

Little Vespers

Little Vespers is celebrated prior to sunset before feasts on which, according to the rule, there is to be an All-night Vigil.

The Holy Doors and the Curtain (katapetasma) remain closed. At the conclusion of the Ninth Hour there is no dismissal, but the Priest, wearing the epitrachelion and standing before the Holy Doors, exclaims:

Priest: + Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen.

Note: If the Ninth Hour has immediately preceded Little Vespers, we omit the introductory prayers and go to either “Come, Let us Worship” or “Christ is Risen from the Dead”, below.

From Pentecost to Great and Holy Saturday:

Glory to You, our God; glory to You!

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, You are everywhere and fulfill all things. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life, come and abide in us and cleanse us from every impurity and save our souls, O Good One!

From Pascha to the Leave-taking of Pascha:

Priest: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life! (2.5x)

People: ...and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

The Trisagion Prayers

Reader: Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity, have mercy on us!
O Lord, cleanse us from our sins!
O Master, pardon our transgressions!
O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your name's sake!

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All: Our Father, Who are in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (12x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

From Ascension to Great and Holy Saturday and, within Paschaltide, when no service precedes Little Vespers:

Come, let us worship God our King!
Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!
Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

From Pascha to the Leave-taking of Pascha, when another service precedes Little Vespers and the service therefore begins here:

Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

The Introductory Psalm

Psalm 103 (104)

Bless the Lord, O my soul!
O Lord my God, You are very great,
You are clothed with praise and majesty,
wrapping Yourself in light for a garment,
stretching out the sky like a skin¹;

Who covers His upper rooms with water,
Who makes clouds His chariot,
Who walks on the wings of the wind,

Who makes spirits his angels
and His servant a flame of fire,

Who poises the earth on its axis;
it will not be moved throughout the ages.

The deep like a garment is its clothing.
On the mountains the waters stand.

At Your rebuke they run,
At the crack of Your thunder they are afraid.

Mountains rise up and plains sink down
to the place which You have appointed for them.

¹ a “tent-skin”.

You have set a bound the waters will not pass,
so they will never return to cover the earth.

You send torrents in the ravines,
the waters run between the mountains.

They give drink to all the beasts of the field;
wild donkeys wait to quench their thirst.

The birds of the sky perch on them;
from among the rocks they pipe their calls.

You water the mountains from above.
The earth is filled with the fruit of Your works.

You make grass spring up for the cattle
and vegetation for the service of men,

for them to produce food from the earth
and wine which cheers man's heart,
that his face may be bright with oil
and that bread may strengthen man's heart.

The trees of the plain will be drenched,
the cedars of Lebanon which You planted.

There the sparrows build their nests,
the house of the heron² at the top of them.

The high mountains are for the deer,
a rock is a refuge for hares.

You made the moon to mark the months,
the sun knows his going down.

² or “egret”.

You appoint darkness and it becomes night,
in which all the wild beasts of the forest prowl:

young lions roaring to seize their prey
and seeking their food from God.

The sun rises and they gather together
and lie down in their dens.

Man goes out to his work
and to his business until the evening.

How great are Your works, O Lord!
You have made all things in wisdom,
the earth is filled with Your creation.

This is the great and wide sea:
there live reptiles without number,
living creatures small and great;

There ships go to and fro;
there, too, is that sea serpent
which You have made to play in it.

All look expectantly to You
to give them their food in due season.

When You give it to them, they gather it;
when You open Your hand,
all things are filled with goodness.

But when You turn away Your face they are troubled.
You will take their spirit and they will die
and they will return to their dust.

You will send Your Spirit and they will be created,
and You will renew the face of the earth.

May the glory of the Lord be forever;
the Lord delights in His works.

He looks upon the earth and makes it tremble,
He touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord all my life,
I will sing praises to my God as long as I live.

May my conversation be pleasing to Him,
and I will rejoice in the Lord.

May sinners vanish from the earth,
and the lawless so as to be no more.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.

You made the moon to mark the months,
the sun knows his going down.

