

Vespers – Ascension of our Lord

The Priest vests in gold epitrachelion.

The Holy Doors remain closed and the Curtain (katapetasma) is opened. The Priest, standing at the Altar Table,¹ says:

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

Reader: Amen.²

The Trisagion Prayers

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.

¹ In some traditions, the Priest begins before the closed Holy Doors.

² If another service has immediately preceded Vespers, or if Little Vespers has been served earlier, we omit the usual introductory prayers and go to "Come, Let us Worship" below.

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.

When another service precedes Vespers, the service begins here:

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!

*The chief **Celebrant** goes to stand in front of the closed Holy Doors, head uncovered, to read the Prayers of Light silently.*

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 skin³;

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.

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,

³ a “tent-skin”.

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 heron⁴ 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.

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.

⁴ or “egret”.

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.

The Deacon, standing at the Southwest corner of the Altar Table, passing the High Place, exits the Sanctuary, through the North door and stands before the icon of the Theotokos until the conclusion of the Psalm.

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)

At the conclusion of Psalm 103, the Deacon and the Priest bow to each other. The Priest returns to the Sanctuary through the South door and stands at his place before the Altar Table.

The Deacon moves to stand before the Holy Doors, lifts his Orarion and says:

The Great Litany

Deacon: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the peace from above and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all people, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For this holy house and for those who enter it with faith, reverence, and the fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: ⁵For [his Beatitude] Metropolitan _____; for [his Grace] our Bishop _____; for the honorable priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For the President⁶ and all civil authorities of this country, and for those serving in its Armed Forces, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For this city, [*if a monastery*: For this holy habitation,] for every city and countryside, and for the faithful dwelling in them, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For travelers by land, by sea, and by air; the sick; the suffering; the captives; and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For our deliverance from all affliction, wrath, danger, and distress, let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Your grace.

⁵ We pray for the bishop of the temple in which we are praying. When not in a temple, we pray for the bishop of the diocese in which we are located. If outside the territory of any Orthodox Church or mission, only then do we pray for the bishop of the celebrating priest.

⁶ We pray for the Chief of State and the civil authorities of the place in which we are praying.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

The Deacon moves to stand before the icon of Christ.

People: To You, O Lord.

Priest: ⁷For to You belong all glory, honor, and worship: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Deacon enters the Sanctuary through the South door, goes to the High Place, bows, turns and bows to the Priest, takes up the censer and presents it to the Priest, saying:

Deacon: Bless, Master, the incense.

Priest:  We offer You incense, O Christ our God, for a perfume of spiritual fragrance. Receive it upon Your heavenly Altar, and send down upon us in return the grace of Your all-Holy Spirit.

Deacon: Amen.

Lord, I Call

Tone 6⁸ 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.

⁷ Some ancient sources suggest Prayer 7a or perhaps 1 in Appendix A be read here.

⁸ Because this feast supersedes the Octoechos, “Lord, I Call...” is sung in the tone of the first Sticheron appointed for the day, instead of the tone of the week.

The Deacon then begins the Great Censing.

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.

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.

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

Tone 6

The Lord ascended to heaven,
to send the Comforter into the world.
The heavens prepared His throne; the clouds, His royal mount!
The angels were amazed, seeing a Man exalted.
The Father awaits the Son Who is eternally in His bosom!

The Holy Spirit commands the angels:
“Lift up your heads, O gates!
Clap your hands, all nations,//
For Christ has ascended to where He was before!”

9. The righteous are waiting for me
until You reward me.

The Lord ascended to heaven... (*repeat above*).

Psalm 129 (130)

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

The cherubim were amazed by Your Ascension!
They beheld the God of angels ascending on clouds.
We glorify You, for Your mercy is good.//
O Lord, glory to You!

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

The cherubim were amazed... (*repeat above*).

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

Seeing Your Ascension upon the Mount, O Christ,
the Splendor of the Father’s glory,
we praise the radiant likeness of Your countenance.
We bow in worship before Your Passion.
We honor Your Resurrection.
We glorify Your glorious Ascension;//
O Lord, have mercy on us!

