The Order of Vespers on the Sunday of Forgiveness (Cheesefare Sunday)

Metropolitan Cantor Institute
Byzantine Catholic Archeeparchy of Pittsburgh
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In the Byzantine tradition, the forty-day fast before Pascha begins on the Monday after the Sunday of Cheesefare (Sunday of Forgiveness). This booklet contains the service of Vespers as celebrated on the afternoon or evening of Cheesefare Sunday, to begin the Great Fast.

At Vespers on Sundays during the Fast, ten stichera are appointed at the Lamp-lighting Psalms. In this book, just the three stichera proper to the Sunday of Forgiveness are included, so that this book may be used year after year. For a more complete set of hymns, see the full booklet for Vespers on Sunday evenings during the Great Fast.

This service may be celebrated with or without a priest (or bishop) as celebrant. If another person leads the service, then:

- The one who leads says or chants anything appointed for “Leader.”
- In place of all litanies: “Lord, have mercy” twelve times, then “Glory.... now and ever...”
- The leader or reader chants the verses of the prokeimenon.
- All other exclamations and prayers of the celebrant and deacon are omitted.

This booklet uses the text for the service of Vespers prepared by the Inter-Eparchial Liturgical Commission of the Byzantine Catholic Metropolitan Church of Pittsburgh, and the musical settings of the Inter-Eparchial Music Commission, along with musical settings from the Metropolitan Cantor Institute. Cantors and others may notice some slight changes from previous versions of this service.

Previous editions of this booklet used the “Lenten tone” for hymns and chants throughout the service. This edition follows the decision of the Inter-Eparchial Music Commission to use this melody only for litany responses.

Previous editions of this booklet also gave a longer ending, which is only appropriate on weekday evenings (Monday through Thursday) in the Great Fast. This edition uses the correct conclusion for Sundays found in the Slavonic liturgical books.

The verses at the aposticha (“To you I have lifted up...” and “Have mercy on us...”) may be sung to the samohlasen verse melody, or chanted to the psalm tone as marked.

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Metropolitan Cantor Institute
The Order of Vespers on Cheesefare Sunday

**Priest:** Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and forever.

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

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**Response:**

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

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.

Priest: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response:  

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 they 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.

And again:
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! (bow)  
Glory to you, O God!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! (bow)  
Glory to you, O God!

And the third time, with melody:  
Al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia! Glory to you, O God!
Litany of Peace

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

Response: 1. Lord, have mercy.

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

Response: 2. Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: 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 [or: this holy monastery] 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, 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: \[\text{\textbf{To you, O Lord.}}\]

_The faithful STAND._

Priest: 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.

Response: \[\text{\textbf{A \ - \ men.}}\]

_The faithful REMAIN STANDING for the beginning of the Lamp-lighting Psalms and the great incensation of the church; they SIT when the incensation is complete._

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The Lamp-Lighting Psalms

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 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.

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 watchman count on daybreak
and Israel on the Lord.

Stichera of Cheesefare Sunday - Tone 2 podoben: Jehda ot dreva
as you saved the Nine-vites of old, and in your goodness, grant us a share
in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Praise the Lord, all you nations; acclaim him all you peoples!

When I see my deeds that deserve such punishment, I
am without hope, O Lord, for I have disobeyed
your holy commandments, and I have led a foolish life.

Therefore I beseech you: Purify me in the waters
of repentance by fasting and prayer, O Savior full of
goodness; do not reject me, O Benefactor of the universe.
Strong is the love of the Lord for us; he is faithful forever.

Let us begin the time of this bright Fast giving ourselves to spiritual struggle. Let us sanctify our souls and purify our flesh. Let us not only fast from food; let us also abstain from every passion and cultivate spiritual virtues.

And let us faithfully persevere in this, so that we may be worthy to see the holy Passion of Christ our God and the joy of his holy Resurrection.

The faithful STAND.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.
With the staff of your intercession, O pure Theotokos, drive from my wretched soul the bestial passions, guiding me peacefully toward life; and add me to the holy flock of thy chosen sheep.

