

**VESPERS**  
**HOLY WEDNESDAY CELEBRATED IN HOMES**

*Leader:* Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us.

*R:* Amen.

Glory to you, our God, glory to you!

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O gracious One.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us. (*3 times*)

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

Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us; Lord, cleanse us of our sins; Master, forgive our transgressions; Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities for your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (*3 times*)

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. 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.

*Leader:* Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us.

*R:* Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (*12 times*)

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

Come, let us worship our King and God.

Come, let us worship Christ, our King and God.

Come, let us worship and bow before the only Lord Jesus Christ, the King and our God.

**PSALM 103**

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Lord my God, how great you are,  
clothed in majesty and glory,

wrapped in light as in a robe.

You stretch out the heavens like a tent,

Above the rains you build your dwelling.  
You make the clouds your chariot,  
You walk on the wings of the wind.  
You make your angels spirits  
and your ministers a flaming fire.  
You founded the earth on its base,  
to stand firm from age to age.  
You wrapped it with the ocean like a cloak  
the waters stood higher than the mountains.  
At your threat they took to flight;  
at the voice of your thunder they fled.  
They rose over the mountains and flowed down  
to the place which you had appointed.  
You set limits they might not pass  
lest they return to cover the earth.  
You make springs gush forth in the valleys;  
they flow in between the hills.  
They give drink to all the beasts of the field;  
The wild asses quench their thirst.  
On their banks dwell the birds of heaven;  
from the branches they sing their song.  
From your dwelling you water the hills;  
earth drinks its fill of your gift.  
You make the grass grow for the cattle,  
and the plants to serve man's needs,  
that he may bring forth bread from the earth,  
and wine to cheer man's heart;  
Oil, to make his face shine;  
and bread to strengthen man's heart.  
The trees of the Lord drink their fill,  
the cedars he planted on Lebanon;  
there the birds build their nests;  
on the treetop the stork has her home.  
The goats find a home on the mountains  
and rabbits hide in the rocks.  
You made the moon to mark the months;  
the sun knows the time for its setting.  
When you spread the darkness it is night,  
And all the beasts of the forest creep forth.  
The young lions roar for their prey,  
and ask their food from God.  
At the rising of the sun they steal away  
and go to rest in their dens.  
Man goes out to his work,  
to labor till evening falls.  
How many are your works, O Lord!  
In wisdom you have made them all.

The earth is full of your riches.  
There is the sea, vast and wide,  
with its moving swarms past counting,  
living things great and small.  
The ships are moving there  
and the monsters you made to play with.  
All of these look to you,  
to give them their food in due season.  
You give it, they gather it up;  
You open your hand, they have their fill.  
You hide your face, they are dismayed;  
you take back your spirit, they die,  
returning to the dust from which they came.  
You send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the earth.  
May the glory of the Lord last forever:  
may the Lord rejoice in his works;  
He looks on the earth and it trembles;  
the mountains send forth smoke at his touch.  
I will sing to the Lord all my life,  
make music to my God while I live.  
May my thoughts be pleasing to him:  
I find my joy in the Lord.  
Let sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked exist no more.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul!  
You made the moon to mark the months;  
the sun knows the time for its setting.  
How many are your works, O Lord!  
In wisdom you have made them all.  
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Glory to you, O God! (*Three times*)

Lord, have mercy. (*Twelve times*)

*Leader:* O good God, in all times and places you are worshiped and glorified both in heaven and on earth. You are long-suffering and generous in your mercy and compassion. You love the just and show mercy to the sinner, calling all to repentance through the promise of blessings to come. Deem, O Lord, at this very hour, to receive our supplications and to direct our lives in the path of your commandments. Sanctify our souls; purify our bodies; set aright our minds; cleanse our thoughts; deliver us from all affliction, trouble, and distress; surround us with your holy angels so that, guided and guarded in their camp, we may attain oneness of faith and the knowledge of your unspeakable glory. For You are blessed forever and ever.

