

Vespers

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, for the sake of the prayers of Thy most pure Mother, of our holy and God-bearing fathers, and all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for Thou art good and the Lover of mankind.

Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee.

O Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, Treasury of good things and Giver of life: Come and dwell in us, and cleanse us of all impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. *Thrice.*

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

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, blot but our sins. O Master, pardon our iniquities. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. *Thrice.*

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

Our Father, Who art in the heavens, hallowed be 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Lord, have mercy. *12 times.*

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

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

O come let us worship God our King.

O come let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and God.

O come let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and God.

Psalm 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God, Thou hast been magnified exceedingly. Confession and majesty hast Thou put on, Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who stretchest out the heaven as it were a curtain; Who supporteth His chambers in the waters, Who appointeth the clouds for His ascent, Who walketh upon the wings of the winds, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire, Who establisheth the earth in the sureness thereof; it shall not be turned back for ever and ever. The abyss like a garment is His mantle; upon the mountains shall the waters stand. At Thy rebuke they will flee, at the voice of Thy thunder shall they be afraid. The mountains rise up and the plains sink down, unto the place where Thou hast established them. Thou appointedst a bound that they shall not pass, neither return to cover the earth. He sendeth forth springs in the valleys; between the mountains will the

waters run. They shall give drink to all the beasts of the field; the wild asses will wait to quench their thirst. Beside them will the birds of the heaven lodge, from the midst of the rocks will they give voice. He watereth the mountains from His chambers; the earth shall be satisfied with the fruit of Thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men, To bring forth bread out of the earth; and wine maketh glad the heart of man. To make his face cheerful with oil; and bread strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the plain shall be satisfied, the cedars of Lebanon, which Thou hast planted. There will the sparrows make their nests; the house of the heron is chief among them. The high mountains are a refuge for the harts, and so is the rock for the hares. He hath made the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night, wherein all the beasts of the forest will go abroad. Young lions roaring after their prey, and seeking their food from God. The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together, and they lay them down in their dens. But man shall go forth unto his work, and to his labor until the evening. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is filled with Thy creation. So is this great and spacious sea, therein are things creeping innumerable, small living creatures with the great. There go the ships; there this dragon, whom Thou hast made to play therein. All things wait on Thee, to give them their food in due season; when Thou givest it them, they will gather it. When Thou openest Thy hand, all things shall be filled with goodness; when Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled. Thou wilt take their spirit, and they shall cease; and unto their dust shall they return. Thou wilt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth. Let the glory of the Lord be unto the ages; the Lord will rejoice in His works. Who looketh on the earth and maketh it tremble, Who toucheth the mountains and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord throughout my life, I will chant to my God for as long as I have my being. May my words be sweet unto Him, and I will rejoice in the Lord. O that sinners would cease from the earth, and they that work iniquity, that they should be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. The sun knoweth his going down, Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God. **Thrice.**

Lord, have mercy. *12 times.*

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

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

Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me. * Hearken unto me, O Lord. * Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me; * attend to the voice of my supplication, * when I cry unto Thee. * Hearken unto me, O Lord.

Let my prayer be set forth * as incense before Thee, * the lifting up of my hands * as an evening sacrifice. * Hearken unto me, O Lord.

Set, O Lord, a watch before my mouth, and a door of enclosure round about my lips. Incline not my heart unto words of evil, to make excuse with excuses in sins. With men that work iniquity; and I will not join with their chosen. The righteous man will chasten me with mercy and reprove me; as for the oil of the sinner, let it not anoint my head. For yet more is my prayer in the presence of their pleasures; swallowed up near by the rock have their judges been. They shall hear my words, for they be sweetened; as a clod of earth is broken upon the earth, so have their bones been scattered nigh unto hades. For unto Thee, O Lord, O Lord, are mine eyes, in Thee have I hoped; take not my soul away. Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and from the stumbling-blocks of them that work iniquity. The sinners shall fall into their own net; I am alone until I pass by. With my voice unto the Lord have I cried, with my voice unto the Lord have I made supplication. I will pour out before Him my supplication, mine affliction before Him will I declare. When my spirit was fainting within me, then Thou knewest my paths. In this way wherein I have walked they hid for me a snare. I looked upon my right hand, and beheld, and there was none that did know me. Flight hath failed me, and there is none that watcheth out for my soul. I have cried unto Thee, O Lord; I said: Thou art my hope, my portion art Thou in the land of the living. Attend unto my supplication, for I am brought very low. Deliver me from them that persecute me, for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison: that I may confess Thy name. The righteous shall wait patiently for me * until Thou shalt reward me.