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

Seeing Your Ascension upon the Mount... (*repeat above*).

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

Seeing Your Ascension, O Giver of Life,
the Apostles mourned and wept:
“Master, do not leave us, Your servants, as orphans,
whom You have loved in Your compassion,
but send down on us Your Holy Spirit as You promised,//
Who will illumine our souls!”

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

Seeing Your Ascension... (*repeat above*).

During the singing of the Stichera, the Priest puts on the Phelonion, and, if a Deacon is serving, he keeps it on until the conclusion of the service.

The Deacon receives the censer from the Server.

Psalm 116 (117)

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

Beholding the mystery of Your dispensation,
 together with the disciples, we sing to You, O Lord:
 “You have ascended from the Mount of Olives for our sake,
 and returned to the firmament of heaven, which You did not leave!
 Send down upon us Your most Holy Spirit,//
 Who will illumine our souls!”

- I.* For great is His mercy to us,⁹
 and the truth of the Lord continues forever.

Beholding the mystery... (*repeat above*).

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

As the People sing “now and ever...” the Holy Doors are opened, the Deacon asks the Priest to bless the censer, they both kiss the Altar Table, and preceded by the Acolytes, passing by the High Place, they proceed out of the Sanctuary through the North door, and go to the solea in front of the Holy Doors.

People: Without leaving the Father's bosom,
 having lived with mankind as a Man,
 today, You have ascended in glory from the Mount,
 mercifully raising our fallen nature,
 enthroning it with the Father on high.
 The angelic hosts were amazed with awe, seeing Your great love for
 mankind!
 With them, we glorify Your condescension to us;
 with them, we glorify Your Ascension from us.
 By it, You filled Your disciples and Your Mother with great joy.
 By their prayers, and through Your great mercy//
 make us, Your chosen people, worthy of this joy!

⁹ Lit., “For His mercy has been strengthened upon us”.

The Vespers Entrance

As they proceed:

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

Priest: In the evening, in the morning, and at midday, we praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You, and we pray to You: O Master of all, O Lord, the Lover of mankind, let our prayer arise in Your sight as incense, and incline not our hearts to words or thoughts of evil, but rescue us from all who seek after our souls. For our eyes are toward You, O Lord: Lord, in You we put our hope. Put us not to shame, O our God. For to You belong all glory, honor, and worship: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Priest stands in the center facing the Sanctuary.

The Deacon approaches the Holy Doors to the right of the Priest and then he censes the Holy Doors, the icons of Christ and the Theotokos, the icon of the patron saint of the Temple, and the Priest. After this he transfers the censer from his right hand to his left, bows to the Priest and, pointing to the Holy Doors with his Orarion in his right hand, he says quietly:

Deacon: Bless, Master, the holy entrance.

Priest: + Blessed is the entrance into Your Sanctuary always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

After this, the Deacon stands in the middle of the Holy Doors and, at the conclusion of the Theotokion, makes the Sign of the Cross with the censer and says:

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

The Deacon proceeds into the Sanctuary, censes the Altar Table on all four sides and the High Place.

The Priest(s) kisses the two small icons located on the sides or pillars of the Holy Doors area, blesses the People, kisses the Altar Table, and goes to the High Place, makes the Sign of the Cross and a small metania and stands to the right of center (Southeast corner of the Altar Table) facing the people.

The Deacon gives the censer to the Acolyte, kisses the Altar Table, goes to the left side of the Sanctuary, makes the Sign of the Cross on himself facing the High Place, bows to the Priest, and stands to the left (Northeast corner) of the Altar Table at the High Place facing toward the people.

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.

Deacon: Let us attend.

Priest: + Peace be unto all.

Deacon: Wisdom!

The Prokeimenon

Psalm 53 (54)

Deacon: 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.

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

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

At the end of the Prokeimenon, the Priest and the Deacon turn, make the Sign of the Cross (lesser metania) to the High Place, and proceed to their places - the Priest to the place in front of the Altar Table.

The Deacon closes the Holy Doors.

