



# AGPEYA

Meaning

History and Patristics

Purpose of each hour

Church Calendar (Feasts and Fasts)

Why use it (educational and spiritual)

15<sup>th</sup> century Agpeya (above picture)

<https://copticliterature.wordpress.com/2016/04/02/the-coptic-agpiya-prayer-book-from-around-the-15th-century-at-the-portland-state-university-oregon/>

# MEANING

- Agpeya is an Arabic corruption of the Coptic “ti agp” ⲧⲁⲥⲡ (the hour)
- In Greek: Horologion ὥρολόγιον (hora=hour; logion=oracle, scripture, word, book)
- Western translation: “Canonical Hours” or “Book of the Hours” or “Liturgy of the Hours”

# HISTORY

- Jewish practice:
  - 4 “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! [b]  
5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 “And  
these words which I command you today shall be in your  
heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children,  
and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when  
you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you  
rise up. (Deut 6)
  - Mishnah and Letter to Aristaeus (2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC) –  
Shema twice a day (also practiced in Qumran)
  - Sacrifice in the temple was twice a day (Ex. 29:38-42;  
Num 28:1-15)

# HISTORY

- Jewish practice:
  - Other evidence shows 3x/day (morning, afternoon/noon, evening)
  - “**Evening and morning and at noon** I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice. He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me” (Ps. 55:17-18)
  - Peter and John go up to the Temple “at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour” (Acts 3:1)
  - Cornelius the centurion kept the ninth hour in his house (Acts 10:3, 30) (Gentile imitating the Jews?)
  - Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, **he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.** (Daniel 6:10)
  - Evidence of Alexandrian Jews as well for 3x/day from Philo, 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Enoch, Epiphanius, Clement, and Origen



# HISTORY

- First Century
  - Peter, John, and Cornelius praying the ninth hour; Peter also prayed the sixth hour (Acts 10:9)
  - Didache 8 commands the Christians to fast Wednesdays and Fridays and to pray the Lord's Prayer 3x/day, made as a clear indication to be contrary to the Jewish practice
  - St. Clement of Rome taught that we pray with oblations and liturgies not disorderly, but at set times and hours (40), and was the first to symbolize the prayer in the morning as remembering the resurrection and prayer in the night as remembering the repose

# HISTORY

- Third Century:
  - St. Clement of Alexandria taught that set hours of the day are not merely set hours, but an injunction to pray unceasingly (1 Thes. 5:17)
  - Origen mentions prayer in the third, sixth, and ninth hours, in addition to the morning and evening. He also stressed the injunction to pray unceasingly, that your whole life should be a living and breathing prayer even when you do your job
    - Those who cannot pray at least 3x/day cannot be called a “Christian”
  - St. Cyprian of Carthage highlights the purpose of each hour of prayer (prayer at 5x/day; same with Tertullian)
  - St. Hippolytus talks about prayer at 6x/day (adding midnight) in the “Apostolic Tradition”
  - Midnight vigil was held to prepare for the Parousia

# HISTORY

- Post-Constantinian Church (Cathedral rites)
  - After St. Constantine, freedom in the churches to more officially develop the prayer service of hours, and to develop some with raising of incense
  - By that time various churches had various traditions in the way they practiced the hours
  - Jerusalem, Antiochian, and Egyptian practices from the diary of the pilgrimage of Egeria (late fourth century)
- Coptic Monastic offices:
  - Scetis: twice daily public prayers, and twice daily private prayers, with 12 psalms each and Scripture readings (described by St. John Cassian)
  - Pakhomian system was similar, but as public as much as they can (sayings of the desert fathers)
- Today's Coptic Agpeya practice can be traced back in its complete form, including Midnight and Veil prayers to the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Abu'l-Barakat ibn Kabar

# GENERAL STRUCTURE

- Fixed Initial Prayers (Intruductory Doxology, Lord's Prayer, Thanksgiving Prayer, Psalm 50 LXX/51)
- 12 Psalms (ideally)
- Gospel Lesson
- Troparia (Litanies)
- Trisagion and Lord's Prayer
- Hail to you/Introduction to the Creed/the Creed
- Kyrie Elayson (41 times)
- Holy, Holy, Holy and Lord's Prayer
- Dismissal Prayer of Absolution
- Standard Conclusion to every hour



