

Home “Vespers”

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.

(During Pascha, from Saint Thomas Sunday to Ascension, in place of “Come, let us worship...” sing or read:

“Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.”)

Psalm 104 (LXX 103)

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...” Psalms and a Prayer from Vespers - (Read one set.)

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.

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.

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."

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.

Psalm 130 (LXX 129)

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, I say more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

3rd Prayer of Vespers

LEADER: O Lord, our God, remember us sinners and Your unprofitable servants when we call upon Your holy name, and put us not to shame in our expectation of Your mercy; but grant us, O Lord, all our petitions which are unto salvation, and grant that we may love and fear You with all our hearts, and do Your will in all things. For You are a good God and love mankind, and 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. Amen.

† † †

“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.

Inspirational Reading or Scripture Reading for the Day

The family could read something about the Feast Day, the Saint of the Day, the Scriptures, or an other inspirational reading.

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. *(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

(or in Lent the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian)

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.

Prayer of St. Ephraim

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.

Hym for the Day

If it is a Feast Day or Season the family could sing or read the Troparion of the Feast.

Troparion to Saint John the Evangelist

O Apostle John, speaker of Deity, the beloved of Christ our God, hasten to deliver your people powerless in speech, for He on Whose bosom you lean accepts you as an intercessor. Beseech Him therefore, to disperse the darkness of ignorance and pray for peace and great mercies to be shown upon us.

The Dismissal

LEADER: O Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, through the intercessions of Your all-pure and all-blameless holy Mother and at the supplication of *(may insert saint of the day or other, and of)* all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for You are a merciful God and love mankind.

FAMILY: Amen.