

THE VESPERS SERVICE
FOR

THE FIRST
SUNDAY EVENING
OF GREAT LENT

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The priest and deacon, vested in exorassa, with the deacon on the priest's right, stand together and make one metania before the episcopal throne. Standing before the closed holy doors they make three metanias, turn toward the west, bow once and enter the sanctuary, the priest through the north door and the deacon through the south door, saying,

PRIEST: I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy, and in thy fear I will worship toward thy holy temple.

Standing before the holy table, with the priest in the center and the deacon at his place at the southwest corner, they make three metanias, saying,

PRIEST: How beloved are thy dwellings, O Lord of hosts; my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

The priest kisses the gospel book and the holy table, while the deacon kisses only the southwest corner of the holy table. The priest takes the epitrachelion, blesses it and kisses the neck-cross, saying,

PRIEST: Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy. Blessed is God, who poureth out his grace upon his priests, as oil of myrrh upon the head, which runneth down upon the beard, upon the beard of Aaron, which runneth down to the fringe of his raiment, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Having put on the epitrachelion, the priest opens the curtain and holy doors and, standing before the holy table facing east, blesses himself while saying in a loud voice,

PRIEST: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.¹

READER: Amen.

Then the senior non-celebrating priest or reader recites,

Come, let us worship and fall down before God our King. (**metania**)

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God. (**metania**)

Come, let us worship and fall down before the very Christ, our King and our God. (**metania**)

The reader now recites Proëmiakon (Ps. 103) "Bless the Lord, O my soul..." During the reading of the Proëmiakon, the deacon, with his sticharion and orarion in his hands, comes to the priest, bows his head and says,

DEACON: Bless, father, the sticharion with the orarion.

The priest blesses them with his right hand, saying,

¹ If Vespers follows the Ninth Hour we begin as above. Otherwise, we begin as follows:

PRIEST: Blessed is our God...

READER: Amen. Glory to thee, our God, glory to thee. O heavenly king... Holy God... Our Father...

PRIEST: For thine is the kingdom...

READER: Lord, have mercy. (12x) Glory... Now... Come, let us worship... and the Proëmiakon (Ps. 103).

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

DEACON: Amen.

After kissing the right hand of the priest, the deacon puts on the sticharion and orarion, saying the proper vesting prayers. Meanwhile, the priest says the seven prayers at the lighting of the lamps.

PSALM 103

READER: Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire: who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever.

Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth. He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.

They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth: And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread, which strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats and the rocks for the conies. He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forests do creep forth.

The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping, innumerable, both small and great beasts.

There go the ships: there is that leviathan, who thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

The glory of the Lord shall endure forever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works. He looketh on the earth and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the Lord, O my soul. Praise ye the Lord.

The sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night. O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all.

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 thee, O God. (**thrice**)

O our God and our Hope, glory to thee.

(The CHOIR/READER may now turn to page 4 for the litany of peace.)

THE SEVEN PRAYERS AT THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS

PRIEST: O Lord, compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy, give ear to our prayer, and attend to the voice of our supplication. Work upon us a sign for good. Lead us in thy way, that we may walk in thy truth. Make glad our hearts, that we may fear thy holy name. For thou art great and doest wonders. Thou alone art God, and among all the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, mighty in mercy, gracious in strength, to aid and to comfort and to save all those who put their trust in thy holy name. 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. Amen.

2. O Lord, rebuke us not in thy displeasure, neither chasten us in thy wrath, but deal with us according to thy mercy, O Physician and Healer of our souls. Guide us unto the haven of thy will. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts to the knowledge of thy truth, and vouchsafe that the remainder of this day and our whole life may be peaceful and without sin, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints. For thine is the might, and 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. Amen.

3. O Lord our God, remember us sinners and thine unprofitable servants when we call upon thy holy name, and put us not to shame in our expectation of thy mercy; but grant us, O Lord, all our petitions, which are unto salvation, and vouchsafe that we may love and fear thee with all our hearts and do thy will in all things. 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. Amen.

