and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one, and in your providence, arrange everything for our good. For to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is due all glory, honor and worship, now and ever and forever. Amen.

6. Lord, O Lord, you hold all things in your spotless hand; you are long-suffering toward all of us, and you repent over our evil deeds. Remember your mercy and your compassion. Visit us in your goodness and for the rest of this day enable us to flee from the many wiles of the evil one, and keep our life secure by the grace of your all-holy Spirit. Through the mercy and the loving-kindness of your only-begotten Son with whom you are blessed, together with your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

7. Great and wonderful God, you govern all things with indescribable goodness and rich providence. You have granted us the good things of this earth, and through the good things already bestowed on us, have given us a pledge of the promised kingdom. You have kept us away from every evil during the part of this day which has passed, even until the present moment; now allow us to complete the rest of the day without blame in the presence of your holy glory singing hymns to you, O God, who alone are good and love us all. For you are our God, and we give glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

8. *(This prayer is prayed aloud at the conclusion of the Litany of Supplication.)*

Prayer of the Entrance

The following dialog is recited quietly before the Small Entrance:

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.

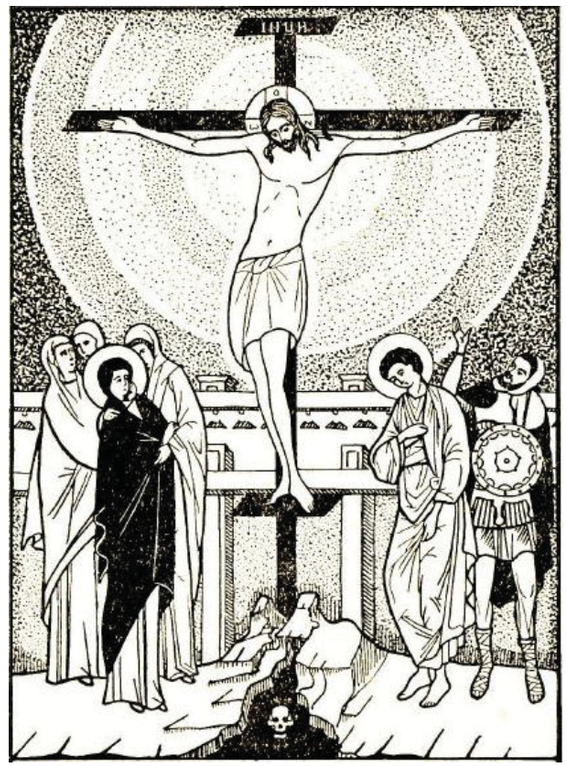
Celebrant: Good and loving King, who have blessed all things, we fervently implore you with contrite heart and humble spirit to bless our comings and goings. For your coming and going, and your dwelling among us are blessed, O Christ our true God, always, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Deacon: Reverend Father, bless the holy entrance!

Celebrant: Blessed is the entrance into your holy of holies, always, now and ever and forever.

Deacon: Amen.

VESPERS FOR HOLY AND GREAT FRIDAY
The Office of the Burial of
Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ



Metropolitan Cantor Institute
Byzantine Catholic Seminary
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
March 2026

Like the other publications of the Metropolitan Cantor Institute, this setting of the service of Vespers for Holy and Great Friday is UNOFFICIAL and subject to change or revision by the Cantor Institute, the Inter-Eparchial Music Commission, or the Council of Hierarchs of the Byzantine Catholic Metropolitan Church *sui juris* of Pittsburgh. We hope that it provides spiritual benefit to all who use it.

The image on the cover is from the Ruthenian *Časoslov* (Rome, 1950).

Prayers of Light

To be said quietly by the celebrant during the chanting of Psalm 103.
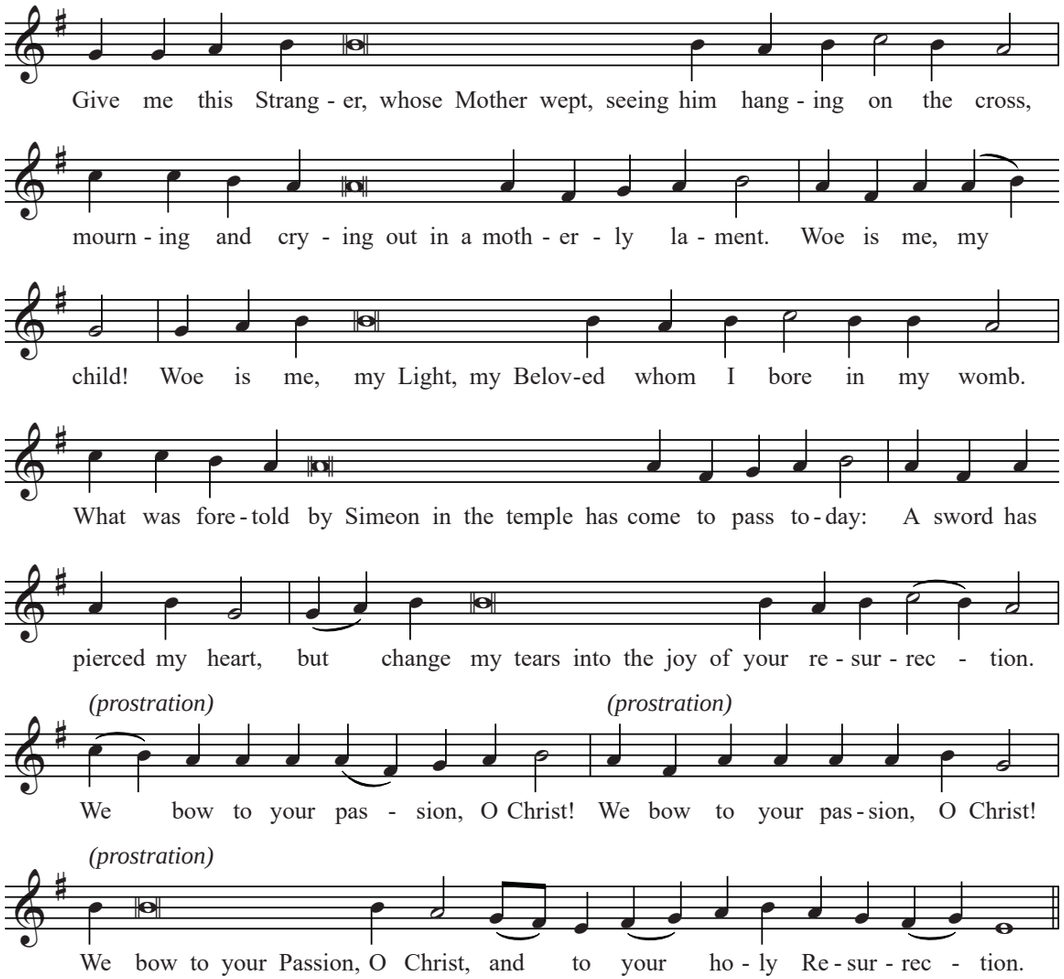
1. Lord, compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and rich in mercy, give ear to my prayer and attend to the sound of my plea. Show us a sign of your favor; guide us in your way so that we may walk in your truth. Gladden our hearts that we may fear your holy name, for you are great and do marvelous deeds. You alone are God, and among the gods there is none like you, O Lord. Powerful in mercy and gracious in strength, you help, comfort, and save all those who hope in your holy name. For to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is due all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever and forever. Amen.

2. Lord, do not rebuke us in your anger, nor punish us in your wrath. Deal with us according to your kindness, O Physician and Healer of our souls. Guide us to the harbor of your will; enlighten the eyes of our minds that we may know your truth. Grant that we may spend what remains of this day and the rest of our life peacefully and sinlessly through the intercession of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints. For yours is the might; and yours are the kingdom and the power and the glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

3. Lord our God, remember us your sinful and useless servants as we call upon your holy and sublime name, and do not put us to shame for hoping in your mercy. Grant us instead, O Lord, all our petitions which lead to salvation, and make us worthy to love and to fear you with all our hearts and to do your will in everything. For you are a good and loving God, and we give glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

4. You are praised by the holy powers with hymns that are never silent and in doxologies that never cease. Fill our mouth with your praise that we may ascribe majesty to your holy name. Through the intercession of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints, give us a share and an inheritance with those who fear you in truth and who keep your commandments. For to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is due all glory, honor, and worship, now and ever and forever. Amen.

5. Blessed are you, Lord God almighty. You know the human mind, you know our needs long before we ask or recognize them. Therefore, O loving King, good in every way, allow us in your great mercy to call upon your holy name with a clear conscience,
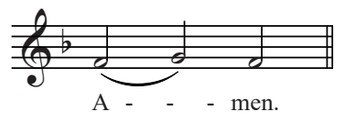


The Office of Vespers for Holy and Great Friday

Before the service, the burial shroud (plaščanitza) is placed on the holy table, underneath the Gospel book. The celebrant and deacon, in dark vestments, stand before the closed holy doors. The faithful STAND.
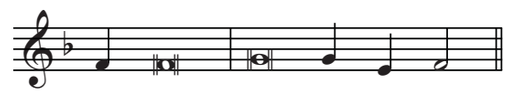
Deacon: Reverend Father, give the blessing!

Celebrant: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and forever.

Response:



Call to Worship



Come, let us worship our King and God.
Come, let us worship Christ, our King and God.
Come let us worship and bow before the only Lord Jesus Christ,
the King and ***our*** God.

Psalm 103

Bless the Lord, O my soul!
Lord my God, how great ***you*** are.

clothed in majesty and glory,
wrapped in light as in ***a*** robe

You stretch out the heavens like a tent.
Above the rains you build ***your*** dwelling.

You make the clouds your chariot,
you walk on the wings of ***the*** wind;

you make your angels spirits
and your ministers a flam***ing*** fire.

You founded the earth on its base,
to stand firm from age ***to*** age.

You wrapped it with the ocean like a cloak:
the waters stood higher than ***the*** mountains.

At your threat they took to flight;
at the voice of your thunder ***they*** fled.

They rose over the mountains and flowed down
to the place which you had ***ap***pointed.

You set limits they might not pass
lest they return to cover ***the*** earth.

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow in between ***the*** hills.

They give drink to all the beasts of the field;
the wild asses quench ***their*** thirst.

On their banks dwell the birds of heaven;
from the branches they sing ***their*** song.

From your dwelling you water the hills;
earth drinks its fill of ***your*** gift.

You make the grass grow for the cattle
and the plants to serve ***man's*** needs,

that he may bring forth bread from the earth
and wine to cheer ***man's*** heart;

oil, to make his face shine
and bread to strengthen ***man's*** heart.

Response: More honorable than the cherubim,
and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim,
who, a virgin, gave birth to God the Word,
you, truly the Theotokos, we mag***ni***fy.

Celebrant: Glory to you, O Christ God, our hope, glory to you!
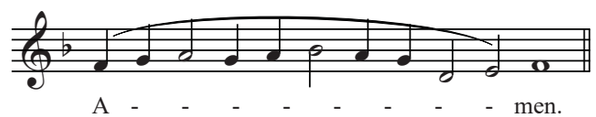
Response: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. ***A***men.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
Give ***the*** blessing.