The First Old Testament Reading

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: (2:1-3 LXX) The word that came from the Lord to Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem: Now it shall come to pass in the last days, the mountain of the Lord and the house of God shall be visible on the tops of the mountains and exalted above the hills. All the Gentiles shall come to it. Many Gentiles shall travel and say, “Come

and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will proclaim His way to us, and we shall walk in it.”

The Second Old Testament Reading

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: (62:10-63:3, 7-9 LXX) Thus says the Lord: “Go through My gates, make a way for My people, throw the stones off the road, and lift up a standard for the Gentiles.” For behold, the Lord caused this to be heard to the ends of the earth: “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your Savior is come, and has His reward, and His work before His face.’” One shall call them a holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, and you shall be called a City Sought for and Not Forsaken.

Who is this who comes from Edom, with red garments from Bozrah, so beautiful in His apparel, with force of strength? “I speak of righteousness and saving judgment.” Why are Your garments red and Your apparel as one who treads in a winepress? “I am full of the treading of grapes, and there is no man with Me among the nations.”

I remembered the Lord’s mercy, the praises of the Lord in all things in which the Lord recompenses us. The Lord is a good judge to the house of Israel, and He deals with us according to His mercy, and according to the multitude of His righteousness. He said, “Surely My people, My children, have not rejected Me?” So He became their salvation. Not an elder or an angel, but the Lord Himself saved them from all their tribulation, because He loved them and spared them. He redeemed and took them up, and lifted them up all the days of old.

The Third Old Testament Reading

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Prophecy of Zachariah.

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: (14:1, 4, 8-11 LXX) *Thus says the Lord:* Behold, the days of the Lord come, and your plunder will be divided among you.

And on that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, half towards the east and half towards the sea, a very great divide; and half the mountain shall lean toward the north and half of it toward the south.

And in that day living water shall come forth out of Jerusalem, half of it toward the eastern sea, and half toward the western sea. So it will be in both summer and spring. And the Lord shall be King of all the earth, and in that day the Lord shall be one Lord, and His name one name, encircling all the land, even the wilderness from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Rama shall remain in her place; from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate; to the Gate of the Corners, and to the Tower of Hananeel, as far as the king's winepresses, they will dwell in her, and it will no longer a curse. Jerusalem shall dwell securely.

The Deacon, passing the High Place, exits the Sanctuary through the North door, takes his place on the solea, lifts his Orarion and says:

The Augmented Litany¹⁰

Deacon: Let us say with all our soul and with all our mind, let us say.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: O Lord almighty, the God of our fathers, we implore You, hear us and have mercy.

People: Lord, have mercy.

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

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Deacon: Again we pray for [His Beatitude] Metropolitan _____, for [His Grace] our Bishop _____, for priests, deacons, and all other clergy, and for all our brethren in Christ.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Deacon: Again we pray for the President and all civil authorities of this country and for those serving in its Armed Forces.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Deacon: Again we pray for the blessed and ever-memorable holy Orthodox Patriarchs; for the blessed and ever memorable founders of this holy house; for all our fathers and brethren, the Orthodox departed this life before us, [especially _____ and all those] who here and in all the world lie asleep in the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

¹⁰ If there are special petitions for a specific situation in the community (flood, drought, harvest, health, war, plague, or whatever), the special petitions are added to this Litany.

Deacon: Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, and visitation for the servants of God [especially _____], and for the pardon and remission of their sins.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Deacon: Again we pray for those who bring offerings and do good works in this holy and all-venerable house; for those who labor and those who sing; and for all the people here present, who await Your great and rich mercy.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Priest: ¹¹For 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.

Grant, O Lord

People: 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.

¹¹ This Litany has no obvious concluding prayer. Some say it should have the same prayer that is attached to it in the Divine Liturgy:

“O Lord our God, accept this fervent supplication of Your servants, and have mercy on us according to the multitude of Your mercy. Send down Your bounties upon us and upon all Your people, who await the rich mercy that comes from You.”

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 Evening Litany¹²

The Deacon, still at his place in the center of the solea, lifts his Orarion and says:

Deacon: Let us complete our evening prayer to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Your grace.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: That the whole evening may be perfect, holy, peaceful, and sinless, let us ask of the Lord.

