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READER'S LENTEN VESPERS ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2026
(evening of Cheesefare Sunday)

***Forgiveness Vespers &
Commemoration of the holy Hieromartyr Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna***

Leader: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us. *All:* Amen.

If the 9th Hour has not been served prior to the Vespers:

Reader: Glory to Thee, our God. Glory to Thee!

O heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who art everywhere present and fillest all things, the Treasury of good things and Giver of life: Come, and abide in us, and cleanse us from every stain, and save our souls, O good One.

Trisagion

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (*Thrice*)

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

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

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (*Thrice*)

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

Both 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: O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us.

All: Amen

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (*12 times*)

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

Reader: O come, let us worship and fall down before God our King. (*Metania*)

O come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God. (*Metania*)

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

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 for ever 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; both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia. Glory to Thee, O God. *(Twice)*

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia: Glory to Thee, O God our Hope, O Lord, glory be to Thee.

THE LITANY OF PEACE REPLACEMENT

Choir: Lord, have mercy. *(12 times)*

Senior Reader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, Both now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

“LORD, I HAVE CRIED” IN TONE FOUR

Choir: O Lord, I have cried out unto Thee, hear Thou me; hear Thou me, O Lord. O Lord, I have cried out unto Thee, hear Thou me. Give ear to the voice of my supplication when I cry out unto Thee: hear Thou me, O Lord.

Choir: Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as the incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice; hear Thou me, O Lord.

- Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth and a protecting door about my lips.
- Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins.
- With men that work iniquity; and I will not communicate with the choicest of them.
- The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me; but let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head.
- For my prayer also shall still be against the things with which they are well pleased; their judges falling upon the rock have been swallowed up.
- They shall hear my words for they are sweet; as when the thickness of the earth is broken upon the ground, their bones are scattered by the side of Hell.
- But to Thee, O Lord, are my eyes; in Thee have I put my trust; take not away my soul.
- Keep me from the snare(s) which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity.
- Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I alone escape.
- I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.
- I poured out my supplication before Him; I showed before Him my trouble.
- When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path.
- In the way wherein I walked have they secretly laid a snare for me.
- I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no one that would know me.
- Refuge failed me; no one cared for my soul.
- I cried unto Thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.
- Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low.
- Deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

The Penitential Stichera in Tone Four

Verse 10. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy Name.

I want to wash away with tears the record of my sins, O Lord, and through the rest of my life to please Thee by repentance; but the enemy deceives me and fights against my soul. Before I perish utterly, save me, O Lord.

Verse 9. The righteous shall wait for me until Thou recompense me.

If a man takes refuge from the tempest in this harbor, will he not be saved? If in his agony he kneels before this house of healing, will he not be cured? O Maker of all and Physician of the sick, before I perish utterly, save me, O Lord.

Verse 8. Out of the depths have I cried to Thee, O Lord, Lord hear my voice.

Wash me with my tears, O Savior, for I am defiled by many sins. Therefore I fall down before Thee: I have sinned, have mercy upon me, O God.

Verse 7. Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

I am a sheep of Thy spiritual flock, and to Thee I flee for refuge, O Good Shepherd. I have gone astray, O God: seek me and have mercy upon me.

For Forgiveness Sunday in Tone Two

Verse 6. If Thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? For with Thee there is forgiveness.

Let us all hasten to the subjugation of the flesh by abstinence, as we approach the divine battlefield, the battlefield of blameless fasting. Let us pray to the Lord, our Savior, in tears and prayers, turning away completely from sin, and crying, "We have sinned against Thee, O Christ, the King. Save us, therefore, as of old Thou didst save the people of Nineveh; and make us partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom, O compassionate One."

Verse 5. Because of Thy Name have I waited for Thee, O Lord; my soul hath waited upon Thy word, my soul hath hoped in the Lord.

If I were to imagine all my sins deserving all punishment, I would despair of myself, O Lord Savior; for by them have I disobeyed Thy noble commandment, wasting my life in extravagance. Wherefore, I beseech Thee to purify me with Thy showers of forgiveness, and lighten me with fasting and supplication; for Thou alone art compassionate; and reject me not, O all-bountiful and of transcendent goodness.

Verse 4. From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch let Israel trust in the Lord. Let us begin the season of fasting with rejoicing, giving ourselves to spiritual strife, purifying soul and body, fasting from passions, as we fast from foods, faring on the virtues of the Spirit, which, if we continue to long for, we shall all be worthy to behold the most solemn Passion of Christ, and the holy Passover, rejoicing with spiritual joy.

For St. Polycarp in Tone Two (**When he took Thee**)

Verse 3. For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is abundant redemption, and He will deliver Israel from all his iniquities.

