Vespers with Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ

Metropolitan Cantor Institute
Byzantine Catholic Archeparchy of Pittsburgh
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The joining of the service of Vespers on Christmas Eve to the celebration of the Divine Liturgy of our Holy Father Basil the Great is an ancient custom in our Byzantine Church. The singing of the first part of the service of evening prayer, joined to an extended Liturgy of the Word with responsorial troparia, and then climaxed by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, is increasingly chosen as the evening service for the parochial observance of Christmas Eve.

This booklet takes the elements of the Vigil and the Divine Liturgy from the official texts and music published by the Metropolitan Church in 2007, and combines them with the stichera and troparia for Christmas Eve from the *Festal Menaion* of the Sisters of Saint Basil the Great of Uniontown, PA. These Christmas Eve texts are set to music in strict accord with the principles used by the Inter-Eparchial Music Commission of the Byzantine Catholic Church.

The image on the cover is from the Ruthenian Časoslov (Rome, 1950).

We hope that this booklet will provide edification and help to God's faithful as they begin the celebration of the birth of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ.
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GREAT VESPERS

Full bright vestments are worn for this liturgy. The faithful **STAND** when the preparatory rites are completed and the clergy quietly say the prayers before commencing the Divine Liturgy. The holy doors remain closed until the Little Entrance.

Deacon: Reverend Father, give the blessing.

Celebrant: Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: \[ \text{Come, let us worship our King and God.} \]

A - men.

Call to Worship

*Each time with a reverence:*

\[ \text{Come, let us worship Christ, our King and God.} \]

\[ \text{Come, let us worship and bow before the only Lord Jesus Christ,} \]

\[ \text{the King and our God.} \]

*The celebrant goes before the closed holy doors and quietly recites the Prayers of Light of vespers.*
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 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. I will sing to the Lord all my life,
make music to my God while I live.
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.
Glorify to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Then three times, with a bow each time:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to you, O God!

The faithful may SIT as the Litany of Peace begins:

Deacon: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.
Response: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: For peace from on high and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.
Response: Lord, have mercy.

For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

For this holy church and for all who enter it with faith, reverence, and fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.
For our holy father (Name), pope of Rome, let us pray to the Lord.  

For our most reverend metropolitan (Name), for our God-loving bishop (Name), for the venerable presbyterate, the diaconate in Christ, and all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord. 

For our government and for all in the service of our country, let us pray to the Lord. 

For this city [or: For this holy monastery], for every city, community, and for the faithful living in them, let us pray to the Lord. 

For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord. 

For those who travel by sea, air, and land, for the sick, the suffering, the captive and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord. 

Special petitions may be inserted here. 

That we be delivered from all affliction, wrath, and need, let us pray to the Lord. 

Protect us, save us, have mercy on us, and preserve us, O God, by your grace. 

Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God. 

Response: 

To you, O Lord.

Celebrant: Evening, morning, and at noon we praise you, we bless you, we thank you, and we pray to you, Master of All and loving Lord. Let our prayer rise like incense before you and do not let our hearts be turned to evil words or thoughts, but deliver us from all that might ensnare our souls. For to you Lord, O Lord, our eyes are turned and in you we hope; let us not be put to shame, O our God. 

For to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is due all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever and forever.
THE LAMP-LIGHTING PSALMS

The faithful **STAND** for the great incensation of the church. They may **SIT** when the great incensation is complete. The opening verses of Psalm 140 with refrain are sung according to the tone of the first sticheron:

Psalm 140: - **Tone 2 samohlasen**

O Lord, I have cried to you, hear me. Hear me, O Lord!

O Lord, I have cried to you, hear me; receive the voice of my pray'r when I call upon you. Hear me, O Lord!

Let my pray'r ascend to you like incense and the lifting up of my hands like an evening sacrifice. Hear me, O Lord!
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 excuses for 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.

The 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 all 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.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness: for this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord. I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman for daybreak.

Let the watch-man count on daybreak and Is - ra - el on the Lord.

