

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
on which we celebrate
THE ADORATION OF THE PRECIOUS
AND LIFE-GIVING CROSS

GREAT VESPERS ON SATURDAY EVENING

Before the beginning of the service, the Precious Cross is brought from the table of the Prothesis or the sacristy and placed on the Holy Table. A candle is lit and left burning in front of it.¹

After the Psalm of Introduction (Psalm 103) and the Great Litany, we read Blessed is the man (the first kathisma of the Psalter).

To Lord, I have cried, ten stichera are sung: six of the Resurrection in the Tone of the week from the Octoechos, and the following four from the Triodion:

TONE FIVE

(to the special melody, Rejoice in truth, ye ascetics. . .)

Shine, Cross of the Lord, shine with the light of thy grace upon the hearts of those that honour thee. With love inspired by God, we embrace thee, O desire of all the world. Through thee our tears of sorrow have been wiped away; we have been delivered from the snares of death and have passed over to unending joy. Show us the glory of thy beauty and grant to us thy servants the reward of our abstinence, for we entreat with faith thy rich protection and great mercy.

Hail! life-giving Cross, the fair Paradise of the Church, Tree of incorruption that brings us the enjoyment of eternal glory: through thee the hosts of demons have been driven back; and the hierarchies of angels rejoice with one accord, as the congregations of the faithful keep the feast. Thou art an invincible weapon, an unbroken stronghold; thou art the victory of kings and the glory of priests.

¹ For further details, see *The Festal Menaion*, pp. 132-3.

Grant us now to draw near to the Passion of Christ and to His Resurrection.

Hail! life-giving Cross, unconquerable trophy of the true faith, door to Paradise, succour of the faithful, rampart set about the Church. Through thee the curse is utterly destroyed, the power of death is swallowed up, and we are raised from earth to heaven: invincible weapon, adversary of demons, glory of martyrs, true ornament of holy monks, haven of salvation bestowing on the world great mercy.

Come, Adam and Eve, our first father and mother, who fell from the choir on high through the envy of the murderer of man, when of old with bitter pleasure ye tasted from the tree in Paradise. See, the Tree of the Cross, revered by all, draws near! Run with haste and embrace it joyfully, and cry to it with faith: O precious Cross, thou art our succour; partaking of thy fruit, we have gained incorruption; we are restored once more to Eden, and we have received great mercy.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

TONE THREE

O Christ our God, of Thine own will Thou hast accepted Crucifixion, that all mankind might be restored to life. Taking the quill of the Cross, out of love for man in the red ink of royalty with bloody fingers Thou hast signed our absolution. We are in danger once again of being parted from Thee; O forsake us not! Take pity on Thy people in distress, for Thou alone art longsuffering. Rise up and fight against our enemies in Thine almighty power.

Both now. . . .

Then the Theotokion (Dogmatikon) in the Tone of the week from the Octoechos, followed by the Entrance, O joyful Light, and the Prokimenon of the day, The Lord is King.

At the Lity we sing the stichera of the patron saint of the church or monastery, and then:

Glory be to the Father. . . . Both now. . . .

TONE FIVE

Beholding Thee, the Fashioner and Creator of all, hanging naked on the Cross, the whole creation was transfixed by fear, and it

lamented; the light of the sun grew dark and the earth quaked; the rocks were split and the splendour of the temple was rent in twain; the dead rose from their tombs and the angelic powers cried in amazement: 'O strange wonder! The Judge is judged, and suffers willingly, for the salvation and renewal of the world.'²

We sing the Aposticha in the Tone of the week from the Octoechos, and then:

Glory be to the Father. . . . Both now. . . .

TONE FOUR

O Lord who hast helped gentle David in the combat and enabled him to overcome the Philistine, come to the aid of Thine Orthodox people,³ and by the weapon of the Cross cast down our enemies. In Thy compassion show us Thy mercy as of old, and make them know in truth that Thou art God, and that we who put our trust in Thee shall conquer. At the constant intercessions of Thy most pure Mother, grant us Thy great mercy.⁴

The apolytikion Hail, Theotokos Virgin, Mary full of grace (twice), and then the apolytikion (troparion) of the Cross (once):

TONE ONE

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance, granting Orthodox Christians victory over their enemies,⁵ and guarding Thy commonwealth with Thy Cross.