4. O thou who, with never-silent hymns and never-ceasing songs of praise to thy glory, art hymned by the holy powers: Fill our mouths with thy praise, that we may magnify thy holy name. And grant unto us part and inheritance with all those who fear thee in truth and keep thy commandments, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos and of all thy saints. 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. Amen

5. O Lord, O Lord, who upholdest all things in the undefiled hollow of thy hand, who shovest long-suffering upon us all and repitest thee at our wickedness: Remember thy compassions and thy mercy. Visit us with goodness, and grant that, through the remainder of the present day, by thy grace, we may avoid the diverse subtle snares of the evil one and preserve our lives unassailed, through the grace of thine all-holy Spirit. Through the mercy and love toward mankind of thine only-begotten Son, with whom thou art blessed, together with thine all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

6. O God, great and wonderful, who with wisdom inscrutable and great riches of providence orderest all things and bestowest upon us earthly good things, who hast given us a pledge of the promised kingdom through the good things already bestowed upon us and hast made us to shun all evil during that part of the day which is past: Grant that we may also fulfill the remainder of this day without reproach before thy holy glory and hymn thee, the only good One, our God, who lovest mankind. For thou art our God 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. Amen.

7. O great and most high God, who alone hast immortality and dwellest in light unapproachable, who has made all creation in wisdom, who hast divided the light from the darkness and hast appointed the sun to rule the day, the moon and stars also to rule the night, who has vouchsafed unto us sinners at this present hour also to come before thy presence with confession and to offer unto thee our evening praise: Do thou thyself, O Lord, who lovest mankind, direct our prayer as incense before thee, and accept it as a savor of sweet fragrance, and grant that we may pass the present evening and the coming night in peace. Endue us with the armor of light. Deliver us from the terror of the night and from everything that walketh in darkness, and grant that the sleep, which thou hast appointed for the repose of our weakness may be free from every imagination of the devil. Yea, O Master of all, Bestower of good things, may we, being moved to compunction upon our beds, call to remembrance thy name in the night, that, enlightened by meditation on thy commandments, we may rise up in joyfulness of soul to glorify thy goodness, offering up prayers and supplications unto thy tender love for our sins and for those of all thy people, whom do thou visit in mercy, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos. 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. Amen.

At the conclusion of the Proëmiakon, the holy doors are closed and the priest stands at his place before the holy table. The deacon, standing at the southwest corner of the holy table, bows to the priest and exits the sanctuary, passing the high place, through the north door. Standing before the holy doors facing the icon of Christ on the iconostasis, the deacon lifts his orarion with the thumb and first two fingers of his right hand and intones the petitions of the litany of peace.

THE LITANY OF PEACE

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

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy. **(to this and the following petitions)**

DEACON: 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 men, 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 **(Metropolitan or Archbishop or Bishop) N.**, the honorable presbytery, the diaconate in Christ, all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For our 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, captives and 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 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.

The deacon enters the sanctuary through the south door as the choir chants, “O Lord, I have cried...” in the proper tone. Bringing the censer to the priest with his head bowed, the deacon says,

DEACON: Bless, father, the incense.

The priest blesses the censer, saying,

PRIEST: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Incense we offer unto thee, O Christ our God, as a savor of spiritual sweetness, which do thou receive upon thy most heavenly altar and send down upon us in return the grace of thine all-holy Spirit.

DEACON: Amen.

The deacon censes the priest twice. When the choir begins to chant, “Let my prayer arise...” the deacon begins the great censing. At the conclusion of the great censing, the other priests, if any, enter the sanctuary and don their epitrachelia and phelonia, and the deacon brings the phelonion to the priest, who blesses the phelonion, kisses the back-cross and puts it on, saying,

PRIEST: Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy. Thy priests, O Lord, shall be clothed with righteousness, and thy holy ones shall rejoice with joy, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PSALM 140

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.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties. Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words, for they are sweet. Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute. Keep me from the snares, which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

PSALM 141

I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. I poured out my complaint 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 privily 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 man 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.

After “O Lord, I have cried...” 10 stichera are sung: four in the tone of the week, three from the Triodion and three from the Menaion for the saint of the day.

