

23 February 2015
The beginning of Great Lent
Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna
Tone 4

Great Vespers (celebrated on Sunday evening, 22 February 2015):

Priest: Blessed is our God...

Reader: Amen. *And the lesser beginning*

Psalm 103 is read

Great Litany

No Kathisma

Lord, I call upon thee on 10, tone 4:

Penitential Stichera Tone 4 – 4 verses: I want to wash away with tears...; If a man takes refuge from the tempest...; Wash me with my tears, O Saviour...; I am a sheep of thy spiritual flock...

Triodion Tone 2 – 3 verses (Lenten Triodion): Let us all make haste to humble the flesh...; When I think of my works, deserving every punishment...; Let us set out with joy upon the season of the Fast...

St Polycarp Tone 1 – 3 verses (Menaion): While living on earth...; O divinely blessed one...; Illumined with splendour divine...

Glory... Both now... Theotokion Tone 2 (Menaion): Thou art the joy of all that sorrow...

Gladsome Light: Entrance with censer.

Great Prokeimenon Tone 8:

Turn not away thy face from thy child; for I am afflicted, hear me speedily. Attend to my soul and redeem it.

Verse: Thy salvation, O God, hath upheld me.

Verse: Let the poor see and be glad.

Verse: Seek ye God, and your soul shall live.

Reader: Vouchsafe... (*This is read slowly. The Royal Doors are shut. At this point the priest removes his phelonion, and changes his epitrachilion to a dark colour; and the vestments of the church are changed to a dark colour. **Here begins the great fast.** From this time we sing the litanies with the penitential Lenten melody*)

Evening Litany, the Peace and the bowing of the heads

Apostikha: Triodion Tone 4

St Simeon and the Trisagion Prayers

Apolytikia:

O Theotokos Virgin, hail... (*prostration*)

Glory be to the Father...

O Baptiser of Christ... (*prostration*)

Both now...

Pray for us, holy apostles... (*prostration*)

Beneath thy tenderness of heart... (**no prostration**)

Reader: Lord, have mercy (*40 times*), Glory... Now and... More honourable than the Cherubim... In the name of the Lord, Father give the blessing.

The priest, standing before the holy doors, exclaims:

Christ our God, He Who is, is blessed, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen. O King of heaven, do thou strengthen our queen, establish the faith, quiet the nations, give peace to the world, keep this town, make our fathers and brethren gone to rest before to dwell in the tabernacles of the righteous, and accept us in repentance and confession, for thou art good and lovest man.

Then the priest reads the prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian:

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faintheartedness, lust for power, and idle talk. (*great reverence*)

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to me thy servant. (*great reverence*)

Yea, O my Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art thou unto ages of ages. Amen. (*great reverence*)

The priest says: Glory to thee, O Christ our God and our Hope, glory to thee.

Choir: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*) Father, give the blessing.

and the dismissal.

Then follows the ceremony of mutual forgiveness. *The priest stands beside the analogion, and the faithful come up one by one and venerate the icon, after which each makes a prostration before the priest, saying: Forgive me, and pray for me, a sinner. The priest also makes a prostration before each, saying the same words; and then the other receives his blessing and kisses his hand. Meanwhile the choir sings quietly the irmoi of Paschal Matins, or the Paschal Sichera (in either case without the refrain 'Christ is Risen'). After receiving the priest's blessing, the faithful also ask forgiveness of one another.*

When all have asked forgiveness, the priest says:

Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us.

Reader: Amen.