People: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: For an angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.

People: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: For pardon and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

People: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: For all things that are good and profitable for our souls, and peace for

¹² If there is no Deacon, the Priest will remove his Phelonion and take this litany in front of the closed Holy Doors.

the world, let us ask of the Lord.

People: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.

People: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: For a Christian ending to our life: painless, blameless, and peaceful; and a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord.

People: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

The Deacon moves to stand before the icon of Christ:

People: To You, O Lord.

Priest: ¹³For You are a good 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 Priest turns to bless the People:

Priest: + Peace be unto all.

People: And to your spirit.

The Priest faces the East as the Deacon says:

Deacon: Let us bow our heads to the Lord.

¹³ Some ancient sources suggest Prayer 7b in Appendix A be read here.

People: To You, O Lord.

The Prayer with Heads Bowed

Priest: O Lord our God, Who bowed the heavens and came down for the salvation of the human race; look upon Your servants and Your inheritance; for to You, the awesome Judge, Who yet love mankind, have Your servants bowed their heads and submissively bent their necks, not waiting for help from men, but asking for Your mercy and looking confidently for Your salvation. Guard them at all times, both during this present evening and in the approaching night, from every foe, from all adverse powers of the Devil, from vain thoughts, and from evil imaginations. Blessed and glorified be the majesty of Your kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Litia¹⁴

As the appointed Stichera are sung, the Clergy kiss the Altar Table, and, with the Servers, exit through the Deacon Doors and proceed to the vestibule.¹⁵

The Priest stands in the center, the Acolytes in front of him and to each side.

Then the Deacon censes the icons in the vestibule, the Clergy according to rank, the choirs, and the people and comes to stand in his place to the Priest's right in front of him.

¹⁴ In order to preserve the festal nature of the celebration, it is recommended that the Phelonion be worn, as in the Kievan practice.

¹⁵ In Kievan practice, the Holy Doors are opened, the Deacon remains in the Sanctuary for this procession to cense the Sanctuary, Iconostasis, people, temple and Priest and comes to the place of the Litia.

Stichera

Tone 1

People: As You ascend to heaven, from where You came,
do not leave us as orphans, O Lord!
Let Your Spirit come, bringing peace to the world;
show the children of mankind the works of Your power,//
O Lord and Lover of mankind!

O Christ, You have ascended to the unoriginate Father,
and the Powers of heaven did not cease singing the thrice-holy praise!
Even after Your incarnation, O Lord,
they recognized You as the only-begotten Son of the Father.//
In the multitude of Your bounties have mercy on us!

Your Angels told the Apostles, O Lord:
“Men of Galilee, why do You stand looking into heaven?
The One Who ascended is Christ our God.
He will come again in the same way;//
serve Him in truth and righteousness!”

Tone 4

When You came to the Mount of Olives, O Christ,
to accomplish the good will of the Father,
the heavenly Angels were astonished, and the depths trembled;
the Disciples stood before You with both gladness and fear.
While You spoke to them, a cloud was prepared as a throne waiting for
You;
heaven opened its gates, manifesting Your beauty.
The earth opened its treasures
that Adam's falling and rising might be known.
But Your steps were directed upward.
As Your hands were raised, the cloud lifted You up,
and the heaven received You.

This great and glorious deed, O Lord,//
 You have accomplished for the salvation of our souls.

Same tone.

O God, You have refashioned the nature of Adam,
 which had fallen into the depths of the earth.
 You have led it up, today, above every Principality and Power,
 for in Your love for it, You have seated it together with Yourself.
 Since You have taken compassion on it You united it to Yourself
 and having been united with it, You suffered with it;
 as not subject to suffering, yet You suffered and glorified it with
 Yourself!

The bodiless ones said: “Who is this Man of beauty?
 He is not only a Man;
 He is both God and Man, united and manifested in One!”
 Astonished Angels, some flying in glorious apparel, and some standing
 near the Disciples, cried out:
 “Men of Galilee, the One gone from You is Jesus, Who is both God and
 Man!”
 The God-Man will come again as the Judge of the living and the dead,//
 granting to the faithful remission of sins and great mercy!

