Forgiveness Vespers

Tone IV – 10 / 23 February: Hieromartyr Charalampus

Priest: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.
Reader: Amen.

O come, let us worship God our King.

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ our King and God.

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and God.

Psalm 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God, Thou hast been magnified exceedingly. Confession and majesty hast Thou put on, Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, Who stretchest out the heaven as it were a curtain; Who supporteth His chambers in the waters, Who appointeth the clouds for His ascent, Who walketh upon the wings of the winds, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire, Who establisheth the earth in the sureness thereof; it shall not be turned back for ever and ever. The abyss like a garment is His mantle; upon the mountains shall the waters stand. At Thy rebuke they will flee, at the voice of Thy thunder shall they be afraid. The mountains rise up and the plains sink down, unto the place where Thou hast established them. Thou appointedst a bound that they shall not pass, neither return to cover the earth. He sendeth forth springs in the valleys; between the mountains will the waters run. They shall give drink to all the beasts of the field; the wild asses will wait to quench their thirst. Beside them will the birds of the heaven lodge, from the midst of the rocks will they give voice. He watereth the mountains from His chambers; the earth shall be satisfied with the fruit of Thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men, To bring forth bread out of the earth; and wine maketh glad the heart of man. To make his face cheerful with oil; and bread strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the plain shall be satisfied, the cedars of Lebanon, which Thou hast planted. There will the sparrows make their nests; the house of the heron is chief among them. The high mountains are a refuge for the harts, and so is the rock for the hares. He hath made the moon for seasons; the sun knoweth his going down. Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the night, wherein all the beasts of the forest will go abroad. Young lions roaring after their prey, and seeking their food from God. The sun ariseth, and they are gathered together, and they lay them down in their dens. But man shall go forth unto his work, and to his labor until the evening. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is filled with Thy creation. So is this great and spacious sea, therein are things creeping innumerable, small living creatures with the great. There go the ships; there this dragon, whom Thou hast made to play therein. All things wait on Thee, to give them their food in due season; when Thou givest it them, they will gather it. When Thou openest Thy hand, all things shall be filled with goodness; when Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled. Thou wilt take their spirit, and they shall cease; and unto their dust shall they return. Thou wilt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created; and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth. Let the glory of the Lord be unto the ages; the Lord will rejoice in His works. Who looketh on the earth and maketh it tremble, Who toucheth the mountains and they smoke. I will sing unto the Lord throughout my life, I will chant to my God for as long as I have my being. May my words be sweet unto Him, and I will rejoice in the Lord. O that sinners would cease from the earth, and they that work iniquity, that they should be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

The sun knoweth his going down, Thou appointedst the darkness, and there was the

night. How magnified are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God. *Thrice.*

Great Litany

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

For the peace from above, and the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, the good estate of the holy churches of God, and the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

For this holy temple, and for them that with faith, reverence, and the fear of God enter herein, let us pray to the Lord
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

For our Archbishop *Name*; for the venerable priesthood, the deaconate in Christ, for all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

For this land, its authorities and armed forces, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

For the suffering Russian land and its Orthodox people both in the homeland and in the diaspora, and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

That He may deliver His people from enemies both visible and invisible, and confirm in us oneness of mind, brotherly love and piety, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

For this city, for every city and country, and the faithful that dwell therein, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

For seasonable weather, abundance of the fruits of the earth, and peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

For travelers by sea, land and air; for the sick, the suffering, the imprisoned, and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

That we may be delivered from all tribulation, wrath, and necessity, let us pray to the Lord.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.
Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Calling to remembrance our most holy, most pure, most blessed, glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and all our life unto Christ our God.
Choir: To Thee O Lord.
Priest: For unto Thee is due all glory, honor and worship; to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.
Choir: Amen.

Lord, I Have Cried, Tone 8

In the tone of the week.

Reader: In the 8 Tone: Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me.

Choir: Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me./ Hearken unto me, O Lord./ Lord, I have cried unto Thee, hearken unto me;/ attend to the voice of my supplication,/ when I cry unto Thee./ Hearken unto me, O Lord.

Let my prayer be set forth/ as incense before Thee,/ the lifting up of my hands/ as an evening sacrifice./ Hearken unto me, O Lord.

Verses for Lord, I Have Cried

Reader: Set, O Lord, a watch before my mouth, and a door of enclosure round about my lips.