And the rest of Vespers.

MATTINS

After the Six Psalms and the Great Litany, we sing The Lord is God, followed by the troparion (apolytikion) of the Resurrection in the Tone of the week (twice); Glory be to the Father. . . ; the troparion of the Cross, O Lord, save Thy people. . . ; Both now. . . ; and the Theotokion:

² Matt. 27: 45, 51-3.

³ Literally, 'of our faithful King'.

⁴ 1 Kgs. [1 Sam.] 17: 45-7; Ps. 131: 1 (Sept.).

⁵ Literally, 'granting the kings victory over barbarians'.

TONE ONE

At Gabriel's salutation, 'Hail!', the Master of all things took flesh in thee, O Virgin. Thou art the holy Ark of which the righteous David spoke; thou wast made wider than the heavens, for thou hast carried thy Creator in thy womb. Glory be to Him who dwelt in thee; glory be to Him who from thee came forth; glory be to Him who through thy childbearing has set us free.⁶

Then the two appointed readings from the Psalter, with the sessional hymns of the Resurrection in the Tone of the week. After the Polyeleos and the Evlogitaria, the following sessional hymn of the Cross:

TONE EIGHT

In Paradise of old the tree stripped me bare; for by giving me its fruit to eat, the enemy brought in death. But now the Tree of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up on earth, and the whole world is filled with boundless joy. Beholding it venerated, O ye people, let us with one accord raise in faith our cry to God: His house is full of glory.⁷

Glory be to the Father. . . . Both now. . . .

Repeat In Paradise of old. . . .

Then the Hymn of Degrees and the Prokimenon in the Tone of the week, and the appointed Morning Gospel. We then sing We have seen the Resurrection of Christ, followed by Psalm 50, and then, as on previous Sundays, Open unto me, O Giver of Life. . . (see p. 101).

The Canon

We use four troparia (including the irmos) from the Canon of the Resurrection and two troparia from the Canon to the Theotokos, both in the Tone of the week from the Octoechos; and then the Canon of the Triodion with eight troparia, by St. Theodore the Studite:

TONE ONE

CANTICLE ONE

(Irmos) This is the day of Resurrection. . . .

This is a day of festival: at the Awakening of Christ, death has

⁶ Ps. 131: 8.

⁷ 3 [1] Kgs. 8: 11.

fled away and the light of life has dawned; Adam has arisen and dances for joy. Therefore let us cry aloud and sing a song of victory.

This is the day of the veneration of the Precious Cross. Now it is placed before us and shines with the brightness of Christ's Resurrection. Let us all draw near and kiss it with great rejoicing in our souls.

O mighty Cross of the Lord, manifest thyself: show me the divine vision of thy beauty, and grant me worthily to venerate thee. For I speak to thee and embrace thee as though thou wast alive.

Let heaven and earth give praise with one accord, for the all-blessed Cross is now set forth before us all, on which Christ's Body was nailed when He was offered in sacrifice. Let us venerate it with great rejoicing in our souls.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

O Trinity of Persons, O Unity of Essence, Father, Son and Spirit, equal in power, one in purpose and will, one in dominion and rule, watch over Thy world and grant it peace.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

O Virgin who hast not known a man, without seed thou hast conceived: pure and sinless is the birth, and the Child thou bearest is the Maker of all, Christ our God. Entreat Him to grant the whole world peace.

(*Katavasia*) Moses the servant of God prefigured Thy Cross in the days of old, when he divided the Red Sea with his rod and led Israel across on dry land; and he sang a song of deliverance unto Thee, O Christ our God.

CANTICLE THREE

(*Irmos*) O come, let us drink a new drink. . . .

O come, let us sing a new song, celebrating the overthrow of hell, for Christ has risen from the tomb; death He has taken captive, and saved all the world.