Same tone.

When You ascended in glory, O Christ God,
 the Disciples beheld the clouds raising You with Your flesh.
 The gates of heaven received You.
 The angels rejoiced, crying out: “Lift up your heads, O gates!
 The King of Glory shall enter!”
 The Disciples cried: “Do not leave us, O good Shepherd,
 but send down on us Your Holy Spirit,//
 Who will guide, confirm, illumine and sanctify our souls!”

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

Tone 4

After You fulfilled the mystery hidden from eternity and for generations,
You, O Lord, as the good One, came with Your Disciples to the Mount
of Olives,
together with the one who bore You,
the Creator and Fashioner of all things.
For to her, who in Your Passion endured more than all the others
because she was Your Mother,
was granted to enjoy the exceeding delight of the glorification of Your
body,
participating in Your Ascension into heaven, O Master.//
We glorify the great mercy which was shown us.

The Deacon lifts his Orarion and prays:

The Great Intercession

Deacon: O God, save Your people and bless Your inheritance. Visit Your world in mercy and compassion. Exalt the horn of Orthodox Christians, and send down on us Your rich mercies; through the prayers of our most-pure Lady, the Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary; through the power of the precious and life-giving Cross; through the protection of the honorable Bodiless Powers of heaven; through the supplications of the honorable and glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; of the holy, glorious, and all-laudable Apostles; of the Holy Myrrh-bearer and Equal-to-the-Apostles, Mary Magdalen;

of our fathers among the saints, hierarchs and ecumenical teachers: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom; of our fathers among the saints Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Irenaeus of Lyons, Cyprian of Carthage, Ambrose of Milan, Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Rome, Augustine of Canterbury, and Theodore of Tarsus;

of Gregory the Enlightener of Armenia; Nina, Equal-to-the-Apostles and Enlightener of Georgia; Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland; Robert, Bishop of Salzburg and Enlightener of the Bavarians; the holy Methodius and Cyril, Evangelizers of the Slavs; the blessed Princess Olga and the holy Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles; Nahum, Enlightener of the Bulgarians; Nicholas, Equal-to-the-Apostles and Enlightener of Japan;

of our fathers among the saints: Innocent, the Enlightener of the Aleuts and Apostle to America; Jacob, Enlightener of the Upic and Athabascan peoples; Nicholas of Zhicha and South Canaan; Tikhon, Enlightener of North America and Patriarch of Moscow; and John the Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco;

of the holy, glorious, and right-victorious Martyrs: the Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephen; the Great-Martyr and Healer Panteleimon; the Great-Martyrs Demetrius of Thessalonika, George the Victorious, and Theodore the Recruit; Alban, Protomartyr of Britain; the martyrs Adrian and Natalia of Nicomedia; the New Martyr Gorazd of Prague; the new Hieromartyr Nicetas the Albanian of Mount Athos; the New Hieromartyr and Equal-to-the-Apostles Cosmos of Aitolia;

of Juvenaly, Protomartyr of America and the martyred Aleut Peter; of the New-martyrs and Passion-bearers of Russia, especially the martyrs John of Chicago and Alexander of New York;

of the Protomartyr among women and Equal-to-the-Apostles Thekla; of the Great Martyrs Barbara, Katherine, Irene of Thessalonika, and Marina of Antioch; of Lucy of Syracuse; the martyrs Faith, Hope, and Love and their mother Sophia; the Virgin-Martyrs of Rome: Anastasia, Tatiana, Paraskeva, Xenia, Agnes, Lucy, Susanna, and Eugenia; of Hripsime and Gayane of Armenia and Susanna of Georgia;

of our venerable and God-bearing fathers: Anthony the Great; Pachomias the Great; Sabbas; Euthymius; Benedict of Nursia; Columban of Iona; Theodore of Studion; Anthony and Theodosius and the other wonderworkers of the Caves in Kiev; Sergius of Radonezh; Paisius of Modavia; Seraphim of Sarov; Macarius of Corinth; Nectarios of Aigina; Nicodemus of the Holy