Incline not my heart unto words of evil, to make excuse with excuses in sins.

With men that work iniquity; and I will not join with their chosen.

The righteous man will chasten me with mercy and reprove me; as for the oil of the sinner, let it not anoint my head.

For yet more is my prayer in the presence of their pleasures; swallowed up near by the rock have their judges been.

They shall hear my words, for they be sweetened; as a clod of earth is broken upon the earth, so have their bones been scattered nigh unto hades.

For unto Thee, O Lord, O Lord, are mine eyes, in Thee have I hoped; take not my soul away.

Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, and from the stumbling-blocks of them that work iniquity.

The sinners shall fall into their own net; I am alone until I pass by.

With my voice unto the Lord have I cried, with my voice unto the Lord have I made supplication.

I will pour out before Him my supplication, mine affliction before Him will I declare.

When my spirit was fainting within me, then Thou knewest my paths.

In this way wherein I have walked they hid for me a snare.

I looked upon my right hand, and beheld, and there was none that did know me.

Flight hath failed me, and there is none that watcheth out for my soul.

I have cried unto Thee, O Lord; I said: Thou art my hope, my portion art Thou in the land of the living.

Attend unto my supplication, for I am brought very low.

Deliver me from them that persecute me, for they are stronger than I.

Stichera of Repentance, Tone 4

In the tone of the week, from the Lenten Triodion.

10 Bring my soul out of prison:

Choir: That I may confess Thy name.

I want to wash away with tears the record of my sins, O Lord,/ and through the rest of my life to please Thee by repentance;/ but the enemy deceives me and fights against my soul.// Before I perish utterly, save me, O Lord.

9 The righteous shall wait patiently for me/ until Thou shalt reward me.

If a man takes refuge from the tempest in this harbor,/ will he not be saved?/ If in his agony he kneels before this house of healing, will he not be cured?/ O Maker of all and Physician of the sick,// before I perish utterly, save me, O Lord.

8 Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord;/ O Lord, hear my voice.

Wash me with my tears, O Saviour,/ for I am defiled by many sins,/ Therefore I fall

down before Thee:// I have sinned, have mercy upon me, O God.

7 Let Thine ears be attentive/ to the voice of my supplication.

I am a sheep of Thy spiritual flock,/ and to Thee I flee for refuge, O Good Shepherd./ I have gone astray, O God:// seek me and have mercy upon me.

Tone 2

Special Melody: When from the tree

Reader: In the 2nd Tone.

6 If Thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, O Lord, who shall stand?

Choir: For with Thee there is forgiveness.

Let us all make haste to humble the flesh by abstinence,/ as we set out upon the God-given course of the holy Fast;/ and with prayers and tears let us seek our Lord and Savior./ Laying aside all memories of evil, let us cry aloud:/ We have sinned against Thee, Christ our King;/ save us as the men of Nineveh in days of old,// and in Thy compassion make us sharers in Thy heavenly Kingdom.

5 For Thy name's sake have I patiently waited for Thee, O Lord; my soul hath patiently waited for Thy word,/ my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

When I think of my works, deserving every punishment,/ I despair of mself, O Lord./ For see, I have despised Thy precious commandments,/ and wasted my life as the Prodigal./ Therefore I entreat Thee:/ cleanse me in the waters of repentance,/ and through prayer and fasting make me shine with light,/ for Thou alone art merciful; abhor me not,// O Benefactor of all, supreme in love.

4 From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch/ let Israel hope in the Lord.

Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast,/ and prepare ourselves for spiritual combat./ Let us purify our soul and cleanse our flesh;/ and as we fast from food, let us abstain also from every passion./ Rejoicing in the virtues of the Spirit may we persevere with love,/ and so be counted worthy to see the solemn passion of Christ our God,/ and with great spiritual gladness// to behold His holy Pascha.

From the Menaion, Tone 6

Three stichera for the saint of the day from the Menaion.

Reader: In the 6th Tone:

3 For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption;

Choir: And He shall redeem Israel out of all his iniquities.

Having set thyself wholly aside from thy youth for the Master, thou didst desire Him, and didst follow in His steps; and having been cleansed of all the defilement of the passions, thou wast enriched with grace divine, that thou mightest work healings and perform most glorious miracles; and thou becamest a martyr, remaining unmoved by all the assaults of the torments, through the power of Him Who was slain upon the Cross. Him do thou earnestly entreat in behalf of our souls.

