

## Vespers

“each evening Jesus went out to spend the night  
on the hill called the Mount of Olives”  
(Luke 21.37)

### **Narrator:**

Vespers is an ancient spiritual practice during which followers of Christ come together in the evening for a time of reflection through readings and hymns. Traditionally, this divine office of prayer begins with the following versicles (little verses).

### **Cantor:**

O God, come to my assistance.  
*(Deus, in adiutorium meum intende.)*

O Lord, make haste to help me.  
*(Domine, ad adiuvandum me festina).*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
*(Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto).*

As it was in the beginning,  
*(Sicut erat in principio),*  
both now and ever,  
*(et nunc et semper)*  
and unto ages of ages  
*(et in saecula saeculorum).*

**All:** Amen

### **Narrator:**

At least two psalms and a New Testament canticle are usually sung and are preceded and followed by an antiphon. Also, the Gloria Patri is sung after each psalm and the canticle. The Proemial (introductory) Psalm is often Psalm 103.

## The First Psalm

### Everyone Reads the Antiphon:

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise God's holy name.

### Cantor:

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, O my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise God's holy name.

<sup>2</sup> Praise the LORD, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits-

<sup>3</sup> who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,

<sup>4</sup> who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,

<sup>5</sup> who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.

<sup>7</sup> He made known his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel:

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.

<sup>9</sup> He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbor his anger forever;

<sup>10</sup> he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.

- <sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;
- <sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
- <sup>13</sup> As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
- <sup>14</sup> for he knows how we are formed,  
he remembers that we are dust.
- <sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are like grass,  
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
- <sup>16</sup> the wind blows over it and it is gone,  
and its place remembers it no more.
- <sup>17</sup> But from everlasting to everlasting  
the LORD's love is with those who fear him,  
and his righteousness with their children's children-
- <sup>18</sup> with those who keep his covenant  
and remember to obey his precepts.
- <sup>19</sup> The LORD has established his throne in heaven,  
and his kingdom rules over all.
- <sup>20</sup> Praise the LORD, you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
who obey his word.
- <sup>21</sup> Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,  
you his servants who do his will.
- <sup>22</sup> Praise the LORD, all his works  
everywhere in his dominion.  
Praise the LORD, O my soul.

### **Everyone Reads the Antiphon:**

Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise God's holy name.

### **Everyone Sings the Gloria Patri:**

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

*(Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto).*

As it was in the beginning,

*(Sicut erat in principio),*

both now and ever,

*(et nunc et semper)*

and unto ages of ages

*(et in saecula saeculorum).*

Amen.

## **New Testament Canticle**

### **Narrator:**

Canticles are portions of scripture not taken from the Psalms that have been sung by the church as "sacred little songs" over the centuries. Such portions of scripture have come from both testaments. Monastic communities have incorporated them into the Divine Offices of Prayer including Vespers.

### **Everyone Reads the Antiphon:**

There are three things that last forever, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.

### **Cantor:**

Love is patient and kind,  
love is not jealous or boastful,  
it is not arrogant or rude.

Love does not insist on its own way,  
it is not angry or resentful.

It does not rejoice in wrongdoing  
but rejoices in the truth.

Love bears all things and believes all things;  
love hopes all things and endures all things.

Love will never come to an end,  
but prophecy will vanish,  
tongues cease and knowledge pass away.

Now we know only in part  
and we prophesy only in part,  
But when the perfect comes,  
the partial shall pass away.  
When I was a child, I spoke like a child,  
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

But when I became mature,  
I put an end to childish ways.

For now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror,  
but then we will see face to face.

Now I know only in part;  
then I shall know fully,  
even as I have been fully known.

There are three things that last forever,  
faith, hope and love,  
but the greatest of these is love.

(1 Corinthians 13.4-13)

**Everyone Reads the Antiphon:**

There are three things that last forever, faith, hope and love, but  
the greatest of these is love.

## Everyone Sings the Gloria Patri:

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

*(Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto).*

As it was in the beginning,

*(Sicut erat in principio),*

both now and ever,

*(et nunc et semper)*

and unto ages of ages

*(et in saecula saeculorum).*

Amen.

## The Second Psalm

### Everyone Reads the Antiphon:

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

### Cantor:

Praise the LORD.

Praise, O servants of the LORD,  
praise the name of the LORD.

Let the name of the LORD be praised,  
both now and forevermore.

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,  
the name of the LORD is to be praised.

The LORD is exalted over all the nations,  
his glory above the heavens.

Who is like the LORD our God,  
the One who sits enthroned on high,  
who stoops down to look  
on the heavens and the earth?

He raises the poor from the dust  
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;  
he seats them with princes,  
with the princes of their people.  
(Psalm 113. 1-8)

### **Everyone Reads the Antiphon:**

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

### **Everyone Sings the Gloria Patri:**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.  
*(Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto).*  
As it was in the beginning,  
*(Sicut erat in principio),*  
both now and ever,  
*(et nunc et semper)*  
and unto ages of ages  
*(et in saecula saeculorum).*  
Amen.

## **Closing Vesper Prayer by Tertullian (160-220)**

Let Us Pray:

We give you thanks, Lord, through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom you have shone upon us and revealed to us the inextinguishable light. So now we have completed the length of the day and have come to the beginning of the night. You have satisfied us with the light of day which you created and now through your grace we do not lack the light of evening. We praise and glorify you through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom be glory and power and honor to you with the Holy Spirit both now and always and to the ages of ages. Amen.