How great are Your works, O Lord!
You have made all things in wisdom,

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to You, O God. (3x)

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, I Call³

Psalm 140 (141):1-2

People: Lord, I call upon You, hear me.
Hear me, O Lord.
Lord, I call upon You, hear me.
Receive the voice of my prayer, when I call upon You.
Hear me, O Lord.

Let my prayer arise,
in Your sight as incense,
and let the lifting up of my hands
be an evening sacrifice.
Hear me, O Lord.

Psalm 140 (141):3-10

Reader: Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth,
and a door of enclosure and protection around my lips.

Do not incline my heart to evil words,
to make excuses for sins.
With men who practice lawlessness,
not even with their chosen ones will I be joined.

A just man will correct and rebuke me with mercy,
but may the oil of a sinner never anoint my head,
because again and again my prayer is against their pleasures.

Their judges and kings drown holding rocks:
they will hear my words, for they are sweet.

³ When a feast supersedes the Octoechos, “Lord, I Call...” is sung in the tone of the first Sticheron appointed for the day. Otherwise, it is sung in the tone of the week.

As a clod of earth is crushed on the ground,
our bones have been scattered beside the grave.

For my eyes look to You, O Lord;
O Lord, in You I trust, do not take away my life.

Keep me from the trap they have set for me
and from the snare of the evildoers.

Sinners will fall into their own net;
I am alone until I pass on.

Psalm 141 (142)

I cry to the Lord with my voice,
I pray with my voice to the Lord.

I will pour out before Him my prayer,
I will tell my trouble before Him.

When my spirit departs from me,
You know my paths.

In this way that I was going,
they hid a trap for me.

I look to the right hand and watch,
but there is no one who knows me.
Escape is cut off from me,
but there is no one seeking my life.

I cried to You, O Lord, and said,
“You are my hope,
You are my portion in the land of the living.”

Attend to my prayer,
for I have been brought very low.
Deliver me from those who are persecuting me,
because they are stronger than I am.

Bring my soul out of prison
that I may confess Your name,

The righteous are waiting for me
until You reward me.

Psalm 129 (130)

Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord;
O Lord, hear my voice.

Let Your ears be attentive
to the cry of my prayer.

If You, O Lord, should take note of our sins,
O Lord, who would survive?
But with You there is forgiveness.

For Your name's sake, O Lord, I wait for You,
my soul waits for Your word,
my soul hopes for the Lord,

4.⁴ from the morning watch until night.
From the morning watch
let Israel hope for the Lord.

3. For with the Lord there is mercy
and with Him there is great redemption.
And He will redeem Israel
from all his sins.

Psalm 116 (117)

2. Praise the Lord, all you nations,
praise Him, all you peoples!

⁴ From this point on, hymns (Stichera) can be inserted between Psalm verses..

I. For great is His mercy to us,⁵
and the truth of the Lord continues forever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

People: [Sing the Theotokion. On Saturday evening the Theotokion is the Dogmatikon of the tone of the week]

Gladsome Light

People: O gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly,
Holy, blessed Father: O Jesus Christ:
Now that we have come to the setting of the sun,
And behold the light of evening,
We praise God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
For it is right, at all times,
To worship You in voices of praise,
O Son of God and Giver of life.
Therefore all the world glorifies You.

Priest: Let us attend.

+ Peace be unto all.

Wisdom!

The Prokeimenon

(See Appendix A)

The Priest, standing in front of the Holy Doors says the Prokeimenon of the day with its verses.

⁵ Lit., “For His mercy has been strengthened upon us”.

Grant, O Lord

Reader: Grant, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin.

Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Your name forever. Amen.

Let Your mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we have set our hope on You.

Blessed are You, O Lord: teach me Your statutes.

Blessed are You, O Master: make me to understand Your commandments.

Blessed are You, O Holy One: enlighten me with Your precepts.

Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the works of Your hands.

To You belongs worship, to You belongs praise, to You belongs glory; to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Aposticha

On Feasts:

People: [the proper of the Feast]

On Sundays:⁶

People: [Sticheron]

Reader: The Lord is King, He is robed in majesty.

