

Vespers Prayer

According to the Pilgrimage Notes of Egeria in the 4th Century A.D. in Jerusalem

Research and Composition by Joseph Yazbeck

Introduction

This prayer is a journey through time, back to the 4th century A.D., drawn from the lines of the pilgrimage notes of **Egeria**, who visited the Holy Land between the years **381 and 384**, and recorded **detailed accounts of liturgical services**. These writings are considered a **precious reference** for liturgy today.

At that time, **ecclesiastical structure and Christian liturgy** were flourishing. The services of **Matins and Vespers**, as well as celebrations of **Christmas and Easter**, were being established, especially in **Jerusalem**. (Noting that the Vespers Service took its final structure in the 14th and 15th centuries in Mount Athos.)

CHAPTER ONE: THE TEXT

Throughout history, various terms have been used to refer to "Vespers," including "Evening Service," "Evening Gathering," "Prayer of the Twelfth Hour," "Order of the Evening Light," "Eucharist of the Light," and "Eucharist of the Evening."

In the Apostolic Tradition up to the beginning of the 3rd century

According to the **Apostolic Tradition**, *Hippolytus* describes the following:

- The **community of believers** would gather for a meal, with the **deacon of the Gospel** standing in their midst.
- As the **light of evening faded**, the **bishop** would offer a **thanksgiving prayer**, giving thanks to God for revealing His divine light through His Son **Jesus Christ**, a light to guide us in the darkness.
- Then, **psalms** would be chanted with the **refrain "Alleluia,"** and **blessed bread** would be distributed to the faithful (distinct from the Eucharistic bread — the Body of the Lord).

Thus, at the beginning of the **3rd century**, the elements of this service included:

1. The **Order of Light**,
2. A **fraternal meal** (which gradually disappeared over time),
3. The **chanting of psalms**,
4. A **homily**,
5. And a **priestly prayer**.

In the 4th century

1. **The Aniksandaria** — the Trinitarian refrains “*Glory to You, O God ...*” known today as part of the Aniksandaria — are mentioned by Symeon the Thessalonian. They apparently originated in Constantinople together with Psalm 85 and persisted until the 8th century. The first attested use of Psalm 103 in this context is by Theodore the Studite (917-986)
2. **The seven priestly prayers** that are still quietly recited by the priest today during Psalm 103 were originally fashioned so that the first six would follow the **six antiphons**, and the seventh would serve as the concluding prayer. All of these belonged to the universal liturgy of Constantinople before being replaced by monastic services. According to Nicolaos Oikonomides (professor/historian), these prayers are very ancient and bear strong resemblance to Jewish prayers. Their use — along with the six antiphons — seems to have largely disappeared between the 13th and 15th centuries.
3. **The Great Supplicatory Litany** was already in use since the earliest days of Christianity.
4. **Kekragaria Chants** — Ijiria mentions that the Kekragaria chants existed in the service since her time.
5. **“O Gladsome Light” (Phos Hilaron)** — the hymn that celebrates the first lighting of evening lamps — is described in the travel notes of Egeria: she reports that the bishop did not join the people for the first part of the prayer, but rather entered later with his retinue — which suggests that the antiphons originally began on this hymn.
According to Basil of Caesarea, *Phos Hilaron* was sung solemnly before the new evening light, and the people responded after each verse with the Trinitarian refrain: “We glorify God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Egeria confirms this in her account — she notes that the evening service began with the Order of Light, during which the liturgical light was carried by clergy, monks, and laity from the Holy Sepulcher to its courtyard, and all the oil-lamps were lit all around, so that the night seemed turned into day.
6. **The Prokeimenon** — the psalm of the Prokeimenon — was chanted in full.
7. **The Supplicatory Prayers (Ekteniae / Litanies)** — according to the apostolic tradition, these concluded Vespers. The deacon (or the “Gospel sub-deacon”) would intone them for catechumens and repentant sinners, then they would be dismissed. Afterwards, the deacon would continue the petitions on behalf of the faithful, and the bishop would bless and pray for the congregation. Egeria mentions that during the litanies the children’s choir responded “Lord, have mercy,” then the bishop would bless and dismiss the people.
8. **“Kataxioson Kirie”** — Egeria does not mention this.
9. **The Apostikhon** — Ijiria also does not refer to it; she indicates that the dismissal occurred immediately after the Supplicatory Prayers.
10. The chant **“Now You will dismiss Your servant in peace”** — we know it was in use already before the patriarchate of Anthimus I of Constantinople (535–536).
11. **“Holy God” (Trisagion / Trisagion hymn)** — the earliest attested mention of this hymn in Vespers that has reached us appears in the 7th-century “Hours of Sinai” manuscripts, where it concludes the evening service.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MUSIC

There was a **large wave of pilgrimage** from the Christian world to Jerusalem, particularly after **Saint Helena discovered the Holy Cross** a few decades earlier (in **326 A.D.**), which made **Jerusalem a global religious center**. As a result, all kinds of **liturgical musical styles** from various regions converged there.