O come, ye faithful, and let us drink, not from a well of earthly water that perishes, but from the fountain of light, as we venerate the Cross of Christ: for His Cross is our glory.⁸

⁸ John 4: 13-14; Gal. 6: 14.

When now we venerate Thy Cross, which Moses once prefigured with his outstretched arms, we put to flight the invisible Amalek, O Christ our Master, and so we gain salvation.

O ye faithful, with pure eyes and lips let us venerate in joy the Cross of the Lord, singing a song of exultation.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

I honour one God without beginning, three in Persons but undivided in Essence, the Father, the Son and the Spirit of life, in whose Name we were baptized.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

In days of old Moses saw thy mystery prefigured in the bush, O hallowed Virgin: just as the flames did not consume it, so the fire of the Godhead has not consumed thy womb.⁹

(*Katavasia*) Through Thy Cross, O Christ my Master, set me firmly on the rock of the faith: let not my mind be shaken by the assaults of the malicious enemy; for Thou alone art holy.

Sessional hymns of the Cross:

ONE SIX

Thy Cross, O Lord, is holy, and brings healing to those who are in sickness through their sins. Venerating it, we fall before Thee: have mercy upon us.

∩. Exalt ye the Lord our God: and worship at His footstool, for He is holy (*Psalms* 98: 5).

Today the words of the Prophet are fulfilled: for see, we worship at the place on which Thy feet have stood, O Lord; and tasting from the Tree of salvation, we have been delivered from our sinful passions at the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Thou who alone lovest mankind.¹⁰

Glory be to the Father. . . .

No sooner had the wood of Thy Cross been set up, O Christ our Lord, than the foundations of death were shaken. Hell swallowed Thee eagerly, but it let Thee go with trembling. Thou hast shown

⁹ Exod. 3: 2.

¹⁰ Ps. 131: 7; 98: 5.

us Thy salvation, O Holy One, and we glorify Thee, O Son of God; have mercy upon us.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

O Virgin Theotokos, thy Son, Christ our God, was nailed of His own will upon the Cross, and He has risen from the dead. Pray to Him for the salvation of our souls.

CANTICLE FOUR

(Irmos) May Habakkuk, inspired by God. . . .

'Behold, Christ is risen', the Angel said to the women bearing sweet spices. 'Lament not, but go and say to the apostles: Rejoice, today is the salvation of the world; for through Christ's death the tyranny of the enemy has been destroyed.'

As we celebrate today the joyful veneration of Thy life-giving Cross, O Christ our Saviour, we prepare ourselves for Thy most holy Passion; for Thou in Thine almighty power hast brought to pass the salvation of the world.

There is joy today in heaven and on earth, for the sign of the Cross is made manifest to the world. The thrice-blessed Cross is set before us, and to all who show it veneration it is a fount of ever-flowing grace.

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ? For Thou hast given us Thy Precious Cross to venerate, on which Thy holy Blood was shed, to which Thy flesh was fixed by nails. With love we kiss it and give thanks to Thee.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

I sing the praises of the three Persons in one Godhead; I proclaim one simple Nature undivided: Father eternal, Son and Holy Spirit, one in throne and lordship, one single Kingdom, one everlasting Power.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

In thee alone among women, O pure Lady, there was revealed a marvellous and fearful thing: thou hast made nature new, conceiving without seed and still remaining as at first a virgin; for the Child that thou hast borne is the true God.

(Katavasia) Seeing Thee, O mighty Lord, upon the Cross, the sun was seized with fear and hid its rays, with dread the whole creation glorified Thy longsuffering, and the earth was filled with Thy praise.

CANTICLE FIVE

(Irmos) Let us rise early in the morning. . . .

From the tomb hast Thou arisen, O Light that never sets, and shone upon the world with the bright dawn of incorruption. In Thy compassion Thou hast driven out the dark sorrow of death from the farthest ends of the earth.

Cleansed by abstinence let us draw near, and with fervent praise let us venerate the all-holy Wood on which Christ was crucified, when He saved the world in His compassion.

Today the ranks of angels dance with gladness at the veneration of Thy Cross. For through the Cross, O Christ, Thou hast shattered the hosts of devils and saved mankind.

