

Vespers of Holy and Great Friday (Reader's Service)

(Consult UOC of USA Prayer Book for text of the Vespers Service. Litanies should be replaced by "Lord have mercy" said twelve times, followed by "Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen." The Gospel should be read, not chanted.)

Service begins with: "Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen."

At LORD I Call Upon You, 6 stychyry are sung:

Vs:

If You, Lord, should mark iniquities: Lord, who will stand? But there is forgiveness with You.

(Tone 1)

All creation was changed by fear when it saw You hanging on the Cross, O Christ; the sun was darkened and the foundations of the earth were shaken; all things were suffering with You, the Creator of them all. This You endured willingly for us. Lord, glory to You!

Vs:

For Your Name's sake I have waited for You, O Lord: my soul has waited on Your word: my soul has hoped in the Lord.

All creation was changed by fear when it saw You hanging on the Cross, O Christ; the sun was darkened and the foundations of the earth were shaken; all things were suffering with You, the Creator of them all. This You endured willingly for us. Lord, glory to You!

Vs:

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

(Tone 2)

Impious and lawless people, why do you meditate vain things? Why have you condemned the Life of all to death? O great marvel! That the Creator of the world, Who loves humankind, is betrayed into the hands of transgressors and lifted up on a tree, that He may free the prisoners in Hell. Long-suffering Lord, glory to You!

Vs:

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

Today the blameless Virgin, when she saw You hanging on the Cross, with a mother's love lamented, bitterly wounded in her heart, groaning in lamentation from the depth of her soul, she struck her cheeks and tore her hair; and so, beating her breast, she cried out with grief, "Woe is me, my divine child! Woe is me, light of the world! Why have You left my sight, Lamb of God?" Therefore the armies of the Bodiless Powers were seized with terror as they said, "Lord, beyond understanding, glory to You!"

Vs:

Praise the Lord, all nations: praise Him all peoples.

When she saw You, O Christ, the Creator and God of all, hanging on the Cross, she who bore You without seed, cried bitterly: My Son, where has the beauty of Your form departed? I cannot bear to see You unjustly crucified; hasten then, arise, that I too may see Your Resurrection from the dead on the third day.

Vs:

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

Today the Master of creation stands before Pilate, and the Creator of all things is given up to a Cross, led like a lamb by His own will. He has been transfixed with the nails, and He has been pierced in the side, and the lips of the One who rained down the manna are touched with a sponge. The Redeemer of the world is struck on the cheeks, and the Fashioner of all things is mocked by His own servants. O the Master's love for mankind! For those who crucify Him He implored His own Father, saying, "Forgive them this sin, for they do not know, the lawless, how wrongfully they act."

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

(Tone 6)

Ah! how did the lawless assembly condemn the King of creation to death, without shame as they recalled benefits with which He had protected them, as He reminded them, saying, "My people, what I have done to you? Have I not filled Judea with marvels? Have I not raised the dead with a word? Have I not healed every sickness and disease? How then have you repaid Me? Why have you forgotten Me, giving Me blows for healings; putting Me to death in return for life; hanging your Benefactor on a Tree as a malefactor, the Lawgiver as a lawbreaker, the King of all as One condemned." Long-suffering Lord, glory to You!

Now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

A dread and marvelous mystery is seen to come to pass today. The Invisible is grasped,

the One Who loosed Adam from the curse is bound, the One Who tries hearts and reins is tried; the One Who shut the abyss is shut up in prison. He, before Whom the Powers of heaven stand in fear, stands before Pilate; the Fashioner is struck by the hand of the thing He fashioned; He Who judges the living and the dead, is condemned to a Tree; the Destroyer of Hell is shut up in a tomb. You bear all things with compassion, and save all from the curse, long-suffering Lord, glory to You!

O Gladsome Light

Prokeimen (Tone 4)

They parted My garments among them, and cast lots for My clothing.

Vs:

O God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?

R:

The Reading is from Exodus.

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his servant, Jesus son of Nun, would not leave the tent. Moses said to the Lord, "See, You have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found favor in My sight." Now if I have found favor in Your sight, show me Your ways, so that I may know You and find favor in Your sight. Consider too that this nation is Your people." He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And he said to Him, "If Your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people, unless You go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and Your people, from every people on the face of the earth." The Lord said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in My sight, and I know you by name." Moses said, "Show me Your glory, I pray." And He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the Name, "The Lord"; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," He said, "you cannot see My face; for no one shall see Me and live." And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by Me where you shall stand on the rock; and while My glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by; then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

Prokeimen (Tone 4)

Give judgment, Lord, against those who wrong me.

Vs:

They have rewarded me with evils in return for blessings.

R:

The Reading is from Job.

The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first Day, the second Cassia, and the third Horn of Amaltheia. In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. And Job died, old and full of days. It is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises. He is described in the Syriac book as dwelling in the land of Ausis, on the borders of Idumea and Arabia. His name before was Jobab and he took an Arabian wife and begot a son named Enon. He himself was the son of his father Zare, one of the sons of Esau. His mother was Bosorra, so that was fifth in descent from Abraham.

R:

The Reading is from the Prophecy of Isaias.

