

Matins of Great and Holy Saturday

In parish practice, this service is sung on Friday evening. It is perhaps the most popular service of Holy Week in the Byzantine Tradition, filled with song and movement. Holy Saturday Matins is a way of keeping vigil at the tomb of Christ during his sabbath rest. We join the Theotokos and the Church in our song of lament in anticipation of the Lord's resurrection.

This service features the poetry of lament and the proclamation of God's word. Therefore, the home service combines elements of lament with the appointed Scriptural readings.

Gather in a quiet room – if you have a burial shroud with a tomb, sing the lament and proclaim the readings standing before it. For the Lamentations, take turns reciting or singing the hymns and the psalm verses.

Leader: Through the Prayers of our holy Fathers and Mothers, Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on us.

All: Amen.

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

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

O most holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Your 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 now and ever and unto 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.

Leader: Amen. Come let us worship God our king. Come let us worship and fall down before Christ, our king and our God. Come let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our king and our God.

Take turns reading the psalm verses and the hymns of lament at the tomb.

Vs.: Blessed are You, o Lord! Teach me Your statutes!

In a tomb they laid You, o Christ the Life. The angelic hosts were overcome with awe, and glorified Your condescension.

Vs. Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek Him with their whole heart.

O Life, how can You die? How can You dwell in a tomb? Yet by Your death you destroyed the reign of death, and raised all the dead from hell.

Vs. For those who work wickedness have not walked in his ways.

We magnify You, o Jesus our King, We worship Your passion and Your burial, for by them you have saved us from death.

Vs. You have commanded Your precepts to be diligently kept.

Earth's bounds You have measured, O Jesus, king of all, yet today You dwell in a narrow tomb, raising the dead from their graves.

Vs. Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn Your commandments.

It is right to magnify you, o Creator of all. We are freed from passion through Your passion, and delivered from corruption.

Vs. In Your steadfast love spare my life, that I may keep the commandments of Your mouth.

Adam was greatly afraid when God walked in paradise. Now, with joy he sees god stalking Hades' depths. There he fell, but here he is raised up.

Vs. Forever, Lord, your word is firmly fixed in heaven.

She who gave birth to You, o Christ, poured out her tears for you; when she saw Your body buried in the tomb, 'Arise, as You have promised,' she cried.

Vs. Your truth endures to all generations. You have established the earth, and it stands fast.

When your mother saw you, o Christ, pierced with nails upon the cross, she was smitten with the nails of bitter grief; her soul was pierced, as Simeon foretold.

Vs. Oh, how I love Your law, o Lord! It is my meditation all day long.

Hell shook with fear, o Savior, seeing you, the Giver of Life, spoiling him of all his hoarded riches, and raising up the dead from every age.

Vs. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.

Earth shook and quaked in fear, O Savior and Creator, when in her dark bosom she enfolded You, and with her quaking she awoke the dead.

Vs. With open mouth I pant, because I long for Your commandments.

Every generation offers Thee its hymn of praise at Thy burial, O Christ.

Vs. Look upon me and have mercy on me, according to the judgment of those who love Your name.

The Arimathean took Thee down from the tree and laid Thee in a tomb.

Vs. Direct my steps according to Your teaching and let no lawlessness rule over me.

The myrrh-bearing women, with foresight brought sweet spices and drew near to Thee, O Christ.

Vs. Ransom me from the slander of men, and I will keep Your commandments.

Come, all creation, sing a hymn to honor the Creator's Burial.

Vs. Make Your face shine upon Your servant and teach me Your ordinances.

Let us, with the myrrh-bearers, anoint as dead the Living One with the Myrrh of True Knowledge.

Vs. My eyes poured down streams of tears because they did not keep Your law.

O thrice blessed Joseph, bury now the body of Christ the Giver of Life.

Vs. Your testimonies are righteousness forever;

give me understanding, and I shall live.

Joseph and Nicodemus bury the Creator with honors fitting for the dead.

*Vs. I cry out to You; save me, and I shall keep
Your testimonies.*

The All-Pure Virgin wept with a mother's grief, O Word, when she saw You lying dead.

*Vs. I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your
law is my meditation.*

The hosts of angels tremble at the strange and fearful sight of Your burial, O Maker of All.

*Vs. My soul shall live and praise You, and Your
judgments shall keep me.*

Early in the morning the myrrh-bearing women came to You and sprinkled myrrh on Your tomb.

*Vs. I went astray like a lost sheep; seek Your
servant, for I have not forgotten Your
commandments.*

By Your resurrection grant peace to Your Church and salvation to Your people.

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

O God in Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit,
grant Your mercy to the world.

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

Grant us your servants to behold, O Virgin,
the Resurrection of your Son.

Then, the readings.

[READING 1] The Reading from the Prophecy of Ezekiel.

In those days, the hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it *was* full of bones. ² Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and indeed *they were* very dry. ³ And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

So I answered, “O Lord GOD, You know.”

⁴ Again He said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD.’ ”

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but *there was* no breath in them.

⁹ Also He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the Spirit, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Come from the four winds, O Spirit, and breathe on these dead men, that they may live.’ ” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the Spirit came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹ Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’ ¹² Therefore prophecy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. ¹⁴ I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*,” says the LORD.’

[READING 2] The reading from the first Epistle of the holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

Brothers and Sisters: Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. ⁸ Therefore let us

keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

All sing together:

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

[READING 3] The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

⁶² On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, ⁶³ saying, “Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise.’ ⁶⁴ Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come ^[D] by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead.’ So the last deception will be worse than the first.”

⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

All: Glory to You, o Lord, glory to You.

Leader: O Lord Almighty, we pray for our Metropolitan N., our Bishop N., for our civil authorities and armed forces. We pray for deliverance from the coronavirus, for the healing of those infected and of all who are sick, for the health and safety of all doctors, nurses, and medical workers, and for all your people.

All: Amen.

Most of the time at home following this service will be devoted to preparing for Pascha. Enjoy one another’s company as you prepare foods, decorate, and clean together.