

Hieromonk Maximos of Holy Resurrection Monastery has composed services for the Theotokos, Searcher for the Lost. All are welcome and encouraged to pray these services privately.

VESPERS: (Searcher for the Lost)

Stichera at Psalm 140

Tone 8

"O Child! Why have you treated us so?"* Asked the All-Holy searching Mother.* "Why send us far from your divine face,* O my sacred Son?"* You, whom Eve fled in the garden*, I have sought through every street in Jerusalem ;* as our fathers hungered for You in the wilderness,* I have longed for your return to my beating heart,* comfort me your grieving Handmaid,* You who love mankind.

"Why seek me but in my Father's House?"* Answered the God-made-Man, her Son:* "Why seek the living God among the dead streets?"* O most Holy Mother,* All generations will bless your sacred error today,* for losing Me the world found Me,* safe in the embrace of my Father's Home,* revealing in human words the word of God,* so that - following you into my arm's clasp* all may come to know my love for mankind.

"I have sought you early in the morning,"* replied the maiden Mother,* "I have made my heart a watcher for the Dawn,* O my sacred Son.* Now, where angels fed me in my youth* the teachers of the law are fed by the Law-Giver.* My mind bends beneath this mystery* and my pondering heart falls silent:* This strange finding pierces me like a new loss;* teach me, your Mother, You who love mankind.

"For love, my hand opened Adam's side,"* answered her Son and God,* "but for sin, Adam will open my side with a spear,* O most holy Mother,* and search the Abyss of Mercy* in the flesh and blood formed in your womb.* I school you now for the black day,* when my broken body will pierce your heart,* so that you may teach the universe to weep,* and wake Adam to my love for mankind."

"I who was bewildered by Gabriel's splendor,"* said his loving Mother,* "stand amazed before your Face like mine,* O my sacred Son,* your Face upon which Gabriel dares not gaze.* I search for one to help, and find no-one,* I look for

words to speak and cannot.* Yet I spread out my hands to You* and bow my neck for your embrace, adoring forever you love for mankind."

"I will arise and return with you to Nazareth,"* answered the Word in the Temple,* "and I will rise from my three-day burial,* O most holy Mother.* I, who fill the cosmos with my Presence* empty myself into your care,* so that all the lost who wish to find Me* may call on you in your home,* and, touching you, who hold Me in your arms,* touch Me who loves mankind.

Glory. Same tone.

Winging over the flood, a dove found no rest,* but Noah's hand bobbing on the ark,* until olive grew once more on the dry hill.* So the Father's Dove found no life on earth* until He plucked a thorn wreathed about the word's head,* and recognizing in bare Golgotha * a new Ararat's saving slopes.

Now and ever. Dogmatikon, same tone.

In his love for mankind,* the king of Heaven appeared on earth and dwelt among us.* For He took flesh from the pure Virgin,* and, being thus incarnate, came forth from her.* the only Son of God remained one Person,* but now possessed two natures.* for this reason, we profess that He is truly perfect God and perfect man.* Therefore, we beseech you, O Virgin Mother:* Implore Christ, whom we proclaim as God,* to have mercy on our souls.

Prokeimenon of the day.

Three Prophecies:

The Reading is from Genesis. (28:10-17):

Jacob went out from the well of the oath and journeyed towards Harran. And he came upon a place and slept there, for the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of the place and put it by his head; and he slept in that place, and he dreamed. And behold, a ladder set up on the earth, whose head reached to heaven; and the Angels of God were going up and going down upon it. But the Lord stood above it and said: I am the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac, do not be afraid. The land on which you are sleeping I shall give to you and to your seed. And your seed will be like the sand of the earth, and it will be spread abroad to the Sea and Liva and North and East; and in you and in your seed all the tribes

of the earth will be blessed. And behold, I am with you, guarding you on every road on which you may journey; and I shall bring you back again to this land, because I shall never abandon you until I have done all that I have said to you. And Jacob arose from his sleep and said: The Lord is in this place, but I did not know it. And he was afraid, and said: How fearful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven.

The Reading is from the Prophecy of Ezekiel. (43:72, 44:1)

It shall be from the eighth day and upwards, the Priests shall make your holocausts upon the altar, and those for your salvation; and I shall accept you, says the Lord. And he turned me back by the way of the outer gate of the Holy Place, which looks towards the east, and it was shut. And the Lord said to me: This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no one shall pass through it, because the Lord, the God of Israel, will enter through it, and it shall be shut. Therefore this prince shall sit in it to eat bread. By the way of the Elam of the gate he shall enter, and by that way he shall go out. And he brought me by the way of the gate towards the North, opposite the House; and I saw, and behold the whole house of the Lord was full of glory.

