

# THE RANKING OF FEASTS

## 1<sup>st</sup> CLASS - FEASTS OF THE MASTER<sup>1</sup>

These Feasts have a Forefeast and a Leavetaking.<sup>2</sup> An All-night Vigil is appointed. At Great Vespers there is no reading from the Psalter following the litany of peace, except if certain of these Feasts of the Master coincide with a Sunday in which case the first kathisma of the Psalter (Psalms 1-8) is read at Great Vespers on Saturday evening.<sup>3</sup> At Festal Orthros the polyeleos (Psalms 134 and 135) is chanted immediately after the second poetic kathisma (on a Sunday it replaces the Amomos [Psalm 118] as the third reading from the Psalter), and, if desired, is followed by the select Psalm verses from the Eclogarion. There is a gospel (chanted from the holy doors and without a veneration following), and the praises and the great doxology are chanted. The whole service is for the Feast alone,<sup>4</sup> even when there is a coincidence with a Sunday.<sup>5</sup> There is rest from labor, and when there is a coincidence with a fast day fish, wine and oil may be consumed.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Nativity of Christ (Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>), Theophany (Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>), Transfiguration (Aug. 6<sup>th</sup>), Palm Sunday (Sunday before Pascha), Ascension (40<sup>th</sup> day after Pascha), Pentecost (50<sup>th</sup> day after Pascha), and the Elevation of the Cross (Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>). Thomas Sunday (Sunday after Pascha) also has certain characteristics of a Feast of the Master. Pascha, the Feast of Feasts, is considered a class unto itself.

<sup>2</sup> Except Palm Sunday which has neither Forefeast nor Leavetaking, Ascension which has no Forefeast, and Pentecost which has no Forefeast.

<sup>3</sup> The first kathisma of the Psalter is never omitted from Great Vespers on a Saturday evening except on Pentecost and when there is a coincidence of a Sunday with the Nativity of Christ (Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>), Theophany (Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>) and Transfiguration (Aug. 6<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>4</sup> See Parish Typikon: Chart II for this rule. Note that at Divine Liturgy for a Feast of the Master the patronal apolytikion of the church temple is not chanted following the little entrance.

<sup>5</sup> On the evening of each Feast of the Master (e.g., the evening of Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, etc.) and Thomas Sunday, Great Vespers is celebrated. There is no kathisma from the Psalter, and the appointed great prokeimenon, rather than the usual daily prokeimenon, is chanted (except when Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> or Aug. 6<sup>th</sup> falls on a Saturday, in which case the appointed great prokeimenon is chanted at Great Vespers on Friday evening and the usual daily prokeimenon *The Lord is King* is chanted at Great Vespers on Saturday evening). The only exception to this rule is that Great Vespers is not celebrated on the evening of Palm Sunday, but rather the order of Daily Vespers with an entrance is followed, the usual Sunday evening prokeimenon *Behold, now bless ye the Lord* is chanted, and, following the trisagion prayers and the lenten troparia [with prostrations], the service ends as on the preceding Sunday evenings of Great Lent.

<sup>6</sup> Except for the Elevation of the Cross (Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>) which is always observed as a strict fast when it falls on a weekday; only when it falls on a Saturday or a Sunday are wine and oil permitted. Wine and oil are also permitted on the Paramon of the Nativity (Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>) and on the Paramon of Theophany (Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>) when they fall on a Saturday or Sunday. From the Nativity of Christ (Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>) until Jan. 4<sup>th</sup> and on Theophany (Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>) there is no abstinence of any sort and all types of food and drink may be consumed.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> CLASS - FEASTS OF THE MOTHER OF GOD<sup>7</sup>

These Feasts have a Forefeast and a Leavetaking. An All-night Vigil is appointed. At Great Vespers the first stasis of the first kathisma of the Psalter (Psalms 1-3), commonly called *Blessed is the man*, is read.<sup>8</sup> At Festal Orthros the polyeleos (Psalms 134 and 135, or, more properly, Psalm 44 *My heart hath poured forth a good word* with its poetic refrains) is chanted immediately after the second poetic kathisma (on a Sunday it replaces the Amomos [Psalm 118] as the third reading from the Psalter), and, if desired, is followed by the select Psalm verses from the Eclogarion. There is a gospel (chanted from the holy doors and without a veneration following), and the praises and the great doxology are chanted.<sup>9</sup> When there is a coincidence with a Sunday, the Menaion texts are combined with other texts according to the rule.<sup>10</sup> There is rest from labor, and when there is a coincidence with a fast day fish, wine and oil may be consumed.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Nativity of the Theotokos (Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>), her Entrance into the Temple (Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>) and her Dormition (Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>). The Meeting of the Lord (Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>) and the Annunciation (March 25<sup>th</sup>) are also considered Feasts of the Mother of God but, unlike the other three 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Feasts, these two also share certain characteristics proper to Feasts of the Master as well as having ones unique unto themselves.