2 O praise the Lord, all ye nations;/ praise Him, all ye peoples.

Though thy blessed, enduring and invincible body was pierced with nails, O athlete Charalampius, thou didst keep thy soul steadfast and thy mind inviolate; for divine desire richly enkindled thee, O glorious one, and exhorted thee to endure all manner of torment, O passion-bearing martyr, who didst share in the sufferings of Christ. Him do thou entreat with boldness in behalf of our souls.

1 For He hath made His mercy to prevail over us,/ and the truth of the Lord abideth forever.

Having suffered, thou didst inherit all-radiant joy, ineffable glory, and everlasting rejoicing, O venerable priest, honored athlete, valiant warrior, who with the streams of thy blood didst manifestly drown the armies and hosts of the serpent, and by grace and divine prayer didst truly raise the dead, praying with boldness in behalf of our souls.
Reader: Glory, both now in the same tone:
Choir: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Theotokion, Tone 6

O most immaculate one, quickly visit me who have been wounded by the robbers' assaults of the demons and who lie, wholly unable to move, on the ever-shifting path of this life, in need of mercy; pour thou wine and oil upon mine incurable wounds, and restore me to health; that I may glorify thee and lovingly hymn thy mighty works, as is meet, O Mother and Virgin, who alone art pure.

O Gentle Light

There is an entrance with the Censer.
Deacon: Wisdom! Aright!
Choir: O Gentle Light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father, O Jesus Christ: having come to the setting of the sun, having beheld the evening light, we praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: God. Meet it is for Thee at all times to be hymned with reverent voices, O Son of God, Giver of life. Wherefore, the world doth glorify Thee.

Great Prokimenon

Deacon: Let us attend. Peace be unto all. Wisdom! The Great Prokimenon in the 8th Tone:
Turn not Thy countenance away from Thy servant, for I am afflicted; quickly hearken unto me. Attend unto my soul and deliver it.
Choir: Turn not Thy countenance away from Thy servant, for I am afflicted; quickly hearken unto me. Attend unto my soul and deliver it.
Deacon: May Thy salvation, O God, be quick to help me.
Choir: Turn not Thy countenance away…
Deacon: Let beggars behold it and be glad.
Choir: Turn not Thy countenance away…
Deacon: Seek after God, and your soul shall live.
Choir: Turn not Thy countenance away…
Deacon: Turn not Thy countenance away from Thy servant, for I am afflicted;
Choir: Quickly hearken unto me. Attend unto my soul and deliver it.

During the following prayer, the priest removes his phelonion and puts on a dark epitrachilion:
Reader: Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this evening without sin. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name unto the ages. Amen.

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in Thee. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Master, give me understanding of Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Holy One, enlighten me by Thy statutes.

O Lord, Thy mercy endureth forever; disdain not the work of Thy hands. To Thee is due praise, to Thee is due a song, to Thee glory is due, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

From this point on the responses are sung to the Lenten melody. The vestments in the Church are also changed to dark colors at this point.
Deacon: Let us complete our evening prayer unto the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

That the whole evening may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

An angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Pardon and remission of our sins and offences, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

Things good and profitable for our souls, and peace for the world, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant this. O Lord.

A Christian ending to our life, painless, blameless, peaceful, and a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ, let us ask.

Choir: Grant this, O Lord.

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

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

Priest: For a good God art Thou, and the Lover of Mankind, and unto Thee do we send up glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Deacon or Priest: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord. *(Very Slowly.)*

Priest: Blessed and most glorified be the dominion of Thy kingdom: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

The Aposticha, Tone 4

Reader: In the 4th Tone, Thy grace has shone forth, O Lord.

Choir: Thy grace has shone forth, O Lord,/ it has shone forth and given light to our souls./ Behold, now is the accepted time:/ behold, now is the season of repentance./ Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light,/ that having sailed across the great sea of the Fast,/ we may reach the third-day Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ,// the Savior of our souls.

Stichos 1: Unto Thee have I lifted up mine eyes, unto Thee that dwellest in heaven. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaid look unto the hands of her mistress, so do our eyes look unto the Lord our God,/ until He take pity on us.

