

## Office of Burial of Laymen

When an Orthodox Christian dies, his relatives quickly call the priest, who comes to the house, where the body of the departed lies, and having put on his epitrachelion<sup>1</sup>, and having put incense in the censor, censens the body of the dead and those present<sup>2</sup>, and begins as usual:

*Blessed is our God...*

And those present begin:

*Holy God... All-Holy Trinity... Our Father... For Yours is the Kingdom...*

And immediately sing this **troparia**.  
Tone 4:

*With the souls of the righteous departed ... In the place of your rest, O Lord... You are God... Alone pure...*

Deacon (**ektenia**): Have mercy on us O God...<sup>3</sup>.

Deacon: *Let us pray to the Lord.*

*Lord, have mercy.*

The priest says this **prayer**:

*O God of spirits...*

Exclamation: *For You are the resurrection...*

Deacon: Wisdom.

People: *More honorable than the Cherubim...* And the rest.

And immediately the priest does the **dismissal**:

*May the Ruler of the living and the dead, Christ our true God, through the prayers of His All-Pure Mother, of our venerable and God-bearing fathers, and of all His Saints, establish the soul(s) of His servant(s) who have been taken from us, Name, in the mansions of the saints and add them with the righteous, and have mercy on us, for He is good and the Lover of mankind.*

And if everything is prepared, as to the outcome<sup>4</sup>, the priest again does the beginning: *Blessed is our God...* And we begin to sing: *Holy God*: with fear and all tenderness<sup>5</sup>. And taking up the remains of the departed, we go to the temple, those present and the priest with candles, the deacon with the censor<sup>6</sup>. When they arrive in the temple, the remains are immediately placed on the church porch (or in the temple, as it is the custom everywhere in Great Russia)<sup>7</sup>.

And they begin<sup>8</sup>: *He who dwells in the help of the Highest...*

And then they sing in a loud voice: *Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.*

*Undeiled in the way: Alleluia*<sup>9</sup>.

And the **first stasis of the undeiled** is sung in tone 6. At the end of each verse we sing: *Alleluia*.

*Blessed are the undefiled... Alleluia. Blessed are those who search out His testimonies... Alleluia. And the rest of the Psalm.*

*Glory: Alleluia.*

*Both now: Alleluia.*

Deacon (**ektenia**): *Again and again.*

Deacon: *Let us pray to the Lord.*

*Lord, have mercy.*

The priest says this **prayer**: *O God of spirits...* And after this we begin the **second stasis** in tone 5: at the end of each verse we say: *Have mercy upon Your servant.*

And after the end (of the second stasis), *Glory: Have mercy upon Your servant. Both now: Have mercy upon Your servant.*

Deacon: *Again and again...*

And after this the **third stasis** begins, in the third tone: *Your name: Alleluia.*

And after the end (of the third stasis) immediately:

*Blessed are You, O Lord... The choir of the saints have found...*

Also the deacon: *Again and again...*

And after the exclamation we sing the **proper troparia**, tone 5:

*Give rest, O our Savior, with the righteous to Your servant(s) and establish him (or, her, them) in your courts, as it is written, overlooking, as You are good, his*

*(her, their) trespasses, voluntary and involuntary, and all things in knowledge or in ignorance, O Lover of mankind.*

*Glory, end (this troparion):*

*And all things in knowledge or in ignorance, O Lover of mankind.*

*Both now, Theotokion:*

*From the Virgin You shone to the world, O Christ God, through her making us sons of light, have mercy on us.*

Also **Psalm 50**.

And the **Canon**,<sup>10</sup> which is an acrostic: with the Irmos sung in 6, for the departed. A work of Theophanes.

Ode 1. Tone 6. Irmos: *When, as if it were dry land ...*<sup>11</sup>.

Ode 3. Irmos: *There is none holy ...*

Deacon: *Again and again...*

The priest reads this prayer: *O God of spirits...* Exclaims: *For You are ...*<sup>12</sup>.

**Sedalen**, tone 6: *Truly all is vanity...*

*Glory, both now and ever,*  
Theotokion: *O All-holy Theotokos ...*

Ode 4. Irmos: *Christ is my power...*

Ode 5. Irmos: *With divine light...*

Ode 6. Irmos: *The sea of life...*

Deacon: *Again and again...*

The priest says this prayer: *O God of spirits...* Exclamation: *For You are ...*

**Kontakion**, tone 8: With the saints give rest ... **Ikos**: You only are immortal ...

And again: *With the saints give rest...*

Ode 7. Irmos: *For an angel made the furnace sprinkle with dew ...*

Ode 8. Irmos: *From the flame upon the godly ones...*

Song 9. Irmos: *It is not possible for men to see God ...<sup>12</sup>*.