The Reading is from Proverbs. (9:1)

Wisdom has built herself a house. She has slaughtered her beasts and mixed her wine in the mixing bowl, and prepared her table. She has sent out her servants, to invite with a loud proclamation upon the mixing bowl: Whoever is foolish, let him turn to me. And to those who lack wisdom she said: Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine that I have mixed for you. Abandon folly, and you will live; and seek understanding that you may have life, and set aright your understanding with knowledge. One who corrects the wicked will gain dishonor for himself. One who rebukes the impious will get blame for himself; for to the impious rebukes are blows. Do not rebuke the wicked, lest they hate you. Rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man and he will be wiser; teach a just man and he will increase learning. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and the counsel of Saints, understanding. While to know the law is the part of a good mind. For by this means you will live for a long time, and years will be added to your life.

Litija

Tone 4

Lovely Lady, unconsumed yet burning bush,* unwed Bride, canny Widow

searching out her coin,* sweep me from the corners of my despondency.* I am lost and forgotten in all the world,* but you are mindful of the lost:* Remember me to the son your bore* and lead me to His Father's House.

Jacob lost Rachel in her last childbirth,* sundered by their community in ancient Eve;* and the whole creation groans in labor* until you, O new Eve, painlessly bear the last pain-filled Man* Whose death washes away all travail* in the baptism of water and His blood.

All-Holy, searching Lady, first finder of god in the flesh,* born in star lit Bethlehem;* Lady, refuge from all danger,* guide us in our lumbering search,* making loud our loving cries for Christ's mercy.

Glory. Same tone.

Christ, the Fruit of Mary's womb, we put on in baptism,* he is of one essence with the Father,* yet distinct in person,* and from Him is the Spirit sent forth* on all the faithful in the Chrism of mercy.

Now and ever. Same tone.

The Law stoned the man in search of sticks,* though the wilderness Sabbath froze his bones;* but now Mary's Son has gathered His wheat* and made the Sabbath a feast, treading the high places in victory,* bowing heavens to the earth,* warming us with His fiery love.

Aposticha

Tone 3

Narrow the space between losing and finding,* between the strength of the feeble and the breaking of the mighty,* between going down to Hades and rising up again,* between the bringing low and the lifting up.* Narrow the space, O Mother of God:* the breath of your Son's body.

Verse: Hear, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear.

The Son of Mary searched the fig-tree,* and cursed the arid plant.* Rejoice, O barren race,* for the Lord stopped not His search,* but dug even until hell to heal our stock,* clearing away the pestilence of death,* husbanding us to plenty again.

Verse: The rich among the people will seek your favor.

Pure One, prefigured in the Burning Bush;* then the spark ignited the sky for the Israelites,* now the fire of your motherhood had overcome the universe with flames:* pray your hot prayers for the coldest hearts,* and save your servants who are lost* in the lightlessness of sin's bitter night.

Glory. Same tone.

Adam was lost to the Father.* Eve, seeking shadows, wandered far from the Son.* To the Spirit the dry ground gave up* nothing but dead men's bones.* So journeyed the undivided Trinity to rendered humanity,* bowing the heavens and coming down.

Now and ever. Same tone.

O God, heal Adam,* close our wounds, bind our hearts,* O Opener of Sides, love's Well.* Adam's first wound was mended by Eve's birth,* then burst open by his deathly leap into hell;* Now the new Eve holds up the soft Balm,* Whose open side closes ancient hurts.

Troparia at the Blessing of Bread

Tone 4

Within the Temple , O Temple of Life, you found Him whom the universe cannot contain, silencing the teachers by the word of God which is above the wisdom of the wise. O all-pure Mother of God, cease not seeking your children who are lost; that we may treasure Christ in our hearts, and find eternally our Father's House.

(Three times.)

Matins: (Searcher for the Lost)

Troparion at "The Lord is God"

Tone 4

Within the Temple , O Temple of Life, you found Him whom the universe cannot contain, silencing the teachers by the word of God which is above the wisdom of

the wise. O all-pure Mother of God, cease not seeking your children who are lost; that we may treasure Christ in our hearts, and find eternally our Father's House.

(Three times.)

First Sessional Hymn

Tone 7

Come, O feast-lovers take up again your hymns, adorn the earth, O Church with a new praise, speak comfort to all the lost throughout the world, naming that holy Woman who found God in her womb and who by His grace gives to all who seek great and abundant mercy.

Glory...now and ever. Repeat.

