

II. The Order of Vespers When There Is No Vigil³⁹

With the Ministry of One Deacon

29. The deacon, holding the sticharion and the orarion approaches the priest and with his head bowed says: **Master, bless the sticharion and orarion.** The priest, blessing, says: **Blessed is our God, ...** The deacon: **Amen**, and then⁴⁰ he dons the sticharion; having kissed the orarion, he places it on his left shoulder.⁴¹



The priest blesses the sticharion and orarion

30. The priest, who is already wearing the rason, blesses the epitachelion, and puts it on. He leaves the Holy Table by the north door and stands before the closed royal doors, where he makes a small bow and says: **Blessed is our God, ...** After the **Our Father ...** he exclaims: **For Thine is the kingdom ...**

31. During the reading or chanting of Psalm 103, the priest quietly reads all the Prayers of Light⁴² before the royal doors.⁴³

After the recitation of Psalm 103, the deacon departs via the northern door and, having shown reverence to the priest by making a small bow, begins: **In peace, let us pray to the Lord.**

Upon completion of the Psalm, the priest returns to the Altar and, standing before the Holy Table, finishes the recitation of the Prayers of Light if he did not complete them before. After the priest's exclamation: **For to You is due all glory, ...** the deacon makes a small bow, returns to the Altar through the southern door and stands at the priest's right.

32. When the Kathisma⁴⁴ is finished, the deacon departs via the northern door and says the Small Synapte. Following the exclamation of the priest: **For Yours is the might ...** he makes a small bow and returns to the Altar.

33. When the choir begins to sing **O Lord, I have cried to You, ...** the deacon takes the thurible, presents it to the priest for blessing, and censes the Holy Table from four sides, then the apsidal icon, the icons in the Altar, and the priest. Then, having left the Altar via the northern door, he comes before the Royal Doors, makes a reverence and censes the icons of the southern part of the iconostasis beginning with the icon of the Savior. Having again made a reverence before the royal doors, he censes the northern part of the iconostasis beginning with the icon of the Theotokos, and then the right and left choirs. He censes the people from the soleas,⁴⁵ and finally enters the Altar via the southern door.

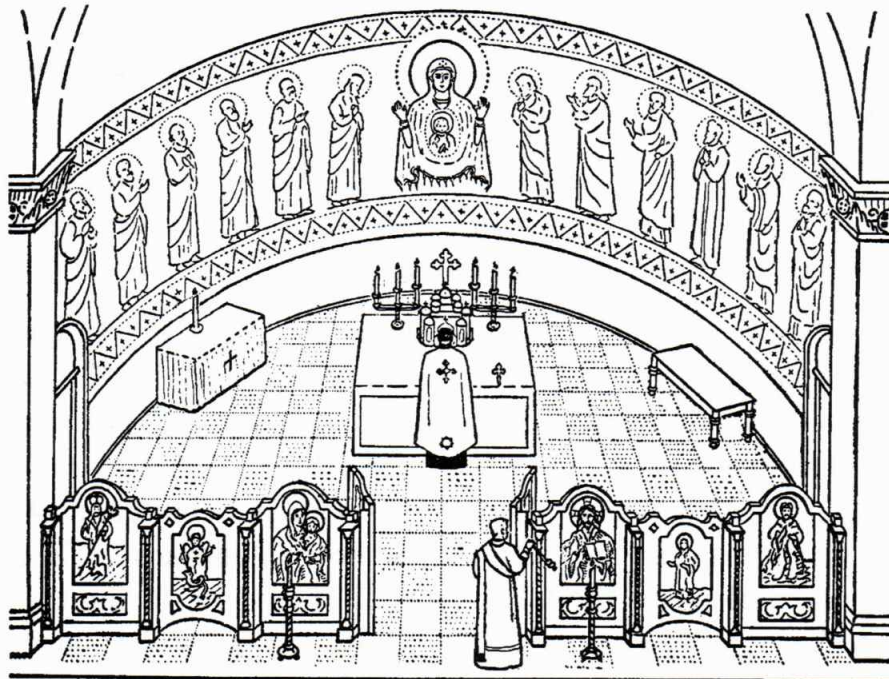
34. When the choir begins to sing the last stichera, the priest blesses and kisses the phelonion and vests in it; at the **Glory ...** he and the deacon come before the holy table. The royal doors are opened. The deacon takes the thurible and receives the priest's blessing over it; preceded by candlebearers, the deacon and the priest, who lets his phelonion hang freely,⁴⁶ walk around the holy table starting from its right side, and then depart via the northern door.

