The Office of Readings

Vigil of Theophany
On the Eve of the Theophany, we keep watch for the Baptism of our Lord by an office of specially chosen psalms, ancient stichera (hymns), and readings from the Old Testament, the apostolic writings and the Gospels. In the present office, these texts are spread throughout the four offices/hours of the day (the First, Third, Sixth and Ninth Hours), and are called, therefore, in the Slav tradition, the “Royal Hours,” and in the Greek tradition, the “Great Hours.” In tradition, as, for example, in some of the Studite typicons of Constantinople, we see that this office of psalms and readings was often celebrated together at one of the liturgical hours, usually the Sixth Hour, which could be served on days other than the actual eve of the feast. This arrangement, which is provided in this book, may better suit the pastoral needs of some communities, and help us to prepare by the word of God and our spiritual songs to welcome Christ into our minds and hearts as we commemorate his holy baptism.

The Very Reverend Archpriest David M. Petras
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The Office of Readings
Vigil of Theophany

The Priest vests in a dark epitrachilion and phelonion, the deacon in a dark orarion and sticharion. The deacon incenses the church. The priest then stands before the altar, the deacon at the ambon.

Deacon: Reverend Father, give the blessing!

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

Psalm tone

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 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.
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: Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. (sung twice)

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

Each time with a reverence:

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.

The deacon enters the altar.

Psalm 73  Why, O God, have you cast us off for ever?
   Why blaze with anger at the sheep of your pasture?
Remember your people whom who chose long ago,
the tribe you redeemed to be your own possession,
   the mountain of Zion where you made your dwelling.
Turn your steps to these places that are utterly ruined!
   The enemy has laid waste the whole of the sanctuary.
Your foes have made uproar in your house of prayer:
   they have set up their emblems, their foreign emblems,
      high above the entrance to the sanctuary.
Their axes have battered the wood of its doors.
      They have struck together with hatchet and pickax.
O God, they have set your sanctuary on fire;
      they have razed and profaned the place where you dwell.
They said in their hearts: “Let us utterly crush them;
      let us burn every shrine of God in the land.”
There is no sign from God, nor have we a prophet,
      we have no one to tell us how long it will last.
How long, O God, is the enemy to scoff?
      Is the foe to insult your name for ever?
Why, O Lord, do you hold back your hand?
      Why do you keep your right hand hidden?
Yet God is our king from time past,
the giver of help through all the land.
It was you who divided the sea by your might,
who shattered the heads of the monsters in the sea.
It was you who crushed Leviathan’s heads
and gave him as food to the untamed beasts.
It was you opened springs and torrents;
it was you who dried up ever-flowing rivers.
Yours is the day and yours is the night.
It was you who appointed the light and the sun;
it was you who fixed the bounds of the earth:
you who made both summer and winter.
Remember this, Lord, and see the enemy scoffing;
a senseless people insults your name.
Do not give Israel, your dove, to the hawk
nor forget the life of your poor ones for ever.
Remember your covenant; every cave in the land
is a place where violence makes its home.
Do not let the oppressed return disappointed;
let the poor and the needy bless your name.
Arise, O God, and defend your cause!
Remember how the senseless revile you all the day.
Do not forget the clamor of your foes,
the daily increasing uproar of your foes.

Psalm 76
I cry aloud to God,
cry aloud to God that he may hear me.
In the day of my distress I sought the Lord.
My hands were raised at night without ceasing;
my soul refused to be consoled.
I remembered my God and I groaned.
I pondered and my spirit fainted.
You withheld sleep from my eyes.
I was troubled, I could not speak.
I thought of the days of long ago
and remembered the years long past.
At night I mused within my heart.
I pondered and my spirit questioned.
“Will the Lord reject us for ever?
   Will he show us his favor no more?
Has his love vanished for ever?
   Has his promise come to an end?
Does God forget his mercy
   or in anger withhold his compassion?”
I said: “This is what causes my grief;
   that the way of the Most High has changed.”
I remember the deeds of the Lord,
   I remember your wonders of old,
I muse on all your works
   and ponder your mighty deeds.
Your ways, O God, are holy.
   What god is as great as our God?
You are the God who works wonders.
   You showed your power among the peoples.
Your strong arm redeemed your people,
   the sons of Jacob and Joseph.
The waters saw you, O God,
   the waters saw you and trembled;
   the depths were moved with terror.
The clouds poured down rain,
   the skies sent forth their voice;
   your arrows flashed to and fro.
Your thunder rolled round the sky,
   your flashes lighted up the world.
The earth was moved and trembled
   when your way led through the sea,
   your path through the mighty waters
   and no one saw your footprints.
You guided your people like a flock
   by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Psalm 90  He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
   and abides in the shade of the Almighty
says to the Lord: “My refuge,
   my stronghold, my God in whom I trust!”
It is he who will free you from the snare of the fowler who seeks to *destroy* you; he will conceal you with his pinions and under his wings you will *find* refuge. You will not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies *by* day, nor the plague that prowls in the darkness nor the scourge that lays waste *at* noon. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand fall at *your* right, you, it will never approach; his faithfulness is buckler *and* shield. Your eyes have only to look to see how the wicked are *repaid*, you who have said: “Lord, my refuge!” and have made the Most High *your* dwelling. Upon you no evil shall fall, no plague approach where *you* dwell. For you has he commanded his angels, to keep you in all *your* ways. They shall bear you upon their hands lest you strike your foot against *a* stone. On the lion and the viper you will tread and trample the young lion and *the* dragon. Since he clings to me in love, I will free him; protect him for he knows *my* name. When he calls I shall answer: “I am with you,” I will save him in distress and give *him* glory. With length of days I will content him; I shall let him see my *saving* power.

