

Forgiveness Vespers

Sung on Sunday 17th March 2024 for Monday 18th March 2024

Repose of Saint Nikolaj (Velimirović), Bishop of Žiča

Parts of the service which are read or sung by the priest are shown in red. These are omitted if the service is used without a priest.

If you are serving Vespers at home without a priest, follow the marked sections shown in blue. The 'Reader' may be the most senior person present – e.g. a parent or grandparent, according to the situation – or simply the most confident reader or singer. The parts marked for the 'Choir' can be read or sung by everyone together, or by one person alone.

You may prefer to use parts of the service in your own language. If so, please make sure that the prayers are read from an Orthodox prayer book or service book.

Before the Service

*If you are serving Vespers at home, you should do so in front of the household icons – e.g. in the family icon corner. If you have charcoal and incense, you may wish to light the charcoal before the service begins; you can then place incense on the lit charcoal during the hymn **Lord I call** at the words "Let my prayer arise". You may wish to prepare an **unlit** lamp or candle(s) which can be lit when the hymn **O Gladsome Light** is sung.*

Music may be found at <https://orthodoxcommunityrugby.com/music-texts-praying-at-home/>

Priest: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Reader: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us, and save us. Amen.

Reader: O come, let us worship God our King.

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God.

O come, let us worship and fall down before the Very Christ, our King and our God.

PSALM 103

Reader: Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God, Thou hast been magnified exceedingly. Confession and majesty hast Thou put on, Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who stretchest out the heaven as it were a curtain; Who supporteth His chambers in the waters, Who appointeth the clouds for His ascent, Who walketh upon the wings of the winds, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire, Who establisheth the earth in the sureness thereof; it shall not be turned back forever and ever. The abyss like a garment is His mantle; upon the mountains shall the waters stand. At Thy rebuke they will flee, at the voice of Thy thunder shall they be afraid. The mountains rise up and the plains sink down, unto the place where Thou hast established them. Thou appointedst a bound that they shall not pass, neither return to cover the earth. He sendeth forth springs in the valleys; between the mountains will the waters run. They shall give drink to all the beasts of the field; the wild asses will wait to quench their thirst. Beside them will the birds of the heaven lodge, from the midst of the rocks will they give voice. He watereth the mountains from His chambers; the earth shall be satisfied with the fruit of Thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men, To bring forth bread out of the earth; and wine maketh glad the heart of man. To make his face cheerful with oil; and bread strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the plain shall be satisfied, the cedars of Lebanon, which Thou hast planted. There will the sparrows make their nests; the house of the heron is chief among them. The high mountains are a refuge for the harts, and so is the rock for the hares. He hath made the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night, wherein all the beasts of the forest will go abroad. Young lions roaring after their prey, and seeking their food from God. The sun ariseth, and they are gathered

together, and they lay them down in their dens. But man shall go forth unto his work, and to his labour until the evening. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is filled with Thy creation. So is this great and spacious sea, therein are things creeping innumerable, small living creatures with the great. There go the ships; there this dragon, whom Thou hast made to play therein. All things wait on Thee, to give them their food in due season; when Thou givest it them, they will gather it. When Thou openest Thy hand, all things shall be filled with goodness; when Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled. Thou wilt take their spirit, and they shall cease; and unto their dust shall they return. Thou wilt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth. Let the glory of the Lord be unto the ages; the Lord will rejoice in His works. Who looketh on the earth and maketh it tremble, Who toucheth the mountains and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord throughout my life, I will chant to my God for as long as I have my being. May my words be sweet unto Him, and I will rejoice in the Lord. O that sinners would cease from the earth, and they that work iniquity, that they should be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The sun knoweth his going down, Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! 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 the ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, glory to Thee, O God. (x 3)

THE LITANY OF PEACE

In place of the Litany of Peace, the choir sings:

Lord, have mercy. (x 12)

“LORD, I CALL ...”

Tone 8

Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me!

Hear me, O Lord!

Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me!

Receive the voice of my prayer,

when I call upon Thee!//

Hear me, O Lord!

Let my prayer arise

in Thy sight as incense,

and let the lifting up of my hands

be an evening sacrifice!//

Hear me, O Lord!

Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy Name.

Tone 8 *(Penitential stichera in the Tone of the week)*

The angels never cease singing praises to Thee,

and I fall before Thee, O King and Master;

and cry out like the Publican://

“Be merciful to me, O God, and save me!”

The righteous will surround me, for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me.

Since thou art immortal, O my soul,

do not be overwhelmed by the waves of this life!

Come to thy senses and cry out to thy Benefactor://

“Be merciful to me, O God, and save me!”

