

Vespers of the Annunciation to our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

Sung on the evening of Wednesday 24th March for Thursday 25th March 2021

The online service will be served by a priest, so the litanies will be sung as normal. The parts of the service which are read or sung by the priest are shown in red. These are omitted if the service is used without a priest.

If you are serving the service at home without a priest, follow the marked sections shown in blue. The 'Reader' may be the most senior person present – e.g. a parent or grandparent, according to the situation – or simply the most confident reader or singer. The parts marked for the 'Choir' can be read or sung by everyone together, or by one person alone.

You may prefer to use parts of the service in your own language. If so, please make sure that the prayers are read from an Orthodox prayer book or service book.

Available music may be found at www.orthodoxcommunityrugby.com/choir

Before the Service

*Whether you are following the service online, or serving it at home without a priest, you should do so in front of the household icons – e.g. in the family icon corner. If you do not have an icon of Christ or the Mother of God, you should place a Cross or a Book of the Gospels (or a copy of New Testament, or a Bible) on a table in front of the icons. If you have charcoal and incense, you may wish to light the charcoal before the service begins; you can then place incense on the lit charcoal during the hymn **Lord I call** at the words "Let my prayer arise". You may wish to prepare an **unlit** lamp or candle(s) which can be lit when the hymn **O Gladsome Light** is sung.*

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

Reader: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us, and save us. Amen.

Reader: O come, let us worship God our King.

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

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

PSALM 103

Reader: 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 forever 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 labour 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; now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, glory to Thee, O God. (x 3)

THE LITANY OF PEACE

In place of the Litany of Peace, the choir sings:

Lord, have mercy. (x 12)

“LORD I CALL ...”

Tone 6

[[Music on website](#)]

Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me!

Hear me, O Lord!

Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me!

Receive the voice of my prayer,

when I call upon Thee!//

Hear me, O Lord!

Let my prayer arise

in Thy sight as incense,

and let the lifting up of my hands

be an evening sacrifice!//

Hear me, O Lord!

If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee.

Tone 6

[[Music on website](#)]

Revealing to thee the pre-eternal counsel,

Gabriel came and stood before thee, O Maiden,

and greeting thee, he said:

“Rejoice, O earth that has not been sown!

Rejoice, burning bush that remains unconsumed!

Rejoice, unsearchable depth!

Rejoice, bridge that leads to Heaven!

Rejoice, ladder raised on high that Jacob saw!

Rejoice, divine jar of manna!

Rejoice, deliverance from the curse!

Rejoice, restoration of Adam;//

the Lord is with thee!”

For Thy Name's sake I wait for Thee, O Lord. My soul has waited for Thy Word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.

Repeat: Revealing to thee the pre-eternal counsel ...

From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch, let Israel hope on the Lord!

“Thou dost appear to me in the form of a man,”
said the undefiled Maid to the chief of the Heavenly Hosts.
“How then dost thou speak to me of things that pass man’s power?
Thou hast said that God shall be with me
and shall take up His dwelling in my womb.
How shall I become the spacious habitation
and the holy place of Him Who rides upon the Cherubim?
Do not deceive me with trickery;
for I have not known pleasure,
I have not entered into wedlock.//
How then shall I bear a Child?”

For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.

Repeat: “Thou dost appear to me in the form of a man,” ...

Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him, all peoples!

Then the bodiless Angel replied:
“When God so wills, the order of nature is overcome,
and what is beyond man comes to pass.
Believe that my sayings are true,
O all-holy and immaculate Lady!”
And she cried aloud:
“Let it be to me according to thy word,
and I shall bear Him Who is without flesh!
He shall borrow flesh from me,
that through this union of natures
He may lead man up to his ancient glory,//
for He alone has power so to do.”

For His mercy is confirmed on us; and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.

Repeat: Then the bodiless Angel replied ...

