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RUSSIAN EASTER LITURGY



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apostles to Moravia for the purpose of bringing Christianity to the Slavic peoples in their own tongue. The brothers elaborated a Slavic alphabet and translated the most important liturgical books into Slavic. At that period, the differences among Slavic languages were far less marked than they later became, and hence Old Church Slavonic was comprehensible to all Slavic peoples.

The Byzantine mission, which had been begun by Cyril and Methodius in Moravia in 863, was stamped out by the Germans about 900, and was continued by those Slavic disciples who had been able to flee to Bulgaria and Macedonia. The language, which after 1100 was known as Church Slavonic, contains elements of Macedonian, Czech, Slovenian, Croatian and Bulgarian. With the final destruction of the Bulgarian Empire by Byzantium in 1014, Russia became the chief repository and the only creative center of Slavic culture in which Church Slavonic still flourished (although the Slavonic liturgy and writings continued in use in vast areas of the Slavic world, including Macedonia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Wallachia, Moldavia and parts of Croatia, and in some areas are in use to the present day).

It should be understood that this recording, while it contains the basic elements of the Divine Liturgy, is not complete since the Liturgy takes many hours to perform. The selections on this recording have been taken from various chants of the immense liturgical repertory, ranging from ancient Byzantine melodies to those of contemporary composers.

Notes by *NICHOLAS SPASSKY*

* * *

PIOTR VASSILIEVICH SPASSKY was born in 1886 in the region of the Don. He began his musical training with his father, Vassilii Alexeevich Spassky. At the age of 16, he became choir conductor at the Don Ecclesiastical Seminary, then continued his work in Bulgaria, Italy, and finally France, where since 1948 he has been conductor of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral Choir in Paris. His choir has performed with great success in France and abroad, notably in 1962 in Rimini, Italy. The choir, under Mr. Spassky's direction, has recorded for Monitor Russian Hymns and Carols, a Christmas Eve Service (Christmas Vespers), Russian Orthodox Requiem & Hymns to the Virgin and Russian Sacred Choral Masterpieces.

A NOTE ABOUT THE COVER

The Russian icon on the cover of this recording depicts *The Resurrection—Descent Into Hell*. It is an icon from the Novgorod School, about 14th Century and is from the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, from the former A.B. Morozov Collection.

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This recording was made in the Cathedral on Rue Daru, Paris under the personal supervision of Michael Stillman.

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THE DIVINE EASTER LITURGY WITH THE HOURS AT EASTER

EASTER, the most joyous of all the Christian festivals, is intensely felt by the Slavic peoples, who celebrate it with great fervor. The Russian Orthodox Church celebrates Easter traditionally with the two services of *Zautrenya* (matins) and the Divine Easter Liturgy with the Hours. On this recording, the service begins after the *Zautrenya* with the Hours at Easter, during which the bread and wine are prepared for the fulfillment of the sacrament. During the Hours on other holy days, the prayers, psalms of repentance and other parts of the service are usually read aloud. But on Easter, all is song: there is no place for repentance but only for the joy of Resurrection.

The Hours begin with the celebrant's fervent proclamation, "Blessed is our God, always, now and forever, and unto ages of ages." The response, "Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and giving life to those in the tomb," is repeated three times by the people and choir. This response, in the form known as *troparion*—a very ancient element of the Byzantine chant which originated as an intercalation between psalm readings around the 4th and 5th centuries—recurs like a refrain many times in the course of the Liturgy.

The next hymn contains the acknowledgment of the Resurrection ("Having seen the Resurrection of Christ...") and an invitation to all the people to kneel down before the Christ who died and came to life again. The pious women sought Him in the grave, but found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre ("Arrived in the morning with Mary..."). But Christ returned to life, descended into Hell, destroyed its power and bestowed resurrection upon the fallen ("Though into the grave You did descend..."). This hymn is a *kondakion* (a brief hymn of praise to the glory of the Savior, the Virgin Mary or a Saint) and, like the *troparion*, is a very old element of the Byzantine chant. It occurs again in the body of the Liturgy itself.

Christ sits on the throne with the Father and the Holy Spirit ("In the grave with the body, and in Hell with the soul...in paradise with the thief, and on the throne with the Father and the Spirit..."). His tomb becomes the source of salvation ("As the giver of life..."). The Holy Mother Herself must rejoice, since through Her comes the joy of salvation ("O sanctified dwelling of the Most High..."). Therefore we glorify God, who gave us grace through His Resurrection (again, the *troparion* "Christ is risen from the dead...").