*The deacon opens the Royal Doors and proceeds to the Ambon through the Northern door.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. *Amen.*
Twice, each with a reverence:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glory to you, O God!

Third time, with melody:

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.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For this holy church and for all who enter it with faith, reverence,
and fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: For our holy father, (Name), pope of Rome, let us pray to the Lord.
Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: 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.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

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

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: 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.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

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

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: 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.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

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

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

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

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)
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.

Priest: O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you grant the prayers and receive the petitions of your servants who cry to you night and day. Incline your ear and listen to the prayers of us sinners. Do not turn your face away from us, O Lord, and do not remember our past sins, because you know our nature and understand our weakness. O Lord, remember that we are dust, a spirit that passes and does not return, and by the power of your arm, fill our lives with mercy. Lead us in the path of your commandments, teach us to do your will, to speak of your mysteries and to study your law day and night. Command your angels to watch us in all our steps. Deliver us from the arrow that flies by day, from the plague that prowls in the darkness, from the scourge that lays waste at noon. Fill our mouths with praise and our lips with joy, that we may greet one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs in grace, singing and making melody with all our hearts, that we might give thanks to the God of all, for you give life to all who place their hope in your mercy. For you are a good God and you love us all, and to you belongs glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: Amen.

As the following Troparion and stichera are sung, the deacon censes the altar three times, then the icon screen and the people and gives the censer to the server. The priest gives the Gospel Book to the Deacon, who carries it in procession to the analogion in the middle of the Church. There the deacon censes the Gospel three times, and the priest and deacon return to the altar.
Troparion - Tone 4

Zeb-u-lun, make ready; Naphta-li, pre-pare your-self. O River Jordan,
stand and leap for joy to receive the Master coming to be baptized.

O Adam, rejoice with the first mother, Eve, and do not hide yourselves as
once you did in Paradise. For, seeing you naked, Christ has appeared to
put on the first robe. He has appeared to re-new all creation.

Cantor:

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

Theotokion

Since we have no one in whom we can confide because of our many sins,
O Virgin Theotokos, intercede for us with the One who was born of you, for a mother's prayer is a powerful means for obtaining the Master's favor. You are most worthy of veneration, so do not turn away from the pleading of us sinners; for the One who willed to suffer in the flesh for our sake is full of mercy, and his power is sufficient to save us.

Stichera of the First Hour - Tone 8

Today the nature of the waters is sanctified, and the Jordan is parted in two; it holds back the streams of its own waters, seeing the Master being bathed.
Cantor - *Tone 8* (Psalm 76: 17):

The waters saw you, O God; the waters saw you and trembled.

All:

You have gone down into the river as a man, O Christ our King; and in your goodness, you hasten to receive the baptism of a servant at the hands of the Forerunner for the sake of our sins, O good God and Lover of us all.

Cantor:

Let us be attentive!

Peace be to all!

Wisdom! Be attentive!

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Priest: ☪ Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!
Wisdom!

A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah

Let us be attentive!

[Isaiah 35:1-10]

Wisdom!


Let us be attentive!


Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel.

All repeat the Prokeimenon.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Lector: [Isaiah 35:1-10]

Priest: Wisdom!


Priest: Let us be attentive!


Priest: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel.

Peace be to all!

Response: And to your spirit.
Priest: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew.

Response: 

Priest: [Matthew 3: 1 - 11]

Response: 

During the stichera the deacon censes the Gospel Book three times.

