

# Vespers

## St Catherine Orthodox Church

Revision: April 2025



Vespers is the evening prayer service of the Orthodox Church. It is traditionally associated with sunset and the lighting of lamps. It is the beginning of the liturgical day, and a Saturday evening Vespers service is the beginning of a new liturgical week. The hymn “O Gladsome Light” is one of the Church’s most ancient.

There are two primary forms of Vespers. Great Vespers is held on Saturday evenings and on the eves of great feasts of the Church. A Vespers at any other time is called Daily Vespers. This booklet assumes Great Vespers, but includes comments about what might differ for Daily Vespers. There is also a service called a Vesperal Divine Liturgy, and this booklet marks the point at which Vespers transitions into the Divine Liturgy.

The traditional services of the daily cycle are: Vespers, Compline, the Midnight Office, Orthros (Matins), 1st Hour, 3rd Hour, 6th Hour, and 9th Hour. At the core of each of these services is a set of Psalms. This booklet uses Septuagint Psalm numbering, which usually means that the numbers you see here are one less than you would expect in a Bible based on Hebrew Psalm numbering (but not always).

The contents of this booklet are primarily derived from the 2022 Archdiocesan Service Book and the Fourth Edition of the Liturgikon.

Reader John Marion

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## The Beginning of Vespers

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

People: Amen.

*During the Paschal Season, “Come, let us worship” is replaced with the Paschal Hymn “Christ is risen...”.*

Choir: Come, let us worship and fall down before 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.

Reader: *Reads Psalm 103 from the Psalter.*

## The Litany of Peace

*The choir and people respond “Lord, have mercy” to each petition.*

Deacon: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

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

For the peace of the whole world, the good estate of the holy churches of God and the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

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

For our father and Metropolitan *N.* and our Bishop *N.*, the honorably presbytery, the diaconate in Christ, all the clergy and all the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For our country, its president, civil authorities and armed forces, let us pray to the Lord.

For this city and every city and countryside and the faithful who dwell therein, let us pray to the Lord.

For healthful seasons, abundance of the fruits of the earth, and peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

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

For our deliverance from all tribulation, wrath, danger, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.

Help us; save us; have mercy on us; and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most [*People, quietly: “Most Holy Theotokos, save us”*] 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.

People: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: For unto Thee are due 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 Lamp-Lighting Psalms

*The Psalms assigned to this portion of Vespers are 140, 141, 129, and 116.*

*The first two verses of Psalm 140 “O Lord, I have cried...” are sung by the choir. It is sung in one of eight different modes, depending on the tone of the week.*

## O Lord, I Have Cried (Tone of Week)

Choir: O Lord, I have cried out unto Thee. Hear Thou me.  
Hear Thou me, O Lord. O Lord, I have cried out unto  
Thee. Hear Thou me. Give ear to the voice of my  
supplication when I cry out unto Thee. Hear Thou me,  
O Lord.

Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as the incense  
and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.  
Hear Thou me, O Lord.

*The Reader then chants the verses of Psalms 140:3-141:9.*

Reader: Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a  
protecting door about my lips.

Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in  
sins.

With men that work iniquity; and I will not  
communicate with the choicest of them.

The just man shall correct me in mercy and shall  
reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner anoint my  
head.

For my prayer also shall still be against the things with  
which they are well pleased; their judges falling upon  
the rock have been swallowed up.

They shall hear my words, for they are sweet; as when the thickness of the earth is broken upon the ground, their bones are scattered by the side of hades.

But to Thee, O Lord, Lord, are mine eyes; in Thee have I put my trust, take not away my soul.

Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity.

Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst I alone escape.

I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord, did I make my supplication.

I poured out my supplication before Him; I showed before Him my trouble.

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path.

In the way wherein I walked have they secretly laid a snare for me.

I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me.

Refuge failed me; no one cared for my soul.

I cried unto Thee, O Lord; I said: Thou art my refuge  
and my portion in the land of the living.

Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low.

Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger  
than I.

*For the remaining 10 verses of this sequence (Psalm 141:10-11,  
Psalm 129, and Psalm 116), small stanzas from the  
hymnography may accompany each verse. The content of these  
stanzas is based on the liturgical cycles of the Church year.*

Reader: Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy  
Name.

The righteous shall wait for me until Thou recompense  
me.

Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord  
hear my voice.

Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my  
supplication.

If Thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord,  
who shall stand? For with Thee there is forgiveness.

Because of Thy Name have I waited for Thee, O Lord;  
my soul hath waited upon Thy word, my soul hath  
hoped in the Lord.

From the morning watch until night, from the morning  
watch let Israel trust in the Lord.

For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is  
abundant redemption, and He will deliver Israel from  
all his iniquities.

Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye  
people.

For His mercy is great toward us, and the truth of the  
Lord endureth forever.

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

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

## The Entrance

*During a Daily Vespers, the entrance is normally not done. The choir proceeds to “O Gladsome Light” and then the prokeimenon without introduction.*

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

## O Gladsome Light (Tone 5)

Choir: 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 meet it is at all times to worship Thee with voices of praise, O Son of God and Giver of Life. Therefore all the world doth glorify Thee.

## The Prokeimenon

Deacon: The evening prokeimenon.