Deacon: *Again and again...*

The priest says this prayer: *O God of spirits...* Exclamation: *For you are...*;

We begin Idiomela<sup>13</sup> by John the monk. Tone 1: *What sweetness of life...*

**The Beatitudes**, tone 6: In your kingdom ...

Then the Deacon says: *Let us attend.*

Priest: *Peace be to all.*

The People sing the **prokeimenon**, tone 6: *Blessed is the way, in which you shall walk today O soul, for a place of rest is prepared for you. Verse: To You, O Lord, will I cry.*

Deacon: *Wisdom.*

Reader: **The Epistle** to the Thessalonians (see p. 631).

Priest: *Peace be to you.*

*Alleluia* Tone 6: *Blessed, is he whom You have chosen and taken, O Lord.*

**Gospel**<sup>14</sup> according to John (see p. 631)

Deacon (**ektenia**): *Have mercy on us...*

Deacon: *Let us pray to the Lord.*

*Lord, have mercy.*

And after ending this, the first of the priests or the bishop if present says the **prayer**:

*O God of spirits*: out loud, having approached the departed. In like manner all the priests present. Let it be known that, whenever the Deacon says the litany each of the priests according to its rank says in a low voice this prayer, silently near the departed. And he proclaims: *For you are...* Now the first priest or the bishop says aloud<sup>15</sup> the **prayer**: *O God of spirits* as said above.

After the exclamation there is a **kissing**<sup>16</sup>.

And we sing the present **stichera** of the podoben. Tone 2: *Come, let us give the last kiss...*

Also: *Trisagion. All-Holy Trinity... Our Father...* Priest: *For Yours are the kingdom...*

Also: *With the souls of the righteous*: and the rest. The petition from the deacon: *Have mercy on us, O God...*

The priest says the prayer: *O God of spirits...* Exclamation: *For you are...*

After this exclamation, *Glory, both now*. And the **dismissal**: *May He who rose from the dead...*

The bishop or the head the priest, says this three times: *May your memory be eternal, O our worthily blessed and ever-memorable brother*. Three times. Also the singers sing three times:

Eternal memory<sup>17</sup>.

Immediately the bishop, if he happens to be there or the priest reads aloud the **prayer**<sup>18</sup> of parting<sup>19</sup>:

*May the Lord Jesus, our God, Who gave a divine command to His Holy Disciples and Apostles, that they should bind and loose them that had fallen into sin, and again, that we, having received this from them, should likewise grant remission, forgive you, spiritual child, that which you have done in the present age, whether voluntary or involuntary, now and ever and unto ages of ages, amen.*

And so taking up the remains we depart to the tomb (i.e. to the grave), followed by all the people, preceded by the priest, and singing: *Holy God ...*<sup>20</sup>.

*All-Holy Trinity... Our Father... And the rest.*

And the remains are placed in the tomb<sup>21</sup>. The bishop, or the priest, takes a shovel in his hand, crosswise spreads earth over the remains<sup>22</sup>, saying: *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all that dwell therein*<sup>23</sup>.

And after this he pours oil from the shrine lamp, or scatters ashes out of the censer<sup>24</sup> over the remains. And so they fill the grave in the usual way, while the Troparia: *With the souls of the righteous departed ...* and the rest are sung<sup>25</sup>. And the **dismissal**.

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<sup>1</sup> Ordinarily at any burial priests also vest in a phelonion (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Usatava Bogoslužhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church], p. 59), but equally at the Panakhida (Ustav ch. 14; refer to the Office of the Burial of a Priest and the Ukaz o provozhd. usopsh. na sv. Paskhu [Ukase for the Accompaniment of the Departed during Pascha]). - See the dopoln. k pogr. prim. [Supplementary notes on burial] below.

<sup>2</sup> The censuring is usually done from the beginning and until the end of the burial (refer to note 1 on p. 1200 above), and those serving at the burial have to watch that during all the time of the burial service the censer by the priest or the deacon constantly smoked so it would be necessary in this case to have two censers for that purpose as this every time gives the full chance to replace a burnt out censer without delay (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1889, 32). - See note 2 on p. 1203 above.

<sup>3</sup> When intoning this and other ektenias, as well as the exclamations, the word "newly departed" may be added to the word "of the departed" - two words with one meaning, after this it is possible to leave the word "of the departed" (see Ts. V. [Church Messenger] 1890, 27).

<sup>4</sup> There is a custom, after the service of the Panakhida in the house, to bless the dead man by hand (but not by a cross) (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 30).