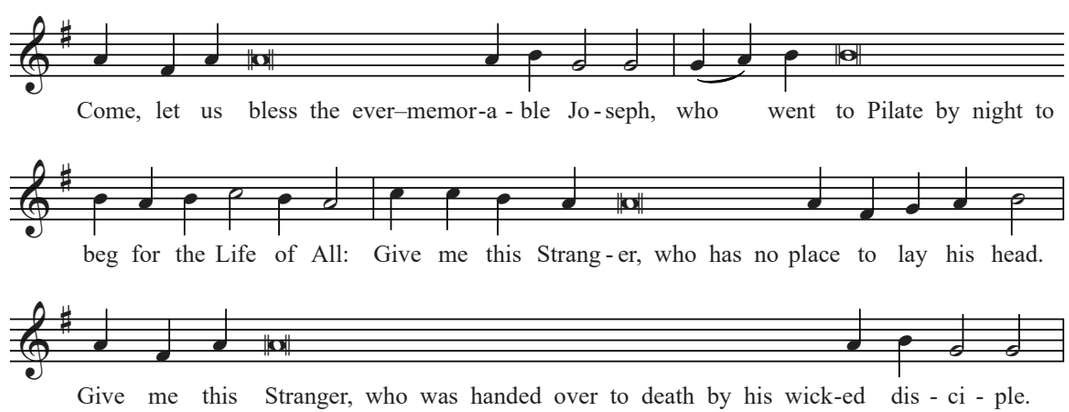
Celebrant: May Christ our true God, who endured dreadful sufferings, the life-giving cross, and voluntary burial for our salvation, have mercy on us and save us through the prayers of his most pure Mother, and through the prayers of all the saints; for Christ is good and loves us all.

-

Response:
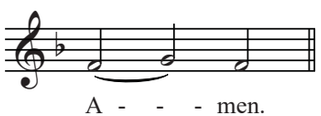


The faithful approach to venerate the burial shroud while the following is sung in Tone 5 samohlasen:



The celebrant or a concelebrant intones the Ambon Prayer of Holy and Great Friday:

Celebrant: Lord Jesus Christ our God, Savior of the world, you have made us worthy to reach this hour when, as God, you surrendered your divine soul as a ransom for the life of the world, and we will be saved from the tyranny of death and sin, as we serve you in newness of life. You cleansed us from sin by your own blood when you cried out in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Deliver us from every snare of the devil, grant compunction to our souls, and careful insight to our thoughts concerning your fearful and righteous judgment. Nail our bodies to fear of you, and put to death our earthly cares, that, rejecting all ungodliness and worldly desires, we may live in moderation, righteousness, and reverence. Do not turn your face away from us, but stretch out your hand in help, and raise us from our fall into sins. For you are our God, a God of mercy, salvation, and freedom from sins and we give glory to you, together with your eternal Father, and your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and forever.
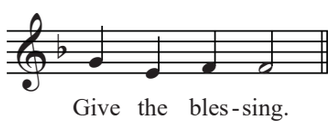
Response:



Dismissal

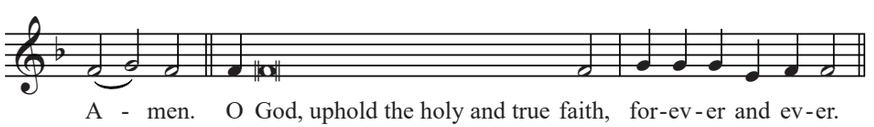
Deacon: Wisdom!

Response:



Celebrant: Blessed is Christ our God, the One-Who-Is, always, now and ever and forever.

Response:



Celebrant: O most holy Theotokos, save us!

The trees of the Lord drink their fill,
the cedars he planted ***on*** Lebanon;

there the birds build their nests;
on the treetop the stork has ***her*** home.

The goats find a home on the mountains
and rabbits hide in ***the*** rocks.

You made the moon to mark the months;
the sun knows the time for ***its*** setting.

When you spread the darkness it is night
and all the beasts of the forest ***creep*** forth.

The young lions roar for their prey
and ask their food ***from*** God.

At the rising of the sun they steal away
and go to rest in ***their*** dens.

Man goes out to his work,
to labor till eve***ning*** falls.

How many are your works, O Lord!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of ***your*** riches.

There is the sea, vast and wide,
with its moving swarms past counting,
living things great ***and*** small.

The ships are moving there,
and the monsters you made ***to*** play with.

All of these look to you
to give them their food in ***due*** season.

You give it, they gather it up;
you open your hand, they have ***their*** fill.

You hide your face, they are dismayed;
you take back your spirit, they die,
returning to the dust from which ***they*** came.

You send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of ***the*** earth.

May the glory of the Lord last forever!
May the Lord rejoice in ***his*** works!

He looks on the earth and it trembles;
the mountains send forth smoke at ***his*** touch.

I will sing to the Lord all my life,
make music to my God while ***I*** live.

May my thoughts be pleasing to him.
I find my joy in ***the*** Lord.

Let sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked exist no more.
Bless the Lord, O ***my*** soul.

And again:

You made the moon to mark the months;
the sun knows the time for ***its*** setting.

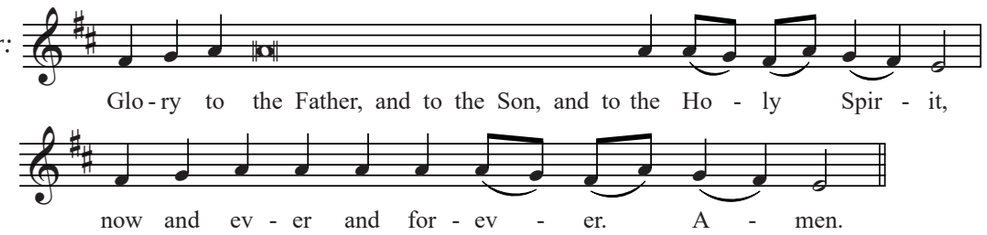
How many are your works, O Lord!
In wisdom you have made ***them*** all.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. ***A***men.

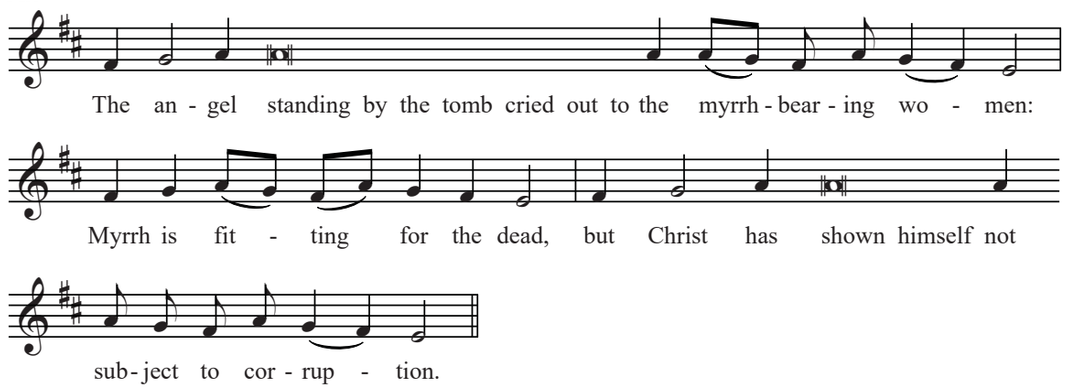
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glory to you, ***O*** God! *(twice)*

At the end of the procession, the shroud is placed in the tomb as the following troparion is sung in Tone 2:

Cantor:
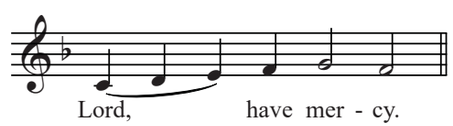


All:



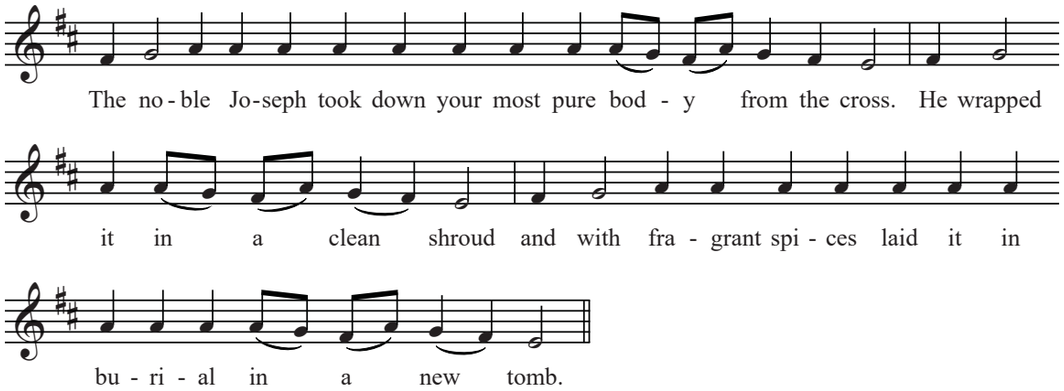
The celebrant again, with the deacon standing opposite the tomb holding a large candle, incenses the shroud three times from the four sides of the tomb. The concelebrants stand in two files to the right and left of the tomb, facing one another. They stand far enough away from the tomb to allow the circumambulation by the celebrant and the deacon.

Deacon: Let us pray to the Lord.
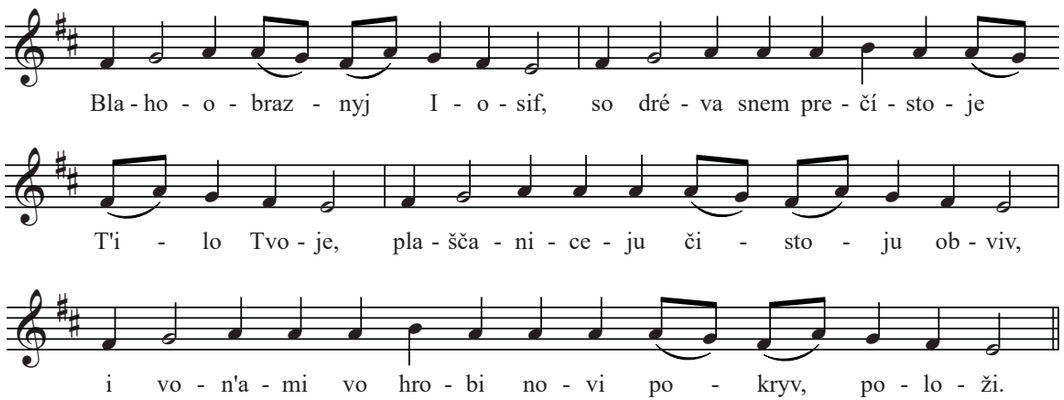
Response:



During the procession, the Troparion of Holy and Great Friday in Tone 2 is sung repeatedly by the faithful:
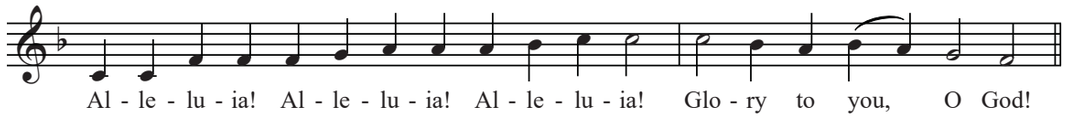


The same troparion, in Church Slavonic:



Outside the sanctuary, the procession moves down the northern side of the church to the doors of the nave. The faithful may join in the procession by following the clergy and the shroud.