Stichera of the Third Hour - Tone 8

The hand of the Forerunner and Baptist, John, the prophet honored above all former prophets, trembled when he saw the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Seized with anguish, he cried out:

I do not dare to touch your head, O Word! O compassionate Lord,

you yourself are able to sanctify and enlighten me! For you, O Lord, are the life,
Cantor:

Tone 4

The waters saw you, O God; the waters saw you and trembled.

All:

To-day, the Trinity, our God, has revealed Itself indivisibly to us: The Father bears his clear witness to his Son; the Spirit comes down from heaven in the form of a dove; the Son bows his spotless head before the Baptist; being baptized, the Lover of Man-kind frees man-kind from slavery.

Cantor:

Tone 5

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and for ever. Amen.
Let us be attentive!

Peace be to all!

Wisdom! Be attentive!

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Priest: ✡ Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - Tone 6 (Psalm 75: 17; Psalm 28: 3)

The waters saw you; the waters saw you O God, and
trembled; saw you, O God, and trembled.
Verse: The Lord’s voice resounding on the waters;
the Lord on the immensity of waters;
the God of Glory thunders.  All repeat Prokeimenon.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Lector: [Isaiah 1: 16 - 20]

Priest: Wisdom!


Priest: Let us be attentive!


Priest: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel.

Response:

And to your spirit.

Priest: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark.

Response:

Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.

Priest: [Mark 1:1-8]
Response:  

During the stichera the deacon censes the Gospel Book three times.

Stichera of the Sixth Hour - Tone 8

The Lord spoke to holy John: Come, prophet, and baptize me who created you, for I enlighten all men by grace and cleanse them!

Touch my divine head and do not hesitate. O Prophet, give in for now.

We must do this if we would fulfill all God's demands: Do not hold back, for I am eager to slay the enemy hidden in the waters, the prince of darkness, that I may now deliver the whole world from his snares, granting it eternal life in my love!
Cantor:

The waters saw you, O God; the waters saw you and trembled.

All:

Today the prophecy of the psalms comes to its fulfillment: The sea fled at the sight; the Jordan turned back on its course before the face of the Lord, before the face of the God of Jacob, who comes to seek baptism from a servant, so that, washed clean from the defilement of idolatry, our souls might be illumined in him.

Cantor:

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

Tone 5

Why is it, O Jordan, that you turn back your waters? Why do you stop your streams and not flow upon your normal course? And he replies:

I cannot endure the consuming Fire! I am overcome with trembling before his extreme condescension! I am not accustomed to washing him who is already pure; I have never learned to cleanse the Sinless One, but rather to purify stained vessels. Christ, who has come to be baptized in me, teaches me to burn away the thorns of sin. John, the voice of the Word, bears witness with me and cries out: Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! O faithful, let us cry aloud to him:
Let us be attentive!

Peace be to all!

Wisdom! Be attentive!

A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

[Isaiah 12:3-6]

Wisdom!

A reading from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Romans.

Deacon:  Let us be attentive!

Priest: ✡ Peace be to all!

Deacon:  Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - Tone 4 (Psalm 28:3, 1)

O give the Lord, you sons of God, give the Lord glory and power. All repeat the Prokeimenon.

Verse: O give the Lord, you sons of God, give the Lord glory and power. All repeat the Prokeimenon.

Deacon:  Wisdom!

Lector:  A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon:  Let us be attentive!

Lector:  [Isaiah 12:3-6]

Priest:  Wisdom!

Deacon:  A reading from the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Romans.

Priest:  Let us be attentive!
Deacon: [Romans 6: 3 - 11]

Priest: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel ✽ Peace be to all!

Response: \[\text{Music notation}\]
\[
\text{And to your spirit.}
\]

Priest: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark.

Response: \[\text{Music notation}\]
\[
\text{Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.}
\]

Priest: [Mark 1: 9 - 15]

Response: \[\text{Music notation}\]
\[
\text{Glory to you, O Lord, glory to you.}
\]

*The deacon censes the altar, the icon screen, the people and then the Gospel Book, the latter three times, as the stichera are sung.*

**Stichera of the Ninth Hour - Tone 7**

\[\text{Music notation}\]
\[
\text{It is a strange wonder to see the Creator of the heavens and the earth standing}
\]
\[
\text{naked in the river, waiting like a servant to receive baptism from a servant for}
\]
\[
\text{our salvation. The angels in heaven were filled with awe and rejoicing in their}
\]

23
Cantor:

The waters saw you, O God; the waters saw you and trembled.

