

GREAT VESPERS ON THE FORTIETH DAY AFTER PASCHA FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

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

Choir: Amen.

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.

THE PSALM OF INTRODUCTION—PSALM 103

Reader: 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 forever 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. 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, wherein are things creeping innumerable, small living creatures with the great. There go the ships; there this leviathan, 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; 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 ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God. (*thrice*)

O our God and our Hope, glory to Thee!

THE GREAT LITANY

Deacon: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

The choir responds "Lord, have mercy" to each petition until noted.

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., (our bishop, N.,) the honorable presbytery, the diaconate in Christ, all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For our country, its president (or appropriate head of state), 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 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.

Choir: 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.

Choir: Amen.

“O LORD I HAVE CRIED” IN TONE SIX

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.

Choir: 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.

- + Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a protecting door round 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 hell.
- + 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 Ascension in Tone Six

Verse 10. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy Name.

The Lord ascended to the heavens to send the Comforter into the world. Wherefore, the heavens made ready His throne, and the clouds His mount. The angels wonder as they see a man more exalted than they. The Father receiveth into His bosom Him Who is eternally with Him. The Holy Spirit commandeth all the angels, Lift your heads, O princes, and all ye nations, clap your hands; for Christ hath ascended whither He was before.

Verse 9. The righteous shall wait for me until Thou recompense me.

The Lord ascended to the heavens ... (repeat above)

Verse 8. Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord hear my voice.

The cherubim were surprised, O Lord, at Thine Ascension, when they beheld Him Who sitteth on them ascending upon the clouds. Wherefore, we praise Thee; for Thy mercy is true, glory to Thee.

Verse 7. *Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.*
The cherubim were surprised, O Lord ... (repeat above)

Verse 6. *If Thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? For with Thee there is forgiveness.*

Having beheld Thine Ascension on the holy mountains, O Christ, the Splendor of the Father's glory, we praise the likeness of Thy radiant appearance. We worship Thy Passion and honor Thy Resurrection, glorifying Thy glorious ascension. Have mercy upon us.

Verse 5. *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.*

Having beheld Thine Ascension ... (repeat above)

Verse 4. *From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch let Israel trust in the Lord.*

When the Apostles saw Thee ascending in the clouds, O life-giving Christ, they frowned deeply, and mourned with tears, saying: Leave us not orphans, O Master, Thy servants whom thou didst love in Thy mercy; for Thou art compassionate. But send us Thy Most-holy Spirit as Thou didst promise to illumine our souls.

Verse 3. *For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.*

When the Apostles saw Thee ascending ... (repeat above)

Verse 2. *Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people.*

When Thou didst fulfill the mystery of Thy dispensation, O Lord, Thou didst take Thy Disciples and ascend the Mount of Olives, passing through the firmament of heaven. Wherefore, O Thou Who becamest humble for my sake, and Who didst ascend to the place from which Thou couldst not be separated, send down Thy most Holy Spirit to illumine our souls.

Verse 1. *For His mercy is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.*

When Thou didst fulfill the mystery ... (repeat above)

DOXASTICON FOR THE ASCENSION IN TONE SIX

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

From the Fatherly bosom Thou wast inseparable, O sweet Jesus, and on earth Thou didst live like a man. Today, Thou hast ascended in glory from the Mount of Olives; and by Thy pity Thou didst raise our fallen nature and seat it with the Father. Wherefore, the ranks of incorporeal celestials were amazed and overtaken by surprise. They trembled from wonder and magnified Thy love to mankind. With them, we terrestrials also glorify Thy condescension to us, and Thine Ascension from us, imploring and saying, O Thou Who didst fill Thy Disciples and Thy Mother the Theotokos with immeasurable joy by Thine Ascension, make us worthy by their beseechings of the joy of Thy chosen ones, for the sake of Thy Great Mercy.

- When "both now" is chanted, the clergy make the entrance with the censer.

Deacon: Wisdom! Let us attend!

O GLADSOME LIGHT (CHANT) (CHORAL)

Choir: O gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy and blessed Father: O Jesus Christ. Lo now that we have come to the setting of the sun, as we behold the evening light, we hymn Thee: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God. Meet it is for Thee at all times to be magnified by joyous voices, O Son of God and Giver of life. Wherefore the whole world doth glorify Thee.

Deacon: The Evening Prokeimenon!

WEDNESDAY PROKEIMENON IN TONE FIVE

Choir: Save me, O God, by Thy Name, and judge me by Thy strength. (*twice*)

Verse. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth!

Choir: Save me, O God, by Thy Name, and judge me by Thy strength.

THE OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

The First Reading

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah. (2:2-3)

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: Thus saith the Lord: In the last days the mountain of the Lord shall be manifest, and the house of God shall be on the summits of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall come to it. And many peoples shall go and say: Come, let us ascend to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will tell us His way, and we will walk in it.

