

**The Divine Liturgies of
Both Saint John Chrysostom as well as of Saint Basil the Great**
The Antiphons

The Litany of Peace concludes with this Priestly Prayer of the First Antiphon:

Priest (in a low voice): **O** Lord our God, Whose power is incomparable, Whose glory is incomprehensible, Whose mercy is immeasurable, and Whose love for man is inexpressible: Look down on us and on this holy house (*Psalm 93:5*) with pity [compassion], O Master, and impart the riches of Thy mercy and Thy compassion (*Ephesians 2:4*) to us and to those who pray with us.

Priestly Doxology (Exclamation):

Priest: **F**or to You belong all glory, honor, and worship to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit (*cf. Matthew 28:29*), now and ever and to the ages of ages (*1Timothy1:17*).

People: **A**men (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*).

Scripture passages related to Doxology

“To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory to the ages of ages. Amen” (*1 Timothy 1:17*).

“The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for His heavenly Kingdom. To Him be glory to the ages of ages. Amen” (*2 Timothy 4:18*).

“To Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can imagine, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations and to the ages of ages. Amen” (*Ephesians 3:20-21*).

“To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power and authority before all ages and to the ages of ages. Amen” (*Jude 25*).

“To the One seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing, honor, glory and power to the ages of ages” (*Revelation 5:13*).

The First Antiphon

Either Psalm 102, or selected verses of the Psalm, are sung.

On certain Feast Days designated Psalm verses are sung with the following short antiphonal response:

People: **B**y the intercession of the Theotokos, Savior, save us (*cf. Matthew 8:25*) (3x).

Scripture

In Byzantine practice, on most – though not all – Sundays of the year, the three designated verses from the Book of Psalms that are sung with the hymn “By the intercessions of the Theotokos...” at the first antiphon are:

“**B**less the Lord, O my soul! May all that is within me bless His holy Name” (*Psalm 102:1*).

“Bless the Lord, O my soul and do not forget all the gifts that come from Him” (*Psalms 102:2*).

“The Lord has established His throne in heaven; over all things His kingship is supreme” (*Psalms 102:19*).

Commentary – What are the Antiphons?

Structurally, the Great Litany or Litany of Peace is followed by what most Liturgy books call the Antiphons: a series of verses from the Bible that on Sundays are usually, although not always, drawn from Psalms 102/103 and 145/146 and sung by a cantor, each verse then followed by a refrain that was to be sung by the congregation as a whole.

In ancient times the Liturgy began with what we now call the “Small Entrance.”

In 7th century Constantinople the people came in long processions through the city, singing psalms, and assembled in the forecourt of the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom; i.e. Christ, to await the arrival of the Patriarch and the Emperor.

On some occasions they might wait just inside the many doorways of the church singing psalms and praying.

The Great Litany or Litany of Peace, with the Antiphons and the short Litanies and prayers that follow it, are survivals of this ancient practice.

Small Litany After the First Antiphon

Deacon: Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Commemorating our most-holy, most-pure, most-blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

The Small Litany concludes with this Priestly Prayer of the Second Antiphon:

Priest (in a low voice): O Lord our God, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance (*Psalms 28:9*). Preserve the fullness of Thy Church, sanctify those who love the beauty of Thy house (*Psalms 26:8*), glorify them in return by Thy Divine power (*2 Peter 1:3*), and forsake us not (*Psalms 27:9-10*) who put our hope in Thee (*cf. Psalms 39:7; 71:5; 1 Timothy 1:1; 1 John 3:3*).

Priestly Doxology (Exclamation):

Priest: For Thine is the might, and Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Matthew 28:29*), now and ever and unto ages of ages (*Ephesians 3:21*).

People: Amen (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalms 106:48*).

The Second Antiphon

Either Psalm 145, or selected verses of the Psalm, are sung.

On certain Feast Days designated Psalm verses are sung with the following short antiphonal response:

People: Save us (cf. Matthew 8:25), O Son of God (John 20:31), (“Who art risen from the dead”)*, to Thee we sing: Alleluia (*Psalm 150:6*) (3x).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit (*cf. Matthew 28:29*); both now and ever and to the ages of ages.