<sup>5</sup> This hymn is sung (while carrying the body of the layman from the house and also the church to the cemetery), after this all the deceased, as Simeon of Salonika said, are servants to the Holy Trinity, proclaimed in her life, died in Her, went to Her after death and are ranked with the angels who are continually singing the Trisagion Hymn (Novaia Skrizhalj [New Stone Tablets]).

<sup>6</sup> The coffin cover, which ordinarily is carried behind an icon or a cross (see p. 1229 below), at an entrance of the funeral procession into the temple, is left outside of the temple (Priest Silchenkov, p. 113), or on the church porch; in some

places it is also brought into the temple and put with half on the coffin (where the feet of the dead are), but the other half goes down from the coffin and leans on some kind of support.

<sup>7</sup> By the witness of Simeon of Salonika, the burial service of the deceased of the priesthood and the holy ones was sung inside the temple, but of simple monks or laymen was done in the narthex (Treatises, vol. 2, p. 526); but practice of the burial service of laymen in the narthex already went out of use at the time of Simeon of Salonika in the Greek Church; in the Russian Church its application was connected with extreme difficulties as among the most ancient Russians, usually small, temples of special narthexes were not inside, and the burial service on the church porch was impossible; therefore the designated practice could hardly find broad application for us, and the expression of our Trebnik is: "as where in Great Russia there is the custom", probably points to a very ancient practice (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1894, 31; refer to Samarskiiia Eparkhial'niia Vedomosti [Samara Diocesan News] 1892, 19). At the present time the performance burial services in the temple are the universal custom of our Church, decreed and its law by force, in which as far as concerns the temple as about the place of the burial service, then it always means the very temple and not the church porch (see, e.g., Ukaz Sv. Sinoda [Decrees of the Holy Synod], 16 Jul. 1812; Opr. Sv. Sin. [Decrees of the Holy Synod] 10-12 Feb. 1886).

<sup>8</sup> If burial service immediately follows the carrying out, then the special exclamation is not done; but if the carrying out comes on the eve of the burial service (refer to p. 1219 above), or between the carrying out and the burial service the liturgy is done, then, of course, there must be the initial exclamation ("Blessed is God") (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1893, 52).

At the burial service in the temple it is necessary to open the royal doors (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Usatava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church], p. 78; Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1897, 28; Tserkovniia Vedomosti [Church News] 1896, 1).

<sup>9</sup> When we read in the Trebnik that they sing: "Undeified in the way" "Alleluia" then we know that these words, placed in the first stasis, one singer at first sings on the kliros and with a special chant (each stasis in a special tone), and then also all the other singers sing the this stasis in the same chant, with the addition, after each verse of the stases, the word: "Alleluia". In exactly the same way and before the second stasis are printed the words: "Your commandments", "Have mercy upon Your servant", but before the third stasis: "Your name", "Alleluia". All this means that in the 2nd stasis, after each verse, as well as after the words: "Your commandments", have to add: "Have mercy upon Your servant", but after the third stasis, after each verse and after the words: "Your name" have to add: "Alleluia"; and thus the singers have to sing all verses in the same chant with which they begun and not another (Novaia Skrizhalj [New Stone Tablets]). It is impossible to drop the "Undeified" for any

reason; neither the inexperience of singers, nor any other reason can form the basis for any turn from the tender singing originating in deep Christian antiquity (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1886, 46).

<sup>10</sup> During the canon, usually, they sing the refrain "Give rest, O Lord, to the soul of Your servant" (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Usatava Bogosluzhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church], p. 731) or: "Your servants".

During the burial (but equally in the commemoration) of several persons is sung either "souls of the servant" or "souls of the servants (refer to office of the liturgy the 2nd petition of the ekt. for the departed and the exclamation), that is equally correct (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1895, 16).

<sup>11</sup> The custom, which is taking root at the present time is very reprehensible, is not to read the funeral canon at all at the burials, limiting themselves only to the singing of irmoses of the canon and the refrains.

<sup>12</sup> Upon termination of the canon the candles are extinguished. (Priest Silchenkov, p. 137).

<sup>13</sup> The name "samoglasen" and the designation of their tones clearly specify that all of them are appointed for singing (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1890, 48).

<sup>14</sup> At burial service of laymen one Gospel must be read as this is required by the Trebnik (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1886, 18).

<sup>15</sup> From here it is clearly evident that the prayer in this place: "O God of spirits... ", is said aloud. By the way, this can form the basis of saying the mentioned prayer aloud even in the Panakhida before the dismissal as is done by many pastors (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 40).

<sup>16</sup> There is a custom, owing to which the priest, after the kissing of the departed at the burial service, blesses him (her) with his hand (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1889, 30).