Come, let us re - joice in the Lord; let us pro-claim the pres-ent
mystery by which the partition has been broken and the flaming sword withheld. Now the Cherubim shall let us all come to the Tree of Life.

As for me, I am returning to the bliss of Paradise from which I had been banished by disobedience. Behold! The Image of the Father and his unchangeable eternity has taken the form of a servant. Without suffering he has come forth to us from an all-pure Virgin, and yet he has remained unchangeable.

He is true God as he was before, and he has taken on himself what he had not been, becoming man out of his love.
for all. Therefore, let us raise our voices in hymns singing:

O God, born of the Virgin, have mercy on us.

Cantor

Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption, Israel indeed he will redeem from all its iniquity.

Because the Lord Jesus was born of the holy Virgin, all creation is enlightened. Behold! The shepherds keep watch and the magi are adoring; the angels are singing hymns of praise and Herod is trembling; for the Savior of our souls has revealed himself in the flesh.
Praise the Lord, all you nations; acclaim him all you peoples!

O Christ our God, your kingdom is eternal, and your reign is from generation to generation. You became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and became man from the ever-virgin Mary.

Your coming, O Christ, has shed a great light upon us.

You are the Light of Light and the radiance of the Father.

You have illumined the whole creation. Therefore, every thing that breathes sings a hymn of praise to you. You are the image of the Father's glory. You are the eternal God, existing before all
ages, who shone forth from the Virgin. O Lord our God,

have mercy on us.

Cantor

Strong is the love of the Lord for us; he is faithful for ever.

O Christ, what shall we offer you for your coming on

earth in our humanity for our sake? Ev'ry creature that has its

its being from you gives thanks to you: the angels offer hymns of praise,

the heavens give a star; the Magi present their gifts and the shepherds,

their wonder; the earth provides a cave and the desert a manger.

As for us, we offer a Virgin Mother. O God who are from all
The faithful **STAND** when the holy doors are opened and the cantor sings:

_The faithful STAND when the holy doors are opened and the cantor sings:

Glo-ry to the Fa-ther, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spir-it, now and ever


While the sticheron at “Glory ...” is sung, the Little Entrance with the holy gospel book and censer is made through the northern door and the holy doors.

**Doxastikon - Tone 2 samohласен**

When Au-gus-tus became su-preme rul-er of the world, the man-ly

king-doms a-mong the peo-ple came to an end. Like-wise, when you

be-came incarnate of the Im-mac-u-late One, the wor-ship of man-ly

gods had to cease. The cit-ies came under a uni-ver-sal

pow-er, and the Gen-tiles believed in one su-preme Di-vin-i-ty.
Nations were registered in the name of Caesar Augustus, and we, the faithful, were registered in your divine name, O Incarnate One.

O Lord, great is your mercy; glory to you!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

The clergy and servers enter the sanctuary as “O Joyful Light” is sung. The sanctuary and the faithful are incensed.

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,
THE READINGS

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Celebrant: Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

The faithful sing the PROKEIMENON OF THE DAY (pages 118-120 in the Divine Liturgies book). But if it is Friday evening, we sing the Great Prokeimenon in Tone 7, “What god is as great as our God? You are the God who works wonders.” The deacon chants the verse(s). Then the lector chants the following readings.

Readings 1-3 (For the sake of brevity, one reading may be chosen.)

Genesis 1:1-13
Numbers 24: 2-3, 5-9, 17-18
Micah 4: 6-7, 5: 2-4

First Responsorial Troparion

All

Tone 6 troparion melody

You were born in a cave, hidden from the eyes of all; but the heav - ens revealed you to all by means of a star, O Sav - ior.
Refrain

It brought the Ma-gi to you; they wor-shipped you in the fer- vor of

their faith. Have mer-cy up-on all of us.

Cantor

On the ho- ly moun-tain is his city cher-ished by the Lord. The Lord

pre-fers the gates of Zion to all Ja-cob's dwel-ings. Of you are told

glo-rious things, O Cit-y of God. E-gypt and Bab-ylon I will count among

those who know me.