Thy grace has shone forth, O Lord,/ it has shone forth and given light to our souls./ Behold, now is the accepted time:/ behold, now is the season of repentance./ Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light,/ that having sailed across the great

sea of the Fast,/ we may reach the third-day Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ,// the Savior of our souls.

Stichos 2: Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for greatly are we filled with abasement. Greatly hath our soul been filled therewith; let reproach come upon them that prosper,/ and abasement on the proud.

To the Martyrs

Thou art glorified in the memorials of Thy saints, O Christ our God:/ at their intercessions// send down upon us Thy great mercy.

Reader: Glory, both now in the same tone:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Theotokion

The ranks of the angels glorify thee, O Mother of God,/ for thou hast given birth to Him that is God,/ who dwells ever with the Father and the Spirit,/ who created the angelic hosts out of nothing by an act of His will./ Entreat Him, all-pure Lady, to save and illumine the souls// of those who with true worship sing thy praises.

Prayer of St. Symeon

Priest: Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, O Master, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light of revelation for the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.

Reader: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. *(Thrice)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

O Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us. O Lord, blot out our sins. O Master, pardon our iniquities. O Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Thy name's sake.

Lord have mercy. *(Thrice)*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, Who art in the Heavens, 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Priest: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Dismissal Troparia, Tone 4

O Theotokos and Virgin Rejoice!/ O Mary, full of grace the Lord is with thee;/ blessed art thou among women,/ and blessed is the fruit of thy womb;// for thou hast borne the Savior of our souls. *Prostration*

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

O Baptizer of Christ, keep us all in remembrance,/ that we may be delivered from our iniquities;// for to thee was given grace to intercede for us. *Prostration*

Both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Plead in our behalf, O holy apostles and all saints,/ that we may be delivered from perils and afflictions;// for we have acquired you as fervent mediators before the Savior. *Prostration*

Beneath thy compassion do we take refuge, O Theotokos;/ disdain not our supplication

in times of affliction;// but do thou deliver us from perils, O only pure, O only blessed one.
No prostration
Reader: Lord, have mercy. *(40 times)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim; who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, the very Theotokos, thee do we magnify.

In the name of the Lord, Father bless.
Priest: He that is is blessed, Christ our God, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.
Reader: Amen. O Heavenly King, strengthen Orthodox Christians, establish the faith, subdue the nations, give peace to the world, keep well this city; settle our departed fathers and brethren in the tabernacles of the righteous, and receive us in penitence and confession, for Thou art good and the Lover of mankind.

Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian

Priest: O Lord and Master of my life, a spirit of idleness, despondency, ambition, and idle talking give me not. *Prostration*

But rather a spirit of chastity, humble-mindedness, patience, and love bestow upon me Thy servant. *Prostration*

Yea, O Lord King, grant me to see my own failings and not condemn my brother; for blessed art Thou unto the ages of ages. Amen. *Prostration*

The Dismissal

Priest: Glory to Thee, O Christ God, our hope, glory to Thee.
Choir: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Lord have mercy. *(Thrice)*

Father, bless.
Priest: O Master plenteous in mercy, O Lord Jesus Christ our God: Through the intercessions of our immaculate Lady Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary; through the power of the precious and life-giving Cross; through the mediations of the honorable, heavenly Bodiless Hosts, of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John; of the holy glorious, and all-praised apostles; of the holy, glorious, and victorious martyrs; of our holy and God-bearing fathers, *Name (the patron saint of the temple)*; of the holy and Righteous Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna; of *Name (the Saints of the day)* and of all the saints: make our prayer acceptable; grant us the remission of our sins; shelter us with the shelter of Thy wings; drive away from us every enemy and adversary; make our life peaceful, O Lord; have mercy on us and on Thy world, and save our souls, for Thou art good and the Lover of mankind.
Choir: Amen.

Then follows the ceremony of mutual forgiveness. The priest stands beside the analogion, and the faithful come up one by one and venerate the ikon, after which each makes a prostration before the priest, saying "Forgive me, a sinner." The priest also makes a prostration before each "May God forgive thee. Forgive me." The person responds, "May God forgive thee" and receives a blessing from the priest.

Meanwhile the choir sings quietly the Irmoi of the Paschal Canon, or else the Paschal Aposticha. After receiving the priests blessing, the faithful also ask forgiveness of each other.

When all have asked forgiveness, the priest says:
Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us.
And the Choir responds:
Amen.