All:

When he saw the Lord of Glory drawing near to him, the Foreunner cried aloud at the sight: Behold, here comes the Savior who lifts the world from corruption! Behold, the One who delivers us from affliction! Behold, the One who has come upon earth, born of a spotless Virgin, to grant us the remission of sins in his love! From the slaves that we are, he...
makes us sons of God! He makes mankind arise from the darkness in order to illuminate it through his divine Baptism! Come, then, together let us glorify him with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Cantor:

Tone 5

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

Doxastikon

Tone 5

With your hand, you have touched the head of the Master! And with that hand, you have shown him to us as our Savior. O Baptist, stretch that hand out before him in prayer on our behalf, for you have great boldness in his presence.
Let us be attentive!

Peace be to all!

Wisdom! Be attentive!

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Priest: Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - Tone 3 (Psalm 26: 1, 16)

The Lord is my light and my help; whom shall I fear? Whom shall I fear?

Verse: The Lord is the stronghold of my life; before whom shall I shrink? All repeat the Prokeimenon.
Deacon:  Wisdom!

Lector:  A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon:  Let us be attentive!

Lector:  [Isaiah 49:8-15]

Priest:  Wisdom!

Deacon:  A reading from the letter of the Apostle Paul to Titus.

Priest:  Let us be attentive!

Deacon:  [Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7]

Priest:  Peace be with you, reader.

Priest:  Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the Holy Gospel.

PRIEST:  ☩ Peace be to all!

Response:  

And to your spir i t.

Priest:  A reading from the Holy Gospel according to the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew.

Response:  

Glo ry to you, O Lord, glo ry to you.

Priest:  [Matthew 3:13-17]

Response:  

Glo ry to you, O Lord, glo ry to you.
Lord, have mercy. (40 times)

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 salvation through the promise of blessings to come. At this very hour, O Lord, receive our supplications and direct our lives in the path of your commandments. Sanctify our souls; purify our bodies; set right 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. Amen.
Let us complete our *morning/evening* prayer to the 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.

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

**Response:**

3. Grant this, O Lord.

**Deacon:** For an angel of peace, a faithful guide and guardian of our souls and bodies, let us beseech the Lord.

**Response:**

4. Grant this, O Lord.

**Deacon:** For the pardon and remission of our sins and offenses, let us beseech the Lord.

**Response:** Grant this, O Lord. (3)

**Deacon:** For what is good and beneficial to our souls and for peace in the world, let us beseech the Lord.
Response: Grant this, O Lord (4)

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

Response: Grant this, O Lord. (3)

Deacon: 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.

Response: Grant this, O Lord. (4)

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.

Priest: O eternal God, you dwell in inaccessible light. No one has seen you nor is able to see you, O inexhaustible Treasury of eternal blessings. O Master of all, now protect those who hope in you, filling us with your divine and saving grace.

For to you is due all dominion and yours is the Kingdom, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: Amen.

All stand.

Priest: ☩ Peace be to all!

Response: And to your spirit.

30
Deacon:  Bow your heads to the Lord!

Response:  

To you, O Lord.

Priest:  O Lord our God, look down upon your creation from the heights of your holy dwelling-place, and keep in peace and goodness those who bow their necks under the yoke of the good Christ.

For blessed and glorified is your honorable and majestic name, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response:  

A - men.

The deacon stands before the icon of Christ, and the priest proceeds to the ambon.

Priest:  Let us go forth in peace.

Response:  

In the name of the Lord.

Deacon:  Let us pray to the Lord.

Response:  

Lord have mer - cy.

At the Ambon, facing East, the priest prays:

Priest:  O Lord our God, your love for us is beyond expression, for it pleased you to make your only-begotten Son a man, born of a pure woman, like us in every way except sin.
As a man he was baptized for our sakes by John the Forerunner, though he had no need for purification, that he might make the water holy and favor us with rebirth from water and the Holy Spirit, who descended upon him, and showed him to the Baptist. In him you sealed and anointed us through Baptism; you made us sharers of your Christ. Through him, do not fail us sinners, but strengthen us against all evil powers. Strengthen our government against all tyranny, and guide us into your kingdom. In us may your holy name, and that of your only-begotten Son, and that of your Holy Spirit be glorified – now and ever and forever.

Response:  
A - men.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Response:

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.

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

Priest: May Christ our true God have mercy on us and save us, through the prayers of his most holy Mother, and of the holy, glorious, and illustrious apostles, and of our holy ascetical fathers and mothers, and of ______ (patron of the church) and of ______ (whose feast we keep this day) and of all the saints; for Christ is good and loves us all.

Response: Amen. Lord, have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord, have mercy. Give the blessing.