*On most Saturday Vespers services, the refrain of the prokeimenon is Psalm 92:1, “The Lord is king...”*

Reader: *Chants the refrain of the prokeimenon.*

People: *Repeat the refrain.*

Reader: *Chants the verse, repeating multiple times if there are multiple verses.*

People: *Repeat the refrain in response to each verse.*

Reader: *Chants part of the refrain.*

People: *Complete the refrain, more slowly than usual.*

*On the Kneeling Vespers of Pentecost Monday, the first kneeling prayer is inserted here, and other kneeling prayers are inserted throughout the service.*

## Scripture Readings

*Sometimes Scripture readings are appointed, usually from the Old Testament. The following section is done for each.*

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: *Announces the Scripture reading.*

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: *Reads the appointed Scripture reading.*

*In the case of a Vespereal Divine Liturgy, this is the transition from Vespers to Divine Liturgy. The Divine Liturgy will begin with the Trisagion Hymn right before the Epistle and Gospel readings.*

## The Litany of Fervent Supplication

*During a Daily Vespers, this litany is skipped.*

*The choir and people respond “Lord, have mercy” to each petition until noted.*

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

O Lord Almighty, the God of our fathers, we pray thee hearken and have mercy.

*The choir and people respond “Lord, have mercy” thrice to each remaining petition.*

Deacon: Have mercy on us, O God, according to thy great mercy, we pray thee, hearken and have mercy.

Again we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians.

Again we pray for our father and Metropolitan *N.*, and our Bishop *N.*

Again we pray for our brethren: the priests, hieromonks, deacons, hierodeacons, and monastics, and all our brotherhood in Christ.

Again we pray for mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, pardon, and remission of sins for the servants of God, *NN.*, and all Orthodox Christians of true worship who live and dwell in this community.

Again we pray for the blessed and ever-memorable founders of this holy church, and for the servants of God, *NN.*, and all of our fathers and brethren, the Orthodox departed this life before us, who here and in all the world lie asleep in the Lord.

Again we pray for those who bear fruit and do good works in this holy and all-venerable temple, those who serve and those who sing and all the people here present, who await thy great and rich mercy.

Priest: For thou art a merciful God and lovest mankind, and unto thee we ascribe † glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

## The Evening Prayer

People: Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is they name forever. Amen.

Let thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we have set our hope on thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord; teach my thy statutes. Blessed art thou, O Master; make me to understand thy statues. Blessed art thou, O Holy One; enlighten me with thy statutes.

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever. O despise not the works of thy hands. To thee belongeth worship, to thee belongeth praise, to thee belongeth † glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

## The Supplication

*The choir and people respond “Lord, have mercy” to each petition until noted.*

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

Help us; save us; have mercy on us; and keep us, O God, by they grace.

*The choir and people respond “Grant this, O Lord” to the next and all following petitions.*

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

An angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.

Pardon and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

All things good and profitable for our souls and peace for the world, let us ask of the Lord.

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

A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful, and a good defense before the fearful judgment seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord.

Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most [*People, quietly: "Most Holy Theotokos, save us"*] 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.

People: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: For thou art a good God and lovest mankind, and unto thee we ascribe † glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

## The Prayer with Heads Bowed

Priest: Peace be to all.

People: And to thy spirit.

Priest: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

People: To Thee, O Lord.

*The people bow their heads until “Amen.”*

Priest: O Lord our God, who didst bow the heavens and come down for the salvation of mankind: Look upon thy servants and thine inheritance; for unto thee, the fearful Judge who yet lovest mankind, have thy servants bowed their heads and submissively inclined their necks, awaiting not help from men but entreating thy mercy and looking confidently for thy 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 and from vain thoughts and from evil imaginations.

Blessed and † glorified by the might of thy kingdom, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

## The Aposticha and Prayer of St Symeon

Reader: *Chants or reads a stanza from the Aposticha.*

*Small stanzas from the hymnography accompany the following verses. The verses may vary, but the most common verses for a Saturday evening Vespers are listed here. The content of the stanzas is based on the liturgical cycles of the Church year.*

Reader: The Lord is King and hath clothed himself with majesty. The Lord is is robed; he is girded with strength.

For he has established the world so that it shall never be moved.

Holiness befits thy house, O Lord, forevermore.

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

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

### **The Hymn of St Symeon (Tone 6)**

Choir: Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.

### **The Trisagion Prayers**

People: ‡ Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3x)

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

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

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

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name; Thy kingdom come. Thy 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 evil.

Priest: For Thine 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.

People: Amen.

## Hymns of the Day

*A number of variable hymns are inserted here. Most of the time, the first one is the Resurrection Hymn for the tone of the week.*

*Sometimes, during Daily Vespers the Litany of Fervent Supplication which was skipped above is placed here.*

# The Dismissal

Deacon: Wisdom.

People: Father, bless.

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

People: Amen. Preserve, O God, the holy Orthodox Faith and all Orthodox Christians, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Priest: Most holy Theotokos, save us.

People: More honorable than the cherubim and glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, thou who without corruption didst bear God the Word and art truly Theotokos: we magnify thee.

Priest: Glory to thee, O Christ our God and our Hope, glory to thee.

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

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Father, bless.

Priest: *Commemorates the saints...*

...whose memory we celebrate, and of all the saints,  
have mercy on us and save us, forasmuch as He is  
good and loves mankind.

People: Amen.

Priest: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Christ  
our God, have mercy on us and save us.

People: Amen. Amen.

