople and its peripheries already had a full array of liturgical rites for Holy Week, Christmas, and Theophany, and while the ever-adapting Byzantine rite could easily accommodate the Great Hours, it was less well-equipped to give this office the prominent place that it had enjoyed in Jerusalem. The Great Hours of Christmas and Theophany suffered a similar fate, eventually being served in a routine manner in anticipation of the more popular Divine Liturgies, Vigils, and the Great Blessing of Water.

However, this marginalization need not define the Royal Hours today and in the future. These services provide a comprehensive scriptural overview of their respective commemorations: the incarnation, the baptism in the Jordan, and salvation through the cross of Christ. The purpose of the series of readings in each Hour, which juxtaposes passages from the Old Testament with those from the New, is to show how the texts of the old covenant are fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the author of the new covenant. This is a fundamental point for Christian liturgy, which seeks to offer praise and thanksgiving to God the Father for his salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Royal Hours include not only scriptural readings that testify to God's saving activity in human history, but also hymns that glorify God for that saving action and request that its reality be manifest in the life of the Church and the individual worshipper today. The Royal Hours may lack some of the more dramatic and stimulating elements of other divine services. Yet their sober and balanced use of psalms, hymns, and readings from scripture can serve as a helpful and much-needed counterbalance to contemporary popular approaches to the better-known services of Christmas, Theophany, and Great Friday, where a sober yet joyful response to the mystery being commemorated can sometimes be obscured by dramatic processions, elaborate singing, and sentimental piety. This is especially problematic when such rites are interpreted primarily through the lens of memorial of past events rather than anamnesis of the Church's present salvation.

What can be done so that this wealth of scriptural and poetic texts find a more fitting place in the array of Byzantine liturgical

services? Despite a history of being moved to the periphery, there is reason to hope. I have witnessed the Royal Hours being celebrated in parishes with significant attendance by the faithful, even if the numbers are lower than at other services. One key element appears to be the celebration of the Great Hours as a discrete service, rather than as a preamble for a Vesperal Liturgy or the Vespers of Great and Holy Friday. When the Royal Hours are served in the morning and the subsequent Vespers is served in the mid or late afternoon, both services have an opportunity to attract the faithful on their own merits, but also because the other service may take place at a time inopportune for individual worshippers. Likewise, the Great Hours served on their own provide more opportunities for a homily explaining one or more of the psalms, readings, or hymns of the service. Indeed, the great advantage of celebrating the Royal Hours apart from the subsequent vespers or vesperal liturgy is that preaching can more easily center on the psalms and readings, rather than on other rites such as the procession with the shroud on Great Friday or the Great Blessing of Waters on Theophany, which naturally call for a mystagogy in the preaching of the service.

If on Christmas and Theophany eves it is impossible to serve the Vesperal Liturgy in the afternoon, then celebrating the Royal Hours on the evenings of December 23 or January 4 would allow for the service to stand on its own and better nourish the faithful, rather than be overshadowed by another office. Some time between services also grants some time for rest for the part of clergy and chanters, who may otherwise be tempted to rush through or even omit a service like the Royal Hours. The Great or Royal Hours represent one of the richest genres of services in the Byzantine liturgical year; in an age when Christians are increasingly curious, and skeptical, about the foundations of their faith in the Scriptures, the renewal of these services would provide a much needed context for the proclamation and explanation of God's words about his work of salvation within the liturgy. through or even omit a service like the Royal Hours. The Great or Royal Hours represent one of the richest genres of services in the Byzantine liturgical year; in an age when Christians are in-

creasingly curious, and skeptical, about the foundations of their faith in the Scriptures, the renewal of these services would provide a much needed context for the proclamation and explanation of God's words about his work of salvation within the liturgy.

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