

Features of Some Elements of Vespers

1) Proëmial Psalm (103)

Read entirely (when Vespers is served alone)

Sung entirely (actually select verses are sung with three refrains):

- 1) Blessed art Thou O Lord.
- 2) Wondrous are Thy works, O Lord.
- 3) Glory to Thee O Lord, Who hast made them all!

This is done when the Vespers is the beginning of the All-Night Vigil.

2) Lord I have cried.

Psalms 140, 141, 129, 116, with the first four verses expanded and sung with refrain (“Harken unto me O Lord”). The remaining verses of the four psalms are read or sung in a recitative until it is time to incorporate the stichera in between the verses.

10 Stichera (Sundays, certain Great Feasts of the Lord)

8 Stichera (all other feast days and when Great Vespers is served)

6 Stichera (daily, non-festal Vespers)

After the last psalm verse (“For He hath made His mercy to prevail over us, and the truth of the Lord abideth forever”) and sticheron, either:

Glory... Doxastichon

Both now and ever ... Theotokion (or its replacement from the festal service)

OR Glory...both now and ever...Theotokion (or its replacement).

3) Prokeimenon. The Prokeimenon is chosen based on the day of the week, except on the Vespers on the afternoon after a Great Feast of the Lord. In that case, a Great Prokeimenon is sung in the 7th tone (Either “What God is as great as our God? Thou art God Who alone worketh wonders,” or “Our God is in heaven and on the earth; all things whatsoever He hath willed, hath He done.”)

4) Litija. In contemporary Russian practice this is done only as part of an All-Night Vigil for a feast or Saint (which can co-occur with a Sunday). The Pentecostarion specifies a litija for the Sundays between Pascha and Pentecost as well. In Greek and other eastern practice, it may be served as a part of Great Vespers without a Vigil.

5) Aposticha. Three stichera (four on Saturday night) with verses between them. After the last stichera is sung, Glory, both now and ever, as at the end of “Lord I have cried.”

6) Dismissal hymn (Apolytikion). If a litija was served, then three hymns will be sung, corresponding to the triple censing of the loaves, wheat, wine and oil before their blessing. If not, and Vigil is not served, then the troparion of a feast will be sung once; that of a Saint will be sung, followed by Glory...both now and ever... and the appropriate Theotokion.