Hymn of the Evening

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

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.
Evening Prokeimenon

Deacon: Let us be attentive!  
Priest: Peace be to all!  
Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon for Cheesefare (Forgiveness) Sunday (Psalm 68:18,19,30,33):

Do not hide your face from your servant; answer me quickly for I am in distress.

Come close to my soul and redeem me.

The verses of the Prokeimenon are chanted either by the deacon or by the priest:

Verse: Let your help, O God, lift me up.
Verse: The poor when they see it will be glad.
Verse: God-seeking hearts will revive.

After the prokeimenon, the deacon closes the holy doors. The faithful SIT for the sermon (if one is given), then STAND for the Hymn of Glorification.

Hymn of Glorification

All: 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 
because we have placed our hope in you.  
Blessed are you, O Lord, (bow)  
teach me your commandments.

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Blessed are you, O Master,  
make me understand your commandments. * (bow)
Blessed are you, O Holy One,  
enlighten me with your commandments. * (bow)
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.

If there is no priest, the cantor and faithful chant “Lord, have mercy” (12 times), “Glory... now and ever...” and continue with the Aposticha on page 18.

Litany of Supplication

Deacon: Let us complete our evening prayer to the Lord.

Response:  
1. Lord, have mercy.  
2. Lord, have mercy.  
3. Grant this, O Lord.  
4. Grant this, O Lord.

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

Response:  
1. Lord, have mercy.  
2. Lord, have mercy.  
3. Grant this, O Lord.  
4. Grant this, O Lord.

Deacon: That this whole evening be perfect, holy, peaceful, and without sin, let us beseech the Lord.

Response:  
1. Lord, have mercy.  
2. Lord, have mercy.  
3. Grant this, O Lord.  
4. Grant this, O Lord.
Deacon: For the pardon and remission of our sins and offenses, let us beseech the Lord.

For what is good and beneficial to our souls and for peace in the world, let us beseech the Lord.

That we spend the rest of our life in peace and repentance, let us beseech the Lord.

For a Christian, painless, unashamed, peaceful end of our life, and for a good account before the fearsome judgement seat of Christ, let us beseech the Lord.

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.

Priest: Great and most high God, you alone possess immortality and dwell in unapproachable light. You made all creation with wisdom, dividing light from darkness, establishing the sun to rule the day and the moon and stars to rule the night. You have allowed us sinners to approach your presence with thanksgiving in this present hour and to offer you evening praise. O loving Lord, make our prayer ascend to you like incense and accept it as a sweet fragrance. Grant that we may spend the present evening and the coming night in peace; clothe us with the armor of light; deliver us from the fears of the night and from everything that lurks about in darkness. Grant that the sleep you have given us to refresh our fatigue may be free from all illusions of the devil. Yes, O Master of All, Giver of good things, let us feel contrition as we lie on our beds remembering your name throughout the night. Enlightened by meditation on your commands, may we rise with gladdened soul to give glory to your goodness, offering to your compassion prayers and supplications for our sins and those of all your people. Visit us with mercy through the intercession of the holy Theotokos.

For you are a good and loving God, and we give glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.
Priest: Peace be to all.

Deacon: Bow your heads to the Lord.

Priest: Lord our God, you bowed the heavens and came down for the salvation of the human race. Look upon your servants and upon your inheritance, for they have bowed their heads and bent their necks to you, the awesome judge who love mankind. They do not expect human help, but await your mercy and long for your salvation. Protect them at all times, this evening and tonight, from every enemy, from all the devil’s assaults, from vain thoughts and evil imaginings.

May the might of your kingdom be blessed and glorified, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.
Aposticha

Tone 4 samohlasen

The light of your grace has shone upon our souls, O Lord. Behold, this is the favorable time, the season of conversion. Let us turn away from the works of darkness, and let us clothe ourselves with the armor of light, so that crossing the ocean of the Fast, we may come to the harbor of the Resurrection on the third day with our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls.

Cantor: 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. 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. Repeat "The light of your grace..."

Cantor: 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.