<sup>8</sup> There is no reading from the Psalter at Great Vespers for the Meeting of the Lord (Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>) and the Annunciation (March 25<sup>th</sup>), except when they coincide with a Sunday in which case the entire first kathisma of the Psalter (Psalms 1-8) is read. According to the Typikon of the Great Church when a Feast of the Mother of God coincides with a Saturday or Monday the reading from the Psalter at Great Vespers may be omitted.

<sup>9</sup> Kollyva may be offered on Feasts of the Mother of God (2<sup>nd</sup> Class Feasts) and Saints of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Intermediate Classes (except those of any Bodiless Power or the Prophet Elias — since kollyva is a festive *memorial* offering), but it is not offered on Feasts of the Master (1<sup>st</sup> Class Feasts) or those of Saints celebrated as 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Class commemorations. When kollyva is offered, it is blessed (using the prayer appointed for that purpose) following the prayer behind the amvon at the end of the Divine Liturgy.

<sup>10</sup> See Parish Typikon: Chart II for this rule. Note that at Divine Liturgy for a Feast of the Mother of God the patronal apolytikion of the church temple is not chanted following the little entrance. For the unique and specific rules regarding the Meeting of the Lord (Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>) and the Annunciation (March 25<sup>th</sup>) and the numerous possible coincidences, refer directly to the Typikon of the Great Church. Note that when there is a coincidence of the Nativity of the Theotokos (Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>) with a Sunday, the epistle and gospel readings at Divine Liturgy are not for the Feast but are for the Sunday before the Elevation of the Cross.

<sup>11</sup> When the Annunciation (March 25<sup>th</sup>) falls during Great Lent fish, wine and oil are permitted. When it falls during Holy Week wine and oil (but not fish) are permitted. When it falls on Great Friday or Great Saturday wine (but not fish or oil) is permitted.

### 3<sup>RD</sup> CLASS - VIGIL or POLYELEOS<sup>12</sup>

These commemorations generally do not have a Forefeast or a Leavetaking.<sup>13</sup> An All-night Vigil may or may not be appointed; if one is appointed (there being Menaion text for Small Vespers), the commemoration is designated Vigil; if one is not appointed (by the Menaion or by the *Protos*), the commemoration is designated Polyeleos. At Great Vespers the first stasis of the first kathisma of the Psalter (Psalms 1-3) *Blessed is the man* is read.<sup>14</sup> *Lord, I have cried* is chanted with 6 or 8 stichera from the Menaion, followed by *Glory* and the commemoration's own doxastikon as found in the Menaion, and *Both now* and the dogmatikon<sup>15</sup> in the same tone as the doxastikon<sup>16</sup> (or as appointed in the Menaion). The aposticha is from the Menaion. At Festal Orthros the polyeleos (Psalms 134 and 135) is chanted immediately after the second poetic kathisma (on a Sunday it replaces the Amomos [Psalm 118] as the third reading from the Psalter), and, if desired, is followed by the select Psalm verses from the Eclogarion. There is a gospel (chanted from the holy doors and without a veneration following), and the seasonal katavasiai, the praises and the great doxology are chanted. When there is a coincidence with a Sunday, the Menaion texts are combined with other texts according to the rule.<sup>17</sup> There is rest from labor, and when there is a coincidence with a fast day wine and oil (and fish, if it is the patronal feast) may be consumed.<sup>18</sup>

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*Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Class commemorations there exist two Intermediate classes: (A.) Katholikon, since the largest bells are struck and the Divine Liturgy is served at the main holy table of the church temple rather than in a side chapel, and (B.) Small Bells, since the largest bells are not struck for this class of commemoration and Divine Liturgy may be served in a side chapel rather than at the main holy table of the church temple.*

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<sup>12</sup> Commemorations for which a complete akolouthia exists in the Menaion.