<sup>17</sup> After the dismissal of "The Burial Service" it is everywhere exclaimed by the priest or deacon: "In blessed repose grant rest eternal, O Lord, to Your newly departed servant, Name, and make his (her) memory to be eternal". Such exclamation should be said "after the dismissal" in the existing "Service for the Departed" (see the Typikon, Chapter 14). Of course, there will be nothing incompatible in this, if the priest, after the burial dismissal, says: "Your eternal memory"..., but the deacon serving with the priest, from his side makes the exclamation: "In blessed repose"..., but the singers will then sing: "Eternal memory" (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1888, 5; see also the Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1895, 16).

<sup>18</sup> According to the instruction of some, at the burial service, the priest must read the prayer of absolution over the departed (see about this below, supplement for the burial, notes) standing at the feet of the departed or on the side by the coffin and having turned facing the departed; at the burial service of children (done according to the Office of the Burial of an Infant) the prayer: "Who protects infants", it is necessary for the priest to read, standing at the head of the infant and having turned his face to the altar (Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1888, 20).

The prayer of absolution is placed in the hand of the departed child at least 7 years old (Tserkovniia Vedomosti [Church News] 1896, 17); as from this time children are already read the burial service according to the office of "burial of the laity".

The prayer of absolution is both said for those who suddenly died as well as for those who did not die suddenly, but without repentance (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1890, 20; 1895, 31; 1896, 28). and generally to everyone who is buried with an Orthodox ceremony.

The prayer of absolution placed in the right hand, which hand, according to tradition, St. Alexander Nevsky, at his burial, himself brought this prayer, as though alive (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1898, 29).

At burial service of several dead men it is good to read the prayer of absolution separately for each one (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1892, 32).

<sup>19</sup> The "parting" prayer and the "prayer of absolution" essentially have the same meaning, their distinction is only in the details. Therefore reading the prayer of absolution itself excludes the need of reading the parting prayer whose contents is wholly contained in the first, and it agrees with the order which was established in the present time everywhere, the parting prayer is not said at all (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1896, 28). From this it would be necessary to conclude that the prayer of absolution has to be read after the "Eternal memory" when it is necessary to say the parting prayer according to the Trebnik. But we usually read and place it in the right hand of the departed after the reading of the Gospel, or after "Have mercy on us, O God" and "O God of spirits". For such a shift it is possible to specify the following basis: the Trebnik says that "after the exclamation (after "O God of spirits") there is the last kiss". During this time the clergy and all those present in the temple say goodbye to the departed. The natural feeling of grief over the departed is considerably facilitated by reading the prayer of absolution and placing it in the hand of the departed. On the other hand, the parting prayer is in the Trebnik placed after the "dismissal", when therefore the attendees must leave the temple, but such a solemn prayer, as the "prayer of absolution", is more expedient to read in the presence of all,

before the termination of the ceremony (see Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1888, 18; 1893, 20; 1895, 4; 1897, 42).

<sup>20</sup> Doing the Litiya at the cross-ways is purely a local custom and is not standard and therefore has no foundation in the statutes and rites of the church (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1891, 41).

<sup>21</sup> The grave of the departed, usually, faces East, with the thought that we also pray towards East, is waiting for the approach of the dawn of eternity, or the second coming of Christ and meaning that the dead goes from life in the West to eternity in the East. This custom is inherited by the Orthodox Church from deep antiquity. Already St. John Chrysostom, specifying the position of the departed facing East as signifying the resurrection of the departed, speaks about such an orientation as the custom existing from former times (Novaia Skrizhalj [New Stone Tablets]; Dukhovnaia Beseda [Spiritual Conversation] 1859, 43; Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1891, 40). - Refer to the supplement for the burial, notes below.

<sup>22</sup> The spreading of earth or the ashes from the censer (see comment 24 below) over the dead must be done after the commission of the coffin into the grave as the Trebnik calls the "coffin" a tomb (Tserkovnyi Viestnik [Church Messenger] 1895, 17; see note 25 below).

<sup>23</sup> To sing thus: "O earth, opened wide", does not follow because this is not specified in the given office of burial (for more information see the Rukovodstvo dlia Sel'skikh Pastyrei [Manual for Village Pastors] 1889, 5; refer to note 1 for p. 120 above).

<sup>24</sup> Ashes mean the same as unburned oil, - the quenched life on earth, but life pleasing to God, which rises as incense from a censer (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Usatava Bogoslužhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church], p. 735).

<sup>25</sup> During the commission of the body of the departed into the grave, the Litiya for the departed is done; after the end of it they, with dirt in hand, give earth to the departed, as a token of humility to the divine command: "for earth are you and to earth you shall return" (Posobiye k Izucheniyu Usatava Bogoslužhenia Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Manual for the Study of the Ustav of the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church], pp. 734-735).

*S. V. Bulgakov, "Handbook for Church Servers", 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp. 1223-1226.*

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