R. Amen.

## PSALM 140

(Tone 1) O Lord, I have cried to you, hear me;  
*Refrain:* Hear me, O Lord!  
 O Lord, I have cried to you, hear me;  
 receive the voice of my prayer when I call upon you.  
*Refrain:* Hear me, O Lord!  
 Let my prayer ascend to you like incense  
 and the lifting up of my hands like an evening sacrifice.  
*Refrain:* Hear me, O Lord!  
*(Psalm Chant):*  
 O Lord, set a guard, before my mouth  
 and set a seal on the door of my lips.  
 Let not my heart be inclined to evil,  
 nor make excuse for the sins I commit.  
 Let me never share in sinners' feasting  
 If a just man strikes or reproves me it is kindness  
 but let the oil of the wicked not anoint my head.  
 Let my prayer be ever against their malice.  
 Their princes were thrown down by the side of the rock.  
 Then they understood that my words were kind.  
 As a millstone is shattered to pieces on the ground,  
 so their bones were strewn at the mouth of the grave.  
 To you, Lord God, my eyes are turned  
 in you I take refuge; spare my soul!  
 From the trap they have laid for me keep me safe;  
 keep me from the snares of those who do evil.  
 Let the wicked fall into the traps they have set  
 while I pursue my way unharmed.

#### PSALM 141

With my voice I cry to the Lord;  
 with all my voice I entreat the Lord.  
 I pour out my trouble before him;  
 I tell him all my distress while my spirit faints within me.  
 But you, O Lord, know my path.  
 On the way where I shall walk they have hidden a snare to entrap me.  
 Look on my right and see:  
 there is no one who takes my part.  
 I have no means of escape,  
 not one who cares for my soul.  
 I cry to you, O Lord,  
 I have said: You are my refuge, all I have in the land of the living.  
 Listen, then, to my cry  
 for I am in the depths of distress.  
 Rescue me from those who pursue me  
 for they are stronger than I.  
 Bring my soul out of this prison

And then I shall praise your name.  
Around me the just will assemble  
because of your goodness to me.

## PSALM 129

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;  
Lord, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my pleading.

*v. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord, who would survive?*

*But with you is found forgiveness: for this we revere you.*

(Tone 1) The harlot recognized you, the Virgin's Son, as God. She wept for her lamentable deeds and begged you: Loose my debt as I unloose my hair. Love me as I love you, though I deserve your hatred; and together with publicans I will acclaim you, Benefactor and Lover of us all.

*v. My soul is waiting for the Lord. I count on his word.*

*My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman for daybreak.*

- The harlot recognized you, the Virgin's Son, as God. She wept for her lamentable deeds and begged you: Loose my debt as I unloose my hair. Love me as I love you, though I deserve your hatred; and together with publicans I will acclaim you, Benefactor and Lover of us all.

*v. Let the watchman count on daybreak,  
and Israel on the Lord.*

- The harlot mingled tears with the costly myrrh, poured it on your immaculate feet and kissed them. At once you justified her; so also grant pardon to us and save us, O Savior, who suffered for our sake.

*v. Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption,*

*Israel indeed he will redeem from all its iniquity.*

- The harlot mingled tears with the costly myrrh, poured it on your immaculate feet and kissed them. At once you justified her; so also grant pardon to us and save us, O Savior, who suffered for our sake.

## PSALM 116

*v. Praise the Lord, all you nations;*

*Acclaim him, all you peoples!*

- While the sinful woman was bringing myrrh, the disciple was conspiring with the lawless. She rejoiced to expend the costly myrrh, while he hastened to sell the Priceless One. She recognized the Master, the Master from whom he drew away; she was freed, but Judas became the enemy's slave; how awful his callousness, how great her repentance. Grant us such repentance, and save us, O Savior, who suffered for our sake.