People: [Sticheron]

⁶ On Sundays that are also feasts, the festal Psalm verses might or might not replace the verses usual on Sunday. The Typicon (or the Liturgical Calendar and Rubrics) should be consulted in each case.

Reader: For He has established the world so that it shall never be moved.

People: [Sticheron]

Reader: Holiness befits Your house, O Lord, forevermore.

People: [Sticheron]

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

People: [Glory verse, if any]

Reader: ...now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

People: [Theotokion]

The Canticle of Simeon

People: Master, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all people: a light for revelation to the gentiles and for the glory of Your people Israel.

The Trisagion Prayers

Reader: Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity, have mercy on us!

O Lord, cleanse us from our sins!

O Master, pardon our transgressions!

O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities, for Your name's sake!

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All: Our Father, Who are in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen.

The Troparia⁷

On Great Feasts:

People: [Troparion (3x)]

The usual order:

People: [Troparion]

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

[Second Troparion, if any]

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

[Theotokion]

⁷ For the order of Troparia, the Typikon or Liturgical Calendar and Rubrics must be consulted.

Litany

Priest: Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your great goodness, we implore You, hear us and have mercy.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Priest: Again we pray for [His Beatitude] Metropolitan _____, and for [His Grace] our Bishop _____.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Priest: Again we pray for priests, deacons, and all other clergy, and for all our brethren in Christ.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Priest: For You are a merciful God, and You love mankind, and to You we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Dismissal

Priest: Glory to You, O Christ, our God and our hope, glory to You.

Facing the people, the Priest says the Dismissal:

From Ascension to Great and Holy Saturday:

Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Father, bless.

From Thomas Sunday to the Leave-taking of Pascha:

People: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

Priest: May Christ our true God, through the prayers of His most pure Mother; of our holy and God-bearing Fathers, and of all the Saints: have mercy on us and save us for He is good and loves mankind.

Reader: Amen.

APPENDIX A

VESPERS PROKEIMENA

in their complete form (see Appendix B for the Great Prokeimena)

Saturday Evening

Psalm 92 (93)

Priest: The Evening Prokeimenon in the sixth tone:

The Lord is King; He is robed in majesty.

Verse: The Lord is robed, He is girded with strength.

Verse: Yea, the world is established; it shall never be moved,

Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.

Verse: The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice,
the floods lift up their roaring.

Verse: Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of
the sea, the Lord on high is mighty!

Verse: Your decrees are very sure;

holiness befits Your house, O Lord, forevermore.

Priest: The Lord is King...

People: ...He is robed in majesty.

Sunday Evening

Psalm 133 (134)

Priest: The Evening Prokeimenon in the eighth tone:

Behold, now bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord.

Verse: You who stand in the temple of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God.

Verse: Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the Lord!

Verse: May the Lord bless you from Zion, He Who made heaven and earth!

Priest: Behold, now bless the Lord...

People: ...all you servants of the Lord.

Monday Evening

Psalm 4

Priest: The Evening Prokeimenon in the fourth tone:

The Lord hears me when I call to Him.

Verse: When I called, the God of my righteousness heard me.

Verse: You have given me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

Verse: O men, how long shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after life?

Verse: But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for Himself; the Lord hears when I call to Him.

- Verse:* Be angry, but sin not; commune with your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.
- Verse:* Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.
- Verse:* There are many who say, “O that we might see some good! Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O Lord!”
- Verse:* You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.
- Verse:* In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

Priest: The Lord hears me...

People: ...when I call to Him.

Tuesday Evening

Psalm 22 (23)

- Priest:* The Evening Prokeimenon in the first tone:
Your mercy, O Lord, shall follow me all the days of my life.
- Verse:* The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; He makes me lie down in green pastures.
- Verse:* He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.
- Verse:* Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
- Verse:* You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Verse: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Priest: Your mercy, O Lord, shall follow me...

People: ...all the days of my life.

Wednesday Evening

Psalm 53 (54)

Priest: The Evening Prokeimenon in the fifth tone:

Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength.

People: Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength.

Verse: Hear my prayer, O God, listen to the words of my mouth.