The Church has been revealed as a second Paradise, having within it, like the first Paradise of old, a tree of life, Thy Cross, O Lord. By touching it we share in immortality.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

I glorify three coeternal Persons in one Essence, Father, Son and Spirit, a single Light in threefold brightness, one Power and Kingdom in unconfused identity.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

Thou hast conceived by the law of nature, but above that law; for thou alone hast borne child without seed. We are afraid to think or speak of the manner of thy giving birth, O all-blameless Virgin.

(Katavasia) Rising early in the morning we sing Thy praises, O Saviour of the world, for we have found peace through Thy Cross. By it Thou hast renewed mankind, and led us to the light that knows no evening.

CANTICLE SIX

(Irmos) Thou hast gone down, O Christ. . . .

Thou hast crushed death, O Christ, and risen as a mighty King;

Thou hast recalled us from the depths of hell and brought us to the land of immortality, granting us the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

O ye faithful, let us cry aloud with joy and sing triumphantly to God, as we greet the Cross of the Lord; for it is a fountain of holiness to all those in the world.

The words of the Psalmist are fulfilled: for see, we worship at the footstool of Thy most pure feet, O Lord all-powerful, at Thy Precious Cross, the thrice-blessed Wood.¹¹

The wood which the Prophet of lamentation saw placed in Thy bread¹² – Thy Cross, O merciful Lord – we venerate, and we sing in praise of Thy bonds and tomb, of the spear and nails.

We kiss the holy Cross, O Christ, which Thou wast pleased to bear upon Thy shoulders, on which Thou hast accepted to be lifted up and crucified in the flesh; and from it we receive strength against our invisible enemies.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

I praise the Unity in three Persons and the Trinity worshipped in one Nature, the Triune God, threefold Light, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

O Ewe free from blemish, the greatest wonder of all wonders was revealed in thee: for thou hast borne the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. Entreat Him fervently for those who sing thy praises.¹³

(*Katavasia*) Jonah in the belly of the whale foreshadowed with his outstretched hands the figure of the Cross; and he leapt out from the monster, saved by Thy power, O Word.

Kontakion

TONE SEVEN

The fiery sword no longer guards the gate of Eden, for in a strange and glorious way the wood of the Cross has quenched its flames. The sting of death and the victory of hell are now destroyed,

¹¹ Ps. 98: 5.

¹² Jer. 11: 19 (Sept.).

¹³ John 1: 29.

for Thou art come, my Saviour, crying unto those in hell: 'Return again to Paradise.'¹⁴

Ikos

Pilate set up three crosses in the place of the Skull, two for the thieves and one for the Giver of Life. Seeing Him, hell cried to those below: 'O my ministers and powers! Who is this that has fixed a nail in my heart? A wooden spear has pierced me suddenly, and I am torn apart. Inwardly I suffer; anguish has seized my belly and my senses. My spirit trembles, and I am constrained to cast out Adam and his posterity. A tree brought them to my realm, but now the Tree of the Cross brings them back again to Paradise.'

CANTICLE SEVEN

(*Irmos*) He who delivered the Children from the furnace. . . .

Thou hast risen on the third day from the tomb as one awakening from sleep, O Lord, and by Thy divine power Thou hast struck down the gatekeepers of hell; Thou hast raised up all our ancestors from the beginning, O God of our fathers, who alone art blessed and greatly glorified.

This day, ye peoples, let us dance and sing to the music of the harp, and greatly rejoice at the veneration of the Cross, giving glory to Christ who was nailed upon it, the God of our fathers, who alone is blessed and greatly glorified.

Thy Cross, O Lord all-merciful, is honoured by the whole world, for Thou hast made the instrument of death into a source of life. Sanctify those who venerate it, O God of our fathers, who alone art blessed and greatly glorified.

Thou alone, O only Jesus, art merciful and tenderhearted: illumine and sanctify those who venerate with faith Thy Cross and Thy divine Passion, O God of our fathers, who alone art blessed and greatly glorified.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

I praise the Godhead, Unity in three Persons: for the Father is Light, the Son is Light, and the Spirit is Light, but the Light remains undivided, shining forth in oneness of Nature, yet in the three rays of the Persons.