*v. Strong is the love of the Lord for us;*

*he is faithful forever.*

- O the misery of Judas! He saw the harlot kiss your feet, and he harbored plans to betray you with a kiss. She unbound her hair but he was bound with anger, and bore, instead of myrrh, the stench of evil; for envy does not choose its own advantage. O the misery of Judas! Deliver our souls, O God, from the same.

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

(Tone 2) The sinful woman hastened to buy the perfume of great price, to anoint her benefactor with it. To the seller of perfume, she said: Give me the myrrh that I might anoint the one who washed me of all my sins.

*v. Now and ever and forever. Amen.*

(Tone 6) Drowning in the depths of sin, the harlot found in you a harbor of salvation; and, pouring out myrrh with her tears, she said: O Lord, you can forgive sins, and you await the repentance of sinners; behold me, O Master, for I am sinking in the storm of sin; in your great goodness, save me.

### HYMN OF THE EVENING

O joyful Light of the holy glory of the Father Immortal, the heavenly, holy, blessed One, O Jesus Christ, now that we have reached the setting of the sun, and see the evening light, we sing to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is fitting at all times to raise a song of praise in measured melody to you, O Son of God, the Giver of Life. Therefore, the universe sings your glory.

### THE EVENING PROKEIMENON

**Prokeimenon, Tone 4** [Psalm 135(136): 26.2]

To the God of heaven gives thanks, for he is good, for his love endures forever.

*Verse:* O give thanks to the God of gods, for his love endures forever.

A Reading from Exodus [Exodus 2:11-22]

On one occasion, after Moses had grown up, when he had gone out to his kinsmen and witnessed their forced labor, he saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his own kinsmen. Looking about and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out again, and now two Hebrews were fighting! So he asked the culprit, Why are you striking your companion? But he replied, Who has appointed you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian? Then Moses became afraid and thought, The affair must certainly be known. When Pharaoh heard of the affair, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to the land of Midian There he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. But shepherds came and drove them away. So Moses rose up in their defense and watered their flock. When they returned to their father Reuel he said to them, How is it you have returned so soon today? They answered, An Egyptian delivered us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock! Where is he? he asked his daughters. Why did you leave the man there? Invite him to have something to eat. Moses agreed to stay with him, and the man gave Moses his daughter Zipporah in marriage. She conceived and bore a son, whom he named Gershom for he said, I am a stranger residing in a foreign land.

**Prokeimenon, Tone 4** [Psalm 137(138): 8.1]

Your mercy, Lord, is eternal, despise not the work of your hands.

*Verse:* I thank you, Lord, with all my heart; in the presence of the angels I shall bless you.

A Reading from Job [Job 2:1-10]

One day, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, the satan also came

with them. The Lord said to the satan, Where have you been? Then the satan answered the Lord and said, Roaming the earth and patrolling it. The Lord said to the satan, Have you noticed my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him, blameless and upright, fearing God and avoiding evil. He still holds fast to his innocence although you incited me against him to ruin him for nothing. The satan answered the Lord and said, Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But put forth your hand and touch his bone and his flesh. Then surely he will curse you to your face. And the Lord said to the satan, "He is in your power; only spare his life." So the satan went forth from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with severe boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. He took a potsherd to scrape himself, as he sat among the ashes. Then his wife said to him: Are you still holding to your innocence, saying, "Behold, I will wait a little longer, looking for the hope of my salvation." Listen, your memory is wiped out from the earth: your sons and daughters, the pangs and pains of my womb, which I suffered in vain and with hardships. You yourself are sitting down, spending the nights in the open air among the rottenness of worms; and I go about as a wanderer and a handmaid from place to place and from house to house, waiting for the setting of the sun, so as to rest from my labors and pains that now beset me. Curse God and die! But looking at her, he said, "You speak as foolish women do. We accept good things from God; should we not accept evil? Through all this, Job did not sin in what he said nor did he charge God with wrong.

Gospel:

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew. (Matthew 26:6-16)

*Response:* Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.