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

Tone 6

The Archangel Gabriel was sent from heaven,
to announce to the Virgin the good news of her conceiving.
And coming to Nazareth, he was filled with wonder at the miracle,
and reasoned within himself:
“How is it that He Who dwelleth on high,
and Whom none can comprehend, is to be born of a Virgin?
How is He, Whose throne is Heaven and Whose footstool is the earth,
to be contained in the womb of a woman?
He upon Whom the six-winged Seraphim and the many-eyed Cherubim are not able to gaze
is well-pleased to be made flesh from her at a single word.
It is the Word of God Who is to come.
Why then do I hesitate, and not say to the Maiden:
‘Rejoice, O Lady, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!
Rejoice, pure Virgin!
Rejoice, Bride without Bridegroom!
Rejoice, Mother of the Life!//
Blessed is the Fruit of thy womb!’”

THE ENTRANCE WITH THE CENSER

Priest: Wisdom! Stand upright!

O GLADSOME LIGHT

O Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the Immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed, Jesus Christ. Now that we have come to the setting of the sun, and behold the light of evening, we praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For meet it is at all times to worship Thee with voices of praise, O Son of God, the Giver of Life; therefore all the world doth glorify Thee.

THE EVENING PROKEIMENON

Priest: Let us attend! Peace be to all!

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Reader: The Evening Prokeimenon.

Reader: O God, in Thy Name save me, and in Thy strength do Thou judge me.

Choir: O God, in Thy Name save me, and in Thy strength do Thou judge me.

Reader: O God, hearken unto my prayer, give ear unto the words of my mouth.

Choir: O God, in Thy Name save me, and in Thy strength do Thou judge me.

Reader: O God, in Thy Name save me

Choir: and in Thy strength do Thou judge me.

READINGS

Priest: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Book of Genesis.

Priest: Let us attend!

Reader: Jacob went forth from the well of the oath, and departed into Haran. And he came to a certain place, and slept there, for the sun had gone down; and he took one of the stones of the place, and put it at his head, and lay down to sleep in that place, and dreamed: and behold a ladder fixed on the earth, whose top reached to heaven, and the angels of God ascended and descended on it. And the Lord stood upon it, and said: "I am the God of thy father Abraham, and the God of Isaac. Fear not; the land on which thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be like the sand of the earth; and it shall spread abroad to the sea, and the south, and the north, and the east; and in thee and in thy seed shall all tribes of the earth be blessed. And behold I am with thee to preserve thee continually in all the way wherein thou shalt go; and I will bring thee back to this land; for I will not desert thee, until I have done all that I have said to thee." And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said: "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And he was afraid, and said: "How fearful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

Priest: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Prophecy of Ezekiel.

Priest: Let us attend!

Reader: Thus saith the Lord: "It shall come to pass from the eighth day and onward, that the priests shall offer your whole-burnt offerings on the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you," saith the Lord. Then He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary that faceth eastward; and it was shut. And the Lord said to me: "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall pass through it; for the Lord God of Israel shall enter by it, and it shall be shut. For the Prince, He shall sit in it, to eat bread before the Lord; He shall go in by the way of the porch of the gate, and shall go forth by the way of the same." And He brought me in by the way of the gate that faceth northward, in front of the house: and I looked, and, behold! the house was full of the glory of the Lord.

Priest: Wisdom!

Reader: The reading from the Proverbs of Solomon.

Priest: Let us attend!

Reader: Wisdom hath built a house for herself and set up seven pillars. She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine in a bowl and prepared her table. She hath sent forth her servants, calling with a loud proclamation to the feast, saying: "Whoso is foolish, let him turn aside to me." And to those who

want understanding, she saith: "Come, eat of my bread, and drink wine which I have mingled for you. Leave folly, that ye may reign forever; and seek wisdom, and improve understanding by knowledge." He that reproveth evil men shall get dishonour to himself; and he that rebuketh an ungodly man shall disgrace himself. Rebuke not evil men, lest they should hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee. Give an opportunity to a wise man, and he will be wiser: instruct a just man, and he will receive more instruction. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the counsel of the law is the character of a sound mind. For in this way thou shalt live long, and years of thy life shall be added to thee.