Thus says the Lord: See, My servant will understand; he shall be exalted and glorified exceedingly. Just as there many will be astonished at you, so your appearance will be without glory from men, and your glory from the sons of men. So many nations will marvel at him; kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them about him they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate. Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? We brought a report as of a child before him, as a root out of dry ground; he had no form or glory, and we saw him, and he had neither form nor beauty. But his form was without honour and inferior to the children of men. He was a man in suffering and acquainted with bearing weakness, because his face has been away, he was dishonoured and not esteemed. He bears our sins and is in pain for us. We reckoned him to be in toil and in affliction and trouble. But he was wounded for our sins and crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment of our peace, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; every one has gone astray in their own way, and the Lord handed him over for our sins. And he, because of his affliction, does not open his mouth; like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation his judgement was taken away; who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken away from the earth; because of the iniquities of my people he was led to death. And I will give the evil for his burial and the rich for his death, because he practised no iniquity, nor was there guile in his mouth. And the Lord wishes to cleanse him of his blow. If you give an offering for sin, your soul will seed a long-lived descendance. And the Lord wishes to take away from the toil of his soul, to

show him light and to fashion him with understanding, to justify the just one, who serves many well, and he will bear their sins. Therefore he will inherit many and divide the spoils of the strong. Because his soul was handed over to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and was handed over because of their iniquities. Rejoice, barren one who do not give birth, break out and cry, you who are not in labor, for the children of the desolate are more than those of her that has a husband.

Prokeimen (Tone 6)

They have placed me in the lowest pit; in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Vs:

Lord God of my salvation, I called for help by day; and by night also before You.

R:

The reading is from the 1st Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

Brethren, the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, Who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

R:

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Vs1:

Save me, O God, for the waters have come in even to my soul.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Vs2:

And they gave Me gall for My food; and for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Vs3:

Let their eyes be darkened, so that they see not; and bow down their back continually.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

R:

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

Pp:

Glory to Your Passion, O Lord, glory to You.

R:

When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death. And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor. Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, and gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD directed me." Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly. Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to

the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him." But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" They said, "Barabbas!" Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it. And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children." Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left. Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing. Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken

Me?” Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, “This Man is calling for Elijah!” Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. The rest said, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.” And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God!” Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, “Not one of His bones shall be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.” And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee’s sons. Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

After the Gospel Reading:

Pp:

Glory to Your long-suffering, O Lord, glory to You!

Aposticha (Tone 2):

When from the Tree the Arimathean took you down as a dead body, O Christ, who are the life of all, he buried you, with myrrh and a shroud; and with love he embraced your immaculate body with heart and lips; yet, shrouded with fear, he cried out to you rejoicing, “Glory to your condescension, Lover of humankind!”

Vs 1:

The Lord is King, he has robed himself with majesty. The Lord has robed, and girded himself with power.

When in the new tomb you, the Redeemer of all, had been laid for the sake of all, Hell became a laughing stock and, seeing you, quaked with fear; the bars were smashed, the gates were shattered, the graves were opened, the dead arose; then Adam with thanksgiving cried out to you rejoicing, “Glory to your condescension, Lover of humankind!”

Vs 2:

He has made the world firm; it will not be shaken.

When in the tomb in the flesh you were enclosed by your own will, O Christ, who by the nature of your godhead are uncircumscribed and unbounded, you unlocked the storehouses of Hell and emptied all his palaces; then too you granted this Sabbath divine blessing and glory and your own splendor.

Vs 3:

Holiness becomes your house, O Lord, for ever.

When the Powers saw you, O Christ, falsely accused by lawless men as a deceiver, they trembled at your ineffable long-suffering, and at the gravestone, sealed by the hands with which they had speared your immaculate side; yet rejoicing at our salvation, they cried to you, “Glory to your condescension, Lover of humankind!”

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

(Tone 5)

When Joseph with Nikodemos took you, who are clothed with light as a garment, down from the Tree, and saw you a dead body, naked, unburied, he was filled with compassion, and raising a lament he grieved and said, “Alas, sweetest Jesu, when a little while ago the sun saw you hanging on the Cross, it wrapped itself in gloom, and the earth quaked with fear, and the veil of the temple was rent in two; but see, I now look on you, who for me have willingly undergone death; how shall I bury you, my God? Or how shall I wrap you in shrouds; with what hands shall I touch your immaculate body? Or what songs shall I sing at your departure? I magnify your sufferings and I hymn your burial, with your resurrection, as I cry: Lord, glory to you!”

Then the following Tropars (Tone 2):

The noble Joseph, taking down Your most pure Body from the Tree, wrapped it in a clean shroud with sweet spices and laid it for burial in a new grave.

The Angel standing by the grave cried to the women bearing myrrh: Myrrh is fitting for the dead, but Christ has shown Himself a stranger to corruption.

Pp:

Preserve, O God, the Holy Orthodox Faith, and all Orthodox Christians, to the ages of ages.

More honorable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Birthgiver-of-God, we magnify you.

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

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

R:

May He Who for our sake and for our salvation accepted the fearful sufferings, the life-giving Cross and the voluntary Burial in the flesh, Christ our true God, through the prayers of His all-pure and holy Mother, by the power of the precious and life-giving Cross, through the intercessions of the holy, glorious and all-praised Apostles, of Saint _____ whose memory we celebrate on this day, and of all the Saints, have mercy on us and save us, for He is good and the Lover of mankind.

Pp:

Amen.