Cantor

For-eign-ers, Tyre, and Ethiopia these will be her chil-dren and Zi-on

shall be called “Mother” for a man was born there. It is he, the

Lord Most High, who found-ed her.
In his register of peoples the Lord writes: “These princes are her children,” and while they dance they will sing: In you all find their home.

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

And the faithful sing the entire troparion: You were born in a cave, hidden from the eyes of all; * but the heavens revealed you to all by means of a star, O Savior. * It brought the Magi to you; * they worshipped you in the fervor of their faith. * Have mercy upon all of us.

Readings 4-6:  
(For the sake of brevity, one reading may be chosen.)

Isaiah 11:1-10
Baruch 3: 35 through 4: 4
Daniel 2:31-36, 44-45

Second Responsorial Troparion

You have shone forth from the Virgin, O Christ, Sun of Justice. A star found you, whom nothing can contain, manifest-ed in the cave.
It led the Ma-gi to a-dore you. With them we wor-ship you;

O Giv-er of Life, glo-ry to you!

The Lord reigns, he is clothed in ma-jes-ty; robed is the Lord

and girt a-bout with strength.

The world you made firm, not to be moved Your throne has stood firm from

of old. From all e-ter-ni-ty, O Lord, you are.

The wa-ters have lift-ed up their voice, O Lord, the wa-ters have lift-ed

up their voice; the wa-ters have lift-ed up their thun-der.
Glo-ry to the Fa-ther and to the Son and to the Ho-ly Spir-it; now and


And the faithful sing the entire troparion: You have shone forth from the Virgin, O Christ, Sun of Justice. * A star found you, whom nothing could contain, manifested in the cave. * It led the Magi to adore you. * With them we worship you; * O Giver of Life, glory to you!

Readings 7-8  (For the sake of brevity, the first reading may be omitted.)

Isaiah 9: 6-7
Isaiah 7:10-16; 8: 1-4, 9-10 (This reading should always be taken.)

Small Litany

Deacon: Again and again, in peace, let us pray to the Lord

Response: Lord, have mer-cy.

Deacon: Protect us, save us, have mercy on us, and preserve us, O God, by your grace.

Response: Lord, have mer-cy.

Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

Response: To you, O Lord.
Celebrant: For you are holy, our God, and we give glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever

Deacon: And forever.

Response: The faithful STAND. Amen.

The Liturgy of St. Basil is now celebrated, beginning with the Trisagion ("Holy God").

Prokeimenon - Tone 1 (Psalm 2:7-8):

Verse: Ask and I shall bequeath you the nations, put the ends of the earth in your possession.

Alleluia - Tone 5 (Psalm 109:1-3):

Verse: The Lord said to my Lord: You are my Son; this day have I begotten you.

Verse: The Lord will yield from Zion your scepter of power: rule in the midst of all your foes.

Verse: From the womb, before the morning star, I have begotten you. The Lord has sworn and he will not repent.

Music for the responses at the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great can be found on pages 96-103 of the Divine Liturgies book.
At the discretion of the celebrant, the irmos of the ninth ode of the canon of Compline may be sung in place of “In You, O Woman Full of Grace.”

Communion Hymn (Psalm 148:1):
Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the highest. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Immediately after the liturgy, the church is darkened, and a candle is lit and set on a stand in the middle of the church.

Standing beside it, the cantor sings the troparion and kontakion of the feast:

Troparion of the Nativity - Tone 4:

Your birth, O Christ our God, has shed upon the world the light of knowledge; for through it, those who worshipped the
stars have learned from a star to worship you, the Sun of Justice,
and to know you, the Dawn from on High. Glory to you, O Lord!

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

Kontakion of the Nativity - Tone 3

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Transcendent One;
and the earth offers a cave to the Unapproachable.
The angels sing his glory with the shepherds;
the wise men journey with the star. The eternal

God is born for us as an infant child.