See The Lenten Triodion for the penitential stichera in the tone of the week (pp. 184-88).

V. 10 Bring my soul out of prison that I may confess thy name.

V. 9 For the righteous shall await me until thou recompense me.

V. 8 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice.

V. 7 Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

The following three stichera are from the Triodion. (Tone 4)

V. 6 If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? For with thee there is propitiation.

Grant me reverence, estrangement from evil, and perfect discipline, who am now drowned in the passions of the flesh, estranged from thee, and entirely without hope, O my God, King of all. Save me, thy prodigal son, by the bounty of thy goodness, O Jesus the Almighty, the Savior of our souls.

V. 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.

When Moses the wonderful was purified by fasting, he beheld the beloved One. Wherefore, emulate him, my humble soul, and hasten to be purified of evils on the day of abstinence, that the Lord may bestow forgiveness on thee, and that thou mayest behold him, for he is the Almighty, the good Lord, and the Lover of mankind.

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

Let us, O brethren, begin the second week of the Fast, fulfilling it day by day with rejoicing, making unto ourselves, like Elijah the Tishbite, a fiery chariot of the great cardinal virtues, elevating our minds by subduing our passions, arming ourselves with purity, to chase away and vanquish the enemy.

See the Menaion for the stichera for the saint of the day.

V. 3 For with the Lord there is mercy and with him is abundant redemption, and he will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.

V. 2 Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him all ye people.

V. 1 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, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

As the choir chants “...now and ever...” and the theotokion from the Menaion, the holy doors are opened, the priest kisses the gospel book and the holy table; the deacon takes up the censer, censes the four sides of the holy table and leads the priests out the north door according to their dignity, senior to junior. The deacon, holding his orarion with the thumb and first two fingers of his right hand and the censer in his left, points with the orarion toward the holy doors and says to the presiding priest,

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

The presiding priest says the prayer of the entrance.

PRAYER OF THE ENTRANCE

PRIEST: In the evening and in the morning and at noonday we praise thee, we bless thee, we give thanks unto thee, and we pray unto thee, O Master of all, Lord who lovest mankind: Direct thou our prayer as incense before thee, and incline not our hearts unto words or thoughts of evil, but deliver us from all who seek after our souls. For unto thee, O Lord, Lord, are our eyes, and in thee have we hoped. Put us not to shame, O our God. 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.

DEACON: Amen.

Pointing to the holy doors with his orarion between the thumb and first two fingers of his right hand, the deacon says to the presiding priest,

DEACON: Bless, father, the holy entrance.

The presiding priest blesses toward the holy doors with his right hand, saying,

PRIEST: Blessed is the entrance to thy holy place, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

DEACON: Amen

The deacon now censes the episcopal throne and the icons on the iconostasis from his place in the center of the solea, while the choir continues its chanting. When the choir has completed its chanting of the theotokion from the Menaion, the deacon, standing before the holy doors and facing east, raises the censer in his right hand and intones,

DEACON: Wisdom. Stand upright.

Then is chanted the hymn of thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps, led by the clergy.

CHOIR: O gladsome Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father: Jesus Christ. Now that we have come to the setting of the sun and behold the light of evening, we praise God: the 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.

At the words “...and behold the light of evening...” the deacon censes the episcopal throne and the icons of Christ and the Theotokos on the iconostasis and enters the sanctuary through the holy doors. At the words “...Father, Son and Holy Spirit...” the priest bows toward the episcopal throne and enters the sanctuary (two by two, senior to junior, if it is a concelebration) through the holy doors while being censed by the deacon.

At the conclusion of the hymn of thanksgiving at the lighting of the lamps the deacon, standing in the holy doors and facing the choir, says,

DEACON: The evening prokeimenon.

THE 2nd GREAT PROKEIMENON

(Pl. 4 Tone)

CHOIR: Thou hast given an inheritance, O Lord, to them that fear thy name. (refrain, also repeated after each verse, with the refrain being sung twice after the last verse)

- V. 1 From the ends of the earth I cried unto thee.
- V. 2 I shall be protected under the cover of thy wings.
- V. 3 I will praise thy name forever.