The Liturgy itself consists of two main parts which are known as the Liturgy of the

Catechumens (i.e., candidates for baptism in the early Christian Church), and the Liturgy of the Faithful. The first section (Band 3) begins with a series of proclamations, each of which is followed by the response, "Christ is risen from the dead...".

The next band (4) consists of the Easter Antiphons. These are chants stemming from the early method of antiphonal psalmody, in which successive verses of the psalm are sung, each followed by an inserted refrain sung by the whole choir. In the first *Antiphon*, "O be joyful in the Lord, all ye nations," the refrain asks the Holy Mother to pray for our salvation. In the second, "O God, be gracious unto us, and bless us, and show us the light of Your Countenance, and be merciful unto us," the refrain asks the Son of God, who rose from the dead on the third day, to save those who sing to Him. The third *Antiphon* (not sung in this recording) confirms the truth of Resurrection.

The celebrants then perform the Little Entrance. The Bishop stands alone in the center of the church as a symbol that "Christ came to the world, but the world does not recognize Him." His disciples, however, did follow Him: and in symbolic representation of this, the priests, deacons and acolytes come in procession from the altar to join the Bishop, then follow him back to the altar to show their willingness to follow Christ's teaching. The people are invited to kneel down before Christ ("O come let us worship and fall down before Christ..."). The choir sings to the Bishop "Long Life to the Lord," while the Bishop censures the altar, the iconostasis and the congregation.

The *troparion* and *kondakion* of the Hours at Easter are then repeated. These are followed by the hymn, "Those who are baptized in Christ," which on Easter replaces the *Trisagion* (the oldest form of the Sanctus), normally appearing at this point in the Liturgy.

The *Prokimen* (a verse of the Psalms sung before the reading of the Epistles) is proclaimed by the Deacon: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." The *Prokimen* is followed by the reading of the Epistles and the Gospel. Litanies preparing the faithful for the Sacrament are intoned by the Deacon. In the early Church, the candidates for baptism (catechumens) were permitted to participate only as far as this point in the Liturgy.

The recording continues with Part Two of the Easter Liturgy, known as the Liturgy of the Faithful. During the opening hymn, "Hymn of the Cherubim," the Great Entrance is performed, bringing to the altar the eucharistic gifts of bread and wine. Christ surrounded by angels is invisibly upborne, and the faithful must forget their earthly cares and acclaim Him as the King of Heaven.

Then begins the Eucharist proper with "The Mercy of Peace," during which the celebrant offers solemn thanksgiving to God for the gift of life in creation, for His mercy and compassion, and for salvation through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of His Son. In the last act of offering, the celebrant invokes the Holy Spirit to transmute the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. After the Consecration, which takes place during the last part of the hymn with the lines "We sing to You, we bless You, we thank You, O Lord..." the Church commemorates all who were present at the sacrifice, affirms its communion with the Saints and with all those who departed this life in hope of resurrection.

The next hymn, "The Angel Proclaimed," which is sung only during the Easter period, celebrates the Mother of God, rejoicing in the Resurrection of Her Son: "Shine, shine, O new Jerusalem...Exult today, and rejoice, O Zion: and You, pure Mother of God, glory that Your Son is risen." Then, after a litany of supplication with the refrain "*Gospodi pomilui*" (Lord, have mercy), comes the "Our Father which art in Heaven," the prayer of Christ Himself, which is the very end of the eucharistic prayer.

The Holy Doors close, and the celebrants commune at the altar. The choir again proclaims, in a jubilant hymn, the Resurrection of Christ and His victory over death ("Let God be resurrected, and let His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him flee from His countenance; as the smoke vanishes, so shall they vanish; as the wax melts at the face of the fire, so shall sinners perish at the Face of God...").

The Communion is distributed to the congregation after the opening of the Holy Doors, followed by hymns of thanksgiving for the given Grace. The Liturgy comes to a close with the kissing of the Cross, instrument of mankind's salvation, by the congregation.

* * *

Even from this brief description of the Liturgy, one can see the dominant place of music in it. Prayer and service are often described as "singing to God," and singing is an organic element in the Russian Orthodox conception of worship.

Since musical instruments are not used in the Russian Orthodox Church, all choral singing is a *cappella*. The language of the service is Church Slavonic, which came to Russia together with the acceptance of Christianity from Byzantium in 988 by Vladimir, Grand Prince of Kiev, (the region which is today the Ukraine).

