

Home “Vespers” for Holy Wednesday 2020

[Introductory Note to Home “Vespers” from 2015: In days long past Christians assembled each day, in the evening and morning, for a time of prayer. This was the origin of Vespers and Matins, which are still prayed every day in monasteries today. But such a regular practice of communal prayer is impractical for Orthodox parishes and families in the modern world, and so most parishes only gather for Vespers on Saturday evenings and sometimes on the eve of a Feast Day. However, the need for the daily remembrance of God remains, for by this Christians are nourished in hope and faith in the midst of a difficult world. The outline below provides a way for a family to bring some portion of this ancient practice into their own home life. No set amount is necessarily correct. Even one prayer together is better than none. These prayers could be said at any time in the evening, together at the dinner table, before an icon or at the bedside. Candles or incense could be used as desired. Readings could be done while sitting and prayers offered with heads bowed, standing or kneeling.]

LEADER: In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

FAMILY: 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.

Psalm 104 (LXX 103¹)

Bless the Lord, O my soul! Lord my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment, Who stretch out the heavens like a curtain. O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the Lord.

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 You, O God. (3x)

O our God and our Hope, glory to You.



“Lord, I Cry...” Psalm and a Prayer from Vespers

Psalm 142 (LXX 141)

I cry out to the Lord with my voice; with my voice to the Lord I make my supplication. I pour out my complaint before Him; I declare before Him my trouble. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path. In the way in which I walk they have secretly set a snare for me. Look on my right hand and see, for there is no one who acknowledges me; refuge has failed me; no one cares for my soul. I cried out to You, O Lord: I said, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living. Attend to my cry, 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 Your name; the righteous shall surround me, for You shall deal bountifully with me.”

¹ The number in parentheses, e.g. (LXX 103), indicates the number of the Psalm according to the Greek Old Testament as found in the *Orthodox Study Bible, Old Testament*.

2nd Prayer of Vespers

LEADER: O Lord, rebuke us not in Your displeasure, neither discipline us in Your wrath; but deal with us according to Your mercy, O Physician and Healer of our souls. Guide us to the haven of Your will. Enlighten the eyes of our hearts to the knowledge of Your truth, and grant 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 Yours is the might, and Yours 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.

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Verses for Holy Wednesday at “O Lord, I Cry”

The verses below can be read by the leader or shared with others.

O Son of the Virgin, the sinful woman knew You were God and she prayed to You lamenting, for she had committed sins worthy of tears. “Loose me from my debt,” she cried, “as I unloose my hair. Show love to her who loves You, though rightly she deserves Your hatred, and with the publican I shall proclaim You, O Benefactor Who love mankind.”

While the sinful woman brought oil of myrrh, the disciple came to an agreement with the transgressors. She rejoiced to pour out what was very precious, he made haste to sell the One Who is above all price. She acknowledged Christ as Lord, he severed himself from the Master. She was set free, but Judas became the slave of the enemy. Grievous was his lack of love! Great was her repentance! Grant such repentance also unto me, O Savior, Who have suffered for our sake, and save us.

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

By Kassiane the Nun

The woman had fallen into many sins, O Lord, yet when she perceived Your divinity, she joined the ranks of the Myrrhbearing Women. In tears she brought You myrrh before Your burial. She cried, “Woe is me! For I live in the night of licentiousness, shrouded in the dark and moonless love of sin. But accept the fountain of my tears, O You Who gathered the waters of the sea into clouds. Bow down Your ear to the sighing of my heart, O You Who bowed the heavens in Your ineffable condescension. Once Eve heard Your footstep in Paradise in the cool of the day, and in fear she ran and hid herself. But now I will tenderly embrace those pure feet, and wipe them with the hair of my head. Who can measure the multitude of my sins, or the depth of Your judgments, O Savior of my soul? Do not despise Your servant in Your immeasurable mercy.

“O Joyful Light”

O joyful Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father: O 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 it is right at all times to worship You with voices of praise, O Son of God and Giver of life. Therefore all the world glorifies You.

Scripture Readings from Vespers for Holy Wednesday

Exodus 2:11-22

One day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. When he went out the next day, behold, two Hebrews were struggling together. And he said to the man in the wrong, "Why do you strike your companion?" He answered, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid, and thought, "Surely the thing is known." When Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian. And he sat down by a well.

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock. When they came home to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come home so soon today?" They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds and even drew water for us and watered the flock." He said to his daughters, "Then where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread." And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah. She gave birth to a son, and he called his name Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

Job 2:1-10

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." And the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason." Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life."

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes.

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Matthew 26:6-16

Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table. And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor." But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body,

she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

A Special Prayer for Protection and Healing from the New Pandemic

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and approved by Patriarch Ignatius for use in Antiochian Patriarchate)*

LEADER: O Lord, our God, Who are rich, merciful, and wise in Your care: in Your wisdom take care of our lives, hear our prayers, accept our repentance for our sins, and stop this rampant pandemic in the same way that You stopped punishing Your people in the days of David the King. O Physician of our souls and bodies: Grant healing to those infected by this virus, and let them rise quickly from their pain to glorify You, O merciful Savior; and for those who are healthy, protect them from any disease.

Bless, O Lord, and support all those who care with love and sacrifice for the sick wherever they are found, whether they are at home or in hospitals, and keep them with Your grace. Protect Your people from all disease and pain, and teach us to value life and health as Your gifts. Grant us, O God, Your peace, and fill our hearts with firm faith in Your care, and with love towards You and our neighbor. Have mercy on us, and save us, O our God.

For unto You we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

FAMILY: Amen.

The Hymn of Simeon the God-receiver

Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.

Prayer of St. Ephraim

This is the last time this Prayer is said in the season of Lent and Holy Week.

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faintheartedness, lust of power, and idle talk.

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Your servant.

O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother; for You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Dismissal

LEADER: O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *Who consented to ride on the colt of a donkey for our salvation*, through the intercessions of Your all-pure and all-blameless holy Mother and at the supplication of *the holy, glorious, all-laudable apostle and evangelist John*, all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for You are a merciful God and love mankind.

FAMILY: Amen.