The holy doors are now closed as the reader continues immediately with "Vouchsafe, O Lord..." and the clergy exchange their vestments for those of a darker color.

THE EVENING PRAYER

READER: 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.

At the conclusion of the evening prayer the deacon bows to the priest, exits the sanctuary through the north door, stands before the holy doors on the solea and, lifting his orarion with the thumb and first two fingers of his right hand, intones the petitions of the litany of supplication, with the choir responding in the penitential lenten melody.

THE LITANY OF SUPPLICATION

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

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy. (to this and the following petition)

DEACON: 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.

CHOIR: Grant this, O Lord. (to this and the following petitions)

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

Pardon and forgiveness 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 most blessed and glorious Lady 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 priest turns to the west and blesses the people with his right hand, saying,

PRIEST: Peace be to all.

CHOIR: And to thy spirit.

The priest faces east as the deacon says,

DEACON: Bow your heads unto the Lord.

CHOIR: To thee, O Lord.

All bow their heads as the priest says the prayer at the bowing of the heads.

PRAYER AT THE BOWING OF THE HEADS

PRIEST: (*quietly*) 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.

PRIEST: (*aloud*) 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.

The deacon enters the sanctuary through the south door and the curtain is closed as the choir chants the aposticha and verses.²

THE APOSTICHA **(Pl. 4 Tone)**

CHOIR: Come, let us purify our souls with alms and mercy to the poor, not blowing the trumpet, nor making public what we accomplish in charity, lest the left hand know what the right hand doeth, and vainglory do away with the fruits of alms. Let us, however, plead secretly with him who knoweth our secrets, crying: Father, forgive us our trespasses, for thou art the Lover of mankind.

V. 1 From the ends of the earth I cried unto thee.

Come, let us purify our souls with alms and mercy to the poor, not blowing the trumpet, nor making public what we accomplish in charity, lest the left hand know what the right hand doeth, and vainglory do away with the fruits of alms. Let us, however, plead secretly with him who knoweth our secrets, crying: Father, forgive us, our trespasses, for thou art the Lover of mankind.

V. 2 I shall be protected under the cover of thy wings.

² If the procession on page 10 is to be omitted the deacon now removes his vestments and the priests their phelonia. Exiting the sanctuary through the north door, the deacon goes to stand with the reader while the concelebrating priests return to the solea.

Every place ye sanctify, O martyrs of the Lord, and every sickness ye heal. Wherefore, now, intercede with him, asking him to deliver our souls from the traps and snares of the enemy.

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

The celestials do praise thee, O full of grace, the spouseless Mother. We glorify thine inapprehensible birth-giving. Wherefore, O Theotokos, intercede for the salvation of our souls.

THE PROCESSION³

As the choir repeatedly sings the trisagion hymn, a great entrance is made from the sanctuary around to the solea with members of the clergy and the faithful bearing icons, preceded by altar servers bearing processional candles and the holy cross. Once the clergy reach the solea, the choir sings the troparion of the first Sunday of Great Lent:

CHOIR: (Tone 2) Thy pure image do we venerate, O good One, asking forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God; for by thine own will thou didst ascend the Cross in thy body, to save thy creatures from the bondage of the enemy. Thou hast verily filled all with joy, since thou didst come, O our Saviour, to save the world.

This is a declaration of the members of the Seventh Ecumenical Council affirming the truths of the Orthodox faith, which sprung forth from the controversy concerning the icons and was read before the Divine Liturgy. Excerpts of the Synodikon are included here.

Facing the faithful, the senior priest reads the following declaration.

PRIEST: As the prophets beheld, as the apostles have taught, ...as the Church has received, ...as the teachers have dogmatized, ...as the universe has agreed, ...as Grace has shown forth, ...as Truth has revealed, ...as falsehood has been dissolved, ...as Wisdom has presented, ...as Christ has awarded, ...thus we declare, ...thus we assert, ...thus we preach Christ our true God, and honor his saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in holy icons; on the one hand worshiping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand honoring as true servants of the same Lord of all and accordingly offering them veneration.