<sup>13</sup> Though the commemoration of St Demetrios (Oct. 26<sup>th</sup>), the Nativity of the Forerunner (June 24<sup>th</sup>), the commemoration of Ss Peter and Paul (June 29<sup>th</sup>), and the Beheading of the Forerunner (Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>) each has a Leavetaking.

<sup>14</sup> According to the Typikon of the Great Church when a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class commemoration coincides with a Saturday or Monday the reading from the Psalter at Great Vespers may be omitted.

<sup>15</sup> Strictly speaking, a dogmatikon is the theotokion chanted at Small Vespers on Saturday evening. The hymn referred to here is more properly entitled "the first theotokion of the tone" and is from Great Vespers on Saturday evening.

<sup>16</sup> However, on a Friday evening (except during a festal season when the festal doxastikon is chanted) and on a Saturday evening "the first theotokion of the tone" is chanted in the tone of the week.

<sup>17</sup> See Parish Typikon: Chart II for this rule.

<sup>18</sup> Except for the Beheading of the Forerunner (Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>) which is always observed as a strict fast when it falls on a weekday; only when it falls on a Saturday or a Sunday are wine and oil permitted.

## **INTERMEDIATE CLASS A - KATHOLIKON**<sup>19</sup>

These commemorations do not have a Forefeast or a Leavetaking. An All-night Vigil may not be served. The order of Great Vespers is followed as for a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class commemoration, but the special festal order of Daily Orthros is followed as for a 4<sup>th</sup> Class commemoration.<sup>20</sup> When there is a coincidence with a Sunday, the Menaion texts are combined with other texts according to the rules.<sup>21</sup> There is rest from labor, and some observe that when there is a coincidence with a fast day wine and oil may be consumed.

## **INTERMEDIATE CLASS B - SMALL BELLS**

A Small Bells commemoration is a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Class commemoration which, for a very specific reason (e.g., it being the patronal feastday of the church temple or of a saint whose relics or wonder-working icon is enshrined at the church temple, etc.), has been blessed by the bishop for more solemn celebration, in a very specific locale, with characteristics similar to but not identical with a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class commemoration. An All-night Vigil may not be served. The order of Great Vespers is followed as for a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class commemoration<sup>22</sup> except that there are no Old Testament readings and no litia and artoklasia.<sup>23</sup> The order of Festal Orthros is followed as for a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class commemoration except that the polyeleos is omitted. It should be noted that the texts which do not exist in the Menaion for a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Class commemoration, but which are needed in order to celebrate the day as Small Bells (e.g., texts for the Orthros gospel sequence from the anavathmoi and prokeimenon through the idiomelon on *Have mercy on me, O God*), may be found in the ‘General Menaion’ or ‘Anthologion’ which contains generic texts for various categories of saints (e.g., Apostles, Hierarchs, Martyrs, Monastics, Unmercenary Healers, etc.). When there is a coincidence with a Sunday, the Menaion texts which do exist, along with those used from the ‘General Menaion’ or ‘Anthologion,’ are combined with other texts according to the rule which governs the coincidence of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class commemoration with a Sunday.<sup>24</sup> There is rest from labor, and some observe that when there is a coincidence with a fast day wine and oil may be consumed.

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<sup>19</sup> For example, Ss Cosmas and Damian (July 1<sup>st</sup>), Dormition of Righteous Anna (July 25<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>20</sup> See Parish Typikon: Chart I for these rules.

<sup>21</sup> See Parish Typikon: Chart II for these rules.

<sup>22</sup> When an Intermediate commemoration coincides with a Saturday or Monday the reading from the Psalter at Great Vespers may be omitted.

<sup>23</sup> When litia troparia exist, they are sung only at the Midnight Office.

<sup>24</sup> See Parish Typikon: Chart II for this rule.