From the doors of the nave, the procession continues to the tomb. It may go outside and circle the church once or three times in a counter-clockwise direction.

And the third time, with melody:
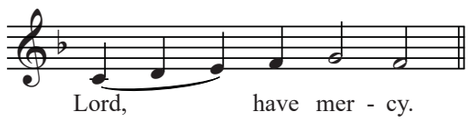


Litany of Peace

The faithful may SIT as the Litany of Peace begins:
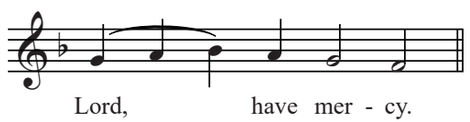
Deacon: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Response:



Deacon: For peace from on high and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

Response:



Deacon: For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy Churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For this holy church and for all who enter it with faith, reverence, and fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: For our holy father *(Name)*, pope of Rome, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For our most reverend Metropolitan *(Name)*, for our God-loving Bishop *(Name)*, for the venerable presbyterate, the diaconate in Christ, and all the clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: For our government and for all in the service of our country, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For this city, [*or:* For this holy monastery], for every city, community, and for the faithful living in them, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Deacon: For favorable weather, for an abundance of the fruits of the earth, and for peaceful times, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: For those who travel by sea, air, and land, for the sick, the suffering, the captive and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Special petitions may be inserted here.

Deacon: That we be delivered from all affliction, wrath, and need, let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (1)

Deacon: Protect us, save us, have mercy on us, and preserve us, O God, by your grace.

Response: Lord, have mercy. (2)

Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us;
Lord, cleanse us of our sins;
Master, forgive our transgressions,
Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities for ***your*** name's sake.
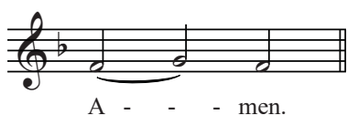
Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.
Lord, ***have*** mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. ***A***men.

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*** evil.

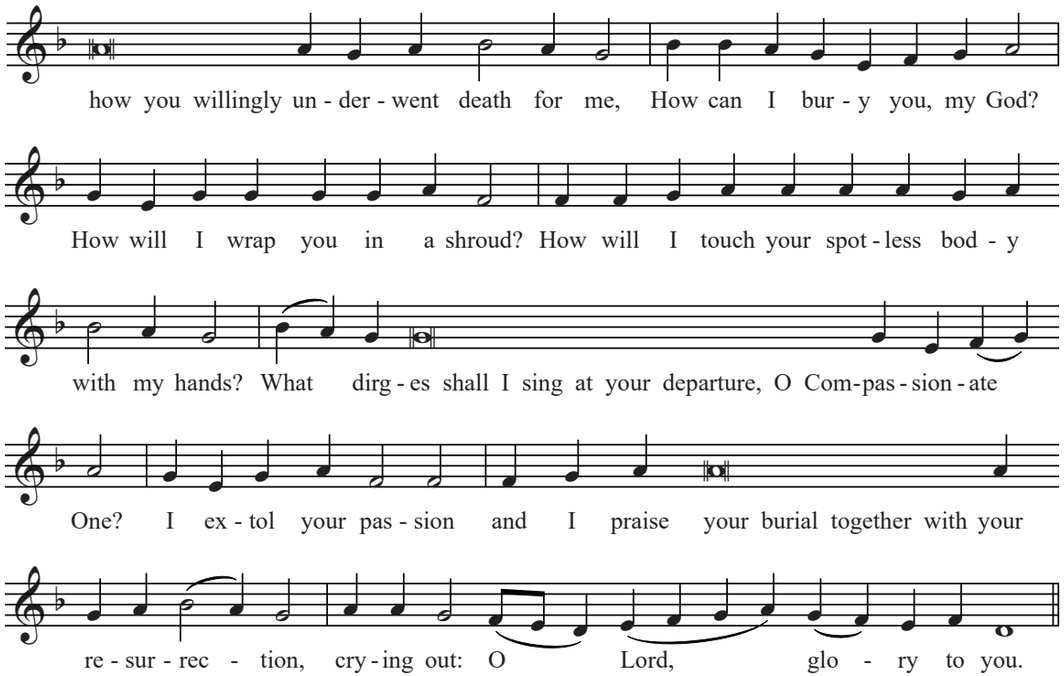
Celebrant: For thine is the kingdom and the power and glory,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response:



In preparation for the procession, the clergy and servers prostrate before the shroud three times. The celebrant takes the shroud on his shoulders, so that the head of Christ in the image is at the top. If there are concelebrants, all the priests hold an edge of the shroud.

The shroud-bearers are preceded by the deacon who incenses while walking backwards. The clergy are preceded by the candle-bearers and other servers. The cross-bearer leads the procession which passes to the right and back of the holy table, and leaves the sanctuary through the northern door.



The Prayer of the Holy Simeon the God-Bearer
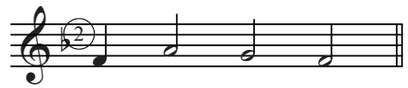
Now you may dismiss your servant, O Lord,
in peace according to ***your*** word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
which you have prepared before the face of ***all*** people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your peo***ple*** Israel.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal,
have mercy ***on*** us. *(3 times)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. ***A***men.
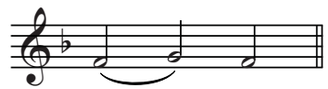
Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

Response:



Celebrant: Evening, morning, and at noon we praise you, we bless you, we thank you, and we pray to you, Master of All and loving Lord. Let our prayer rise like incense before you and do not let our hearts be turned to evil words or thoughts, but deliver us from all that might ensnare our souls. For to you Lord, O Lord, our eyes are turned and in you we hope; let us not be put to shame, O our God. For to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is due all glory, honor, and worship now and ever and forever.

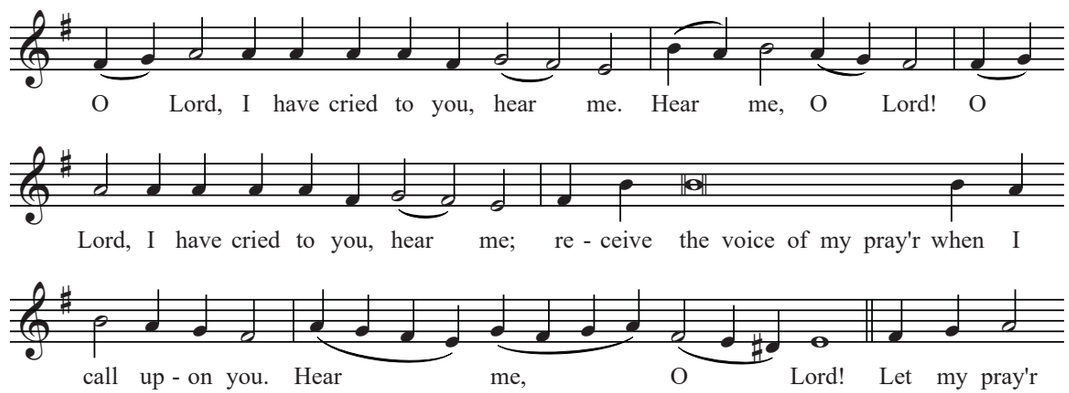
Response:

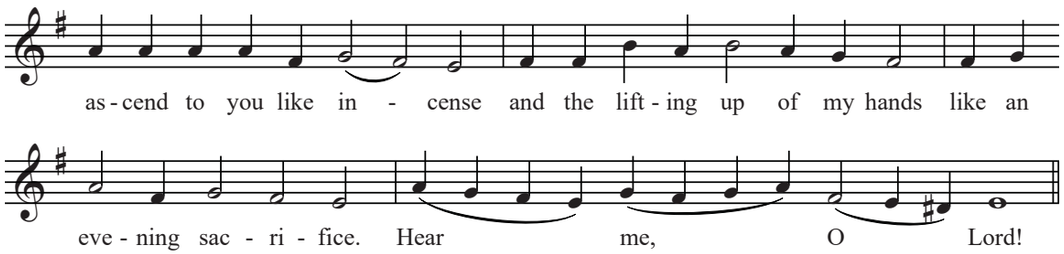


The Lamp-lighting Psalms

The faithful STAND for the great incensation of the church. They may SIT when the great incensation is complete.

Psalm 140 - *Tone 1 samohlasen*





O Lord, set a guard before my mouth
and set a seal on the door of ***my*** lips.

Let not my heart be inclined to evil,
nor make excuse for the sins I ***com***mit.

Let me never share in sinners' feasting.
If a just man strikes or reproves me it ***is*** kindness

but let the oil of the wicked not anoint my head.
Let my prayer be ever against ***their*** malice.

The princes were thrown down by the side of the rock;
then they understood that my words ***were*** kind.

As a millstone is shattered to pieces on the ground,
so their bones were strewn at the mouth of ***the*** grave.

To you, Lord God, my eyes are turned;
in you I take refuge; spare ***my*** soul!

From the trap they have laid for me keep me safe;
keep me from the snares of those who ***do*** evil.

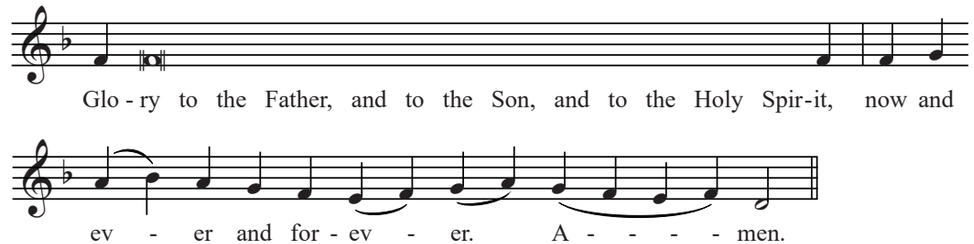
Let the wicked fall into the traps they have set
while I pursue my way ***un***harmed.