When the blameless Virgin's holy Fruit * and the Seed whence all of life springeth had fallen into the earth, * then He shot thee forth as a most fruitful ear of wheat, * who didst feed with the words and deeds * of godly religion * all His faithful flock, while also sanctifying them * with the godly blood of thy contest, * cleansing them as well with the sweet myrrh * of thy priestly ministry, a Polycarp.

Verse 2. Praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise Him, all ye people.

Glist'ning with the brightly flashing beams * of thy holy martyrdom, thou didst set from the world unto God; * and thou hast fulfilled thy longing since thou hast attained * to the highest of all desires * and ever dost revel * in that blessed brightness, whereof do thou now entreat * that we may be all made partakers, * as we celebrate thine all-sacred * memory, O blest and righteous Polycarp.

Verse 1. For His mercy is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever.

When the True Vine had been lifted up * hanging on the wood of the Cross, then He put thee forth as a branch * which, on bringing forth much fruit, was hewn down with the scythe * of a ven'erable martyrdom * and fully was trod out * in the vat and wine-press of most painful punishments; * having mixed the wine-bowl of gladness * from these things in faith, O wise Father, * we all glorify thy sacred contests now.

THEOTOKION FROM THE MENAION IN TONE TWO

(**Same melody**)

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

Joy of all that sorrow art thou, * and of the oppressed a protectress, and nurture of all the poor, * comfort unto the estranged, a staff art thou of the blind, * visitation of all the sick, * a shelter and

succor * unto those brought down by pain, helper of orphaned ones: * Mother of God in the highest * art thou, O immaculate Maiden; * hasten, we beseech thee, to redeem thy slaves.

THE HYMN OF THANKSGIVING AT THE LIGHTING OF THE LAMPS

(Read, not sung!)

Reader: Gladsome light of the Holy glory that shines from the immortal Father in Heaven, the Holy, the Blessed, O Jesus Christ! Lo now that we come to sunset, now that we see the evening light, we sing the praise of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, One God. Worthy art Thou to be praised at all times with voices meet for holy song. Son of God, Thou Giver of Life, wherefore the world glorifieth thee.

THE EVENING PROKEIMENON, FROM THE TRIODION

Psalm 68, in tone 8

Choir: Turn not away thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. Attend to my soul, and deliver it. *(twice)*

Verse: May Thy salvation, O God, be quick to help me.

Choir: Turn not away thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. Attend to my soul, and deliver it. *Verse:* Let beggars behold it and be glad.

Choir: Turn not away thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. Attend to my soul, and deliver it. *Verse:* Seek after God, and your soul shall live.

Choir: Turn not away thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. Attend to my soul, and deliver it.

THE EVENING PRAYER

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.

LITANY OF SUPPLICATION (& THE PEACE) REPLACEMENT

Reader: Lord have mercy *(12 times)*

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

THE APOSTICHA

From the Triodion, in Tone Four

Thy grace hath risen, O Lord, the illumination of our souls hath shone forth. Lo, now is the acceptable time; the season of repentance hath come. Let us cast down the works of darkness, and put on the works of light, that we may pass the great tempest of fasting and reach the summit of the third-day Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls.

Verse 1. Unto Thee have I lifted up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in heaven. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, as the eyes of the handmaiden look unto the hands of her mistress, so do our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He take pity upon us.

Thy grace hath risen, O Lord, the illumination of our souls hath shone forth. Lo, now is the acceptable time; the season of repentance hath come. Let us cast down the works of darkness, and put on the works of light, that we may pass the great tempest of fasting and reach the summit of the third-day Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Savior of our souls.

Verse 2. Have mercy upon us O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are utterly humiliated. Let shame come on them that prosper, and abasement on the proud.
O Christ God, glorified in the mention of thy saints, send us, through their beseechings, the Great Mercy.

THEOTOKION FROM THE TRIODION, IN TONE FOUR (**As one valiant**)

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

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

Thee do all the angelic ranks * glorify, since thou gavest birth * unto God, Who doth co-exist eternally * with both the Father and the Spirit, Who from nothing hath caused to be * the angelic companies, * which He made by His will alone, * Whom entreat to save * and enlighten the souls of them that rightly sing thy praise in Orthodoxy, * O unstained Mother of God most pure.

THE HYMN OF SYMEON THE GOD-RECEIVER

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, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.

Trisagion

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal: have mercy on us. (*Thrice*)

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

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

All-holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (*Thrice*)

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

Both 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: O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us.

All: Amen.

