



# AGAPE VESPERS

## *of Holy & Glorious Pascha*

SAID ON THE SUNDAY OF PASCHA, ALL DAYS OF BRIGHT WEEK  
AND THE LEAVETAKING OF PASCHA<sup>1,2</sup>

### PREPARATION

The priest fully vests, as he normally does for the Divine Liturgy, the color being white.

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<sup>1</sup> The order of Vespers on all days of Bright Week and on the Leavetaking is as on Pascha, except that (a) the entrance is made with the censer, (b) there is no gospel reading and (c), in some traditions, the priest is not fully vested but only in exorasson, epitachelion and phelonion.

<sup>2</sup> If the feast of the Great Martyr George (April 23) falls on Great and Holy Saturday or on Pascha, then the feast is moved to Bright Monday and the service for the Great Vespers of Saint George is combined with the Agape Vespers. The changes to the service as given in this book is as follows: (a) at **Lord, I have cried**: at the psalm verse **Out of the depths...** the first of 4 stichera for the Resurrection is said, then at the psalm verse **From the morning watch...** the first of 4 prosomia for St. George is said in Tone 4 (from Nassar, page 528), the **Glory** is for St. George in Tone 6; **Now and ever** is as in this service; (b) at the **Aposticha**: the **Glory** is for St. George in Tone 4 (from Nassar, page 529); and (c) **For the Apolytikia and/or Troparia: Christ is risen...** is sung once then the Troparion of St. George, **As deliverer of captives...** is sung finally; **Christ is risen...** is sung again.

## THE BLESSING

**Priest:** Glory to the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-giving and Undivided Trinity, always: now and ever, and unto ages of ages.<sup>3</sup>

**Choir:** Amen.

## THE PASCHAL TROPARION

Then the priest censes the front of the holy table as he chants the Paschal troparion three times:

**Priest:** Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.<sup>4</sup>

## THE PASCHAL STICHERA

Then standing and censuring at each side of the holy table, the priest chants the Paschal verses. He begins by censuring the west (front) of the holy table:

**Priest:** ✠ Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered, and let them that hate him flee from before his face.

**Choir:** Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

Censuring the south side:

**Priest:** ✠ As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish; as wax melteth before the fire.

**Choir:** Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the Mar Sabbas Typikon and the Pentecostarion, all Vespers during Bright Week and on the Leaver-taking are opened with the usual exclamation Blessed is our God...

<sup>4</sup> In some traditions, after the clergy have chanted this troparion three times, it is chanted three more times by the choir.

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Censing the east side:

**Priest:**     ✠ So let sinners perish at the presence of God; and let the righteous be glad.

**Choir:**     Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

Censing the north side:

**Priest:**     ✠ This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad therein.

**Choir:**     Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

Censing the prothesis:

**Priest:**     Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**Choir:**     Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

Censing again before the front of the holy table:

**Priest:**     Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

**Choir:**     Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

Then in a louder voice, the priest chants as he stands in the holy doors and censes the icons on the iconostasis and the faithful.

**Priest:**     Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs...

The choir concludes the troparion.

**Choir:**     ...bestowing life.

The priest gives up the Paschal candle, hand cross and censer. The deacon exits the sanctuary, through the north door, stands at his place in the center of the solea, lifts his oration and, facing east, intones the petitions of the litany of peace.

## THE LITANY OF PEACE

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

**The choir responds** Lord, have mercy to each petition.

For the peace from above, and for 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 for the union of all men, let us pray to the Lord.

For this holy house, and for 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.**) for the venerable priesthood, the diaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and the people, let us pray to the Lord.

For the President of the United States,<sup>5</sup> and all civil authorities, and for our armed forces everywhere, let us pray to the Lord.

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

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

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

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<sup>5</sup> In other countries the appropriate head of state is mentioned here.

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 north door while the choir chants Lord, I have cried in the second tone. The deacon brings the censer, Paschal candle, and hand cross to the priest, bows his head and says:

**Deacon:** Bless, master, 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 savour 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.

## LORD, I HAVE CRIED

*Tone 2.*

*Psalm 140*

**Choir:** O Lord, I have cried out unto thee, hear thou me. Hear thou me, O Lord. O Lord, I have cried unto thee, hear thou me: give ear to the voice of my supplication, when I cry out unto thee. Hear thou me, O Lord.

**On the Lord, I have cried, the priest does the great censing, holding in his left hand the Paschal candle and the hand cross.**

**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 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 up upon the ground. Their bones are scattered by the side of Hell.