Mountain; Sergius and Herman of Valaam; Ambrose, Elder of Optina;
Silouan of Mount Athos;

and our venerable father Herman, Elder and Wonderworker of Alaska
and all America;

of our venerable and God-bearing mothers: Pelagia; Theodosia; Anastasia;
Eupraxia; Fevronia; Theodulia; Euphrosyne; Mary of Egypt; and Hilda of
Whitby; and Xenia of Petersburg, Fool-for-Christ; of the Holy and God-
crowned Emperor Constantine and his mother Helen; of the Righteous
Sarah, wife of Abraham; the Righteous Hanna, mother of the Prophet
Samuel; Emilia, mother of Saints Basil the Great, Macrina ,and Gregory of
Nyssa; Silvia, mother of Gregory the Dialogist; and Genevieve of Paris;

of St. John of Kronstadt; and our father-among-the-saints, Alexis of
Minneapolis and Wilkes-barre, defender of the Orthodox Church in
America;

of Saint *(of the day)*; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God,
Joachim and Anna, and of all the saints, hear us sinners who pray to
You, and have mercy on us.

People: Lord, have mercy. (12x)

Deacon: Again we pray for [His Beatitude] Metropolitan _____, for [His Grace]
our Bishop _____, and for all our brotherhood in Christ; and for every
Christian soul afflicted and weary in well-doing, in need of God's
mercies and help; for the protection of this city (*or countryside, or
town, or village, or holy abode*), and for those who dwell therein, for
the peace and quietness of the whole world; for the good estate of the
holy churches of God; for the salvation and help of our fathers and
brethren who with diligence and fear of God labor and serve; for those
who are absent and those who are abroad; for the healing of those who
lie in sickness; for the repose, refreshment and blessed memory and
forgiveness of sins of all our fathers and brethren, the Orthodox
departed this life before us who lie here and everywhere; for the

deliverance of captives; for our brethren who are serving, and for all who serve and have served in this holy temple (*or holy abode*), let us say.

People: Lord, have mercy. (12x)

Deacon: Again we pray for the President and all civil authorities of this country, and for those serving in its armed forces, let us say.

People: Lord, have mercy. (12x)

Deacon: Again we pray that He will keep this city (*or countryside, or town, or village, or holy abode*) and every city and countryside from wrath, famine, pestilence, earthquake, flood, fire, the sword, foreign invasion or civil war, and from sudden death; that our good God, the Lover of mankind, will be gracious, favorable, and conciliatory, and turn away and dispel all the wrath stirred up against us, and all sickness, and may deliver us from His righteous chastisement which impends against us, and have mercy on us.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Deacon: Again we pray that the Lord God will hear the voice of supplication of us sinners and have mercy on us.

People: Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Priest: Hear us, O God, our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who are far off on the sea; and be gracious, be gracious, O Master, to us sinners and have mercy on us. For You are a merciful God, the Lover of 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.

Priest:  Peace be unto all.

People: And to your spirit.

Deacon: Let us bow our heads to the Lord.

People: To You, O Lord.

The Prayer With Heads Bowed

Priest: O Master, great in mercy, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, through the intercessions of our most-pure Lady, and of all the saints, make our prayer acceptable, grant us forgiveness of our trespasses, hide us under the shelter of Your wings, drive away from us every enemy and adversary, give peace to our life, O Lord, have mercy on us and on Your world, and save our souls, for You are good and You love mankind.

The procession proceeds “into the temple” (nave) to the center where the table is prepared with the tray of loaves, wheat, wine, and oil. The Deacon stands to the right of the Priest, facing East. The Servers stand on the sides, facing inward.

The Aposticha

Tone 2

People: You were born as You Yourself willed;
You appeared, as You Yourself desired;
You suffered in the flesh, O our God;
You rose from the dead, having trampled on death.
You ascended in glory, filling all things.
You sent us Your divine Spirit,//
that we may praise and glorify Your Divinity.

Reader: Clap your hands, all peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy!

People: When the Angels beheld You ascending from the Mount of Olives, O Christ,
they cried to one another:
“Who is this? He is strong and mighty!
He is mighty in battle!
He is truly the King of Glory!