THE LENTEN APOLYTIKIA, IN TONE 5

Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, for thou hast borne the Savior of our souls. (*Prostration.*)

O baptizer of Christ, remember us all that we may be delivered from our iniquities; for to thee has been given the grace to intercede for us all. (*Prostration.*)

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

Intercede for us, holy apostles and all the saints that we may be delivered from perils and sorrows; for we have acquired you as fervent intercessors before the Savior. (*Prostration.*)

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

Beneath thy compassions we take refuge, O Theotokos. Despise not our prayers in our necessity, but deliver us from harm, only pure, only blessed One. (*Simple metania*)

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (*40 times*)

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

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

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim, thou who without corruption bearest God the Word and art truly Theotokos: we magnify thee.

Leader: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.

Reader: Amen. O heavenly King, support our believing kings; confirm their faith; guide the nations; give peace to the world and preserve well this holy church. Grant repose to our departed fathers and brothers, in the dwelling-places of the righteous. Receive us in repentance and confession, for Thou art good and the Lover of mankind

THE PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN

All: O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, meddling, lust of power and idle talk. (*prostration*)

But give, rather, the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to thy servant. (*prostration*)

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sins and not to judge my brother, for thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen. (*prostration*)

THE DISMISSAL

The Leader bows toward the icon of Christ on the iconostasis, saying:

Leader: Glory to thee, O Christ our God and our Hope, glory to thee.

All: 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. O Lord, bless.

Leader: O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, through the intercessions of his all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; by the protection of the honorable bodiless powers of heaven; of the Holy Myrrh-Bearer and Equal to the Apostles Mary Magdalene, protector of this community; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; of the Hieromartyr Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna; Venerable Gorgonia, sister of Gregory the Theologian; ((Venerable Zebinas, Polychronios, Moses and Damian near Cyrrhus in Syria; and Venerable Damian of Esphigmenou Monastery on Mount Athos)); whose memory we celebrate today, and of all the saints: have mercy on us, and save us, for Thou art good and lovest mankind.

All: Amen.

THE CEREMONY OF MUTUAL FORGIVENESS

As the choir very slowly and in low voice sings the Theotokion below, the exchange of mutual forgiveness may now take place, beginning with the clergy. The priest stands next to the analogion as the faithful venerate the icon of the Theotokos. Each of the faithful bow deeply or prostrate before the priest, who also does the same before each of the faithful, each saying to one another: "Forgive me, a sinner." The response is: "God forgives." He/she then receives the priest's blessing and kisses his hand. He/she will then approach each of the faithful and, bowing deeply or prostrating, ask his/her forgiveness as well, and exchange the kiss of peace.

FORGIVENESS THEOTOKION, IN TONE TWO (**When he took Thee**)

(*chanted very slowly*)

All those who with faith flee unto thee, * with thy mighty hand dost thou shelter, O pure one, as thou art good; * no one else have we who sin as a perpetual * intercessor for us with God * in dangers and sorrows, * we who have been burdened down with our abundant sins, * Mother of God in the highest. * Wherefore, we all fall down before thee; * rescue us, thy servants, from adversities.

If additional time is needed, the choir may chant: the Katavasiae of Pascha in tone 1

Ode 1: This is the day of Resurrection, let us be radiant, O people. Pascha, the Lord's Pascha, for Christ our God has passed us from death to life and from earth to heaven, we who sing the song of victory.

Ode 3: Come, let us drink a new drink, not one wondrously brought forth from a barren rock, but from the Fount of incorruption, which springs forth from the Tomb of Christ, in whom we are established.

Ode 4: The inspired prophet Habakkuk now stands with us in holy vigil; he is like a shining angel who cries with a piercing voice: Today salvation has come to the world for Christ is risen as all-powerful.

Ode 5: Let us rise early at the break of dawn and offer a hymn instead of myrrh to the Master. And let us behold Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Who causes life to rise for all.

Ode 6: Thou didst descend into the depths of the earth and shattered the everlasting bars which kept the dead captive; and, like Jonah from the whale, Thou arose, O Christ from the tomb.

Ode 7: He Who saved the three youths in the furnace, becomes man and suffers as a mortal, that through suffering He may clothe mortality with incorruption. He alone is blessed and most glorious, the God of our fathers.

We praise, we bless and we worship the Lord.

Ode 8: This is the chosen and holy day, the first of Sabbaths, the King and Lord; it is the feast of all feasts and festival of festivals, in which we bless Christ unto all the ages.

Ode 9: The angel cried to the Lady full of grace: Rejoice, rejoice, O pure Virgin. Again I say: Rejoice. Your Son is risen from His three days in the tomb. With Himself He has raised all the dead. Rejoice. All you people. Shine! Shine! Shine! O new Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone on you. Exult now, exult, and be glad, O Zion. Be radiant, O pure Theotokos, in the resurrection of Thy Son.

When everyone has completed the exchange of mutual forgiveness

the Leader, facing the icon of Christ on the iconostasis, says,

Leader: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. *All:* Amen.