At that time: when Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil, and poured it on his head while he was reclining at table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant and said, "Why this waste? It could have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor." Since Jesus knew this, he said to them, "Why do you make trouble for the woman? She has done a good thing for me. The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me. In pouring this perfumed oil upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Amen, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be spoken of, in memory of her." Then one of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

*Then:*

### **HYMN OF GLORIFICATION.**

Make us worthy, O Lord, to be kept sinless this evening.

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our Fathers, and praiseworthy and glorious is your name forever. Amen.

May your mercy, O Lord, be upon us who have placed our hope in you.

Blessed are you, O Lord, teach me your commandments.

Blessed are you, O Master, make me understand your commandments.

Blessed are you, O Holy One, enlighten me with your commandments.

O Lord, your mercy is forever; despise not the work of your hands.  
To you is due praise; to you is due a hymn; to you is glory due.  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (*Twelve times*)

*Leader:* Blessed are you, Master and Ruler of All, for you have lighted the day with the brilliance of the sun and the night with fiery stars. You have counted us worthy of the length of this day and to come to the beginning of night.

Hear our prayer and forgive the voluntary and involuntary sins of all your people. Accept our evening prayers and upon your inheritance. send down in return your abundant mercy and kindness.

Guard us by your holy angels, clothe us in righteousness as a defense, protect us in your truth and keep us in your strength. Deliver us from all enemies and from every hostile attack. Grant that this evening and the approaching night and all the days of our life be perfect, holy, peaceful, sinless, and free from violence and evil dreams.

Through the prayers of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints who have been pleasing to you from all ages.

R. Amen.

*Then we sing or say:*

**Apostichera:**

(Tone 6) Today Christ comes to the house of the Pharisee, and the sinful woman falls at his feet; she bows before him and says: Behold, I am drowning in the depths of sin; I have lost all hope because of my deeds; in your goodness, do not turn away from me; grant me forgiveness, O Lord, and save me.

*v: To you have I lifted up my eyes, you who dwell in the heavens; my eyes, like the eyes of slaves on the hand of their lords.*

- The harlot loosened her hair for you, O Lord, while Judas reached out his hand to the godless ones. One acted to receive your forgiveness, the other to gain money. Therefore, we cry out to you: O Lord, sold for our deliverance, glory to you.

*v. Like the eyes of a servant on the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are on the Lord our God, till he show us his mercy.*

- Filled with the odor of sin, the woman drew near to you; she poured out tears over your feet and proclaimed your passion, O God our Savior: O Master, how shall I dare to raise my eyes to you, for you have come to save the fallen? You raised Lazarus from the tomb; lift me also from the abyss of death. O Lord, accept me in my misery and save me.

*v: Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy. We are filled with contempt. Indeed, all too full is our soul with the scorn of the rich, with the proud man's disdain.*

- She who was rejected because of her life, and who was accepted because of her conversion, came to you, bearing myrrh, and saying: Do not cast me out, for I am a wretched one, O Son of the Virgin; do not despise my tears, O Joy of the angels; but receive me in repentance, and in your goodness, accept me a sinful one.

*v. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.*

(Tone 8) The woman who had fallen into many sins, sensing your divinity, O Lord, assumed the



myrrh-bearers' role and mourned, preparing you with myrrh before your burial. She said: Woe is me; for gloomy, moonless night incites my unbridled desires and lust for sin. You who draw down seawater from the clouds accept the fountain of my tears. Incline to the groaning of my heart as you bowed the heavens when you emptied yourself. I will kiss your immaculate feet and wipe them with the hair of my head, those feet whose steps Eve heard at dusk in Paradise and hid herself in fear. Who will search the multitude of my sins or plumb the depths of your judgments? Do not despise me, your servant, O Savior of my soul, for your mercy knows no measure.

*Then:*

Now you may dismiss your servant, O Lord,  
in peace, according to your word;  
for my eyes have seen your salvation  
which you have prepared before the face of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and the glory of your people, Israel.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us. (3 times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.  
Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us; Lord, cleanse us of our sins; Master, forgive our transgressions; Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities for your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3 times)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. 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.  
R. Amen.