Amen (*1 Timothy 1:17*).

* On weekdays we sing (“Who is wondrous in Thy saints”).

Scripture

On most, though not all Sundays of the year, the three designated verses from the Book of Psalms sung with the hymn “Save us, O Son of God...” at the second antiphon are:

“Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord all my life! I will sing to the Lord as long as I live” (*Psalm 146:1*).

“Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God” (*Psalm 146:5*).

“The Lord is King forever; Thy God, O Sion, rules from generation to generation” (*Psalm 146:10*).

Commentary – Praise the Lord, O my soul!

In the Liturgy we constantly praise the Name of the Lord. All Christians are to proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (*1 Peter 2:9*).

Praising God is not simply one thing that we do among many others; it is everything! We are called to praise God in everything that we say and everything that we do, by the content of our character and the quality of our lives.

In this sense, praise and worship are not merely something we occasionally do on Sunday mornings: it is a lifestyle, an entire way of living that expresses our commitment to Christ. Worship “in Spirit and in Truth” (*John 4:24*) always implies integrity, commitment and compassion in our day-to-day living.

As Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (1914-+2003) once remarked, Christians “should try to live in such a way that if the Gospels were lost, they could be re-written by looking at us.”

The Hymn Of Justinian

Only begotten Son (*John 1:18*) and Word of God (*John 1:1*), although immortal You humbled Yourself for our salvation, taking flesh from the holy Theotokos and ever virgin Mary and, without change, becoming man. Christ, our God, You were crucified but conquered death by death. You are one of the Holy Trinity, glorified with the Father and the Holy Spirit – save us.

Small Litany After the Second Antiphon

Deacon: Again and again in peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

Commemorating our most-holy, most-pure, most-blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

The Small Litany concludes with this Priestly Prayer of the Third Antiphon:

Priest (in a low voice): O Thou Who hast given us grace with one accord to make our common supplications unto Thee, and didst promise that where two or three are gathered together in Thy Name (*Matthew 18: 19-20*) Thou wouldst grant their requests: Fulfill now, O Lord, the petitions of Thy servants as may be expedient for them, granting us in this world the knowledge of Thy truth (*1 Timothy 2:4*), and in the world to come life everlasting (*Luke 18:30*).

Priestly Doxology (Exclamation):

Priest: For Thou art a good God and lovest mankind, and unto Thee do we send up glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit (*cf. Matthew 28:29*), now and ever and unto ages of ages (*Ephesians 3:21*).

People: Amen (*1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 106:48*).

Commentary – The Hymn of Justinian

The second Antiphon is followed by a sort of mini-Creed, the hymn “Only-begotten Son and Word of God...”

It is an excellent summary of the essentials of the Christian faith in the Holy Trinity and in the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ Jesus, the Word of God made flesh.

Well worth learning by heart, this hymn dates from the sixth century and is attributed by the majority of contemporary liturgical scholars to the Roman Emperor Justinian (AD 482-565), the man responsible for the construction of the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom in Constantinople.

The hymn “Only-begotten Son and Word of God...,” which ends the second Antiphon, was originally the Entrance Hymn or, in Greek, the *Eisodikon*, of the Liturgy, as it still is today in the Liturgy of St James: this was the beginning of the Liturgy when the clergy came, not from within the Altar, but from the narthex, or vestibule, through the main doors of the church together with the laity.

The Third Antiphon

Either the Beatitudes, or selected Psalm verses, are sung.

If Psalm verses are sung, the Apolytikion/Troparion is sung antiphonally between them.

If the Beatitudes are sung, designated hymns are sung antiphonally between the verses.

The Beatitudes

In Thy Kingdom remember us, O Lord, when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. *(Verse-10)*

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. *(Verse)*

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. *(Verse-8)*

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. *(Verse)*

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God. *(Verse-6)*

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. *(Verse)*

Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. *(Verse)*

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. *(Verse)*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. *(Verse)*

Both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen. *(Verse)*