Both now. . . .

¹⁴ Gen. 3: 24; I Cor. 15: 55; I Pet. 3: 19.

Theotokion

Under many different names thou wast proclaimed by all the prophets: for thou hast been revealed as the gateway of God, the golden vessel of manna, the holy land, O Virgin Bride of God who hast conceived in the flesh Jesus Christ, the God of our fathers who is greatly glorified.¹⁵

(*Katavasia*) The Lord who delivered the Children from the flames took flesh and came upon the earth: nailed to the Cross, He has granted us salvation, the God of our fathers, who alone is blessed and greatly glorified.

CANTICLE EIGHT

(*Irmos*) This is the chosen and holy day. . . .

'Why do ye hold sweet-smelling spices in your hands? Whom are ye seeking?', cries the young man at the tomb. 'Christ our God is risen, raising up the nature of mortal men from the hidden depths of hell.'¹⁶

Rejoice, O Cross, thrice-blessed and divine Wood, a light to those in darkness. Shining on the four corners of the earth, thou dost prepare us for the dawn of Christ's Resurrection. O grant to all the faithful that they may come to the festival of Easter.

On this day the Wood anointed with life, the Cross of Christ, fills all things with the perfume of divine grace. Let us smell its God-given fragrance, venerating it with faith for ever.

Come, Elisha the prophet, and tell us plainly: What was the wood that thou hast cast into the water? 'It was the Cross of Christ, which draws us up from the depths of corruption: and we venerate it with faith for ever.'¹⁷

Jacob prefigured Thy Cross in days of old, O Christ, when he venerated the top of Joseph's holy staff, in which he saw foreshadowed the dread sceptre of Thy Kingdom; and now we venerate Thy Cross in faith for ever.¹⁸

We bless the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I glorify one Substance in three beings: Father, Son and Spirit,

¹⁵ Gen. 28: 17; Ezek. 44: 1-3; Exod. 16: 33; 3: 5; Heb. 9: 4.

¹⁶ Mark 16: 5.

¹⁷ 4 [2] Kgs. 6: 5-7.

¹⁸ Gen. 47: 31 (Sept.); Heb. 11: 21.

neither confused in Persons nor divided in Essence; for there is one God in Trinity, ruling over all for ever.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

Alone among mothers, Mary Bride of God, thou hast remained a virgin. Without knowing man thou hast given birth to the Saviour Christ, yet kept the seal of thy purity unbroken; and with all the faithful we shall call thee blessed for ever.

We praise, bless and worship the Lord. . . .

(*Katavasia*) Daniel, great among the prophets, was cast into the lions' den; but, stretching out his hands in the form of the Cross, he was delivered from their mouths and kept unharmed, blessing Christ our God for ever.¹⁹

CANTICLE NINE

(*Irmos*) Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem. . . .

Thou hast gone down into the tomb, O God the Giver of Life, and Thou hast broken all the bolts and bars, raising up the dead who cry aloud: Glory to Thy Resurrection, O Christ, the Saviour all-powerful.

Thy tomb, O Christ, has brought me life: for Thou, the Lord of life, hast come and cried to those who were dwelling in the grave: 'O all who are in bonds, be loosed: for I am come, the Ransom of the world.'²⁰

Let all the trees of the forest dance and sing, as they behold their fellow-tree, the Cross, today receiving veneration: for Christ, as holy David prophesied, has exalted it on high.²¹

I died through a tree, but I have found in thee a Tree of Life, O Cross of Christ. Thou art my invincible protector, my strong defence against the demons. Venerating thee this day, I cry aloud: Sanctify me by thy glory.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad, O Church of God, as thou dost venerate today the thrice-blessed wood of the most holy Cross of

¹⁹ Dan. 6: 22.

²⁰ Mark 10: 45.

²¹ Ps. 98: 5.