Second Sessional Hymn

Tone 7

Born from barren Hannah's pain, Samuel foreshadows the painless birth from the Virgin's womb of Him Who came to take all pains on Himself. But as He chose, so did you, O All-Holy Lady, receiving a swordthrust by holy choice, as daughter not as slave and, abiding a little loss, finding the Pearl beyond price.

Glory...now and ever. Repeat.

Third Sessional Hymn (after the Polyeleos)

Tone 4

To the Woman who has cast aside all for the Treasure, and who has sold everything for the Pearl, who has sought out the Good Fish, is given the gift of finding: Boast, barren and poor in spirit, boast of the Lord!

Glory...now and ever. Repeat.

Prokeimenon

Tone 4.

I will make your name to be remembered from generation to generation!

Verse: Forget your people and your father's house, and the King will greatly desire your beauty.

Gospel: Luke 1:39-49,56

Sticheron after Psalm 50

Tone 6.

I am the sheep astray among the thorns, the pit closes in and the waters meet over my head, O Lady rise to heaven and thunder, that I might see You on the heights, and hear Your voice calling me. Find me and rescue me, O Mother of God.

CANON

Troparia on the Acrostic:

"O Holy Mary, remember Maximos"

With the Acrostic in the Triadica:

"Splendid"

And in the Theotokia

"Searcher"

Katavasia of the Season

Tone 8

Ode 1

Irmos

Crossing the water as though dry land, * escaping from Egypt * and its miseries in his flight, * the Israelite raised his voice and cried aloud, * 'To God our Redeemer now let us sing!'

Refrain: Most Holy Theotokos, save us!

Oysters hide their pearls from sight; * But you, O Lady, * held the Pearl of Great Price, * the hidden Trove thrown open to our gaze, * Who, when we seek Him, finds us.

High up the parted Red Sea flung its treasures, to guide * Israel 's searching feet, *
So the Word of God emptied Himself, * parting a womb with his flesh.

On before them two pillars marched: * fire and cloud * to light and lead the search
* for the Land promised by our God, * Whose Mother we praise in hymns.

Glory...

Sing Seraphim and chant Cherubim: * To Light from Light * who makes bright
our search. * Seek Him early, my heart, before the dawn: * Father, and Son and
Holy Spirit.

Both...

Stand enrapt before the Lady all-pure, * Angel of God; * Speak the Lord's
greeting, * pressing all heaven into your speech: * Hail! O woman full of grace!

Katavasia

Tone 4

**I shall open my mouth and it will be filled with the Spirit, and I shall sing a
hymn to the Queen and Mother; and I shall celebrate with splendor and sing
with joy of her wonders.**

Ode 3

Irmos

**In the beginning Your Wisdom made firm the skies, * and on the waters you
set the earth. * O Christ, let your precepts be my founding rock! * For none
but You is holy, * O Lover of Mankind.**

Look you barren on Samuel's wondrous birth, * touch in mind the mystery of love.
* Mary's Son turns away barrenness and all death, * the Riser and the Conqueror *
and Lover of Mankind.

Young David was hid among wand'ring sheep * from Samuel the prophet's search.
* And among us sheep all gone astray was hid * David's Daughter who gave birth
* to the Lover of Mankind.

Make music from David's words, O Church: * Where can I hide from your Face? *
Your hand shall find me, hold me fast * through your Mother's prayers, * You who
love mankind.

Glory...

Power and glory and majesty are yours * O God, in nature One, * Holy Trinity
without division, * Creator and Master of all * and Lover of Mankind.

Both...

Enamored Solomon foresaw your beauty, * O Lady, Wisdom's glory. * Save from
the snares of fools and sin * your servants who call on you, * the Searcher for the
Lost.

Katavasia

Tone 4

**O Theotokos, living and overflowing fountain, strengthen those who applaud
you in this spiritual gathering; and in your holy feast make them worthy of
crowns of glory.**

Sessional Hymn

Tone 1

The all-pure Mother searched for her Son * and pondered his Gospel in her heart. *
Glory to her abounding care! * Glory to her unfailing help! * Glory to her, the
steadfast Searcher for the Lost.

Glory...now and ever. Repeat.

Ode 4

Irmos

**I have heard, Lord, the mystery * of your dispensation, * I heard and was
afraid, * I have meditated on your works * and exalt and glorify your Deity.**

At Your sound, Lord, Habbakuk * trembled in fear, * foreseeing your Virgin birth.
* But she who pondered in her heart * without fear will find the lost.

Rahab's rope, Lady, let down * the hidden scouts; * you strung your handmaid's words * which let the Word down into flesh * to search for his lost people.

You went forth, Lord, to save! * trampling down * the waters of error and sin, * raising up your Mother for us * the Searcher for the Lost.

Glory...

