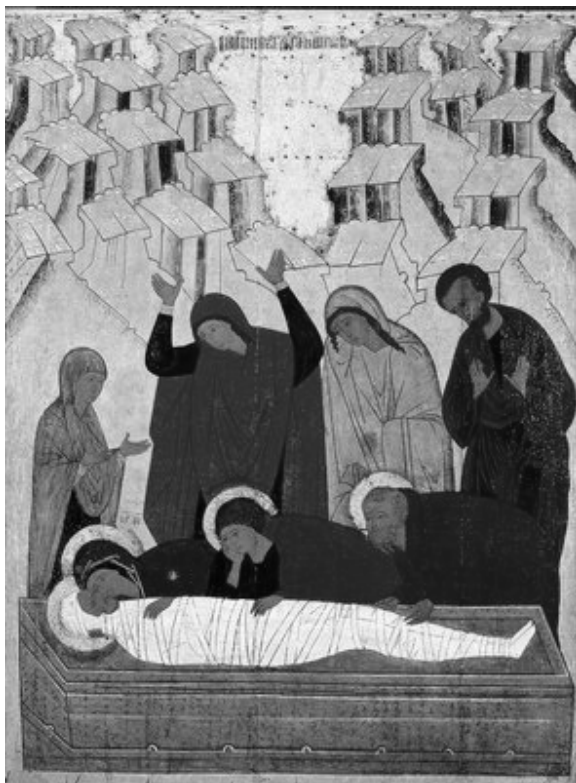


Morning Prayer



Great and Holy Saturday

OPENING RESPONSES

In the centre of the church the cross lies covered in white to symbolise Christ's burial.

Blessed is our God, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages
Amen.

The noble Joseph,
taking down your most pure body from the Tree,
wrapped it in a clean shroud with sweet spices
and laid it for burial in a new grave.

Glory!

When you went down to death, O immortal life,
then you slew death and hell
with the lightning flash of your love;
but when from the depths you raised the dead,
all the angles of heaven cried out:

**Giver of life, Christ our God,
all glory is yours for ever and ever!**

The Angel standing by the grave
cried out to the women bearing spices for his body:

**Myrrh is fitting for the dead,
but Christ has shown himself
a stranger to corruption.**

The *Trisagion* is chanted three times :



Glory be to God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
**as in the beginning, so now, and for ever,
to the ages of ages. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE John 19.38-42
 Job 14.1-14
 Lamentations 3.1-9, 19-24

I am one who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath;
he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light;
against me alone he turns his hand, again and again, all day long.
**He has made my flesh and my skin waste away,
and broken my bones;**
he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation;
he has made me sit in darkness like the dead of long ago.

He has walled me about so that I cannot escape;
he has put heavy chains on me;
though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer;
**he has blocked my ways with hewn stones,
he has made my paths crooked.**

The thought of my affliction and my homelessness
is wormwood and gall!
My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.
But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
**The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;**
they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
**'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul,
'therefore I will hope in him.'**

I Peter 4.1-8

Silent reflection.

FROM AN ANCIENT HOMILY ON HOLY SATURDAY

Something strange is happening—there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the Lord is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. At the sight of him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: 'My Lord be with you all.' Christ answered him: 'And with your spirit.' He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: 'Awake, o sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.'

'I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in Hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of my hands, you who were created in my image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in Me and I in you; together we form one person and cannot be separated.

'For your sake I, your God, became your seed; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, Whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed

to the Jewish leaders in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

'See on my Face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in my image. On My back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See My hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.

'I slept on the cross and a sword pierced My side for you who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in Hell. The sword that pierced Me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

'Rise. Let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but will enthrone you in heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The bridal chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The kingdom of heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.'

CANTICLE TO CHRIST

It is suggested that worshippers read or chant a stanza each.

O most strange of wonders,
what new deeds we now see!

He who gave my life's breath, lies unbreathing now,
borne to burial at noble Joseph's hands.

Now you have been hidden
like the sun beneath the earth
and been covered over, veiled by the night of death.
Dawn again, O Saviour, dawn more brightly still.

Life of all life, how can you perish, or how dwell in a tomb?
Yet the royal hall of Death you now bring to nought,
and from Hades' realm you raise the dead again.

Like a burning lampstand concealed under a bushel
here the life of our God lies hidden in the earth.
He who governs all things is here is seen as a corpse;
new the grave in which his body is laid to rest,
he the one who empties graves of all their dead.

In the tomb they laid you,
you, O Christ, who are Life itself;
death itself you brought to nothing by your own death,
and became the fount of life for all the world.

Guilty with the guilty you were judged, O my Christ,
at the very moment you wrought justice for us all;
from the ancient trickster's foul and evil deeds,
by the greatest trick of all, you ransomed us whole.

By your Passion, Jesus most beloved,
all creation was changed,
all things suffered with you, knowing you to be
the alpha and omega of all living things.

How could Hell endure it,
when in splendour you came,

and how not be swiftly shattered and plunged into night,
blinded by the blazing glory of your light?

Death, who eats up all things,
swallowed you also, Rock of Life.
But when you entered into his belly he vomited,
spewing forth the dead gulped down from every age.

Light that saves, O Jesus,
you are sweetness to me;
in the darkness of the grave how can you lie hid,
O grace that no language can express?

A great sword was sharpened
against you, O my Christ,
but the strong one's mighty sword has been blunted now,
and the sword that guarded Eden is turned back.

With our hymns, O Christ our beloved,
we venerate your cross and wonder silently at your tomb;
For by your burial we, who were dead in our sins,
have been raised to life evermore.

Glory be to God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
**as in the beginning, so now, and for ever,
to the ages of ages. Amen.**

PRAYERS

All may kneel.

Lord, have mercy
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy.

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession may be offered.

Today a tomb holds him who holds all creation in his palm. A stone covers him who covered the heavens with glory. Life sleeps and hell trembles while Adam is released from his bonds. Lord of glory, we praise and laud the grace by which you save us from death and hell and grant us an eternal Sabbath in the bosom of your love. **Amen.**

BLESSING

We go from this place in silence, the silence of a sorrow which is saving the world. As the day stretches out before us, let us recall the sorrow of the Father and the Spirit at the death of that most beloved Son. But let us also recall their smiles of joy as the women make their journey towards an empty tomb.

Go in peace, and may God the Father, Son and Spirit, guard and keep you close always. **Amen.**



Acknowledgments

This service was prepared by Garry J. Deverell using sources from Matins for Great and Holy Saturday in the Orthodox tradition.

The chanted *Trisagion* was composed by James Kriewald © 1992 Abingdon Press.