Christ, that is attended by the ranks of angels, and with fear they stand before it.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

I worship Thee, O holy God, as Trinity of Persons in Unity of Essence, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one Power and Kingdom, sovereign over all.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

Thou art the great mountain, O Virgin, wherein Christ dwelt, as holy David says. By thee we are raised up to heaven, all-blessed Lady, regaining through the Spirit the adoption of sons.²²

(*Katavasia*) O Virgin Mother and true Theotokos, without seed thou hast borne Christ our God, who was lifted in the flesh upon the Cross. We and all the faithful, as is right, magnify thee with thy Son.

The appointed exapostilarion of the Resurrection; Glory be to the Father. . . ; and then the exapostilarion of the Cross:

Seeing the Precious Cross of Christ placed this day before us, let us venerate it and rejoice in faith; with love let us greet the Lord who by His own free choice was crucified upon it, asking Him to grant us all uncondemned to adore His Holy Passion and to attain the Resurrection.

Both now. . . .

Theotokion

All-hallowed Lady, with true devotion now we venerate the Wood on which thy Son stretched out His most pure hands and for our sakes was nailed. Give us peace and grant that we may come to the Holy Passion that has saved the world; and may we worship at the radiant Festival of Easter, the Lord's Day that brings light and joy to all creation.

Lauds. Four stichera of the Resurrection in the Tone of the week from the Octoechos, and then the following three stichera of the Cross, repeating the first:

²² Ps. 67: 17; Gal. 4: 5-6.

TONE FOUR

With our voices let us shout and magnify in songs the Precious Cross; let us kiss it and cry out: O honoured Cross, sanctify our souls and bodies by thy power, and keep unharmed from all malice of the enemy those who venerate thee with true reverence.

Approach and draw waters that shall never fail, flowing from the grace of the Cross. See now set before you the holy Wood, source of divine gifts, on which there fell blood and water from the wounded side of the Lord of all. Of His own will He was raised upon the Cross, and with Himself He has raised up mortal man.

Ψ. Exalt ye the Lord our God: and worship at His footstool, for He is holy (*Psalms 98: 5*).

O honoured Cross, thou art the firm foundation of the Church, the strength of kings, the glory and defence of monks. Venerating thee today, we are filled with light in heart and soul, through the divine grace of the Lord who was nailed upon thee and overthrew the power of our deceitful enemy, bringing the curse to naught.

Ψ. God is our King before the ages: He has worked salvation in the midst of the earth (*Psalms 73: 12*).

Repeat the first sticheron, With our voices let us shout. . . .

Ψ. Arise, O Lord my God, lift up Thine hand: forget not Thy poor for ever (*Psalms 9: 33*).

Then we sing the following sticheron:

TONE EIGHT

The Lord of all has taught us in a parable to shun the boastful thoughts of the evil Pharisees; and He has instructed all of us not to think more highly than we should. He Himself became our pattern and example, for He emptied Himself even unto death upon the Cross. Let us therefore render thanks with the Publican and say: O God who hast suffered for us and yet remained impassible, deliver us from the passions and save our souls.²³

Glory be to the Father. . . .

Repeat The Lord of all has taught us. . . .

²³ Luke 18: 10-14; Rom. 12: 3; John 13: 15; Phil. 2: 5-8.

Both now. . . .

Most blessed art thou, O Virgin Theotokos. . . .

Great Doxology

During the stichera of Lauds the officiating priest puts on all his vestments. While the choir sings the Great Doxology, he takes incense and goes three times round the Holy Table, on which lies the Precious Cross upon a tray with branches of basil or flowers; and he censes the Cross from the four sides. Then, while the choir sings the concluding Holy God to a slow and solemn melody, he takes the Cross with the tray and, placing it upon his head, he proceeds round the Holy Table and out of the sanctuary through the north door, preceded by candles and by the deacon with the incense. The priest stops in front of the Holy Doors, facing to the east, and when the final Holy God has ended, he says:

Wisdom, let us attend.

Then we sing the troparion of the feast, O Lord, save Thy people (p. 336), three times.

The priest proceeds to the centre of the church, and places the Cross on a table or analogion specially prepared for it; and he censes the Cross from the four sides of the table, going round it three times.