Tone 6:

Verse: Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord; * O Lord, hear my voice.

My wretched soul hath been weakened by my many sins * and by the pleasures of this life, * and I lay upon the bed of slothfulness, * O Master I cry to Thee: * O merciful One come and visit me, * and grant me health and mercy. * Forsake me not, lest I sleep unto death * and the enemy rejoiceth over my downfall: * for he ever seeketh me, O Savior, ** to lead me into the depths of Hades.

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

I have rivaled in foolishness the unmerciful rich man, * overwhelmed by sensuality and passions, I rejoice in pleasures. * Like Lazarus my mind ever layeth at the gates of penitence, O Lord, * but with indifference I pass it by, * leaving it hungry, sick and wounded by the passions. * Wherefore I am deserving of the flames of Gehenna: * but do Thou deliver me from them, O Master, ** for Thou alone art rich in mercy.

Tone 4:

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

O Lord, while dwelling in the flesh on the far side of the Jordan, * Thou didst foretell that the sickness of Lazarus would not be unto death, * but rather it would be unto Thy glory,

O our God. * Glory to Thy mighty acts and Thine all-sovereign power, * for Thou hast destroyed death ** in Thy great mercy O Lover of mankind.

Tone 6:

Verse: For Thy name's sake have I patiently waited for Thee, O Lord; my soul hath patiently waited for Thy word, * my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

Verse: From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch * let Israel hope in the Lord.

Gabriel stood before thee, * O Maiden, * revealing the pre-eternal counsel, * saluting thee and exclaiming: * "Rejoice, O earth unsown! * Rejoice, O bush unburnt! * Rejoice, O depth hard to fathom! * Rejoice, O bridge leading to the heavens * and lofty ladder, which Jacob beheld! * Rejoice, O divine jar of Manna! * Rejoice, annulment of the curse! * Rejoice, restoration of Adam: the Lord is with thee!

Verse: For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption; * and He shall redeem Israel out of all his iniquities.

Verse: O praise the Lord, all ye nations; * praise Him, all ye peoples.

"Thou appearest to me as a man," * the incorrupt Maiden saith to the supreme commander; * "yet how is it that thou announcest words which are beyond mankind? * For thou hast said that God is with me, * and that He will dwell within my womb. * Tell me, how shall I become * so spacious a dwelling * and a place of sanctity * which surpasseth the cherubim? * Deceive me no more with falsehoods, * for I have not known carnal lust, * I have not partaken of marriage, * how then shall I give birth to a Child?"

Verse: For He hath made His mercy to prevail over us, * and the truth of the Lord abideth forever.

"When God desireth, * the order of nature is overcome," * said the incorporeal one; * "and things beyond man are wrought. * Believe thou my true words, * O most holy and immaculate one!" * And she cried aloud: * "Be it now with me according to thy words: * I shall give birth. to the Incorporeal One, * Who will borrow flesh from me, * that through this union He might lead mankind up * to his primal dignity, * in that He alone is mighty!"

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

The Archangel Gabriel was sent from heaven to announce the conception to the Virgin. And, arriving in Nazareth, he pondered within himself, marveling at the wonder: "How is it that He Who in the highest is unapproachable is born of the Virgin; that He Who hath heaven for His throne and the earth for His footstool is contained within the Virgin's womb; that He upon Whom the six-winged and many-eyed beings cannot gaze hath

been well pleased to become incarnate of her by His word alone? This is God's word. Why, therefore, do I stand and not say to the Virgin: "Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace! The Lord is with thee! Rejoice, O pure Virgin! Rejoice, O unwedded Bride! Rejoice, O Mother of Life! Blessed is the Fruit of thy womb!"

O Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father, O Jesus Christ: Having come to the setting of the sun, having beheld the evening light, we praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: God. Meet it is for Thee at all times to be praised with reverent voices, O Son of God, Giver of life. Wherefore, the world doth glorify Thee.

Prokeimenon in Tone 4: O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: * for His mercy endureth for ever.

Verse: So let them say that have been redeemed by the Lord.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS (27:1 - 41)

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly,

my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee. And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck. And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him.

Prokeimenon in Tone 7: Be Thou exalted above the heavens, O God: * and Thy glory above all the earth.