But why are His vestments purpled?
 He is from Bozra, which is to say, ‘the flesh.’”
 As God, You sat at the right hand of majesty.//
 You sent us the Holy Spirit to guide and save our souls!

Reader: God has gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet!

People: You ascended in glory, O Christ our God,
 from the Mount of Olives in the presence of Your Disciples.
 You sat at the right hand of the Father.
 You fill all things with Your Divinity:
 You sent to Your Disciples the Holy Spirit,//
 Who illumines, confirms, and sanctifies our souls!

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

Tone 6

People: God has gone up with a shout;
 the Lord with the sound of a trumpet,
 in order to raise the fallen image of Adam,
 and to send the comforting Spirit,//
 Who will sanctify our souls!

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 Deacon takes the censer, receives a blessing from the Priest for the censing, and censes around the table on which lies the Litia tray while the people sing the Troparion (three times). On the last time around, he censes the festal icon and turns to cense the Celebrant, and the five loaves from the front only.

The Troparion

Tone 4

You ascended in glory, O Christ our God,
granting joy to Your Disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit.
Through the blessing, they were assured
that You are the Son of God, //

the Redeemer of the world! (3x)

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

The Deacon gives the censer to the Acolyte, makes the Sign of the Cross, bows to the Priest, and goes to stand to the right of the Priest.

The Blessing of Bread

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

People: Lord, have mercy.

Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Who blessed the five loaves in the wilderness and with them You satisfied the five thousand, + bless these loaves, wheat, wine, and oil, and multiply them in this city, and in all the world, and sanctify all the faithful who partake of them. For it is You, O Christ our God, Who bless and sanctify all things, and to You we send up glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, and good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

The Priest enters through the Holy Doors for the Dismissal. The Deacon stands to the right of the Analog.

The Dismissal

If it is an All-Night Vigil or there has been a Litia:

People: Blessed be the name of the Lord, henceforth and forevermore. (3x)

Psalm 33:1-10

Reader: I will bless the Lord at all times,
His praise shall be continually in my mouth.

My soul will be praised by the Lord;

let the meek hear and be glad.

O magnify the Lord with me
and let us exalt His name together.

I sought the Lord and He answered me,
and He delivered me out of all my troubles.

Come to Him and be radiant,
and your faces will not be ashamed.

This poor man called and the Lord heard him
and saved him out of all his troubles.

The angel of the Lord will camp round those who fear Him
and will deliver them.

O taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed is the man who hopes in Him.

O fear the Lord, all you His saints,
because those who fear Him lack nothing.

(*see Note* ¹⁶)

The rich do become poor and hungry,
but those who seek the Lord
will not be in want of anything good.

Deacon: Wisdom.

People: Father, bless.

Standing in front of the Altar Table, the Priest says:

If it be a Vigil:

Priest: + The blessing of the Lord be upon you, through His Grace and love for

¹⁶ In some traditions, this verse is sung with sweet melody by one or more singers.

mankind, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

And the Reader begins the Six Psalms of Matins.

Priest: + Christ our God, The Existing One, is blessed, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

Confirm, O God, the holy Orthodox faith and Orthodox Christians unto ages of ages.

Priest: Most holy Theotokos, save us.

*People:*¹⁷ More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, without corruption you gave birth to God, the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify you.

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

Standing in the Holy Doors, facing the people, the Priest says the Dismissal:

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.

Priest: May He Who in glory ascended from us into heaven and sat at the right hand of the God and Father, Christ our true God, through the prayers of His most pure Mother; of the holy, glorious, and all-laudable Apostles; of St. (of the temple....); of St. (of the day), whom we commemorate today; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; and of all the saints: have mercy on us and save us for He is good and loves mankind.

¹⁷ In some traditions, during Paschaltide, “Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem” is sung.

Reader: Amen.

The Priest enters the Sanctuary, closes the Holy Doors and the curtain, kisses the Holy Gospel and the Altar Table and then the Clergy remove their vestments.