Then the priest sings three times:

TONE SIX

We venerate Thy Cross, O Master, and we glorify Thy holy Resurrection.

This is repeated three times by the choir and people.

Meanwhile the priest makes two prostrations in front of the Cross and kisses it, after which he makes another prostration. The Cross is then venerated by the other clergy in order of rank and by all the faithful, each making two prostrations before venerating the Cross and one after.

During the veneration of the Cross, the choir sings the following:

TONE TWO

(by the Emperor Leo)

Come, ye faithful, and let us venerate the life-giving Wood, on which Christ, the King of Glory, stretched out His hands of His own will. To the ancient blessedness He raised us up, whom the enemy despoiled of old through pleasure, making us exiles far from God. Come, ye faithful, and let us venerate the Wood whereby we have

been counted worthy to crush the heads of our invisible enemies. Come, all ye kindred of the nations, and let us honour in hymns the Cross of the Lord. Rejoice, O Cross, perfect redemption of fallen Adam. Glorifying in thee, our faithful kings laid low by thy might the people of Ishmael. We Christians kiss thee now with awe, and glorifying God who was nailed on thee, we cry aloud: O Lord, who on the Cross wast crucified, have mercy upon us, for Thou art good and lovest mankind.

TONE EIGHT

Today the Master of the creation and the Lord of Glory is nailed to the Cross and His side is pierced; and He who is the sweetness of the Church tastes gall and vinegar. A crown of thorns is put upon Him who covers the heaven with clouds. He is clothed in a cloak of mockery, and He who formed man with His hands is struck by a hand of clay. He who wraps the heaven in clouds is smitten upon His back. He accepts spitting and scourging, reproach and buffeting; and all these things my Deliverer and God endures for me that am condemned, that in His compassion He may save the world from error.

Glory be to the Father. . . .

SAME TONE

Today He who is in essence unapproachable, becomes approachable for me and suffers His Passion, delivering me from passions. He who grants light unto the blind is spat upon by the mouths of the transgressors, and He gives His back to scourging for the sake of those that are held captive. When the pure Virgin His Mother saw Him on the Cross, she cried aloud in pain: 'Woe is me, my Child! What is this that Thou hast done? Thou who wast in beauty fairer than all mortal men, dost now appear without life and form, having neither shape nor comeliness. Woe is me, my Light! I cannot bear to look upon Thee sleeping, and I am wounded inwardly, a harsh sword has pierced my heart. I sing the praises of Thy Passion, I venerate Thy merciful kindness: O longsuffering Lord, glory to Thee!' ²⁴

Both now. . . .

²⁴ Isa. 53: 2; Luke 2: 35.

TONE SIX

Today the words of the Prophet are fulfilled: for see, we worship at the place on which Thy feet have stood, O Lord; and tasting from the Tree of salvation, we have been delivered from our sinful passions at the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Thou who alone lovest mankind.²⁵

Then the two Litanies, as usual, and the Dismissal.

LITURGY

The Typika (Psalms 102 and 145) and the Beatitudes. With the Beatitudes we sing four troparia in the Tone of the week from the Octoechos, and four troparia from Canticle Six of the Canon in the Triodion.

In place of the Trisagion is sung:

We venerate Thy Cross, O Master: and we glorify Thy holy Resurrection (three times).

Glory be to the Father. . . . Both now. . . .

And we glorify Thy holy Resurrection.

We venerate Thy Cross, O Master: and we glorify Thy holy Resurrection.

Prokimenon: TONE SIX

O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance (*Psalm 27: 9*).

✠. Unto Thee have I cried, O Lord my God: be not deaf to my prayer (*ibid.*, 1).

Epistle: Hebrews 4: 14-5: 6.

Alleluia: TONE TWO

✠1. Remember Thy congregation, which Thou hast purchased of old (*Psalm 73: 2*).

✠2. God is our King before the ages: He has worked salvation in the midst of the earth (*ibid.*, 12).

Gospel: Mark 8: 34-9: 1.

Communion verse: The light of Thy countenance is marked upon us, O Lord.