*Them the Penitential dismissal:*

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos! Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. For you gave birth to Christ, the Savior and Redeemer of our souls.

*Prostration*

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

O Baptizer of Christ, remember us all, that we be delivered from our transgressions for you have been given grace to intercede on our behalf.

*Prostration*

Now and ever and forever. Amen.

Pray for us, O holy apostles and all you saints, that we be delivered from danger and affliction for we have you as our fervent intercessors before the Savior.

*Prostration*

Beneath your compassion, we take refuge, O Virgin Theotokos. Despise not our prayers in our

need, but deliver us from dangers, for you alone are pure and blessed.

Lord, have mercy. (*40 times*)

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

More honorable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, who, a virgin, gave birth to God the Word, you, truly the Theotokos, we magnify.

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us.

R. Amen.

### PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM

Lord and Master of my life,  
spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair,  
lust for power, and idle chatter.  
*Prostration.*

Instead, bestow on me, your servant,  
the spirit of integrity, humility, patience and love.  
*Prostration.*

Yes, O Lord and King,  
let me see my own sins,  
and not judge my brothers and sisters  
for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.  
*Prostration*

*Then, with a simple bow, the following is repeated four times:*

O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.  
O God, cleanse me of my sins and have mercy on me.  
O Lord, forgive me for I have sinned without number.

*Repeat:* Lord and Master of my life,  
spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair,  
lust for power, and idle chatter.  
Instead, bestow on me, your servant,  
the spirit of integrity, humility, patience and love.  
Yes, O Lord and King,  
let me see my own sins,  
and not judge my brothers and sisters  
for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.  
*Prostration*

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us. (*3 times with a prostration after each*)

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

Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us; Lord, cleanse us of our sins; Master, forgive our transgressions; Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities for your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (*3 times*)

Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. 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.

Amen. Lord, have mercy. (*12 times*)

R. Blessed be the Name of the Lord, now and forever. (*3 times*)

### PSALM 33

I will bless the Lord at all times;  
His praise always on my lips.  
In the Lord my soul shall make its boast.  
The humble shall hear and be glad.  
Glorify the Lord with me,  
Together let us praise his name.  
I sought the Lord and He answered me,  
and from all my terrors he set me free.  
Look towards him and be radiant;  
let your faces not be abashed.  
This poor man called; the Lord heard him  
and rescued him from all his distress.  
The angel of the Lord is encamped  
around those who revere him, to rescue them.  
Taste and see that the Lord is good.  
He is happy who seeks refuge in him.  
Revere the Lord, you his saints,  
They lack nothing, those who revere him.  
Strong lions suffer want and go hungry  
but those who seek the Lord lack no blessing.  
Come, children, and hear me  
that I may teach you the fear of the Lord.  
Who is he who longs for life  
and many days, to enjoy his prosperity?  
Then keep your tongue from evil  
and your lips from speaking deceit.  
Turn aside from evil and do good;  
seek and strive after peace.

The Lord turns his face against the wicked  
to destroy their remembrance from the earth.  
The Lord turns his eyes to the just  
and his ears to their appeal.  
They call and the Lord hears  
and rescues them in all their distress.  
The Lord is close to the broken-hearted;  
those whose spirit is crushed he will save.  
Many are the trials of the just man  
but from them all the Lord will rescue him.  
He will keep guard over all his bones,  
not one of his bones shall be broken.  
Evil brings death to the wicked;  
those who hate the good are doomed.  
The Lord ransoms the souls of his servants.  
Those who hide in him shall not be condemned.

It is truly proper to glorify you, O Theotokos, the ever-Blessed, Immaculate and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, who, a Virgin, gave birth to God the Word, you, truly the Theotokos, we magnify.  
*Leader:* Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord, Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us.

*R:* Amen.