They stand before the royal doors: the candlebearers facing one another, one near the icon of the Theotokos and the other near the icon

of the Savior, the deacon in the center, and behind him the priest. Both bow their heads, and after the deacon, holding the orarion with three fingers, has said: **Let us pray to the Lord** in a subdued voice, the priest, secretly says the Prayer of Entrance: **O gracious King, You love mankind ...**⁴⁷

However, when the vigils of the Lord's Nativity and Epiphany fall on a Saturday or a Sunday,⁴⁸ the deacon takes both the thurible and the Gospel⁴⁹ for making the Entrance.⁵⁰

After the Prayer of the Entrance, the deacon, pointing his orarion eastward, says to the priest: **Master, bless the holy entrance.** Facing east and blessing, the priest says: **Blessed is the entrance ...** Then the deacon proffers the Holy Gospel (if he carries it) to the priest for kissing; standing in the royal doors in front of the priest, when the choir has finished the stichera, the deacon makes the sign of the Cross with the thurible or he raises the Holy Gospel,⁵¹ exclaiming: **Wisdom! Stand aright!** While **O Joyful Light ...** is sung, the deacon and the priest enter the Altar to return to the Holy Table, and the candlebearers return through the side doors. Then the deacon censes everything as prescribed at **O Lord, I have cried to You, ...** (See § 33).⁵²



The deacon censes the iconostasis

With the censuring done and the hymn finished, the deacon comes to the royal doors and looking toward the people, exclaims: **Let us be attentive!** The priest,⁵³ facing the people, blesses: **Peace be with all.**⁵⁴ The deacon: **Wisdom! Be attentive!** And the priest remaining there with hands crossed over his breast awaits the end of the Prokeimenon.⁵⁵ Then,⁵⁶ if any lessons are to be read,⁵⁷ he makes a small bow before the Holy Table and proceeds to his chair. Where the custom prevails, the priest proceeds to his chair immediately after the deacon's exclamation: **Wisdom! Be attentive!** The deacon, however, remains at the royal doors, and before the title of each lesson exclaims: **Wisdom!** to the people, and after the title he also exclaims: **Let us be attentive!**

35. After the lessons,⁵⁸ the priest returns to the Holy Table; the deacon, having shown a reverence to the priest, walks around the Holy Table and departs via the northern door; coming before the royal doors, he says the ektene: **Let us all say ...** The priest exclaims: **For You are a merciful and gracious God, ...** and after: **O Lord, keep us this evening ...**⁵⁹ the deacon says the Aitisis:⁶⁰ **Let us complete our evening prayer ...** The priest exclaims: **For You, O God, are ...** The choir: **Amen.** The priest, blessing: **Peace be with all!** The choir: **And to your spirit.** The deacon: **Bow your heads to the Lord.** The choir: **To You, O Lord.** And while the priest recites the Prayer of the Inclination of the Head, all bow their heads until the ekphonesis: **May the might of Your kingdom ...** After the ekphonesis, the deacon returns to the Altar via the southern door.

36. The choir begins to sing the Aposticha, then: **Now You may dismiss your servant ...** Trisagion;⁶¹ and after: **Our Father ...** the priest exclaims: **For Thine is the kingdom ...**

After the troparia, the royal doors are opened.⁶² The deacon leaves via the southern door and stands near the icon of the Savior; looking towards the people and elevating the orarion with the first three fingers of his right hand, he exclaims: **Wisdom!** The choir: **Give the blessing!** The priest: **Blessed is the One-Who-Is ...** The choir: **Amen. O God, strengthen ...** The priest: **O most holy Theotokos ...** The choir: **More honorable than the Cherubim ...** The priest, facing the east: **Glory to You, O Christ, ...** The choir: **Glory to the Father ... now and ever ... Lord, have mercy (three times) ... Master, bless!**⁶³ The priest,

facing the people and standing in the center of the royal doors, says the Dismissal.

While the priest says the Dismissal, the deacon raises his orarion. Then the priest returns through the royal doors, and the deacon re-enters the Altar via the southern door. The deacon closes the royal doors; the priest and deacon make a small bow before the Holy Table and they proceed to unvest.⁶⁴

With the Ministry of Two Deacons

37. After the recitation of Psalm 103, the first deacon departs via the northern door and, having made a small bow and shown reverence to the priest, he says the Great Synapte; after the ekphonesis of the priest **For to You is due all glory ...** he makes a small bow and returns to the Altar via the southern door.

38. After the Kathisma, the second deacon departs via the northern door and says the Small Synapte; following the ekphonesis: **For Yours is the might ...** he makes a small bow and returns the Altar via the southern door.

39. When the choir begins to sing: **O Lord, I have cried to You, ...** the deacons,⁶⁵ having taken the thuribles and placed incense into them, approach the priest; after the priest's prayer of benediction, both deacons cense the Holy Table: at first from the front and then the first deacon the right side, the second deacon the left, and again both together from the east; after this, the apsidal image and the other images in the Altar, then the priest. Then they leave the Altar, the first deacon through the southern door, the second deacon through the northern door. They come before the royal doors and, having made a reverence, they cense the icons on the iconostasis; the first deacon beginning with the icon of the Savior, the second deacon with the icon of the Theotokos, then the first deacon the right choir, the second deacon the left. They cense the people while remaining on the soleas, one from the right and the other from the left.⁶⁶ Finally, they return to the Altar, the first deacon through the southern door and the second through the northern door.

40. When the choir begins to sing the last stichera, the priest and the deacons come before the Holy Table at the **Glory ...** The royal