Let us all, faithful, give praise * to God our Father, * and his Son without beginning * and the Spirit who gives life to all, * our God the holy Trinity.

Both...

All of us, Lady, magnify. * your holiness, * for you gave birth to God the Son * who gave you to us his Church * to be Searcher for the Lost.

Katavasia

Tone 4

He who sits in glory on the throne of divinity: Jesus the supreme God, came down on an ethereal cloud and with His pure hand redeemed those who cry out to Him: glory to your power, a Christ!

Ode 5

Irmos

Why have You driven me far from your face, * O unapproachable Light? * The outer darkness has enveloped me, * wretched creature that I am. * Make me return, I pray You, * and direct my paths towards the light of your law.

Reeling out your prophets for us, * O unapproachable Light, * Your mighty right hand has sought us out, * among all the storms of sin. * Gather us into your apostles' nets * by your Mother's holy and steadfast prayers.

Early at dawn we search for You, * O unapproachable Light. * Save us through your Mother's prayers * from your lifted hand and your consuming fire; * Those who dwell in dust shall awake * for Your glory on earth is everlasting light!

Make this gnawing darkness bright, * O unapproachable Light; * not the lightless glow of hellish flames, * nor the lava flow of selfish lust, * but by tender Mary's searching pleas * the new dawn of your grace in my soul.

Glory...

Escaping darkness through the incarnate dawn * of the unapproachable Light, * we praise our saving, triune God * help in trials that He is! * Give to us strength, we pray to you, * Father, Son and all-Holy Spirit.

Both...

Remember your servants who call on you, * Mother of the Light * Unconsumed you bore the Fire * untouched by man you bore the Son. * Undaunted by our hearts of stone, * find us and bring us to our God.

Katavasia

Tone 4

The universe was amazed at your divine glory, for you, O Virgin, who knew not wedlock, have borne in your womb the God of all and have given birth to an eternal Son, who grants salvation to those who praise you.

Ode 6

Irmos

I pour out * my supplication to the Lord, * and to him I shall declare my afflictions, * for, see, my soul has been filled with evils * and now my life has been drawn very close to Hell. * Like Jonas I appeal to you, * 'O my God, bring me up from corruption!'

Entombed, I call * to you, Lady, out of my distress: * God's Presence in the temple I cannot see, * or feel the breath of his holy mouth, * or touch the warmth of his warming sun, * I am tangled in the ocean's weeds, * hurry to my deliverance, and have mercy on me.

Many walls * in the city echoed your cries * as you searched for your Son who was lost. * Beyond the walls rang your Calvary lament * We have no Mother who does not know grief * nor a High Priest without temptation. * Lead us in our search for the Light and save us!

Be our ally * Lady, as Rachel was Jacob's. * Through guile she frustrated Laban's search; * Now you, with the wisdom of a serpent, * cheat the snake who seeks to swallow the life * of your servants who call on you * as our Helper and the Searcher for the Lost.

Glory...

New-made ropes * could not keep Samson bound, * nor a new-hewn tomb enclose the Word * who rose in glory on the third day, * driving Death like smoke from before his face, * who reigns in glory on a throne * with the Father and the Spirit, one God for eternity.

Both...

Cover me, * with the wings of your love * for to you I run for your protection, * I who am lost among the evils of this life * and whose life is drawn very close to the Abyss. * O Lady, I appeal to you, * All-pure One, bring me up from corruption.

Katavasia

Tone 4

Come, divinely inspired, let us clap our hands and celebrate this holy and most honorable feast of the Mother of God and glorify God who was born of her.

Kontakion

Tone 6

O Lady, strengthen our hearts and knees * and lead us healed along level paths. * For we have wandered far from your Son * into anger and loss and many sins. * Search for us who call on your name * and bring us safe into our Father's house.

IKOS

He who rested in the Ark * amazed the teachers where the Ark reposed, * and she who surpassed the Ark * searched Sion for the Lord of Heaven. * He who emptied himself into her care * has given his Mother to his Church * to seek for all the lost who call * and bring them safe into our Father's house.

Ode 7

Irmos

The Three Youths from Judea * who attained to the faith of the holy Trinity * in Babylon of old, * sang out as they trampled * on the furnace's raging flames, * 'Blessed are you, O God, * the God of our Fathers!'

Enveloped in the flames * the youths recalled Sinai's Burning Bush * and cried out in prayer. * O Lady search for us the lost * so that we may sing their hymn: * 'Blessed are you, O God, * the God of our Fathers. '

Reaching out toward the youths * the flames yearned for flesh to char and burn, * as Death sought for Christ * But both flames and Death * met the shock of this song: * 'Blessed are you, O God, * the God of our Fathers. '

Many flames lick my soul * and my passions rule where Christ should reign; * Babylon holds me fast! * Visit me like Habakkuk, * Lady, feed me that I may sing: * 'Blessed are you, O God, * and the God of our Fathers. '

Glory...