But to thee, O Lord, are my 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.

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Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I alone 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 supplication before him; I showed before him my trouble.

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

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

I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no one 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 supplication; for I am brought very low.

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

Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name.

The righteous shall wait for me, until thou recompense me.

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

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

*Stichos*

If thou O Lord should'st mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?  
For with thee there is forgiveness.

Come ye, let us worship him who was born of the Father before all time, the Word of God, incarnate of the Virgin Mary; for he did submit to crucifixion by his own choice, was delivered to burial as he himself willed, rose from the dead, and saved me, who was lost.

*Stichos*

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.

Verily, Christ our Saviour nailed to his Cross the handwriting of the decree, and did expunge it. And he abolished the might of death. Let us therefore adore his third-day Resurrection.

*Stichos*

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

Come, let us with the archangels praise the Resurrection of Christ; for he is the Redeemer and Saviour of our souls, and he it is who will come with fearful magnificence and glorious might to judge the world which he hath created.

*Stichos*

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

O thou who wast crucified and wast buried, the angel did proclaim thee, that thou art the Master, saying to the women, "Come ye and behold where the Lord was laid; for he is risen as he said; for he is the Almighty One, and therefore, do we worship thee, O thou who alone art deathless; O Christ, Giver of life, have mercy upon us."

*Stichos*

Praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

With thy Cross thou didst abolish the curse of the tree; with thy Death and Burial thou didst cause the might of death to die; and with thy Resurrection thou didst enlighten mankind. Wherefore, do we cry to thee, O Christ our God, the Benefactor, glory to thee.

*Stichos*

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

O Lord, verily the gates of death were opened to thee for fear of thee. And as the gate-keepers of hades saw thee they did tremble; for thou didst break asunder its brazen gates; didst crush its iron bars; didst bring us out from the shadow and darkness of death; and didst break our bonds asunder.

*Tone 2.*

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

Come, let us all sing with our mouths a song of salvation. Let us kneel down in the house of the Lord, saying, "O thou who wast crucified on a Tree, who didst rise from the dead, and who still remainest in the bosom of the Father, forgive us our sins."

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

O Virgin, verily, the shadow of the law hath been annulled by the coming of thy grace; for as the bush was burning but not consumed, so didst thou give birth while yet a Virgin. And instead of the pillar of fire, the Sun of justice shone forth; and instead of Moses, Christ the Saviour of our souls.

As the chanter chants the Now and ever the priest kisses the gospel book and the holy table and then he hands the deacon the gospel book. The deacon leads the priest(s), in order of their dignity, senior to junior, through the north door for the entrance. The entrance is made to the center of the solea.

Deacon: | Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

The presiding priest says the prayer of the entrance:

**Priest:** In the evening and in the morning and at noonday we praise thee, we bless thee, we give thanks to 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.

The deacon holds the gospel book for the presiding priest to kiss, himself kissing the presiding priest's hand.

Pointing to the holy doors with his orarion in 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.

When the choir has completed its chanting of the Theotokion, the deacon, standing before the holy doors and facing east, raises the gospel book and intones:

**Deacon:** Wisdom. Let us attend.

## PHOS HILARON

Then all sing 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 Father, the heavenly, the holy blessed, Jesus Christ. Now that we are come to

the setting of the sun, and behold the light of evening, we hymn thee: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God. It is meet and right that at all times thou shouldst be magnified by voices of praise, O Son of God, the Giver of Life. Therefore, the whole world doth glorify thee.

## THE GREAT PROKEIMENON

### *Tone 7.*

**Deacon:** The evening prokeimenon.

**Chanter:** Who is so great a God as our God? Thou alone art the God that workest wonders.

**Choir:** Who is so great a God as our God? Thou alone art the God that workest wonders.

**Reader:** Thou hast made thy power known among the peoples; with thine arm hast thou redeemed thy people.

**Choir:** Who is so great a God as our God? Thou alone art the God that workest wonders.

**Reader:** And I said: Now have I made a beginning; this change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High.

**Choir:** Who is so great a God as our God? Thou alone art the God that workest wonders.

**Reader:** I remembered the works of the Lord; for I will remember thy wonders from the beginning.

**Choir:** Who is so great a God as our God? Thou alone art the God that workest wonders.

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## THE GOSPEL

The Gospel is read in as many languages as possible today.