# DE VIRGINITATE

- **Unknown authorship (4<sup>th</sup> Century): St. Athanasius? Cappadocian father?**
- Night and day let not the word of God be absent from your mouth. Let your work always be meditation on the sacred Scriptures. Have a Psalter and learn the psalms.
- 1. Let the rising sun see the book in your hands
- 3. and after the third hour perform a synaxis, because at this hour the wood of the cross was prepared.
- 6. At the sixth hour likewise make your prayers, with psalms, weeping, and petition, because at this hour the Son of God hung on the cross.
- 9. At the ninth hour again in hymns and praises, confessing your sins with tears, supplicate God, because at that hour the Lord hanging on the cross gave up the spirit. . . .
- 12. If you come in at the twelfth hour, celebrate a greater and longer synaxis with your sister virgins. If you do not have a companion, celebrate it alone, for God is present and listening. . . .

# DE VIRGINITATE

- Midnight: Rise at midnight and hymn the Lord your God, for at that hour our Lord rose from the dead and hymned the Father; therefore at that hour we were commanded to hymn God. Having risen, first say this verse: 'At midnight I rose to praise you because of your righteous ordinances', and pray and begin to say the fiftieth psalm [Ps. 51] until you complete it, and let these things remain fixed for you every day.
- Say as many psalms as you can say standing, and after each psalm let there be a prayer and genuflection, confessing your sins with tears to the Lord and asking him to forgive you. After three psalms say the Alleluia. If there are virgins with you, let them also sing psalms and perform prayers one by one.
- Sunset: Towards dawn say this psalm, 'O God, my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you', and
- at sunrise, 'Bless the Lord, all works of the Lord', and 'Glory to God in the highest, and in earth peace, goodwill to men. We praise you, we bless you, we worship you', and the rest.'

# “SEVEN TIMES”

- Seven times a day I  
praise You because of  
Your righteous  
judgment (Psalm  
119:164)

# “SEVEN TIMES”

- Pray unceasingly  
(1 Thes. 5:17)



# Πρωληλ ἠξανατοοτι

- “The Morning Prayers” aka Prime aka Matins aka “Orthros” (6AM)
- Theme: Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; it’s a new day and a new life
- Variations
  - Before the Psalms:
    - Come let us kneel down
    - Pauline (Eph. 4:1-5)
    - Faith of the Church
  - 19 Psalms (not 12)
    - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 24, 26, 62, 66, 69, 112, 142
  - John 1:1-17 (In the beginning was the Word)
  - Gloria prayed between the Troparia and Trisagion
  - Two Absolutions

# Πῶς ληλ ἵταχπ ᾗτ (you)

- “The Prayer of Third Hour” aka Terce (9AM)
- Theme:
  - Ascension to the Heavens (Ps. 23) and descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples (Prayer to the Holy Spirit)
  - The hour which our Lord was condemned (this is the moment of the need of most comfort from the Spirit)
  - Renew the Spirit within us! Make us ready!
- Psalms 19, 22, 23, 25, 28, 29, 33, 40, 42, 44, 45, 46
- John 14:26 – 15:4 (But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit)

# Πρώτη ἡμέρα ἔ (coor)

- “The Prayer of the Sixth Hour” aka Sext (Noon)
- Theme
  - The Crucifixion of our Lord
  - The Cross Saves; Blessed are you when you suffer and persecuted!
- Psalms 53, 56, 60, 62, 66, 69, 83, 84, 85, 86, 90, 92
- Matthew 5:1-16 (the Beatitudes)

# Πρωληλ ἡτε ταχπ ἑ† (ψ††)

- “The Prayer of the Ninth Hour” aka None (3PM)
- Theme:
  - The death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross
  - The acceptance of Demas, the crucified right hand thief, the “left-over” fragment for salvation
  - He tasted death that we may taste life; miracle of the loaves and fish and the Eucharist
- Psalms 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 109, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115
- Luke 9:10-17 (Multiplication of Loaves and Fish)



# Πρωληλ ἡ̅τε ἀχπια̅ πχιηζω̅τπ

- “The Prayer of the eleventh (ἡ̅ = ἡ̅τ ὀ̅τ̅αι) hour, the passing sunset” aka vespers (Sunset)
- Theme:
  - Christ taken down from the Cross and prepared for burial (anointed with spices and wrapped in linen)
  - Salvation at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour (it’s never too late to repent)
  - Time of prayer after a day’s work (Christ went to rest but Simon followed him to have his mother-in-law healed; work is not done)
- Psalms 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128
- Luke 4:38-41 (“at sunset” healing of diseases and demon-possession; Simon’s mother-in-law)