[Music on website]

Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!

When I grasp with my mind the great number of terrible things I have done,
and go in my thoughts to that terrible reckoning,
then I tremble with fearfulness.

I flee for refuge to Thee, O God and Lover of man.

I humbly pray: "Do not turn from me, O sinless Lord, //
but grant my lowly soul compunction before the end, and save me!"

Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

Give me tears, O God, as Thou once gavest them to the woman who had sinned,
and thus count me worthy to drench Thy feet with tears —
those feet that freed me from the path of error!

Let me offer Thee a life of purity,
acquired by me through repentance,
as fragrant ointment,
that I too may hear that voice for which I pray, //
saying: "Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace!"

If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee.

Tone 2 *(From the Lenten Triodion)*

Let us humble the flesh by abstinence,
as we follow the divine path of pure fasting!
With prayers and tears let us seek the Lord, Who saves us!

Let us put an end to anger, crying out:
"Save us for we have sinned against Thee!

Save us, O Christ our King, as Thou didst save the men of Nineveh, //
and make us partakers of Thy heavenly Kingdom, O compassionate One!"

For Thy Name's sake I wait for Thee, O Lord. My soul has waited for Thy word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.

When I think of my deeds, O Lord,
I am filled with despair,
and know that I am worthy of every torment.
I have despised Thy commandments, O Saviour.
I have spent my life as a prodigal.
I pray to Thee, O only merciful One:
"Cleanse me by repentance,
enlighten me through prayers and fasting, //
and despise me not, O most gracious Benefactor of all!"

From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch, let Israel hope on the Lord!

Let us begin the fast with joy!
Let us prepare ourselves for spiritual efforts!
Let us cleanse our soul and cleanse our flesh!
Let us abstain from every passion as we abstain from food!
Let us rejoice in virtues of the Spirit and fulfil them in love,
that we all may see the Passion of Christ our God, //
and rejoice in spirit at the holy Pascha!

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

Tone 6 *(From the Menaion, for Saint Nikolaj)*

Thou wast revealed in every way as a most sacred bearer of light,
invested with divine and holy anointing in the Holy Spirit,
ablaze with the brightness that comes from God,
always radiantly approaching the Holy of Holies,
and partaking of the saving Mysteries by grace.
As a true and most glorious hierarch, //
with boldness thou dost intercede for our souls.

Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him, all peoples!

Thy life was resplendent with virtues that enlightened the faithful
and dispelled the fog of error,
for thou didst truly appear as a radiant sun, O all-blessed Hierarch.
And now thou hast made thy dwelling
where the Light that knows no evening shines;
by the grace of the Holy Spirit thou hast become a son of the day.
Therefore, as we celebrate thy divine and revered memory, //
we lovingly honour thee, O Father Nikolaj.

For His mercy is confirmed on us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever.

Thy pure mind dwelt in God through faith.
Meditating on incorruption while in a mortal and corruptible body,
thou didst acquire the splendour of the Bodiless Powers.
By remaining passionless thou wast adorned with dispassion,
O Father and most-wise Hierarch Nikolaj, //
radiant beacon and intercessor for those who honour thy memory.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Tone 8 *(From the Menaion, for Saint Nikolaj)*

The fruit of thy virtues,
O venerable Father Nikolaj,
has enlightened the hearts of the faithful.
For, upon hearing of thine immeasurable humility,
who would not wonder at thy patience, gentleness, and compassion?
Thou hast instructed all in the ways of God.
And now, as thou art adorned with the never-fading crown, //
ever intercede on behalf of our souls!

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

Tone 8 *(Theotokion)*

Receive the Archangel Gabriel's voice, crying:
"Rejoice, O Mother of God, //
for thou hast borne for the world Christ the Giver of Life!"

THE ENTRANCE WITH THE CENSER

Priest: *Wisdom! Stand upright!*

O GLADSOME LIGHT

O Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the Immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed, Jesus Christ.
Now that we have come to the setting of the sun, and behold the light of evening, we praise God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For meet it is at all times to worship Thee with voices of praise, O Son
of God, the Giver of Life; therefore all the world doth glorify Thee.

THE EVENING PROKEIMENON

[Music on website]

Priest: Let us attend! Peace be to all!

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Reader: Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted: hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul, and deliver it!

Choir: Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted: hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul, and deliver it!

Reader: Let Thy salvation, O God, uphold me!

Choir: Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted: hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul, and deliver it!

Reader: Let the poor see and be glad!

Choir: Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted: hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul, and deliver it!

Reader: Seek God, and thy soul shall live!