**Deacon:** Wisdom. Let us attend. Let us hear the Holy Gospel.

The priest blesses the people, saying:

**Priest:** Peace be to all.

**Choir:** And to thy spirit.

**Priest:** The reading is from the Holy Gospel according to John.

**Choir:** Glory to thee, O Lord. Glory to thee.

**Deacon:** Let us attend.

The priest reads the gospel from the holy doors. Traditionally, this gospel is to be read in as many languages as are possible (See the Appendix, pages 785-812).

*(John 20:19-25)*

**O**N THE evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe."

**Choir:** Glory to thee, O Lord, glory to thee.

## THE EKTENIA OF FERVENT SUPPLICATION

The deacon, standing before the holy doors, intones the petitions of the Ektenia 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 three petitions.

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

Have mercy upon, O God, according to thy great goodness, we pray thee: hearken and have mercy.

Again we pray for all pious and Orthodox Christians.

*The choir responds* Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy to this and the remaining petitions.

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 and visitation and pardon and forgiveness 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 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

The people then recite the evening prayer.

**All:** Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this night 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 commandments. Blessed art thou, O Holy One; enlighten me with thy precepts.

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

Standing at his place before the holy doors, the deacon intones the petitions of 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.**

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 of the Lord.

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 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 the east, while the deacon says:

**Deacon:** Bow your heads unto the Lord.

**Choir:** To thee, O Lord.

## PRAYER AT THE BOWING OF THE HEADS

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

**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.

## THE APOSTICHA<sup>6</sup>

*Tone 2.*

**Chanter:** Thy Resurrection, O Christ Saviour, hath illumined the whole universe. Thou hast renewed thy creation, O Lord Almighty. Glory to thee.

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<sup>6</sup> During the chanting of the aposticha, it is customary for the clergy and all the people to make a procession around the church, with lighted candles—the clergy exiting the sanctuary through the north door. The procession ends with the clergy standing on the solea for the dismissal.

*Tone 5.*

∇ Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered, and let them that hate him flee from before his face.

Today Christ our saving Pascha, hath been revealed unto us a noble Pascha; the Pascha new and holy; the mystical Pascha; the Pascha all august; the blameless Pascha; the great Pascha; the Pascha of the faithful; the Pascha which openeth unto us the gates of paradise; the Pascha which sanctifieth all the faithful.

∇ As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish; as wax melteth before the fire.

O come from the vision, ye women, heralds of good tidings, and say ye unto Zion, Receive from us the glad tidings of the joy of the Resurrection of Christ. Rejoice, O Jerusalem, and leap for joy, in that thou beholdest Christ the King like a bridegroom come forth from the grave.

∇ So let sinners perish at the presence of God; and let the righteous be glad.

When the ointment-bearing women stood, very early in the morning, before the tomb of the Life-giver, they found an angel sitting upon the stone. And he cried out unto them, saying, Why seek ye the Living among the dead? Why mourn ye the Incorruptible amidst corruption? Go, proclaim the glad tidings to his Disciples.

∇ This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad therein.

The joyful Pascha, the Pascha of the Lord, the Pascha all majestic hath shone upon us! The Pascha in which we embrace one another with joy! Oh what a Pascha, delivering from sorrow! For today from the tomb, as from a bridal chamber Christ shone, and hath filled the women with joy, saying, Proclaim the glad tidings to the Apostles.

### *Glory and Now*

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

Today is the Day of Resurrection! Let us shine with the Feast! Let us embrace one another. Let us say, brethren! And because of the Resurrection, let us forgive all things to those who hate us, and in this wise, exclaim: Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

**All:** Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life. (*thrice*)

### **PRAYERS BEFORE THE HOLY DOORS**

The senior priest, standing in the holy doors, facing west and holding the Paschal candle, says:

**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. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Father, bless.

### **THE DISMISSAL**

**Priest:** May he who rose again from the dead, trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of his all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; of **N.**, (*daily commemoration*); of **N.** (*patron saint of the church*); 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.

Throughout the time of Pascha, Through the prayers of our holy fathers... is omitted.

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Say instead:

**Priest:** Christ is Risen. (*thrice*)

**All:** Indeed, he is Risen. (*thrice*)

**Priest:** Glory to his holy third-day Resurrection.

**All:** We adore his third-day Resurrection.

**Priest:** Christ is risen from the dead trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs...

**All:** ...bestowing life.

The other clergy, followed by all the people, come to the senior priest and exchange with him and then with each other the Paschal kiss and greeting.