APPENDIX A

THE SEVEN VESPERS PRAYERS

I

O Lord, compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and of great mercy, give heed to our prayers, and attend to the voice of our supplications. Work upon us a sign for good. Guide us in Your way that we may walk in Your truth. Gladden our hearts that we may fear Your holy name, for You are great and You work wonders. You alone are God, and among the gods there is none like You, O Lord, powerful in mercy and good in might, to help and to comfort and to save all those who hope in Your holy name. For to You belong all glory, honor, and worship: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

II

O Lord, in Your displeasure, rebuke us not, neither chasten us in Your wrath, but deal with us according to Your tenderness, O physician and healer of our souls. Guide us to the haven of Your will. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts to the knowledge of Your truth, and grant that the remainder of the present day and the whole time of our life may be peaceful and sinless, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints. For Yours is the majesty, and Yours are 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. Amen.

III

O Lord our God, remember us, Your sinful and unprofitable servants, when we call on Your holy and venerable name, and put us not to shame in our expectation of Your mercy, but grant us, O Lord, all our petitions which are unto salvation, and make us worthy to love and fear You with all our hearts, and to do Your will in all things. For You are a good 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. Amen.

IV

O You to Whom the holy powers sing with unending hymns and unceasing doxologies, fill our mouths with Your praise that we may magnify Your holy name. And grant to us part and inheritance with all those who fear You in truth and keep Your commandments, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints. For to You belong all glory, honor, and worship, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

V

O Lord, Lord, Who uphold all things in the most pure hollow of Your hand, Who are long-suffering toward us all, and Who turn away from our wickedness, remember Your compassion and Your mercy. Look on us with Your goodness. Grant to us also by Your grace, through the remainder of the present day, to avoid the various subtle snares of the Evil One. Keep our lives unassailed, through the grace of Your all holy Spirit. Through the mercy and love toward mankind of Your only-begotten Son, with Whom You are blessed, together with Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

VI

O God, great and wonderful, Who with goodness indescribable and rich providence, order all things and grant to us earthly good things; Who have given us a pledge of the promised kingdom through the good things already granted to us, and have made us to shun all harm during that part of the day which is past, grant that we may also fulfill the remainder of this day blamelessly before Your holy glory, and hymn You, our God Who alone are good and love mankind. For You are our God, 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. Amen.

VII

a

O great and most high God, You alone have immortality, and You dwell in unapproachable light. You have fashioned all creation in wisdom. You have divided the light from the darkness, and have set the sun to rule the day and the moon and stars to rule the night. You have also permitted us sinners at this present hour to come before Your presence with confession and to offer to You our evening doxology. O Lord, Lover of Mankind, direct our prayer as incense before You, and accept it as a sweet fragrance. Grant that the present evening and coming night be peaceful. Clothe us with the armor of light. Rescue us from the fear of night, and from everything that walks in darkness. Grant that the sleep that You have given us for rest in our weakness may be free from every fantasy of the devil.

b

O Master of all, leader of the good, may we, being moved to compunction on our beds, remember Your name in the night. Enlightened by doing Your commandments, may we rise up with joyful soul to glorify Your goodness of heart for our own sins and those of all Your people. Look on them in mercy, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos. For You are a good 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. Amen.

APPENDIX F

GREAT VESPERS AT A VIGIL

The Priest with the censer, and the Deacon with a candle, do a complete censing of the Sanctuary (the Deacon walks in front of the Priest while the Priest censes).

After censing the Sanctuary, the Deacon exits through the North door to the Solea and says:

Deacon: Arise! Bless, Master!

The Deacon then goes to the High Place and stands facing the Priest.

The Priest, moving to the front of the Altar Table, makes the Sign of the Cross with the censer and says:

*Priest: Glory to the holy, consubstantial, life-creating, and undivided Trinity,
always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.*

And Great Vespers continues as usual except:

- “Come, let us worship” is sung by the Clergy.
- The Introductory Psalm is sung.
- “Grant, O Lord...” is usually sung.
- The Canticle of Simeon is sung.
- The Litia is correct in Russian usage, if appointed.
- The Troparion is replaced by “Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos” (3x) unless it is a Great Feast.