## 4<sup>TH</sup> CLASS - DOXOLOGY

These commemorations generally do not have a Forefeast or a Leavetaking.<sup>25</sup> An All-night Vigil may not be served. At Daily Vespers the kathisma of the Psalter appointed for the day of the week is read.<sup>26</sup> *Lord, I have cried* is chanted with 6 stichera, followed by *Glory* and the commemoration's own doxastikon as found in the Menaion, and *Both now* and the dogmatikon in the same tone as the doxastikon<sup>27</sup> (or as appointed in the Menaion). There is no entrance.<sup>28</sup> The aposticha and its doxastikon are both for the commemoration if they exist in the Menaion, otherwise they are taken from the Parakletike.<sup>29</sup> The special festal order of Daily Orthros is followed. The seasonal katavasiai are chanted after Odes 8 and 9, and the praises and the great doxology with the commemoration's apolytikion are chanted, after which the service continues as Festal Orthros through the dismissal. When there is a coincidence with a Sunday, the Menaion texts are combined with other texts according to the rule.<sup>30</sup>

## 5<sup>TH</sup> CLASS - SIMPLE

An All-night Vigil may not be served. At Daily Vespers the kathisma of the Psalter appointed for the day of the week is read.<sup>31</sup> *Lord, I have cried* is chanted with 6 stichera, followed by *Glory* and *Both now* and the appointed theotokion or stavro-

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<sup>25</sup> Though the Procession of the Cross (Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>) and the Conception of the Theotokos by St Anna (Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>) each has a Forefeast.

<sup>26</sup> If there was a Vigil the night before, the kathisma from the Psalter may be omitted.

<sup>27</sup> However, on a Friday evening (except during a festal season when the festal doxastikon is chanted) and on a Saturday evening "the first theotokion of the tone" is chanted in the tone of the week.

<sup>28</sup> An entrance is made at Daily Vespers only when specifically appointed (e.g. on the Leavetakings of feasts, nightly during the Dormition Fast, on the eve of the Forefeast of the Meeting of the Lord when it [Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>] falls on the Saturday before Cheesefare Sunday, on Cheesefare Sunday evening, on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday evenings of the Great Fast, on Palm Sunday evening, on a weekday evening during the 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 6<sup>th</sup> weeks of the Great Fast when it is a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class or Intermediate commemoration, etc.). On these occasions the priest dons the phelonion, the holy doors are opened, the entrance is made, and *O gladsome Light* is intoned (rather than chanted in Tone 2 or simply said) as the priest enters the sanctuary. The order of Daily Vespers resumes with the chanting of the appointed prokeimenon, after which the holy doors are closed and the priest removes his phelonion. Note that according to the Russian Typikon an entrance is not made on the Leavetaking of feasts.

<sup>29</sup> The term Parakletike refers to the book containing the eight tone cycle of hymnography appointed to be chanted at divine services for weekdays (Monday through Saturday); the term Octoechos is reserved for the book containing the eight tone cycle of resurrectional hymnography appointed to be chanted at divine services for Sundays.

<sup>30</sup> See Parish Typikon: Chart II for this rule.

<sup>31</sup> If there was a Vigil the night before, the kathisma from the Psalter may be omitted.

theotokion.<sup>32</sup> There is no entrance. The order of Daily Orthros is followed.<sup>33</sup> The seasonal *katavasiai* are not chanted, but at the end of Odes 3, 6, 8 and 9 the *heirmos* of the corresponding ode from the last canon of the day from the Menaion is chanted. *It is truly meet* is chanted following the *heirmos* of Ode 9 of the last canon of the day from the Menaion. The praises are read unless there are *stichera* appointed, in which case the praises are chanted together with the *Glory* and *Both now* with the appointed *doxastikon* and *theotokion* or *stavro-theotokion*. The exclamation “To thee belongeth glory, O Lord our God...” introduces the reading of the little *doxology* after which the order of Daily Orthros continues. When there is a coincidence with a Sunday, the Menaion texts are combined with other texts according to the rule.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> If a Simple (5<sup>th</sup> Class) commemoration has two *doxastika* (one on *Lord, I have cried* and another on the *aposticha*), at *Lord, I have cried* do not chant any *stichera* from the *Parakletike* but rather chant six for the commemoration from the Menaion (doubling as necessary). The foregoing does not apply to a Double Simple Commemoration, which is merely a coincidence of two Simple Commemorations, each having three verses on *Lord, I have cried* and each having, at most, one *doxastikon*.

<sup>33</sup> The poetic *kathismata*, both of which are taken from the *Parakletike*, are not preceded by a little litany. The 3<sup>rd</sup> poetic *kathisma* in the *Parakletike* is either omitted or combined with the 2<sup>nd</sup> poetic *kathisma* so as to correspond with the two readings from the *Psalter* which are appointed for Daily Orthros.

<sup>34</sup> See Parish Typikon: Chart II for this rule.