Psalm 141 With all my voice I cry to the Lord,
with all my voice I entreat ***the*** Lord.
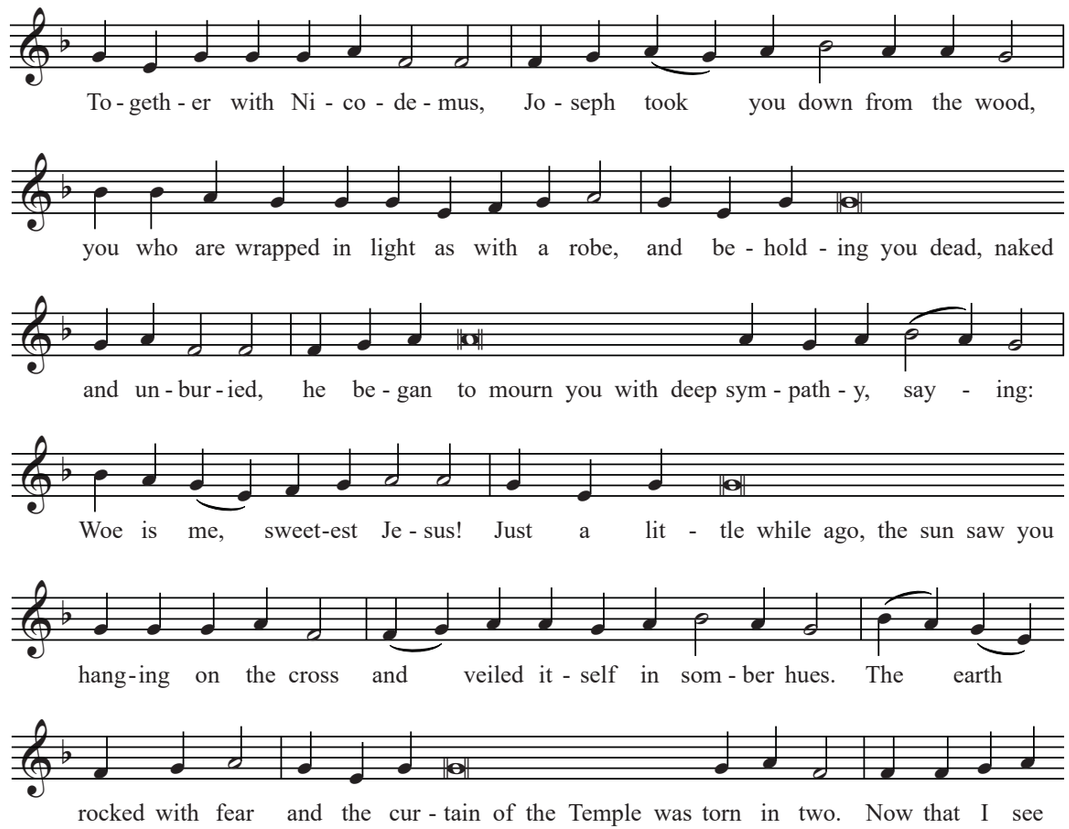
*When the "**Glory... now and ever...**" is sung, the celebrant incenses the shroud three times from the four sides of the holy table. The deacon also goes around the altar, standing opposite the celebrant and holding a large candle.*
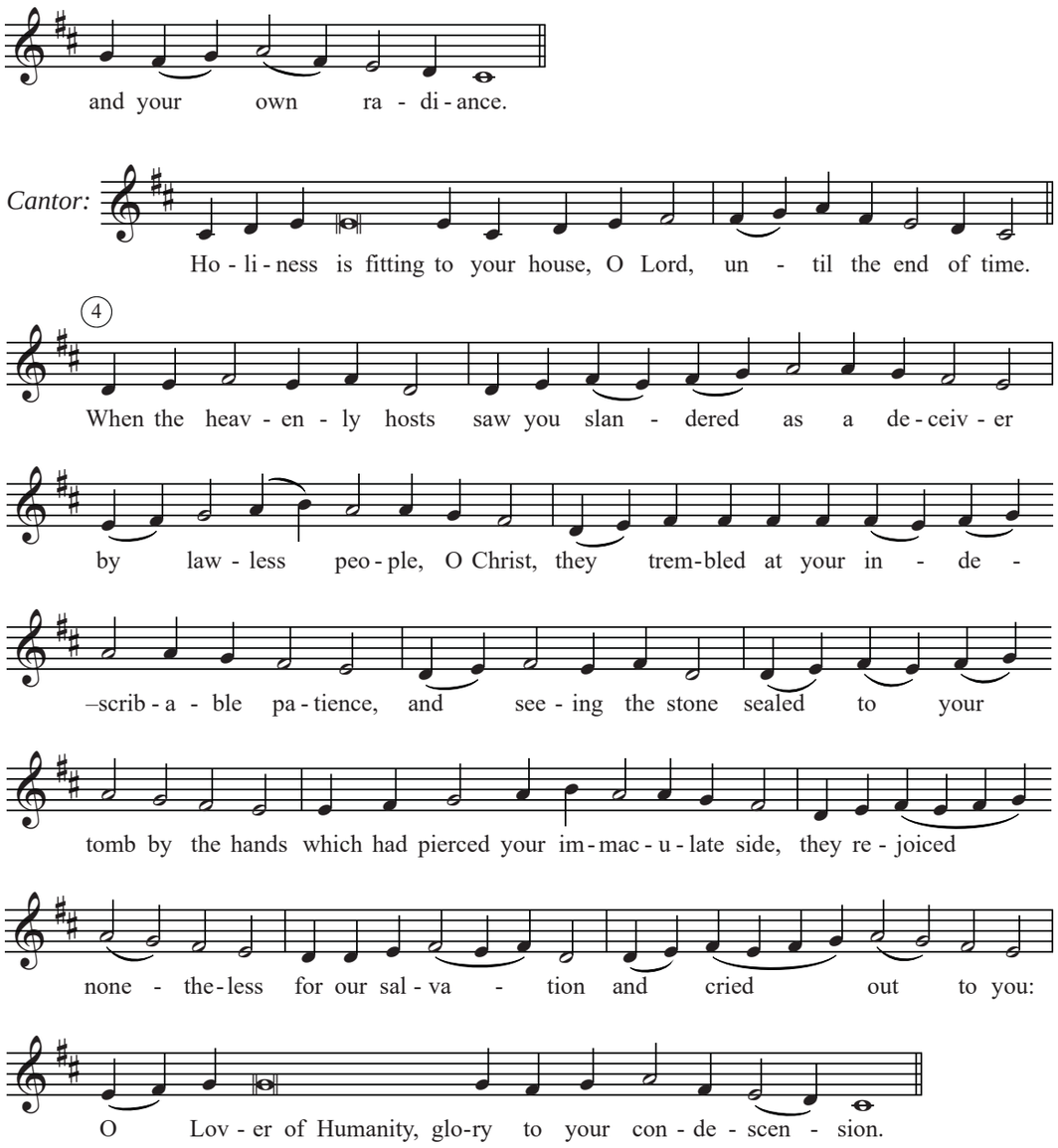
Tone 5 samohlasen

Cantor:



All:





The faithful STAND.

I pour out my trouble before him;
I tell him all my distress while my spirit faints ***with***in me.

But you, O Lord, know my path.
On the way where I shall walk they have hidden a snare to ***en***trap me.

Look on my right and see:
there is no one who takes ***my*** part.

I have no means of escape,
not one who cares for ***my*** soul.

I cry to you, O Lord.
I have said: "You are my refuge, all I have in the land of ***the*** living."

Listen, then, to my cry
for I am in the depths of ***dis***tress.

Rescue me from those who pursue me
for they are stronger ***than*** I.

Bring my soul out of this prison
and then I shall praise ***your*** name.

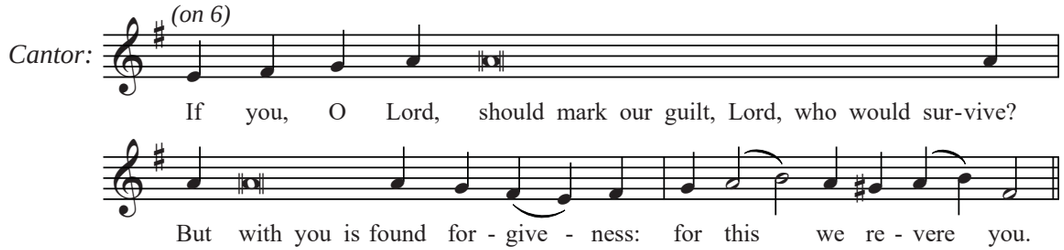
Around me the just will assemble
because of your goodness ***to*** me.

Psalm 129

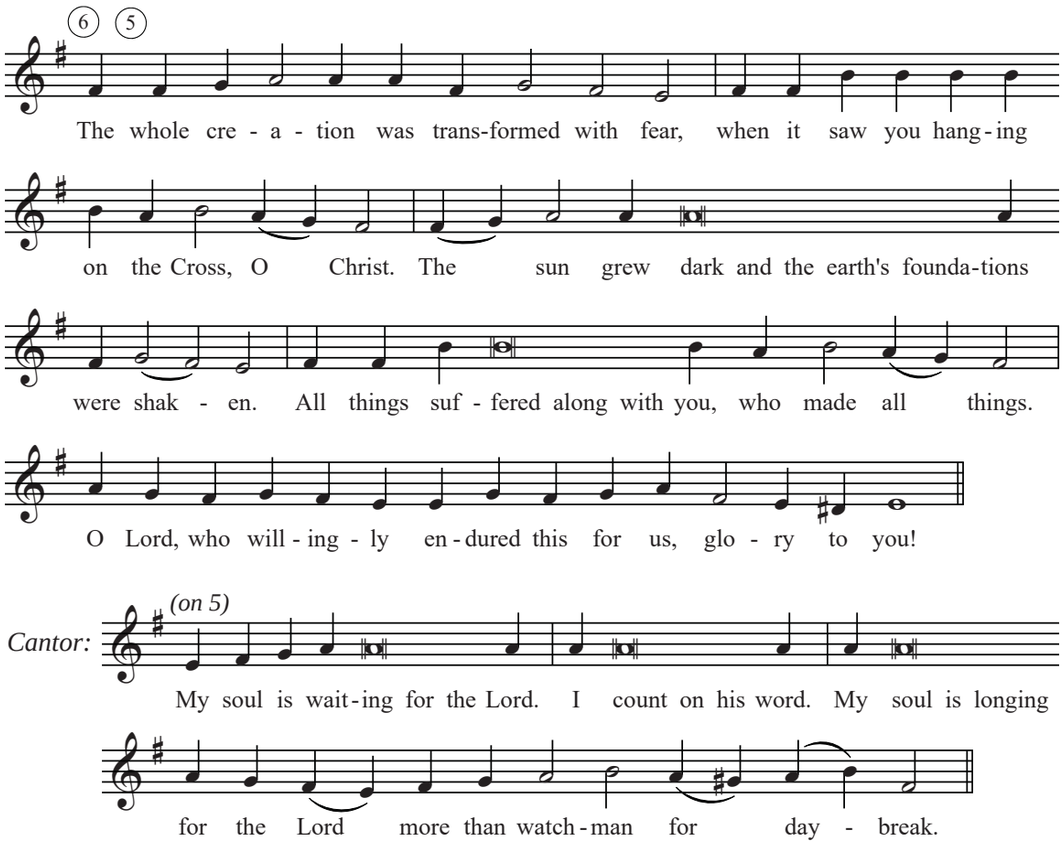
Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear ***my*** voice!

Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of ***my*** pleading.
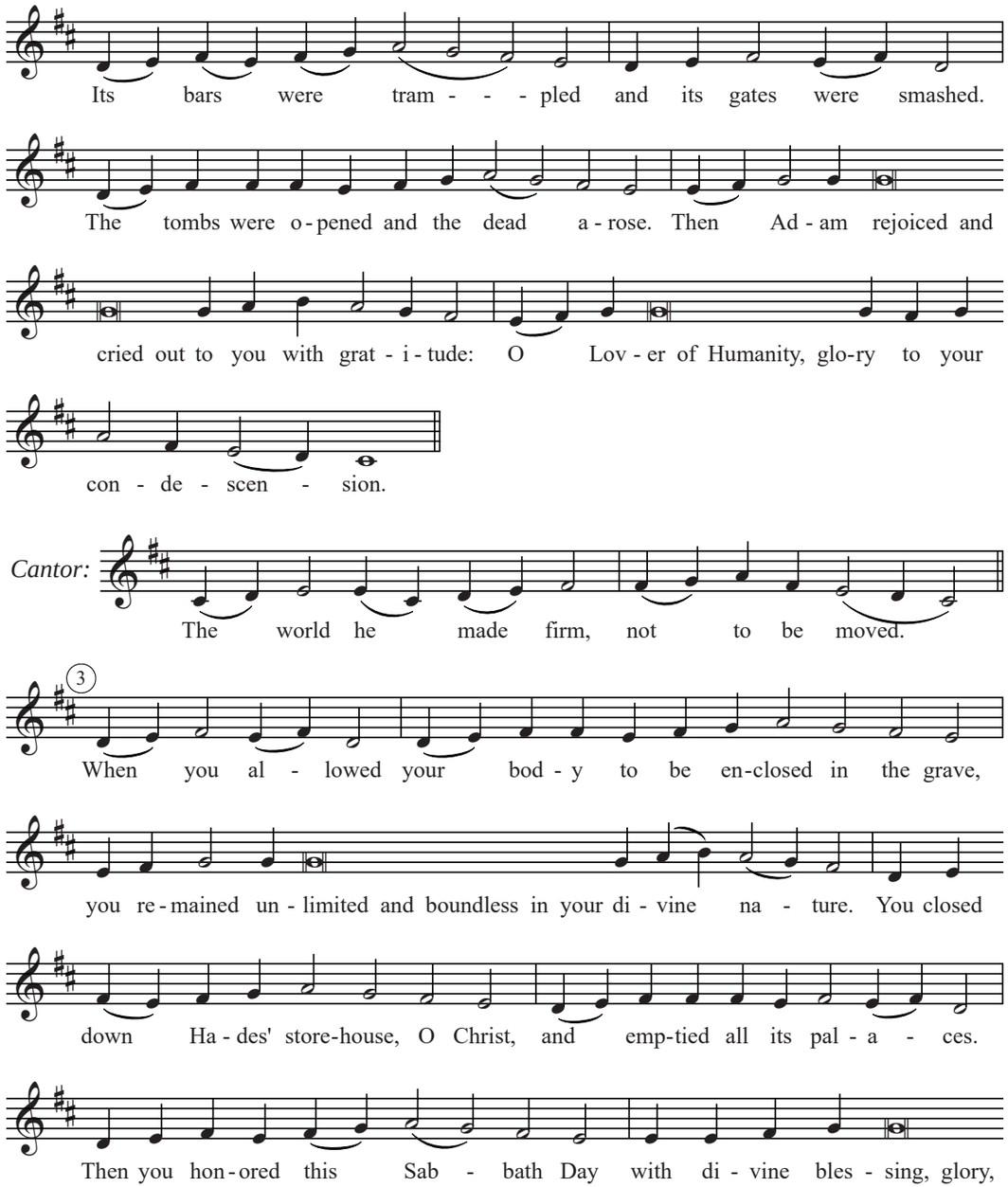
Then the hymns (stichera) of Holy and Great Friday are sung.



Stichera of Holy and Great Friday - *Tone 1 samohlasen*
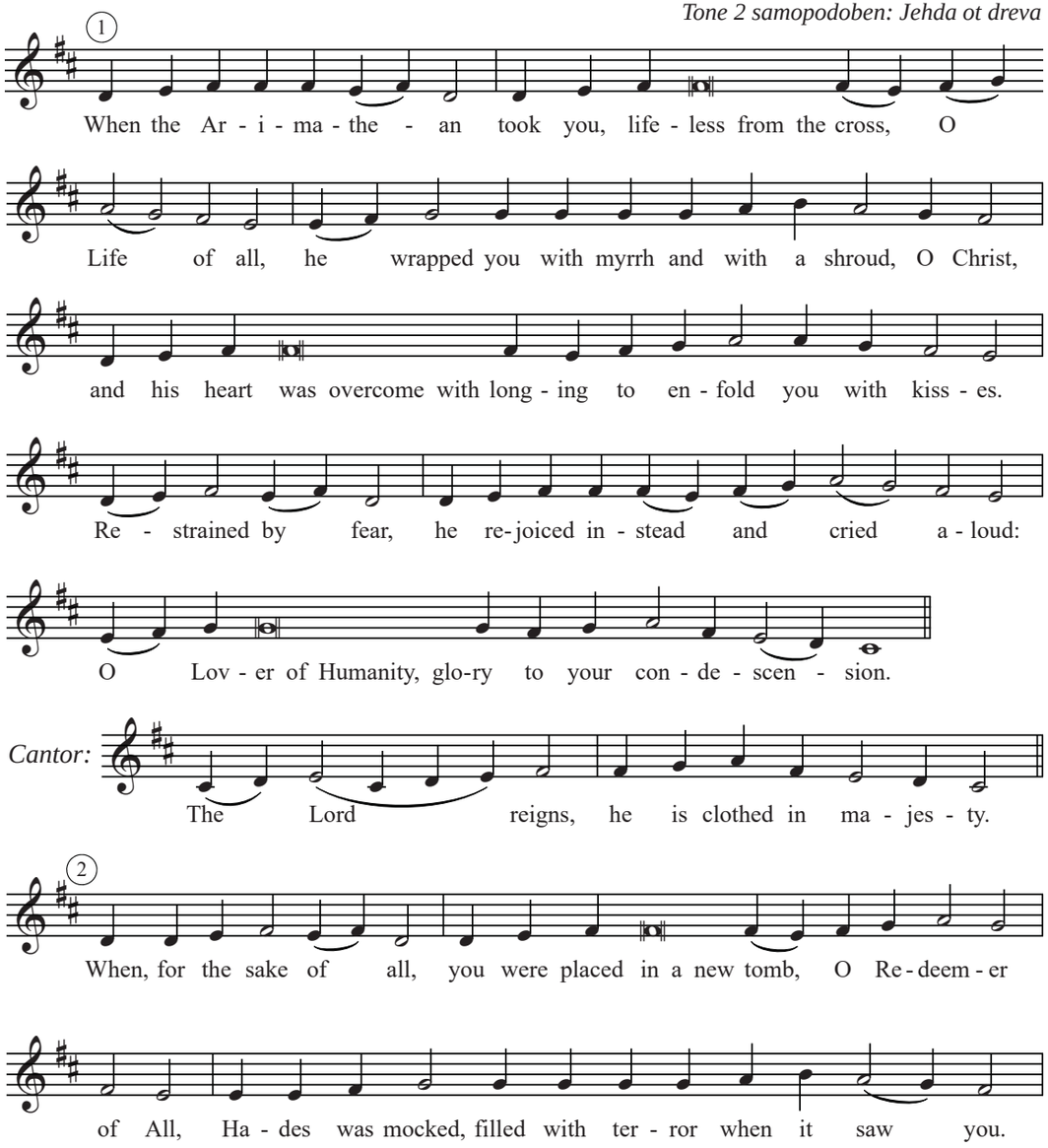


The faithful repeat, "The whole creation was transformed with fear..."
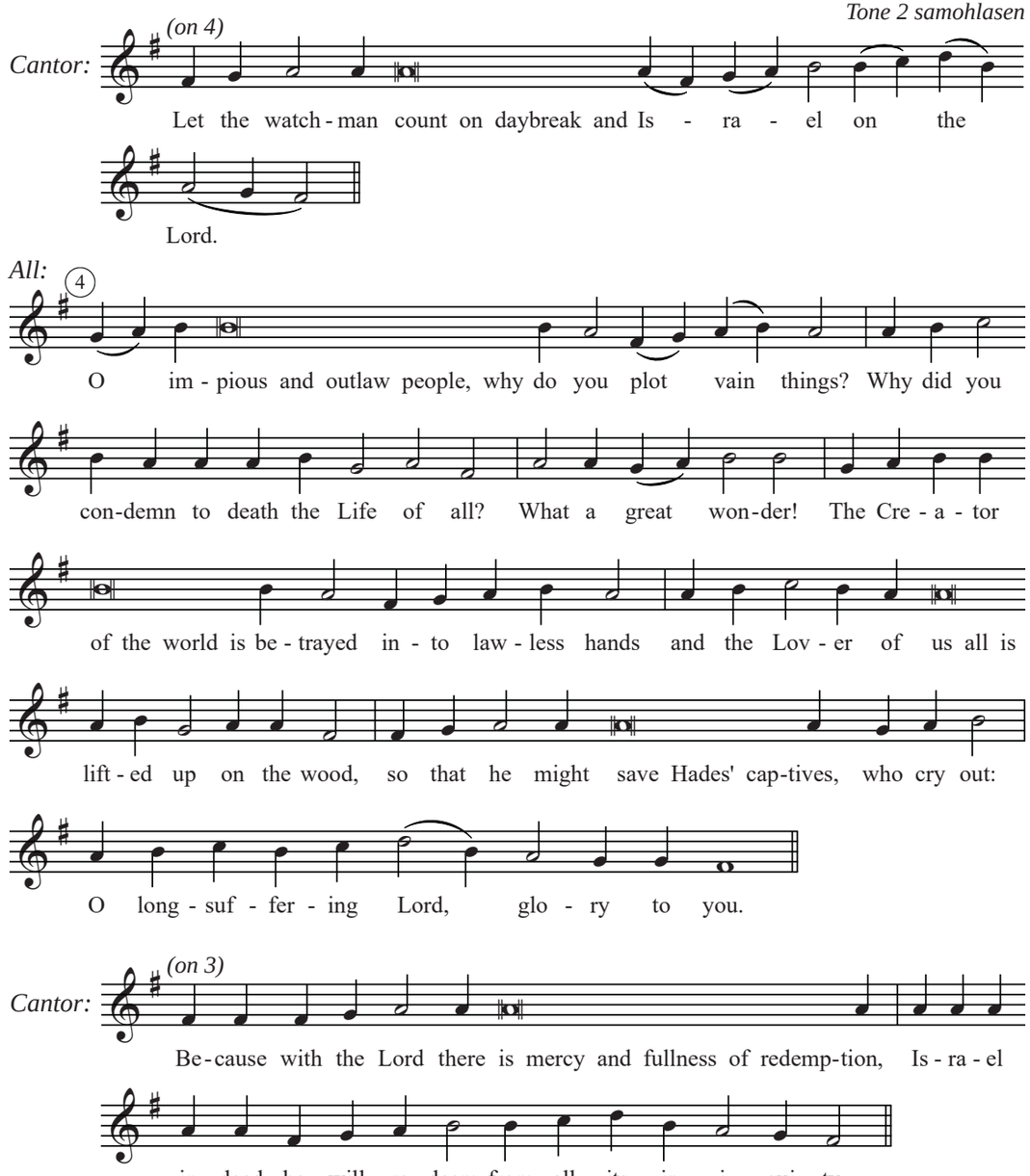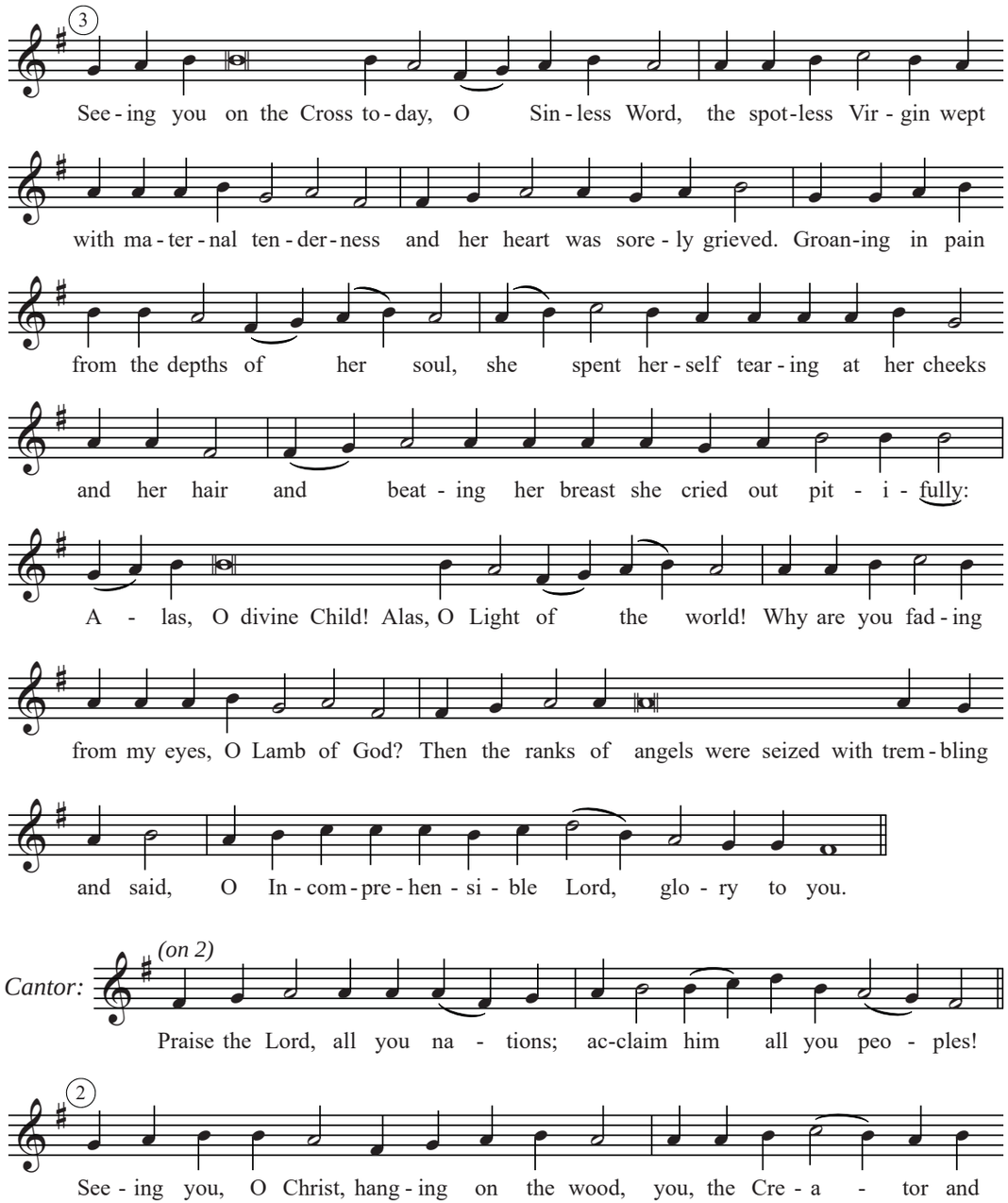