²⁵ Ps. 131: 7; 98: 5.

VESPERS ON SUNDAY EVENING

There is no reading from the Psalter.

To Lord, I have cried, ten stichera are sung: four penitential stichera in the Tone of the week, and then three stichera from the Triodion:

TONE EIGHT

(by Joseph)

O Lord, Thou hast stretched out Thine hands of Thine own will upon the Cross: fill us with Thy light through fasting and through prayer, through abstinence and works of charity; and count us worthy to adore Thy Cross with contrite hearts, for Thou art good and Thou lovest mankind.

O Lord all-merciful, in the multitude of Thy mercies blot out the multitude of my sins, and count me worthy with a pure soul to behold and kiss Thy Cross during the present week of abstinence, for Thou lovest mankind.²⁶

TONE THREE

(by Theodore)

O mighty wonder! Before us stands the Wood, on which Christ was crucified in the flesh. The world venerates it and, illumined, cries aloud: 'Great is the power of the Cross! When devils look upon it, they are burnt; by the sign of the Cross they are consumed with fire.' O pure and holy Wood, I call thee blessed; I honour thee and worship thee with fear, and I give glory unto God who through thee has bestowed upon me life without end.

Then three stichera to the saint of the day from the Menaion; Glory be to the Father. . . . Both now. . . ; and the Theotokion from the Menaion.

Entrance, O joyful Light. . . .

Great Prokimenon (Psalm 60):

TONE EIGHT

O Lord, Thou hast given an inheritance to them that fear Thy Name.

✠1. From the ends of the earth have I cried unto Thee.

✠2. I will take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings.

✠3. So will I sing praise unto Thy Name for ever.

²⁶ Ps. 50: 3.

Aposticha:

TONE EIGHT

In my wretchedness I dare not raise my eyes to heaven, because of all the evil I have done; but like the Publican I groan and cry to Thee: O God, be merciful to me a sinner, and deliver me from the Pharisee's hypocrisy, for Thou only art compassionate (*twice*).²⁷

To the Martyrs

O martyrs of the Lord, ye hallow every place and heal every ill; and now we entreat you to pray that our souls may be delivered from the snares of the enemy.

Glory be to the Father. . . . Both now. . . .

Theotokion

The heavenly powers praise thee, O Virgin Mother full of grace, and we also glorify thy childbearing that none can understand. O Theotokos, pray for the salvation of our souls.

And the rest of Vespers as on the preceding Sundays.

Note that at the First Hour on Monday, Wednesday and Friday we venerate the Precious Cross, singing We venerate Thy Cross, O Master . . . , in placē of Order my steps in Thy word. . . .

²⁷ Luke 18: 10-13.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
on which we celebrate the memory of
OUR HOLY FATHER
JOHN OF THE LADDER

VESPERS ON SATURDAY EVENING

After the Psalm of Introduction (Psalm 103) and the Great Litany, we read Blessed is the man (the first kathisma of the Psalter).

To Lord, I have cried, ten stichera are sung: six of the Resurrection in the Tone of the week from the Octoechos, and the following three in honour of the saint, the first of them being repeated:

TONE EIGHT

(to the special melody, O marvellous wonder. . .)

O holy father John, truly hast thou ever carried on thy lips the praises of the Lord, and with great wisdom hast thou studied the words of Holy Scripture that teach us how to practise the ascetic life. So hast thou gained the riches of grace, and thou hast become blessed, overthrowing all the purposes of the ungodly (*twice*).

Most glorious father John, with the fountain of thy tears thou hast cleansed thy soul, and by keeping vigils through the night thou hast gained God's mercy. Thou wast raised on wings, O blessed one, to the love of Him and of His beauty; and as is right thou dwellest now in His unending joy, with thy fellow soldiers in the spiritual fight, O holy saint of God.

O holy father John, through faith thou hast lifted up thy mind on wings to God; hating the restless confusion of this world, thou hast taken up thy Cross; and, following Him who sees all things, thou hast subjected thy rebellious body to His guidance through ascetic discipline, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Glory be to the Father. . . .