Choir: Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted: hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul, and deliver it!

Reader: Turn not away Thy face from Thy child, for I am afflicted:

Choir: hear me speedily, draw near unto my soul, and deliver it!

VOUCHSAFE, O LORD

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.

THE LITANY OF SUPPLICATION

In place of the Litany of Supplication, the choir sings:

Lord, have mercy. (x 12)

THE PRAYER AT THE BOWING OF THE HEADS

Priest: Peace be to all!

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Priest: Bow your heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

The Priest reads the Prayer at the Bowing of the Heads:

Priest: ... now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

APOSTICHA

Tone 4 (*From the Lenten Triodion*)

[Music on website]

Thy grace hath shone forth, O Lord:
the grace which illumines our soul.

This is the acceptable time!

This is the time of repentance!

Let us lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light,
that passing through the Fast as through a great sea
we may reach the Resurrection on the third day//
of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of our souls.

v. *To Thee I lift up mine eyes, O Thou Who art enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till He have mercy upon us.*

Repeat: "Thy grace hath shone forth, O Lord..."

v. *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Too long our soul has been sated with the scorn of those who are at ease, the contempt of the proud.*

Tone 4 (For the Martyrs)

Thou art glorified
in the memory of Thy saints, O Christ God.//
At their supplications, send down on us Thy great mercy!

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

Tone 4 (From the Lenten Triodion)

The angelic hosts glorify thee, O Mother of God,
for thou gavest birth to God,
co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,
Who, by His own desire, created the angelic hosts out of nothing.
Beseech Him to deliver from corruption and to enlighten//
the souls of those who rightly praise thee, O most pure one!

THE PRAYER OF SAINT SIMEON, THE GOD-RECEIVER

Priest/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; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel.

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

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

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, look upon and heal our infirmities for Thy Name's sake.

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

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;
both now and ever, and unto the 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 the evil one.

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 the ages of ages. Amen.*

Reader: *Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us, and save us. Amen.*

THE LENTEN TROPARIA

[Music on website]

Tone 8

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 hast borne the Saviour of our souls. *(All make a prostration)*

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

O Baptiser of Christ, remember us all,
that we may be delivered from our iniquities;//
for to thee is given grace to intercede for us! *(All make a prostration)*

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

Intercede for us, O holy Apostles and all the saints,
that we may be delivered from perils and sorrows;//
for we have acquired you as fervent intercessors before the Saviour! *(All make a prostration)*

Beneath thy compassion we take refuge, O Theotokos.
Do not despise our supplications in adversity;//
but deliver us from perils, O only pure and only blessed one! *(No prostration)*

THE BLESSING

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (x 40)

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

More honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, thou who without defilement gavest birth to God the Word, and art truly Theotokos, we magnify thee.

Bless, father, in the Name of the Lord.

Priest: *Christ our God, He Who is, is blessed, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.*

Reader: *Amen.*

Reader: O Heavenly King, support the faithful; confirm the faith; guide the nations; give peace to the world; and preserve well our holy church and this city. Grant repose to our departed fathers and brethren in the dwelling-place of the righteous. Receive us in repentance and confession, for Thou art a good and merciful God and lovest mankind

THE PRAYER OF SAINT EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

The Priest or Reader says the Prayer of Saint Ephraim:

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faint-heartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. *(All make a prostration)*

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to me Thy servant. *(All make a prostration)*

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults, and not to judge my brother; for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen. *(All make a prostration)*

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, give the blessing.

The Priest gives the blessing.

Bless, O Lord.

Reader: Lord Jesus Christ, through the intercessions of Thy most pure Mother; by the protection of the honourable bodiless powers of heaven; at the supplications of our Father among the Saints, Chad, Bishop of Lichfield, Patron and Protector of this Community; of the Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; and of all the saints, have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.

THE CEREMONY OF MUTUAL FORGIVENESS

*All venerate the icon of Christ. Each person then makes a prostration in front of each other person present, and asks his or her forgiveness, using these or similar words: **Forgive me, and pray for me, a sinner.** They then share a kiss of peace.*

*If no one else is present, and you are using the service alone, you should still forgive from your heart anyone who has wronged you, ask God's forgiveness for any wrong you have done to another, and pray for everyone with whom you need to be reconciled because of past wrongs done to one another. You may wish to say the Prayer of Forgiveness: **O God, remit, pardon and forgive our sins, whether voluntary or involuntary, whether by words or deeds, whether in knowledge or ignorance, whether by day or night, whether in mind or thought; forgive us all these, for Thou art good and lovest mankind.***

Priest/Reader: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us, and save us. Amen.