# Πῶληλ ἦτε πιζινῶ

- “The Prayer of the Sleep/Retire/Repose” aka Compline (Bedtime)
- Theme
  - Christ is entombed
  - Judgment Day; repent now for after death you cannot repent; repent now before it's too late
- Psalms 129, 131, 132, 133, 136, 137, 140, 141, 145, 146, 147
- Luke 2:25-32 (Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace...)
- “Graciously accord O Lord to keep us this night without sin...” between the Troparia and Trisagion

# Πρώτη ἡ ἑξήκωτο ἡμέρα

- “The Prayers of the Middle/Half of the Night”
  - πρῶτη ἡμέρα (First Watch)
  - δευτέρα ἡμέρα (Second Watch)
  - τρίτη ἡμέρα (Third Watch)
- Theme:
  - Gethsemane prayers of Christ (3 watches)
  - Be Watchful for the Advent of Christ’s Resurrection and Second Coming
  - Be Watchful for your soul
- Arise O children of the Light!

# Πρώτη ἡ ἑφτά ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν

(continued)

- **First Watch** (Psalms [3, 6, 12, 69, 85, 90, 116, 117, 118 – 22 parts], Matthew 25:1-13 [five wise and five foolish virgins], Troparia, Kyrie Elayson 41 times, Holy Holy Holy, Lord's Prayer
- **Second Watch** (10 Psalms [119-128], Luke 7:36-50 [repentance of the sinful woman at Simon's house washing Christ's feet] Troparia, Kyrie Elayson 41 times, Holy Holy Holy, Lord's Prayer
- **Third Watch** (12 Psalms [129-133, 136, 137, 140, 141, 145, 146, 147], Luke 12:32-46 [gird yourself; parable of the faithful servant] Troparia, Kyrie Elayson 41 times, Holy Holy Holy, Lord's Prayer
- Luke 2:29-32 (Lord now you are letting your servant depart in peace...), Introduction to the Creed, the Creed, Kyrie Elayson 41 times, Holy Holy Holy, Lord's Prayer, Absolution, Conclusion



# Πρωληλ ἡσυχία

- “The Prayer of the Veil” (between Compline and Midnight prayers)
- Prayed daily by monks and clergy for private meditation and self-examination
  - Christ will guide you through raging storms of battles against evil
  - Do not seek earthly crowns
  - Stay steadfast in repentance
  - Give thanks to the Lord; Eucharist
- 28 Psalms (4, 6, 12, 15, 24, 26, 55, 69, 72, 79, 84, 85, 90, 96, 109, 114, 115, 120, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 136, 140, 145) + Parts 20, 21, and 22 and Psalm 118
- John 6:15-23
  - Jesus flees from a crowd that wanted to enthrone Him
  - Jesus appears to the disciples in the middle of the raging sea and when the disciples received Him the ship arrived
  - People saw the disciples on shore alone without Jesus
  - Other boats came after the Lord had given thanks, after eating bread

# CHURCH CALENDAR MODIFICATIONS

- Matins and Vespers have Liturgical significance with raising of incense before any liturgy
- Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist
  - The prosthora must be prepared before the Psalms in the Agpeya are prayed since the Psalms prophecy about the Incarnation of the Lord for our salvation
  - Saturdays, Sundays, and non-fasting days, Third and Sixth Hours are prayed after Matins
    - Any major, minor, or Cross feasts which fall on a Wednesday, Friday, or any other Fast, only the Third and Sixth Hours are prayed as well
  - Fasting days except Great Lent and Jonah's Fast, add the Ninth Hour
  - Great Lent and Jonah's Fast, add the Ninth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Hours
    - In monasteries, add the Veil Psalms
  - Nativity, Theophany, and Resurrection Feasts: no Agpeya hour is prayed because we celebrate these feasts in the evening

# CHURCH CALENDAR MODIFICATIONS

- Holy Week (Pascha)
  - No Agpeya prayers to be prayed; only those provided in the rubrics of the Pascha week; Agpeya prayers commence on Resurrection Sunday
- Holy 50 days
  - No prostrations are allowed while praying the Agpeya prayers; prostrations will commence after Pentecost Sagda Prayers
  - No prostrations are allowed after the Eucharist or after nighttime meals