Verse: Ready is my heart O God, ready is my heart.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS (19:16 - 25)

He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul; but he that despiseth his ways shall die. He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again. Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again. Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end. There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand. The desire of a man is his kindness: and a poor man is better than a liar. The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil. A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again. Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

A READING FROM GENESIS

Jacob went forth from the well of the oath, and departed into Haran. And he came to a certain place, and slept there, for the sun had gone down; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it at his head, and lay down to sleep in that place, and dreamed: and behold a ladder fixed on the earth, whose top reached to heaven, and the angels of God ascended and descended on it. And the Lord stood upon it, and said: "I am the God of thy father Abraham, and the God of Isaac. Fear not; the land on which thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be like the sand of the earth; and it shall spread abroad to the sea, and the south. and the north, and the east; and in thee and in thy seed shall all tribes of the earth be blessed. And behold I am with thee to preserve thee continually in all the way wherein thou shalt go; and I will bring thee back to this land; for I will not desert thee, until I have done all that I have said to thee." And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said: "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And he was afraid, and sad: "How fearful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL

Thus saith the Lord: "It shall come to pass from the eighth day and onward, that the priests shall offer your wholeburnt-offerings on the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you," saith the Lord. Then He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary that faceth eastward; .and it was shut. And the Lord said to me: "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall pass through it; for the Lord God of Israel shall enter by it, and it shall be shut. For the Prince, He shall sit in it, to eat bread before the Lord; He shall go in by the way of the porch of the gate, and shall go forth by the way of the same." And He brought me in by the way of the gate that faceth northward, in front of the house: and I looked, and, behold! the house was full of the glory of the Lord.

A READING FROM PROVERBS

Wisdom hath built a house for herself and set up seven pillars. She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine in a bowl and prepared her table. She hath sent forth her servants, calling with a loud proclamation to the feast, saying: "Whoso is foolish, let him turn aside to me." And to those who want understanding, she saith: "Come, eat of my bread, and drink wine which I have mingled for you. Leave folly, that ye may reign forever; and seek wisdom, and improve understanding by knowledge." He that reproveth evil men shall get dishonor to himself; and he that rebuketh an ungodly man shall disgrace himself. Rebuke not evil men, lest they should hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give an opportunity to a wise man, and he will be wiser: instruct a just man, and he will receive more instruction. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the counsel of the law is the character of a sound mind. For in this way thou shalt live long, and years of thy life shall be added to thee.

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 Thy name unto the ages of ages. Amen. Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Master, give me understanding of Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Holy One, enlighten me by Thy statutes. O Lord, Thy mercy endureth forever; disdain not the works of Thy hands. To Thee is due praise, to Thee is due a song, to Thee glory is due, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. *12 times.*

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

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

The Aposticha. Tone 4:

Deliver us from soul-destructive greed O Savior, * and grant us a place with Lazarus the beggar in the bosom of Abraham. * For Thou Who art rich in mercy * willingly becoming poor for our sakes, * leading us up from corruption to incorruption, * as Thou art a merciful God ** and the Lover of mankind.

Verse: Unto Thee have I lifted up mine eyes, unto Thee that dwellest in heaven. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid look unto the hands of her mistress, so do our eyes look unto the Lord our God, * until He take pity on us.

Verse: Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for greatly are we filled with abasement. Greatly hath our soul been filled therewith; let reproach come upon them that prosper, * and abasement on the proud.

To the Martyrs: Thou hast accepted the patience of the holy martyrs: * in Thy love accept also our hymns of praise, ** and by their intercessions grant us Thy great mercy.

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

Tone 4:

Today is the joy of the annunciation, the triumph of virginity! Those below are united to those above! Adam is restored, and Eve is freed from her primal grief. The tabernacle of our nature, mingled with divinity, hath become the temple of God! O the mystery! Incomprehensible is the image of His abasement, and ineffable the richness of His goodness! An angel serveth the miracle, and the Virgin's womb receiveth the Son. The Holy Spirit is sent down from on high, and the Father is well pleased. The covenant is enacted by common consent. Saved thereby, let us cry out together with Gabriel to the Virgin: Rejoice, O joyous one, from whom Christ God, our salvation, is come, assuming our nature and elevating it in Himself! Him do thou entreat, that our souls be saved.

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.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. *Thrice.*

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

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, blot but our sins. O Master, pardon our iniquities. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. *Thrice.*

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Our Father, Who art in the heavens, hallowed be 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Troparion Tone 4:

Today is the fountainhead of our salvation/ and the manifestation of the mystery which was from eternity./ The Son of God becometh the Virgin's Son,/ and Gabriel proclaimeth the good tidings of grace;/ wherefore, we also cry to the Theotokos with him:/ Rejoice, thou who art full of grace,// the Lord is with thee.

Lord, have mercy. **Thrice**

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

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

O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, for the sake of the prayers of Thy most pure Mother, of our holy and God-bearing fathers, and all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for Thou art good and the Lover of mankind.