(louder) This is the faith of the apostles, this is the faith of the fathers, this is the faith of the Orthodox, this is the faith, which has established the universe.

THE GREAT PROKEIMENON

(Grave Tone)

CLERGY: Who is so great a God as our God? Thou alone art the God that doest wonders. (refrain, also repeated after each verse, with the refrain being sung twice after the last verse)

V. 1 Thou hast made known thy power among the peoples.

V. 2 And I said, now have I begun; these are the charges of the right hand of the Most High.

V. 3 Remembering the works of the Lord; for from the beginning I will remember thy wonders.

As the choir chants the following troparion the clergy venerate the icons of Christ and the Theotokos and return to the sanctuary through the south door, with the deacon removing his vestments and the priests their phelonias. The priests return to the solea exiting through the north door, while the deacon goes to stand with the reader.

³ This procession and the subsequent great prokeimenon are not part of the traditional Sunday Lenten Vespers. They are part of an American folk practice, which has come into use in the 20th century. To observe this vespers in its more traditional form proceed to the hymn of St. Simeon the God-receiver once the theotokion of the aposticha is sung.

CHOIR: (Tone 2) Thy pure image do we venerate...

The priest or reader recites the hymn of Simeon the God-receiver.

THE HYMN OF ST. SIMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER⁴

READER: 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, 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 God, 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, 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.

The choir chants the following apolytikia and theotokion.

THE LENTEN APOLITIKIA

(Pl. 1 Tone)

CHOIR: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Mary full of grace; the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for thou didst give birth to the Savior of our souls. (prostration by all)

O Baptizer of Christ, remember our congregation, that we may escape from our iniquities, for to thee was given grace to intercede for us. (prostration by all)

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

O pure apostles, and all ye saints, pray for our sakes, that we escape tribulations and sorrows, for we have taken you as fervid intercessors with the Savior. (prostration by all)

Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

We have taken refuge under the wing of thy compassion, O Theotokos. Turn not away from our beseechings in tribulation, but save us from distress, O thou who alone art pure and blessed. (no prostration)

READER: Lord, have mercy. (40 times)

⁴ If a homily is to be offered, it may be done prior to the hymn of St. Simeon or at the end of vespers.

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

More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, thou who without corruption bearest God the Word and art truly Theotokos: We magnify thee.

Bless, father, in the name of the Lord.

Standing on the solea before the closed holy doors, the priest bows toward the icon of Christ, saying,

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

READER: Amen. O heavenly King, support our believing kings; confirm their faith; guide the nations; give peace to the world and preserve well this holy church. Grant repose to our departed fathers and brothers, in the dwelling-places of the righteous. Receive us in repentance and confession, for thou art good and the Lover of mankind.

Standing on the solea before the holy doors and facing east, the priest says the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian.

THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

PRIEST: O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, meddling, lust of power and idle talk. **(prostration by all)**

But give, rather, the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to thy servant. **(prostration by all)**

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother, for thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen. **(prostration by all)**

Bowing toward the icon of Christ on the iconostasis, the priest says,

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

READER: 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.

Standing on the solea facing the people, the priest says,

THE DISMISSAL

PRIEST: May Christ our true God, through the intercessions of his all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; by the protection of the honorable bodiless powers of heaven; of **N. (patron saint of the church)**; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; of **N. (the saint of the day)** whose memory we celebrate, and of all the saints: have mercy on us, and save us, forasmuch as he is good and loveth mankind.

While the choir chants the following theotokion the faithful reverence the icon of the Theotokos and receive the blessing from the priest.

THEOTOKION

(Tone 2)

CHOIR: O righteous one, Mother of the most high God, defend all those who take refuge in faith in thy precious protection; for we sinners, bowed by the multitude of sins, have no other constant intercessor with God in tribulations and sorrows, save thee. Wherefore, we bow to thee, adoring. Save thou thy servants from every distress.

Then, facing the icon of Christ on the iconostasis, the priest says,

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

CHOIR: Amen.

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O God our Hope, O Lord, glory to Thee.