Old Church Slavonic, the oldest recorded Slavic language, is a literary language, the original elements of which were synthesized by the brothers Cyril and Methodius, who were sent by Byzantine Emperor Michael III, about the middle of the 9th century, as

THE DIVINE EASTER LITURGY WITH THE HOURS AT EASTER

CHOIR OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL OF PARIS

conducted by PIOTR V. SPASSKY

MCD 71441

Soloists: Reverend Deacon Mikhail Storogenko and Veronika Mikheeff (soprano)

Trios: 1) Veronica Mikheeff (soprano), Irene Evetz (mezzo), Maria Evetz (alto)

2) Galina Grigorieff (soprano), Taissia Spassky (mezzo), Maria Evetz (alto)

THE HOURS AT EASTER

1. Proclamation: Blessed is our God...
(choir): Christ is risen from the dead...
(*Troparion*)
Having seen the Resurrection of Christ
(*Kievan Melody*)

2. Arrived in the morning with Mary... (Arch. Theophan);
Though into the grave You did descend... (*Kondakion*);
In the grave with the body...; Glory: As the giver of
life...; Now: O sanctified dwelling of the Most High...;
Purer than the Cherubim...; Christ is risen from the
dead...

THE LITURGY

3. Proclamation: Bless, O Lord. Blessed be the Kingdom...
Proclamation: Let God be resurrected... (choir): Christ
is risen from the dead...

4. Antiphons (Greek Melody)
1st Antiphon: O be joyful in the Lord...
2nd Antiphon: O God, be gracious unto us ...
5. O come let us worship...
(The Little Entrance)
6. Long Life to the Lord (Bortnyansky)
7. *Troparion*: Christ is risen from the dead...
8. *Kondakion*: Though into the grave you did
descend...
9. Those who are baptized in Christ
10. *Prokimen*: This is the day which the Lord hath
made...
11. Hymn of the Cherubim (Kravtsov)
(The Great Entrance)
12. The Mercy of Peace (Fateev)
13. The Angel Proclaimed (Vedel)
14. Litany (Ural Melody)
15. Our Father (Dubensky)
16. Let God Be Resurrected (Bortnyansky)

ПАСХАЛЬНЫЕ ЧАСЫ

1. Возглас: Благословен Бог наш...
(хор): Христос Воскресе...
Воскресение Христово видевше...
(Киевский распев)
2. Предварившие утро... (Архим. Фе-
офан): Аще и во гроб...; Во гробе
плотски...; Слава: Яко живоно-
сец...; И ныне: Вышняго освя-
щенное...; Честнейшую херу-
вим...; Христос Воскресе...

ЛИТУРГИЯ

3. Возглас: Благослови Владыко. Благословено царство... Возглас: Да воскреснет Бог... (хор): Христос Воскресе...

4. Антифоны: Воскликните Господе-
ви... (Греческий распев)
5. Приидите поклонимся...
6. Исполза эти деспота...
(Бортнянский)
7. Тропарь: Христос Воскресе...
8. Кондак: Аще и во гроб...
9. Елицы во Христа крестистесь...
10. Прокимен: Сей день...
11. Иже Херувимы... (Кравцов)
12. Милость мира... (Фатеев)
13. Ангел вопияше... (Ведель)
14. Ектения...
15. Отче наш... (Дубенский)
16. Да воскреснет Бог... (Бортнянский)



THE DIVINE EASTER LITURGY

with the Easter Hours

HOURS AT EASTER

1. Proclamation: Blessed is our God... 2:40
2. Arrived in the morning with Mary... 5:55

THE LITURGY

3. Proclamation: Bless, O Lord 2:18
4. Antiphons 3:10
5. O Come Let Us Worship... :50
6. Long Life to the Lord 1:15
7. Troparion: Christ is Risen from the Dead :33
8. Kondakion: Though into the Grave... :45
9. Those Who Are Baptized in Christ 1:20
10. Prokimen: This is the Day which the Lord Hath Made... 1:35

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11. Hymn of the Cherubim 4:40
12. The Mercy of Peace 6:40
13. The Angel Proclaimed 2:15
14. Litany 1:55
15. Our Father 2:33
16. Let God Be Resurrected 3:50

CHOIR of the RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL of PARIS

Conducted by Piotr V. Spassky

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