Aposticha

Tone 2 samopodoben: Jehda ot dreva
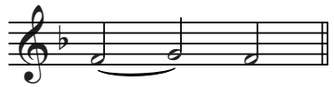


Tone 2 samohlasen
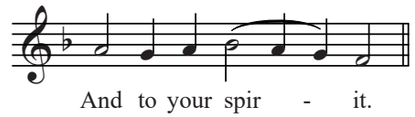




For you are a good and loving God, and we give glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response:
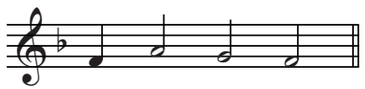


Celebrant: Peace be to all!

Response:
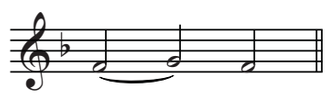


Deacon: Bow your heads to the Lord!

Response:



Celebrant: Lord our God, you bowed the heavens and came down for the salvation of the human race. Look upon your servants and upon your inheritance, for they have bowed their heads and bent their necks to you, the awesome judge who love us all. They do not expect human help, but await your mercy and long for your salvation. Protect them at all times, this evening and tonight, from every enemy, from all the devil's assaults, from vain thoughts, and evil imaginings. May the might of your kingdom be blessed and glorified, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response:



While the faithful sing the aposticha, the clergy enter the sanctuary, where they vest for the procession. The celebrant vests fully; concelebrants vest in epitrachilion and phelonion.

The faithful may SIT for the singing of the aposticha.

Deacon: That we may spend the rest of our life in peace and repentance, let us beseech the Lord.

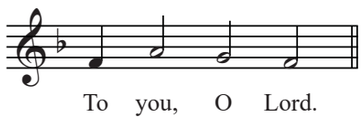
Response: Grant this, O Lord. (3)

Deacon: For a Christian, painless, unashamed, peaceful end of our life, and for a good account before the fearsome judgment-seat of Christ, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: Grant this, O Lord. (4)

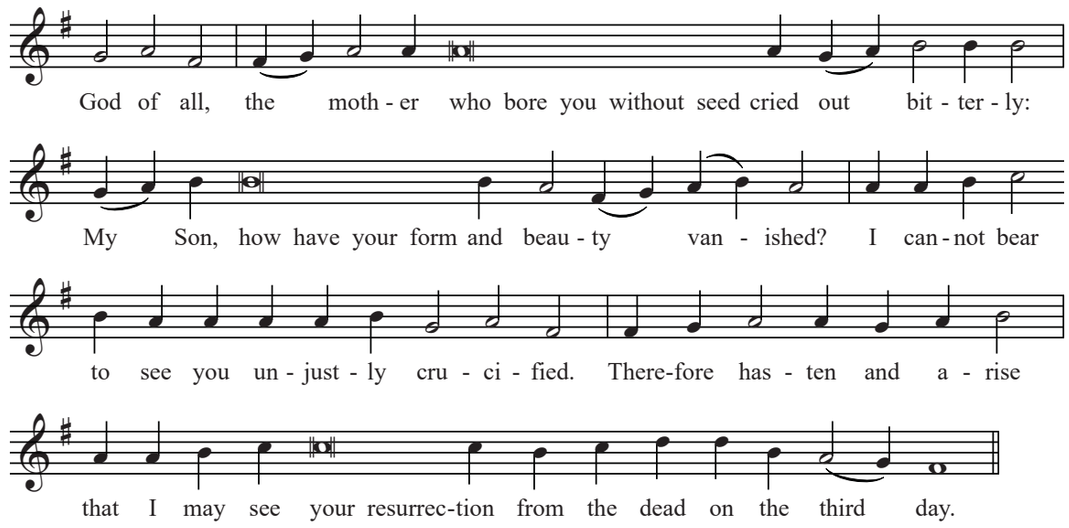
Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady, the Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary with all the Saints, let us commit ourselves and one another, and our whole life to Christ our God.

Response:

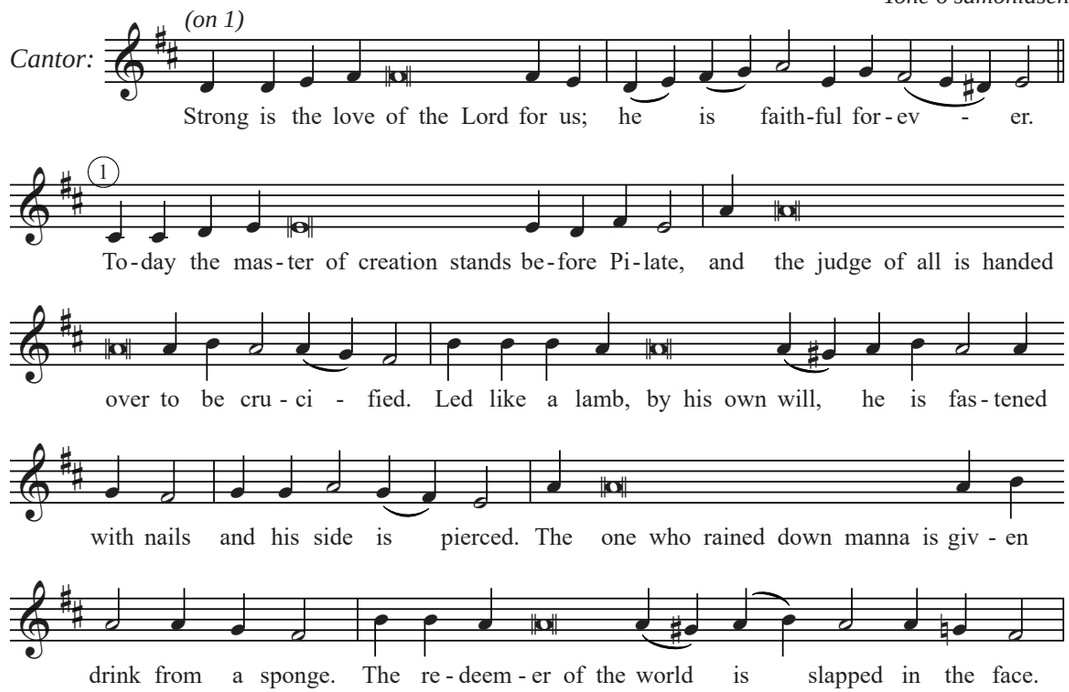


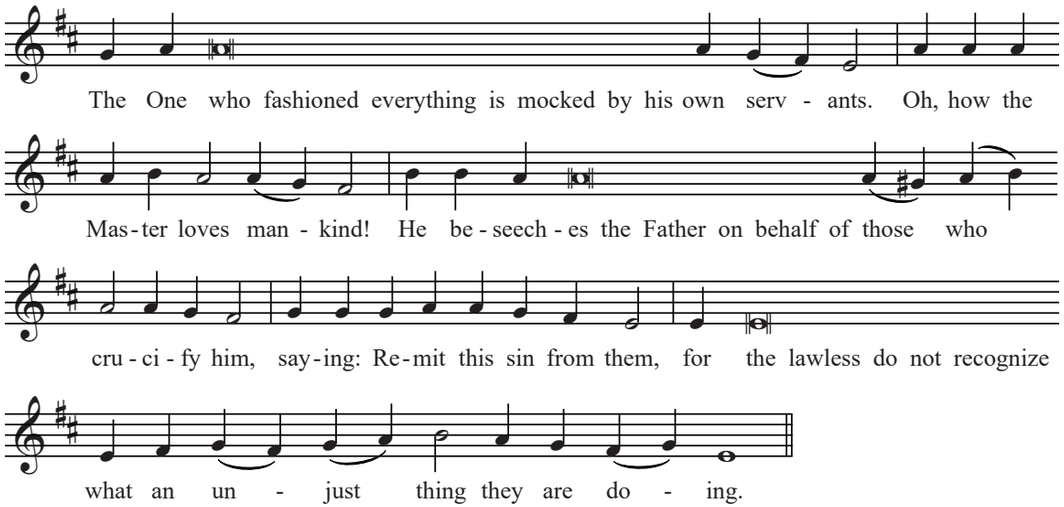
The faithful STAND.