The Second Reading

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah. (62:10-63:3, 7-9)

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: Thus saith the Lord: Go ye, pass through My gates, make ready My pathway and make a way for My people, and cast the stones out of the way; lift up a standard for the nations. For behold, the Lord hath proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say ye to the daughter of Zion: Behold, thy Savior is come, having His reward with Him and His work before His countenance. And He shall call them a holy people, redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called a city sought out, and not forsaken. Who is this that is come from Edam, with red garments from Bosor, so fair in His apparel? He crieth with mighty strength: I speak of righteousness and saving judgment. Wherefore are Thy garments red, and Thy raiment as if fresh from a trodden winepress? I am full of trodden grape, I have trodden the winepress utterly alone, and of the nations there is not a man with Me. I remembered the mercy of the Lord, I shall recall the virtues of the Lord, the praises of the Lord in all things wherein He recompenseth us. The Lord is a good judge to the house of Israel; He dealt with us according to His mercy, and according to the multitude of His righteousness. And He said: Are ye not My people? They are My children, and they shall not set Me at nought; and He became

for them salvation out of all their affliction. Not an ambassador, nor an Angel, but the Lord Himself saved them, because He loved them and spared them; He Himself redeemed them, and took them up, and lifted them up for all the days of eternity.

The Third Reading

Deacon: Wisdom!

Reader: The Reading from the Prophecy of Zachariah. (14:1, 4, 8-11)

Deacon: Let us attend!

Reader: Thus saith the Lord: Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which lieth opposite Jerusalem on the side whence is the dawning of the sun. And in that day living water shall come forth out of Jerusalem; half of it toward the former sea, and half of it toward the latter sea; and so shall it be in summer and spring. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His Name one, compassing all the earth, and the wilderness from Gabaah unto Remmon, to the south of Jerusalem. And He shall be exalted and shall remain in that place, from the gate of Benjamin to the place of the first gate, to the gate of Gomor, and to the tower of Anameel, and to the gate of the corners, as far as the king's winepresses. They shall dwell therein; and there shall be no more anything accursed, and Jerusalem shall dwell securely.

THE LITANY OF FERVENT SUPPLICATION

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

The choir responds "Lord, have mercy" to the first two petitions.

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

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

The choir responds "Lord, have mercy" (thrice) to this and the remaining petitions until noted.

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.

Choir: 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 Thy 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 me Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Master; make me to understand Thy statutes. 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 LITANY OF SUPPLICATION

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

The choir responds "Lord, have mercy" to the first two petitions.

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

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

The choir responds "Grant this, O Lord" to this and the remaining petitions until noted.

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.

Calling to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, 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.

Choir: 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.

Choir: Amen.

THE PEACE

Priest: Peace be to all.

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Deacon: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

- *All bow their heads as the priest says the following prayer:*

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 be 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.

Choir: Amen.

- *If your parish will offer “The Service of the Litia and Artoklasia”, it is performed here.*

THE APOSTICHA FOR THE ASCENSION IN TONE TWO

Thou wast born as Thou didst will, O our God; Thou didst appear of Thine own choice, and suffer in the flesh. Thou didst rise from the dead, and hast trodden down death, ascending in glory, O Thou Who fulfilllest all, and didst send us the divine Spirit, that we may praise and glorify Thy Godhead.

Verse 1. *Clap your hands, all ye nations; shout unto God with a voice of rejoicing.*

The powers, beholding Thine Ascension from the Mount of Olives, O Christ shouted to one another, saying, Who is this? And it was said to them, He is the mighty One in battles. He is in truth the King of Glory. Wherefore, are His clothes red? Because He cometh from Bosor, which is the flesh. But Thou, being God, didst sit at the right hand of the majesty and didst send us the Holy Spirit that He may guide us and save our souls.

Verse 2. *God is gone up in jubilation, the Lord with the voice of the trumpet.*

Thou didst ascend in glory from the Mount of Olives, O Christ God, at Thy Disciples' side, and didst sit down at the right hand of the Father, O Thou Who dost fill all with Thy Godhead, sending to them Thy Holy Spirit, the Illuminator, Strengtheners, and Sanctifier of our souls.

DOXASTICON FOR THE ASCENSION IN TONE SIX

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

God hath ascended in jubilation, the Lord with the voice of the trumpet, to raise the fallen likeness of Adam, and send the comforting Spirit to sanctify our souls.

THE HYMN OF ST. SIMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER (CHANT) (CHORAL)

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. (*thrice*)
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. (*thrice*)
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 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 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.

Choir: Amen.

APOLYTIKION OF THE ASCENSION IN TONE FOUR (CHANT) (CHORAL)

Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Thy Disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit, making them confident through the blessing that Thou art the Son of God, and Deliverer of the world. (*thrice*)

THE DISMISSAL

Deacon: Wisdom!

Choir: Father, bless.

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

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

Priest: Most-holy Theotokos, save us.

Choir: More honorable than the cherubim and more 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 (*thrice*). Father, bless.

Priest: May He Who in glory ascended from us into Heaven and sat at the right hand of God the Father, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; by the might of the Precious and Life-giving Cross; by the protection of the honorable Bodiless Powers of Heaven; at the supplication of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; of the holy, glorious and all-laudable apostles; of the holy, glorious and right-victorious Martyrs; of our venerable and God-bearing Fathers; *of Saint N., the patron and protector of this holy community*; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, and of all the saints: have mercy on us and save us, forasmuch as He is good and loveth mankind.

Priest: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.

Choir: Amen.

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