O Christ our God, you are glorified in the remembrance of your saints; through their intercession, send down on us great mercy.
Glo-ry to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir-it, now and ev-er

The choir of angels glorifies you, O most pure Vir-gin, for you have given
birth to our God, co-eternal with the Father and the Ho-ly Spir-it, through
whom the angelic armies were brought forth from noth-ing-ness. Be-seech
him to send the light of sal-va-tion up-on the souls who profess
the true faith prais-ing you as the Moth-er of our God.

The Prayer of Holy Simeon the God-Bearer

chanted to the usual psalm tone

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 Is-ra-el.
Trisagion Prayers

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, 
    have mercy on us. (3 times, with a bow each time)

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 names' sake.

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

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.

Priest: For thine is the kingdom and the power and glory, 
    Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Dismissal for Fasts

Troparion to the Theotokos - Tone 4

Re-joice, O Vir-gin The-o-to-kos! Mar-y full of grace, the Lord is with you! Bless-ed are you a-mong wo-men, and bless-ed is the fruit of your womb. For you gave birth to Christ, the Sav-ior and re-deem-er of our souls.

Prostration

Glo-ry to the Fa-ther, and to the Son, and to the Ho-ly Spir-it.

Troparion to John the Forerunner - Tone 4

O bap-tiz-er of Christ, re-mem-ber us all, that we be deliv-ered from our trans-gres-sions; for you have been giv-en the grace to in-ter-cede on our be-half.

Prostration
Now and ever and forever. Amen.

Troparion to the saints - Tone 4

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

Then this hymn to the Theotokos, using either melody:

Below your compassion we take refuge, O Virgin Theotokos. Despise not our pray'rs, our pray'rs in our need, but deliver us from dangers, for you alone are pure, for you alone are pure and blessed.

or
Be - neath your compas-sion we take ref - uge, O Vir-gin The-o - to - kos.

De - spise not our pray'rs in our need, but de-liv-er us from dan-gers,

for you a-lone are pure and bless-ed.

The following is sung four times:

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

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

All:

Lord, give the bless-ing.

Priest:  Blessed is Christ our God, the One-Who-Is, always, now and ever and forever.

Priest: King of heaven, support our civil authorities, confirm the faith, calm the nations, give peace to the world, and safeguard this city [or: this holy monastery]. Grant those who have gone before us a dwelling place among the righteous, and accept us in repentance and confession and have mercy, for you are good and love us all.

Response:

All: Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

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.

If a priest leads the service:

Give the blessing, Reverend Father, in the name of the Lord.

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

Response:
The Prayer of Saint Ephrem the Syrian

All: 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)

The following dismissal is omitted if there is no priest.

Dismissal

Priest: Glory to you, O Christ God, our hope; glory to you!

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

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

Give the blessing.

Priest: May Christ our true God have mercy on us and save us through the prayers of his most pure Mother, through the protection of the honorable and heavenly angelic powers; through the prayers of the holy, glorious, and illustrious apostles; of the holy (Name), the patron[ess] of this church; of the holy (Name of the saint whose day it is); and through the prayers of all the saints; for Christ is good and loves us all.

Response: Amen.
The Ceremony of Mutual Forgiveness

*The priest or leader bows low to those present, and says:*

**Priest or Leader:** Brothers and sisters, forgive me, a sinner,
all the sins I have committed this day and all the days of my life,
in word or deed or thought,
with all my spiritual and bodily faculties.

*Response:* May God forgive you and have mercy on you, [*if a priest:* reverend father].

*Then those present bow low to the priest or leader, saying:*

[*If a priest:* Bless, reverend father, and] forgive us sinners
the sins we have committed this day
and all the days of our lives,
in word or deed or thought,
with all our spiritual and bodily faculties.

**Priest or Leader:** May God in his grace forgive your sins
and have mercy on all of you.

*After this exchange, the faithful come forward individually, make a bow, and say to the priest or leader:*

Forgive me, a sinner.

*to which the priest or leader responds:*

May God forgive you.

*During the exchange of mutual forgiveness, the cantors and choir quietly sing the irmosy of the Paschal Canon, or the Paschal stichera.*