Verse: For insolent men have risen against me, ruthless men seek my life; they do not set God before them.

Verse: Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

Verse: He will requite my enemies with evil; in Your faithfulness put an end to them.

Verse: With a freewill offering I will sacrifice to You; I will give thanks to Your name, O Lord, for it is good.

Verse: For You have delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Priest: Save me, O God, by Your name...

People: ...and vindicate me by Your strength.

Thursday Evening

Psalm 120 (121)

Priest: The Evening Prokeimenon in the sixth tone:

My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.

Verse: I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?

Verse: My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved. He Who keeps you will not slumber.

Verse: Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Verse: The Lord is your keeper, the Lord is your shade on your right hand.

Verse: The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.

Verse: The Lord will keep you from all evil. He will keep your life.

Verse: The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

Priest: My help comes from the Lord...

People: ...Who made heaven and earth.

Friday Evening

Psalm 58 (59)

Priest: The Evening Prokeimenon in the seventh tone:

You, O God, are my helper and Your mercy shall go before me.

Verse: Deliver me from my enemies, O God, and protect me from those who rise up against me.

- Verse:* Deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men.
- Verse:* For lo, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men band themselves against me. For no transgression or sin of mine, O Lord, for no fault of mine, they run and make ready.
- Verse:* Rouse Yourself, come to my help, and see! You, Lord God of hosts, are the God of Israel. Awake to punish all the nations; spare none of those who treacherously plot evil.
- Verse:* Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city. There they are, bellowing with their mouths, snarling with their lips--for "Who," they think, "will hear us?"
- Verse:* But You, O Lord, laugh at them; You hold all the nations in derision. O my strength, I will sing praises to You; for You, O God, are my fortress. My god in His steadfast love will meet me; my God will let me look in triumph on my enemies.
- Verse:* Slay them not, lest my people forget; make them totter by Your power, and bring them down, O Lord, our shield! For the sin of their mouths, the word of their lips, let them be trapped in their pride. For the cursing and lies which they utter, consume them in wrath, consume them till they are no more, that men may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth.
- Verse:* Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city. They roam about for food, and growl if they do not get their fill.
- Verse:* But I will sing of Your might; I will sing aloud of Your steadfast love in the morning. For You have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. O my Strength, I will sing praises to You, for You, O God, are my fortress, the God Who shows me steadfast love.
- Priest:* You, O God, are my helper...

People: ...and Your mercy shall go before me.

APPENDIX B

A Great Prokeimenon

from Psalm 76 (77)

Priest: The Great Prokeimenon in the seventh tone:

Who is so great a God as our God?
You are the God Who does wonders.

Verse: You have made known Your power among the peoples.

Verse: And I said: now have I begun to understand: this is the change
accomplished by the right hand of the Most High.

Verse: I will remember the works of the Lord: from the beginning will I
remember Your wonders.

Verse: And I will meditate on all Your works and reflect on Your mighty acts.

Another Great Prokeimenon

from Psalm 113 (114-115)

Priest: The Great Prokeimenon in the seventh tone:

Our God is in heaven and on earth;
He does whatever He pleases.

Verse: When Israel went forth from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of
strange language, Judah became His sanctuary.

Verse: The sea looked and fled; Jordan turned back; the mountains skipped like
rams, and the hills like lambs.

Verse: What ails you, O sea, that you flee; O Jordan, that you turn back?

First Lenten Great Prokeimenon

Cheesefare Sunday, 2nd and 4th Sundays

Priest: The Great Prokeimenon in the eighth tone:

Turn not Your face from Your servant, for I am afflicted:
Hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul and deliver it!

Verse: Let Your salvation, O God, uphold me.

Verse: Let the poor see and be glad!

Verse: Seek God and your soul shall live!

Second Lenten Great Prokeimenon

1st, 3rd, and 5th Sundays

Priest: The Great Prokeimenon in the eighth tone:

You have given an inheritance, O Lord,
To those who fear You!

Verse: From the ends of the earth I call to You!

Verse: O to be safe under the shelter of Your wings!

Verse: So will I ever sing praises to Your name!

Verse: Your decrees are very sure.