THE EVENING LITANY

In place of the Evening Litany, the choir sings:

Lord, have mercy. (x 12)

VOUCHSAFE, O LORD

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 forever. Amen. Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we have set our hope on Thee. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Master, make me to understand Thy statutes. Blessed art Thou, O Holy One, enlighten me with Thy statutes. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever. O despise not the works of Thy hands. To Thee belongeth worship, to Thee belongeth praise, to Thee belongeth glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

THE LITANY OF SUPPLICATION

In place of the Litany of Supplication, the choir sings:

Lord, have mercy. (x 12)

THE PRAYER AT THE BOWING OF THE HEADS

Priest: Peace be to all!

Choir: And to thy spirit.

Priest: Bow your heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To Thee, O Lord.

The Priest reads the Prayer at the Bowing of the Heads:

Priest: ... now and ever, and unto the ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

APOSTICHA

Tone 4

[Music on website]

In the sixth month, the Archangel was sent to the pure Virgin;
and with his greeting "Rejoice,"
he announced the good news that the Deliverer was to come forth from her.
Therefore, having received the salutation with faith,
she conceived Thee, the pre-eternal God,
Who wast well-pleased ineffably to become man//
for the salvation of our souls.

v. Proclaim from day to day the glad tidings of the salvation of our God!

The Theotokos heard a tongue that she knew not,
for the Archangel addressed to her the words of glad tidings;
therefore, accepting the salutation with faith,
she conceived Thee, the pre-eternal God.
And so, rejoicing exceedingly, we too cry aloud to Thee:
O God, made flesh from her without change,//
grant peace to the world, and great mercy to our souls!

v. Sing to the Lord a new song, for the Lord has done wonders!

Behold, our restoration has now been revealed to us:
in a manner beyond understanding, God is united to man;
at the voice of the Archangel, delusion is destroyed,
for the Virgin receives joy;
things of the earth have become heaven;
and the world is freed from the ancient curse.
Let creation rejoice exceedingly and sing with voices of praise://
"O Lord, our Maker and Deliverer, glory to Thee!"

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

Tone 4

Today the good tidings of joy are proclaimed,
today is the festival of the Virgin;
things below are joined together with things on high.
Adam is made new;
Eve is freed from the primal grief;
and by the deification of the human nature that the Lord assumed,
the tabernacle of our substance has become a temple of God.
Oh, what a mystery!
The manner of His emptying cannot be known;
the manner of His conception is beyond speech.
An angel ministers at the miracle; a virginal womb receives the Son;
the Holy Spirit is sent down; the Father on high is well pleased,
and according to their common counsel, a reconciliation is brought to pass
in which and through which we are saved.
For this reason let us unite our song with Gabriel's,
crying aloud to the Virgin:
"Rejoice, O Lady Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee!
From thee is our salvation, Christ our God,
Who, by assuming our nature, has led us back to Himself.//
Pray to Him for the salvation of our souls!

THE PRAYER OF SAINT SIMEON, THE GOD-RECEIVER

Priest/Reader: Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel.

Reader: Holy God, Holy Mighty Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (x 3)

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

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, look upon and heal our infirmities for Thy 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;
both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. 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 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. Amen.

Reader: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us, and save us. Amen.

THE TROPARION

Tone 4

[Music on website]

Today is the beginning of our salvation,
the revelation of the eternal mystery!
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin
As Gabriel announces the coming of Grace.
Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos:
"Rejoice, O Full of Grace,
the Lord is with thee!"

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

Repeat: Today is the beginning of our salvation ...

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

Repeat: Today is the beginning of our salvation ...

THE DISMISSAL

Priest: Wisdom!

Reader: Father, give the blessing.

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

Reader: Establish, O God, the holy Orthodox Faith and all Orthodox Christians, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Priest: Most Holy Theotokos, save us.

Choir: More honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, thou who without defilement gavest birth to God the Word, and art truly Theotokos, we magnify thee.

Priest: 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, both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

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

Father, give the blessing.

The Priest gives the blessing.

Reader: Bless, O Lord.

Reader: Lord Jesus Christ, through the intercessions of Thy most pure Mother whose Annunciation we celebrate; by the protection of the honourable bodiless powers of heaven; at the supplications of our Father among the Saints, Chad, Bishop of Lichfield, Patron and Protector of this Community; of the Holy and Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; and of all the saints, have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.

Priest/Reader: Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us, and save us. Amen.