# SPIRITUALITY

- Immense depth and riches of spirituality (story of Fr. Peter Farrington)
  - Good school of prayer to teach prayer
- Pray without ceasing
  - Mister Miyagi's Principle
    - The late Bishop Youanis of Gharbia said, "The value of prayer is not measured by the degree of comfort one receives from it, but by the amount of toil."
    - "That men always ought to pray and not lost heart" (Luke 18:1)
  - to make prayer a habit
  - to eventually **become** prayer
- Organization
- Principle of Anamnesis (living the life of Christ **eternally** through remembrance of time and remembrance of my own personal life)



# SPIRITUALITY

- Why pray?
  - Thanksgiving
  - Repentance and Humility
  - Glorification and Praise (Doxology)
  - Supplication
  - Pray for mercy (41 times)
  - According to Your will
    - If it be Your will
    - Teach me to do Your will
  - Spiritual pre-occupation
  - Reaffirmation of your faith
  - Comfort
  - Being Present with the Lord out of pure Love

# SPIRITUALITY

- Benefiting from the Agpeya:
  - Prepare yourself for the Hour you choose to pray and contemplate on its meaning for Christ and its meaning for you
  - Make use of all your bodily functions and senses: icon corner, candles, sweet aroma, sign of the Cross, prostrations, orans position (sacrifice of praise), chanting
  - Start small—don't get carried away and burn yourself out; seek your spiritual father's guidance
  - Consider what God did for you and the awe and wonder of God's characteristics and mercy for you
  - Personalize the prayers, and at the end, formulate your own words

# MEDITATION

- Evagrius Ponticus “On Prayer”:
  - 61: **If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you are a theologian**
  - 87: If you have not yet received the gift of prayer or psalmody, persevere patiently and you will receive it
  - 98: At the time of such trials, use a brief but intense prayer
  - 113: The monk becomes equal to the angels through prayer, because of his longing to “behold the face of the Father who is in heaven” (cf Matthew 18:10)
  - 153: If when praying no other joy can attract you, then truly you have found prayer.

# LINKS

- <http://www.coptic.org/language/horologion.html>
- <http://www.copticplace.com/files/02MarkGospel.pdf>
- <http://www.agpeya.org/What is the Agpeya/what is the agpeya.html>
- [http://www.suscopts.org/servantsprep/pdf/RIT/RIT101\\_rites.pdf](http://www.suscopts.org/servantsprep/pdf/RIT/RIT101_rites.pdf)
- <https://www.suscopts.org/q&a/index.php?catid=419>
- <http://www.slideshare.net/eroufail/praying-the-agpeya>
- [http://www.saintmaryhouston.org/files/Understanding%20the%20Agpeya\(2\).doc](http://www.saintmaryhouston.org/files/Understanding%20the%20Agpeya(2).doc)
- <http://ekladious.info/Grade7/Agpeya%20Prayers.doc>
- Pope Shenouda <http://becomeorthodox.org/prayer/the-spirituality-of-the-coptic-horologion-agpeya/>
- <http://www.slideshare.net/eroufail/praying-the-agpeya>



# ACADEMIC BOOKS

- Rober Taft, “The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West”
- Paul Bradshaw, “Daily Prayer in the Early Church, A Study in the Origin and Development of the Divine Office”
- O.H.F. Burmester, “The Horologion of the Egyptian Church”
- Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, “Introduction to Liturgical Theology”
- Arabic:
  - Fr. Matta al Maskeen
    - “The Daily Hymn of Praise and the Hourly Psalms”
    - “The Daily Hymn of Praise and the Psalms of the Canonical Hours”
  - Fr. Athanasius al Maqari, “The Agpeya”
  - <http://www.athanase.net/>

# BOOKS ON PRAYER

- Evagrius Ponticus, “On Prayer”  
<http://desertfathers.blogspot.com/2011/06/works-of-evagrius-ponticus-on-prayer.html>
- Metropolitan Anthony Bloom
  - Beginning to Pray
  - Living Prayer
- Fr. Matta al Maskeen “Orthodox Prayer Life”
- Bishop Youannis of Gharbia, “Paradise of the Spirit”  
<https://youanis.wordpress.com/>
- Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, “For the Life of the World”
- St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, “Tertullian, Cyprian and Origen on the Lord’s Prayer”
- Athanasius letter to Marcellinus on the use of Psalms,  
<http://www.athanasius.com/psalms/aletterm.htm>

# THANK YOU

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