Celebrant: Great and most high God, you alone possess immortality and dwell in unapproachable light. You made all creation with wisdom, dividing light from darkness, establishing the sun to rule the day and the moon and stars to rule the night. You have allowed us sinners to approach your presence with thanksgiving in this present hour and to offer you evening praise. O loving Lord, make our prayer ascend to you like incense and accept it as a sweet fragrance. Grant that we may spend the present evening and the coming night in peace; clothe us with the armor of light; deliver us from the fears of the night and from everything that lurks about in darkness. Grant that the sleep you have given us to refresh our fatigue may be free from all illusions of the devil. Yes, O Master of All, Giver of good things, let us feel contrition as we lie on our beds remembering your name throughout the night. Enlightened by meditation on your commands, may we rise with gladdened soul to give glory to your goodness, offering to your compassion prayers and supplications for our sins and those of all your people. Visit us with mercy through the intercession of the holy Theotokos.

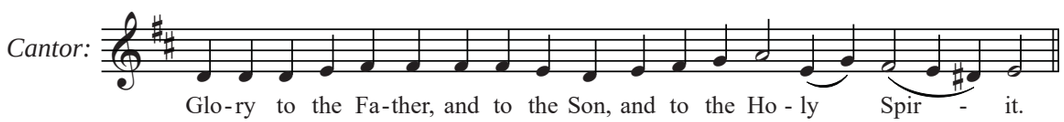


Tone 6 samohlasen

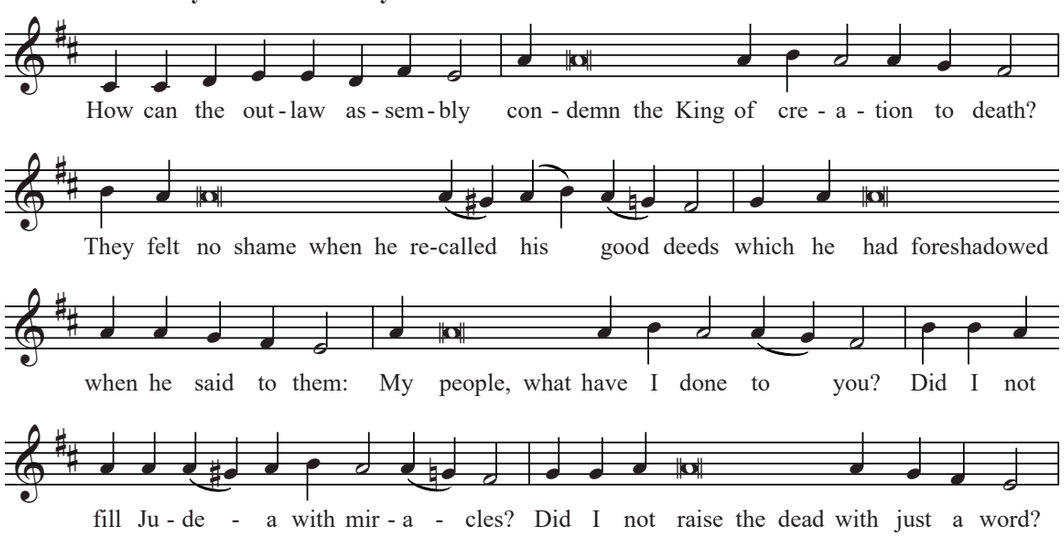




The faithful STAND when the holy doors are opened and the cantor sings:



Doxastikon of Holy and Great Friday - *Tone 6 samohlasen*
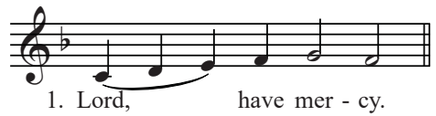


Litany of Supplication

The deacon says the following litany at the ambon. If there is no deacon, the celebrant intones this litany at the holy doors. The faithful may SIT for the litany.
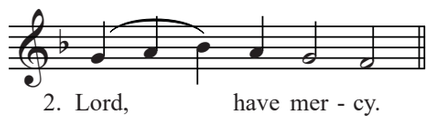
Deacon: Let us complete our evening prayer to the Lord.

Response:



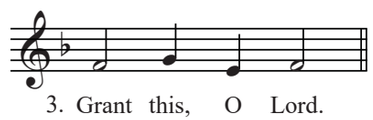
Deacon: Protect us, save us, have mercy on us, and preserve us, O God, by your grace.

Response:



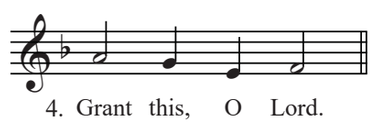
Deacon: That this whole evening be perfect, holy, peaceful, and without sin, let us beseech the Lord.

Response:



Deacon: For an angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us beseech the Lord.

Response:



Deacon: For the pardon and remission of our sins and offenses, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: Grant this, O Lord. (3)

Deacon: For what is good and beneficial to our souls and for peace in the world, let us beseech the Lord.

Response: Grant this, O Lord (4)

Celebrant: For you are a merciful and loving God, and we give glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response:



The faithful STAND following the Litany of Fervent Supplication.

Hymn of Glorification

All: Make us worthy, O Lord,
to be kept sinless ***this*** evening.

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers,
and praiseworthy and glorious is your name for ever. ***A***men.

May your mercy, O Lord, be upon us
who have placed our hope ***in*** you.

Blessed are you O Lord;
teach me your ***com***mandments. *(bow)*
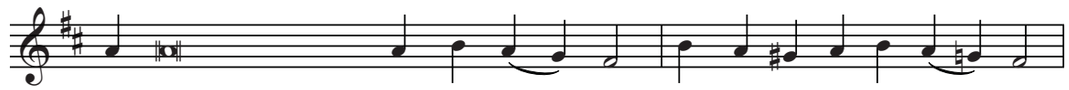
Blessed are you, O Master;
make me understand your ***com***mandments. *(bow)*
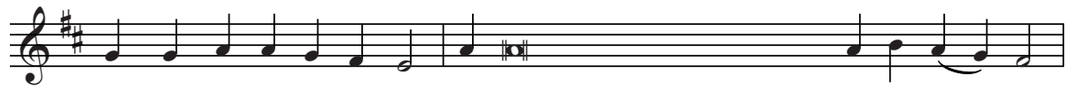
Blessed are you, O Holy One;
enlighten me with your ***com***mandments. *(bow)*
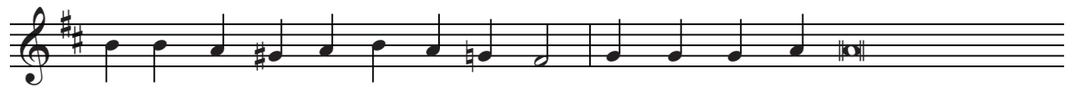
O Lord, your mercy is forever;
despise not the work of ***your*** hands.

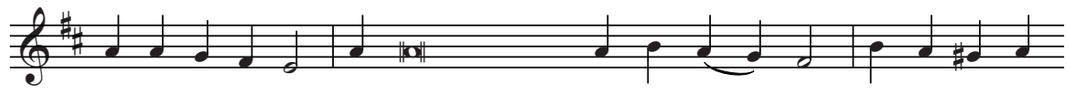
To you is due praise;
to you is due ***a*** hymn;

to you is glory due, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
now and ever and forever. ***A***men.
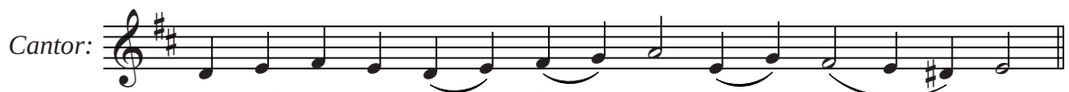




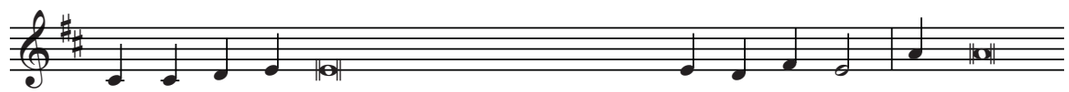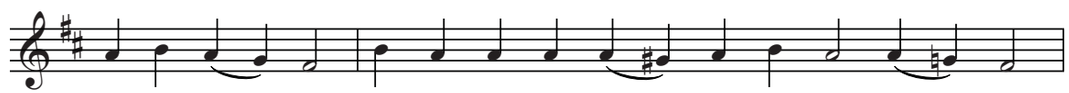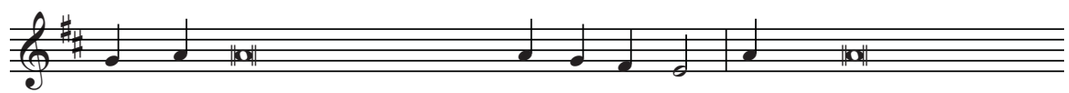






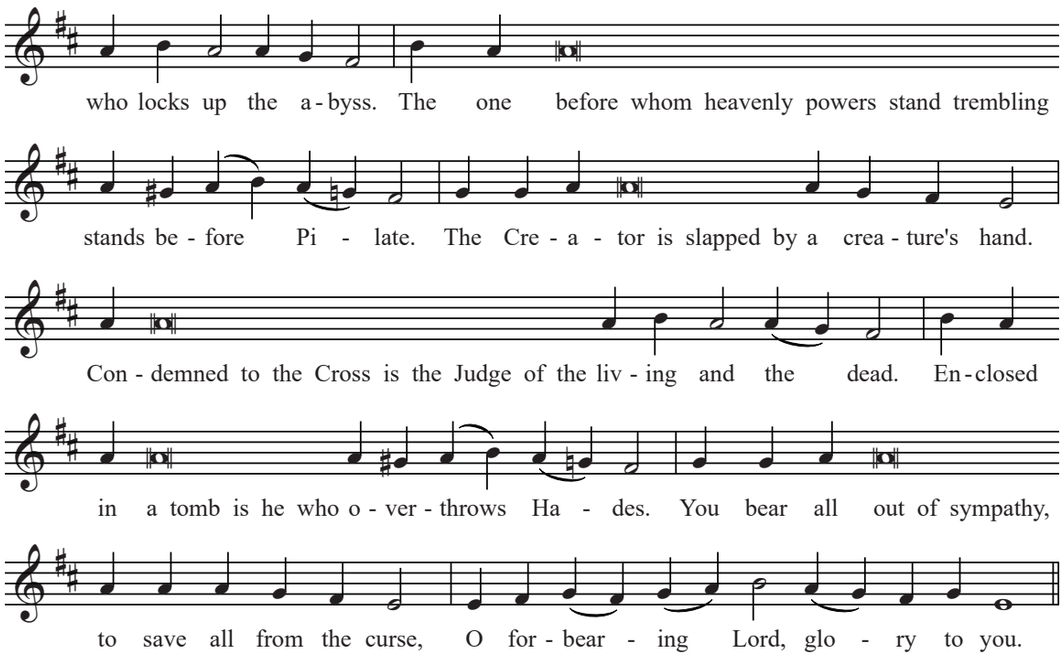


All:





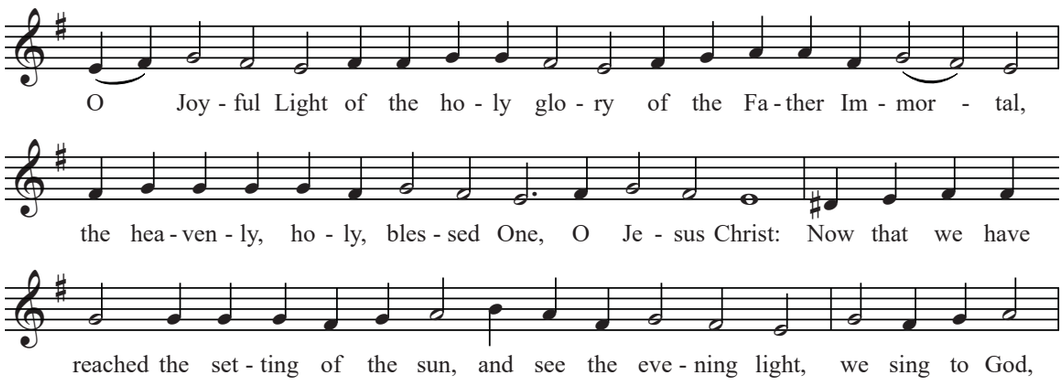




The Hymn of the Evening
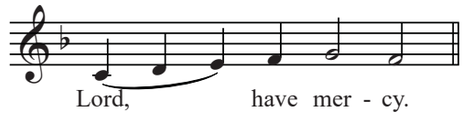
Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

The clergy and servers enter the sanctuary as "O Joyful Light" is sung.
The sanctuary and the faithful are incensed.
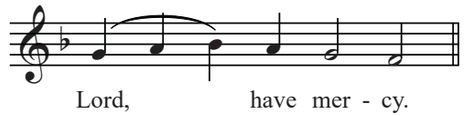


Deacon: Let us all say with our whole soul and with our whole mind, let us say:

Response:



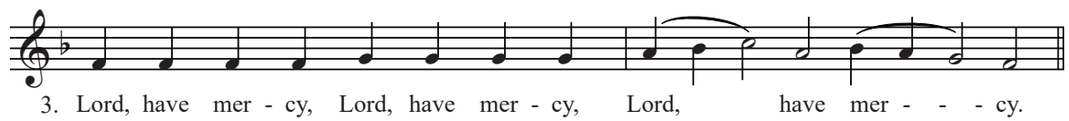
Deacon: O Lord Almighty, God of our Fathers, we pray you, hear and have mercy.

Response:
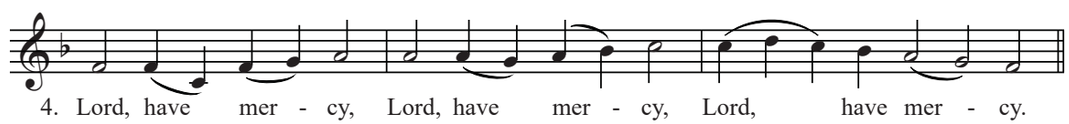


Deacon: Have mercy on us, O God, according to your great mercy,
we pray you, hear and have mercy.

Response:



Deacon: Again we pray for our holy father, *(Name)*, pope of Rome, and for our most reverend metropolitan, *(Name)*, for our God-loving bishop, *(Name)*, for those who serve and have served in this holy church, for our spiritual fathers, and for all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Response:



Deacon: Again we pray for our government and for all in the service of our country.
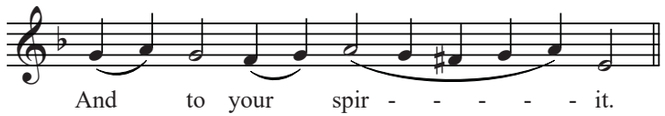
Response: Lord, have mercy. *(three times, using response 4.)*

Deacon: Again we pray for the people here present who await your great and abundant mercy, for those who show us mercy, and for all Christians of the true faith.

Response: Lord, have mercy. *(three times, using response 3.)*

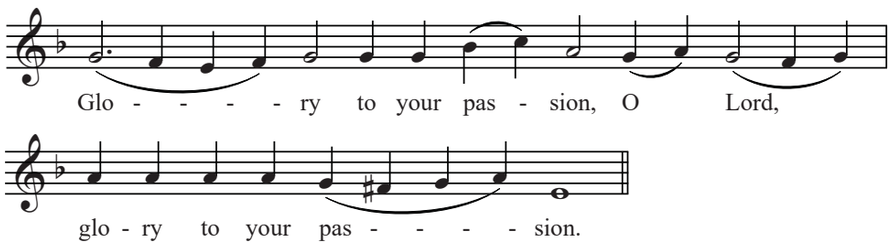
Celebrant: Wisdom! Let us stand and listen to the holy Gospel. Peace be to all!

Response:



Deacon: A reading of the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Response:
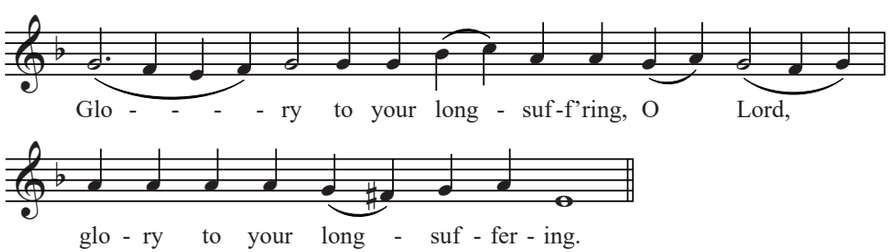


Deacon: Let us be attentive!

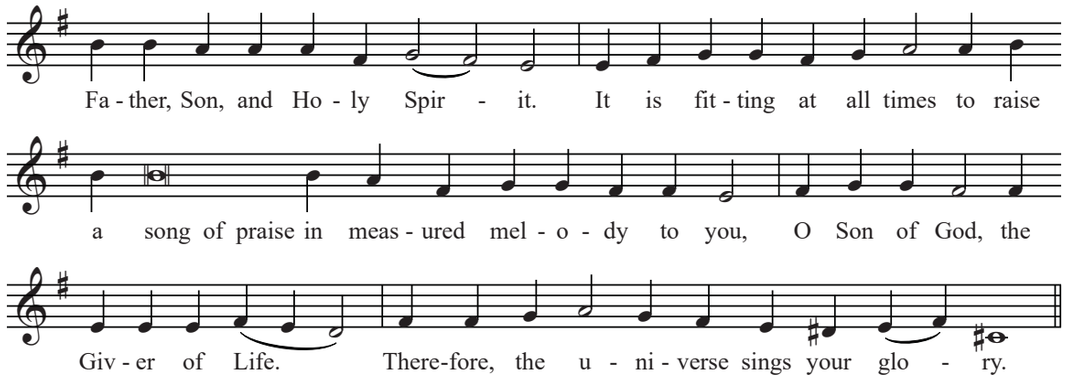
Deacon: [Matthew 27:1-38; Luke 23:39-44; Matthew 27:39-54; John 19: 31-37; Matthew 27:55-61]

When the Gospel reading is concluded, the faithful sing:

Response:



*The faithful **SIT** during the homily*
and may also sit during the Litany of Fervent Supplication which follows.



Old Testament Readings
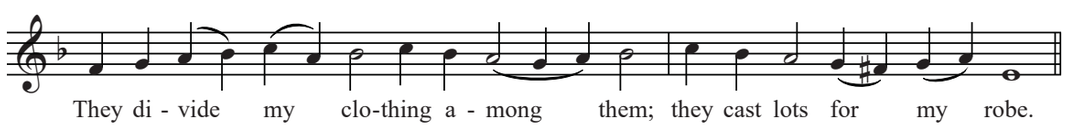
Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Celebrant: Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

The faithful sing the PROKEIMENON. The deacon chants the verse.

Prokeimenon - *Tone 4* (Psalm 21:19,2)



Deacon: My God, my God, hear me; why have you forsaken me?

The first two Old Testament readings may be omitted.

Deacon: Wisdom!

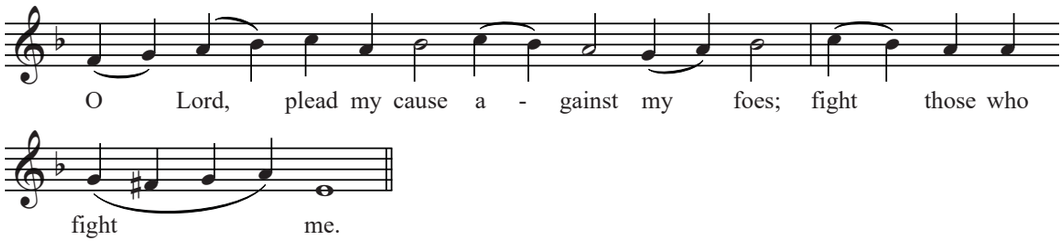
Lector: A reading from Exodus.

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Reader: [Exodus 33:11-23]

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - *Tone 4* (Psalm 34:1,12)



Deacon: Take up your buckler and shield; arise to help me.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the Book of Job.

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Lector: [Job 42:12-17]

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Lector: [Isaiah 52:13 – 54:1] (EOT 292)

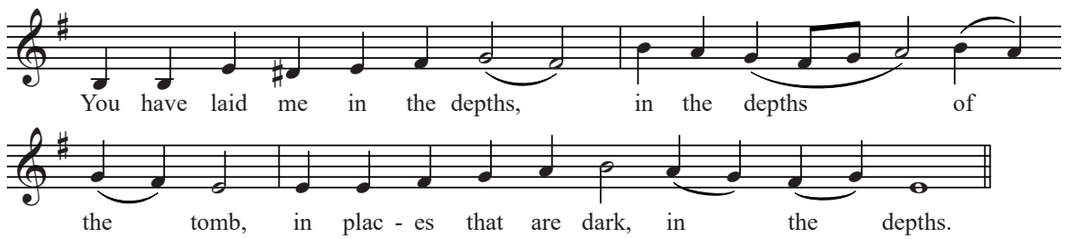
New Testament Readings

Deacon: Let us be attentive!

Celebrant: Peace be to all!

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

Prokeimenon - *Tone 6* (Psalm 87:7, 2)



Verse: Lord God of my salvation, I call for help day by day, I cry at night before you.

Deacon: Wisdom!

Lector: A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians.

Deacon: Let us be attentive.

The faithful may SIT for the reading.

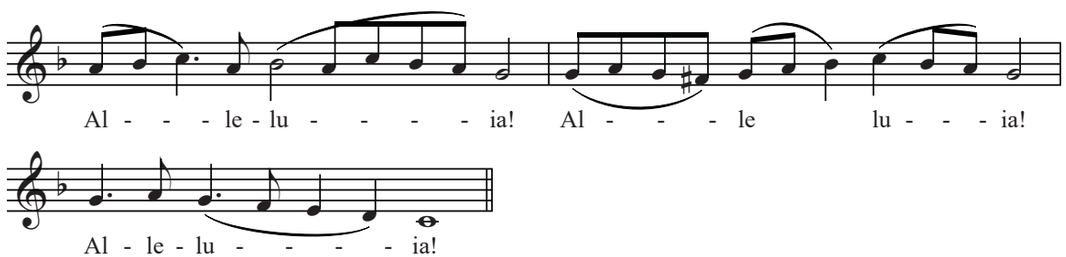
Lector: [1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:2] (EOT 201)

Celebrant: Peace be to you, reader(s).

Deacon: Wisdom! Be attentive!

The faithful STAND.

Alleluia - *Tone 1* (Psalm 68: 2, 22, 24)



Verse: Save me, O God, for the waters have risen to my neck.
Verse: Taunts have broken my heart; I have reached the end of my strength.
Verse: Let their eyes grow dim and blind.