

THIRTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
THE THREE HOLY HIERARCHS



*Icon of Saint Gregory, Saint John, Saint Basil -- January 30th*

***SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 31 – FEBRUARY 6***



Dean of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology



## The Blessing of the Lytia

Adapted from V. Rev. Victor Potapov



On great feasts and on days commemorating highly honored saints, an intensified prayer is offered at the Vespers service called the lytia. It begins with the singing of special hymns in honor of the feast or saint of the day, during which the clergy go in procession to the porch or vestibule of the church.

Here the Church steps out of its blessed walls and offers prayers of a universal character for the whole world, embracing all people.

During the lytia, the prayer, "O God, Save Thy People" is read, as well as, four other short petitions. These are comprised of entreaties for the salvation of the people, the Church and civil authorities, for the souls of Christians, for the cities, for this land and all believers living herein, for the reposed, as well as, entreaties asking that we be preserved from foreign invasions and from civil war. Each of these five petitions ends with repeated chanting of Lord have mercy.

During the lytia, the faithful display a heightened sense of humility, as a host of saints are invoked by name, underscoring one of the basic dogmas of Orthodoxy; our veneration of, and prayerful communication with, the saints.

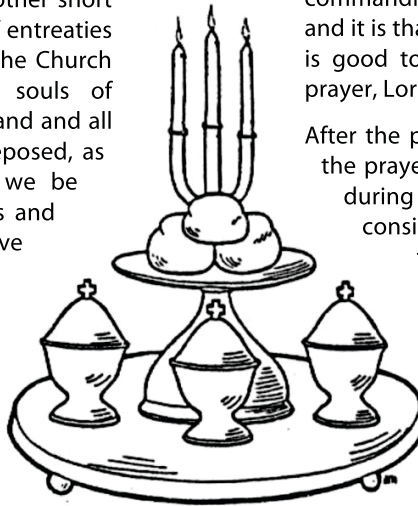
The words Lord have mercy are repeatedly chanted during the lytia; which causes the heart, mind, and soul of those who pray to be saturated with this petition. These multiple repetitions are intended to focus our attention on the meaning of the prayer, something the Church considers especially important for man's spiritual growth. Like a musical theme, this oft repeated prayer accompanies us out of the church and into our daily life.

Lord have mercy — only three words; yet how profound! First of all, in calling God Lord, we affirm the fact of His rule over the world, over mankind; and, the most important, over ourselves, and over those who call Him Lord, which means "ruler" or "master." For this reason we refer to ourselves as servants or slaves of God. There is nothing shameful about this title. Slavery, in a worldly sense, is intrinsically a negative thing, for it robs man of his earliest gift from God, the gift of freedom. However, when man becomes a slave of God, keeping His commandments, he learns how to truly live, and it is that truth that actually sets him free. It is good to treasure, keep, and cultivate the prayer, Lord have mercy.

After the petitions are read, the priest recites the prayer, "Hear us, O God our Savior", and during the singing of the Aposticha, which consists of stichera or verses that glorify the feast or saint of the day; the clergy and faithful enter the nave or central part of the church. At this time, a table is placed in the center of the church. On the table are five loaves of bread, as well as, wheat, wine, and oil. All are then blessed in this token act of the ancient

custom of distributing food to the faithful, some of whom had come from afar, so that they might gain the strength to participate in the lengthy worship services. Five loaves are blessed in memory of the Lord's feeding of the 5000 who listened to his sermon. Later, after the faithful have venerated the Festal Icon, the priest anoints them with blessed oil.

**Note:** The lytia is served at all 12 Great Feast Days in our parish. All are welcome to receive this blessing.







**Українська Греко-Католицька Церква  
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St. John the Baptizer  
Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church**

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***The Feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs***

Today we celebrate the Feast of the three Holy Bishops, St. Gregory the Theologian (also known as Gregory Nazianzus), St. Basil the Great and St. John Chrysostom. In addition, to this feast in common, each of these great Fathers of the Eastern Churches has a special day commemorating his memory: St. Basil the Great (January 1st), St. Gregory the Theologian (January 25th), and St. John Chrysostom (November 1).

In the early part of the twelfth century a controversy arose among the admirers of these famous bishops; each group proclaiming that their saint was the greatest. This divided the people of Constantinople and caused great confusion. The saintly Bishop John of Euchaita was appointed as arbitrator. With fervent prayer, he asked God to help him resolve the problem. One night he had a vision in which the three saints appeared to him and told him they were equal before God

and that each had his own individual genius a value. They asked him to institute a common feast, commemorating all three. Bishop John chose January 30th and composed a beautiful office for this feast.

The merits of these three great bishops are expressed in the Vesper services of the feast. "Come, feast lovers! Let us come together and extol in song those sons, bishops of Christ, the pride of the Fathers, towers of faith, and teachers and guardians of believers, saying: Rejoice, O Basil the Wise, star of the Church and its unshakable pillar. Rejoice, O heavenly intelligence, Gregory the Theologian, the great High Priest. Rejoice, O John of the golden words, Chrysostom, fervent preacher of repentance. Therefore, O blessed Fathers, do not cease to intercede with Christ always for those who, in faith and love, celebrate your most noble and sacred feast."