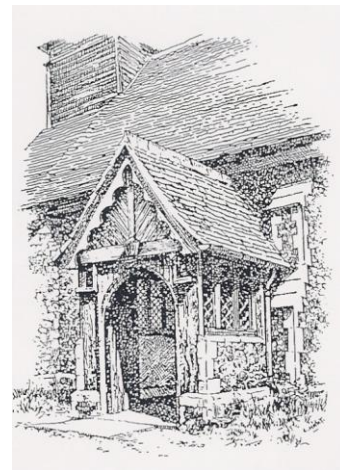


# Compline

On the Saturdays of Lent and during Holy Week, it is proposed to observe at 9pm the ancient office (or prayer duty) of Compline in the stillness of the Old Church. But what on earth is it?

The ancient office of Compline derives its name from a Latin word meaning 'completion' (*completorium*). It is above all a service of quietness and reflection before rest at the end of the day. It is most effective when the ending is indeed an ending, without additions, conversation or noise. If there is an address, or business to be done, it should come first. If the service is in church, those present depart in silence; if at home, they go quietly to bed.

After a short preparation, the service continues with the Word of God, involving the reading of psalms. This is not the rather dull recital of difficult words, as might be thought. The psalms are a rich seam of human thinking and emotions, reflections and reactions, and when understood, provide the contemporary person which a thrilling roller-coaster experience which it is difficult not to want to return to again and again.



Then we come to prayers, of various types, ending with a confession. But on this occasion, the confession is both personal and immediate, as we think about the day just lived, a day perhaps full of wrongs or rights, or delights, and this is a time for a truly personal confrontation with what we know is in need of putting right in our lives. Taken seriously, this is a privately challenging moment.

Finally, there are prayers for light in the darkness of night, and the darkness in our lives, and peace as we rest. One of the prayers is such a tough but reassuring set of words as you will ever hear:

O Lord Jesus Christ, son of the living God,  
who at this evening hour didst rest in the sepulchre,  
and didst thereby sanctify the grave  
to be a bed of hope to thy people:  
make us so to abound in sorrow for our sins,  
which were the cause of thy passion,  
that when our bodies lie in the dust,  
our souls may live with thee;  
who livest and reignest with the Father  
and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Compline ends with optimistic greetings about news of the resurrection. Enjoy!

V. We will lay us down in peace and take our rest.  
R. **For it is thou, Lord, only that makest us dwell in safety.**

V. Abide with us, O Lord,  
R. **for it is toward evening and the day is far spent.**

V. As the watchmen look for the morning,  
R. **so do we look for thee, O Christ.**