Drive out the Canaanites * though they have chariots of iron and are strong! * Teach me your laws, * Holy Trinity our God, * so that I may sing to you: * 'Blessed are you, O God, * and the God of our Fathers. '

Both...

Hear our prayer, Mother * from the midst of these flames in life's furnace; * our children cry, * our parents search for peace. * Find for us the strength to sing: * 'Blessed are you, O God, * and the God of our Fathers.'

Katavasia

Tone 4

The three young men divinely inspired, refused to worship creatures instead of the Creator. But with courage they trampled upon the threatening fire and sang joyfully: Blessed are You, O all praised Lord, the God of our Fathers.

Ode 8

Irmos

The King of heaven, * whose praise the Angels are singing, * all the hosts of the bodiless powers * praise him and exalt him most highly to all ages.

A wake, O my soul! * Praise the Woman who searches * for all who seek to sing to her Son: * praise him and exalt him most highly to all ages.

" 'X' marks a target, * and my Son made his breast a mark * for Death's darts," says She who sings: * praise him and exalt him most highly to all ages.

I stand amazed * and praise your steady zeal, * O Searcher for the Lost, who cries: * praise him and exalt him most highly to all ages.

Glory...

In the beginning * you made heaven and earth, * Father, Son and Holy Spirit. * Praise him and exalt him most highly to all ages.

Both...

Evening falls * O Lady, and we are lost! * Lead us to the Dawn to sing: * praise him and exalt him most highly to all ages.

Katavasia

Tone 4.

The maternity of the Theotokos preserved the three young men in the furnace. Then it was prefigured but now that it is accomplished, it brings the whole world together to sing: O works of the Lord, praise and exalt Him forever.

Ode 9

Irmos

We who through you, O Virgin, * have been saved confess you * to be most truly the one who gave birth to God, * with all the choirs of the heavens we now magnify you.

Make a joyful sound, O Church * to the Mother of our God. * True shepherd, she searches out the lost sheep. * All generations call her blessed and magnify her.

Our sins are as scarlet, Lady, * who will make them white as you? * From the swine pen, your prodigal children cry: * O loving Searcher for the Lost we magnify you!

Suffering by your Son's cross, * you bore a new child, figuring * in his person the Church of Christ, * in which the lost are found and magnify you.

Glory...

Dread and great darkness * came upon Abraham in his dream, * He lifted up his voice to magnify you, * one God: Father, and Son, and all-Holy Spirit.

Both...

Returning from Jerusalem * you pondered Christ in your heart. * Return our lost hearts to your Son and God; * lend us your voice to magnify his sacred name.

Katavasia

Tone 4.

Let every human being take up a torch and let him dance in spirit and let the immaterial spirits celebrate this holy feast of the Mother of God and cry out: Rejoice, O all-blessed and pure and ever Virgin Theotokos!

Exapostilarion

Tone 3

Light has dawned that we may find our way: O Lady, be our guide, you who are Searcher for the Lost.

Glory be...now and ever....Repeat.

4 Stichera at the Praises

Tone 6

Thus says the Lord through his prophet: "Behold! I myself will search for my sheep and I myself will seek them where they wander!" His own Mother he has set upon our trail, to track us over our winding paths, and lead us into the level places where green pastures and still waters will revive us, body and soul.

Faith drove you through the city's streets searching for the Son you bore: "Your angel called me full of grace, you set the moon beneath my feet, yet now my heart is pierced and bleeds. I will reach out to your Father's house and touch the hem of your mystery; only finding you can heal my flow of grief."

Hope drove you through the city's streets searching for the Son you bore: "My soul is cast down within my breast, the roar of your cataracts has covered me, deep calls on deep in my search for your face. O send forth your light and your truth and lead me upon your holy hill, for I will find my hope on Sion's slopes."

Love drove you through the city's streets searching for the Son you bore: "I sought him who my soul loves; I sought him but found him not, whose cheeks are like beds of spices. O that his left hand were under my head and that his right hand embraced me! I will find you in your Father's house."

Glory. Now and ever. Same Tone.

The Mother saw the Life hung upon the cross and cried to the Lord with tears; "I am afflicted, but not crushed, perplexed but without despair, persecuted but not lost, struck down but not destroyed. I will show all the lost for whom I search the might of your death and resurrection.

Great Doxology. Troparion, Litanies and Dismissal.