

Home “Vespers” for Palm Sunday 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 141: Psalm 141 (LXX 140)

O Lord, I cry out to You, hear me! Hear me, O Lord. O Lord, I cry out to You, hear me. Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Hear me, O Lord. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Hear me, O Lord. Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies. Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him reprove me; it shall be as excellent oil; let not my head refuse it. For still my prayer is against the deeds of the wicked. Their judges are overthrown by the sides of the cliff. And they hear my words, for they are sweet. Our bones are scattered at the mouth of the grave, as when one plows and breaks up the earth. But my eyes are upon You, O God the Lord; in You I take refuge; do not leave my soul destitute. Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and from the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape safely.

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*.

1st Prayer of Vespers

LEADER: O Lord, merciful and compassionate, long-suffering and abundant 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 Your way, that we may walk in Your truth. Make glad our hearts, that we may fear Your holy name, for You are great and do wonders. You alone are God, and among all the gods there is none like You, O Lord, mighty in mercy, gracious in strength, to aid and comfort and save all those who put their trust in Your holy name. For unto You 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.

† † †

Verses for Palm Sunday at “O Lord, I Cry”

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

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together, and we all take up Your Cross and say, ‘Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.’

Today the Word and coeternal Son of God the Father, whose throne is the heaven and whose footstool is the earth, humbles Himself and comes to Bethany, seated on a dumb beast, on a foal. Then the children of the Hebrews, holding branches in their hands, praise Him saying: ‘Hosanna in the highest: blessed is He Who comes, the King of Israel.’

Let us also come today, all the new Israel, the Church of the Gentiles, and let us cry with the Prophet Zechariah: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; for behold, your King comes to you: He is meek and brings salvation, and He rides upon a colt, the foal of a beast of burden. Keep the feast with the children, and holding branches in your hands sing His praises, ‘Hosanna to the highest; blessed is He Who comes, the King of Israel.’

Prefiguring for us Your holy Resurrection, O loving Lord, by Your command You have raised up from death Lazarus Your friend, who was without the breath of life; and after four days in the tomb he had begun to stink. Then, O Savior, mounted on a foal, and as though riding in a chariot, You have given a sign unto the Gentiles. Therefore, also Israel Your beloved offers You praise out of the mouth of innocent babes, as they behold You, O Christ, enter the Holy City six days before the Passover.

Six days before the Passover Jesus entered Bethany, and His disciples came to Him, saying: ‘Lord, where do You will that we prepare for You to eat the Passover?’ Then He sent them, saying: ‘Go into the village opposite, and you shall find a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him, and tell the master of the house, “The Teacher says, “In your house shall I eat the Passover with My disciples.”’

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

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us together, and we all take up Your Cross and say: Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest!

“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.

Gospel Reading from Matins for Palm Sunday: Matthew 21:1-11; 15-17

At that time, when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. If any one says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and he will send them immediately." This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

"Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon. Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee." But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant; and they said to him, "Do you hear what they are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you have brought perfect praise'?"

And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

The Prayer of the Family

The leader or another offers a simple prayer for the needs and concerns of the family, their loved ones, and their parish, asking God for His mercy and love. Below is one possible format, but another form can be used as well.

LEADER: O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, in Your mercies and loving-kindness, You regard the humble prayers of all who call upon You with their whole heart; incline Your ear and hear now our prayers, offered to You in humility. *(ALL: Lord, have mery.)*

Remember, O Lord, Your holy, catholic and apostolic Church; confirm and strengthen it, increase it and keep it in peace, and preserve it unconquerable forever. *(All: Lord, have mery.)*

Remember, O Lord, our father, *(metropolitan, bishop) N.*, and every bishop of the Orthodox; the priests and deacons and all the clergy of the Church, which You have established to feed the flock of Your Word; and by their prayers have mercy on us and save us. *(Lord, have mery.)*

Remember, O Lord, all civil authorities, our armed forces, this city in which we dwell, and every city and countryside; grant them peaceful times that we, in their tranquillity, may lead a calm and peaceful life in all godliness and holiness. *(Lord, have mery.)*

Remember, O Lord, our friends and our families, *(insert names here of those especially remembered)*; grant that they may have mercy, life, peace, health, salvation, visitation, and pardon and remission of sins; that they may ever praise and glorify Your holy name. *(Lord, have mery.)*

Remember, O Lord, those who travel by land, by sea, and by air; the elderly and the young; the orphans and widows; the sick, the suffering, the sorrowful, the afflicted, the captives, and the needy poor; and send down Your mercies on all of them, for You are the Giver of all good things. (*Lord, have mery.*)

Remember each of us, O Lord, and grant us Your grace, that we may be diligent and faithful, avoiding evil company and influence, resisting temptation; that we may lead godly and righteous lives, blameless and peaceful, ever serving You; and that we may be accounted worthy to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

ALL: 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.

The Trisagion Prayers

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (3x)

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 Your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

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.

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. Amen.

Hymns for the Feast Day

Sing or read the Troparion of the Feast.

Troparion Lazarus Saturday - (Tone 1)

Giving us before Your Passion, / an assurance of the general Resurrection, / You have raised Lazarus from the dead, O Christ our God. / Therefore, like the children, / we also carry tokens of victory, / And cry to You, the Conqueror of death: / "Hosanna in the highest; Blessed is He / Who comes in the name of the Lord."

Troparion Palm Sunday - (Tone 4)

Buried with You through Baptism, O Christ our God,
We have been granted immortal life by Your Resurrection, And we sing Your praises, saying:
"Hosanna in the highest!" "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!"

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.

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