Thus, the melodies of this prayer reflect influences from:

- **Jewish**
- **Syriac**
- **Byzantine**
- **Coptic**
- and **Pre-Gregorian** traditions.

In brief, the musical background of that era can be summarized as follows:

- The **Psalms**, in particular, were still influenced by **Jewish Temple music**, especially in Jerusalem.
- **Coptic music** in Egypt shared similarities with the chants of Jerusalem, due to **geographical proximity**, especially before the **doctrinal schism** at the **Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.**
- **Syriac music** was clearly present in Jerusalem, under the influence of **Saint Ephrem the Syrian**, who had died only a few years earlier (in **373 A.D.**) and whose **Syriac monks were present in Jerusalem**.
- **Byzantine music** was still in a **very primitive stage**. Church music of that time is often referred to as a **unified Christian chant**, predating the split into **Byzantine (Eastern)** and **Gregorian (Western)** traditions — an early **common form of Christian chant** from which both later developed.

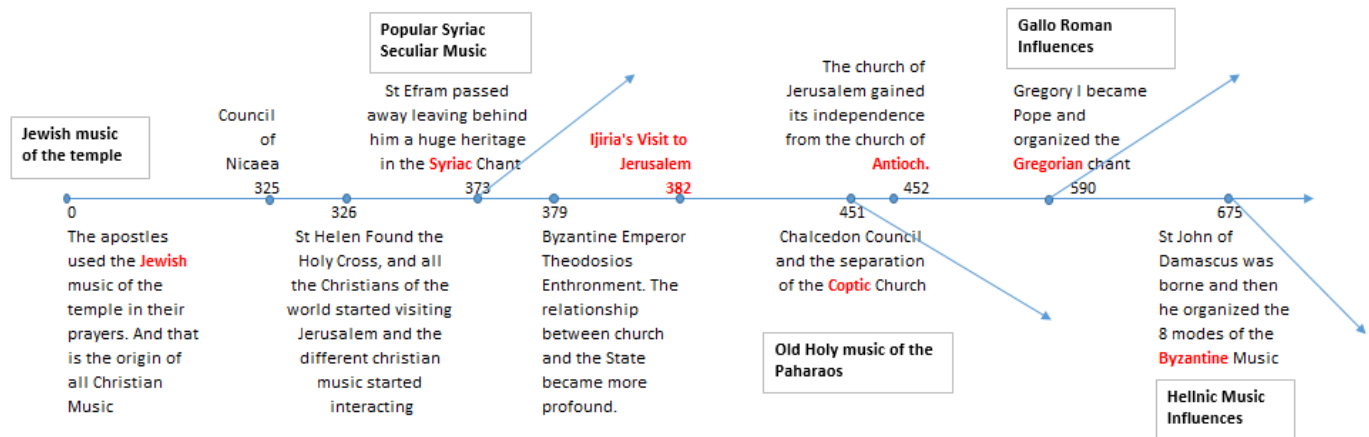
Note:

In composing the music for this service, **we did not aim to recreate the exact melodies** used at the time — as that would be practically impossible, given the **absence of musical notation** or recordings in that era.

Rather, our goal was to **highlight the musical traditions** that had an influence on **4th-century Jerusalem**, and to **present each of these traditions in its most magnificent form**.

Special focus was given to **Greek (Byzantine) music**, which, though still in its infancy at the time, is here **showcased in its full splendor**, especially through the **Koukouzelian melodies**, considered among the **greatest compositions in Byzantine church music**.

In general, we have summarized the musical elements of this evening in the following diagram, which illustrates the historical musical background of 4th-century Jerusalem:



1. Byzantine Music in the 4th Century

In the 4th century, **Byzantine music** was in a **foundational and formative stage**, as its distinctive features began to take shape as a sacred art closely tied to liturgy. However, it had **not yet developed into the structured form** we know from the Middle Ages.

- There was **no written system** of Byzantine musical notation yet; hymns were transmitted **orally** from generation to generation.
- **Musical instruction** took place **by ear** in churches and monasteries, relying heavily on **memorization and imitation**.

2. Unified Church Music in 4th-Century Jerusalem

Some studies suggest that music in the early centuries was **shared between East and West**, forming a kind of **common Christian chant tradition** (according to **Alexander Lingas**).

Marcel Pérès believes that the music of this period was **not primitive**, but rather **fully developed**, with its own **structures, detail, and refinement**. According to him, these chants display **distinct modes of performance, modal systems, and ornamentation** different from what Gregorian chant became later. This suggests a **more diverse and possibly more Eastern-influenced** liturgical musical landscape in the West than is often assumed.

As a result, **any modern attempts to perform the music of that era** are essentially **reconstructions** — informed interpretations of what that music *might* have sounded like, since **no written sources or recordings** have survived.

3. Gregorian Music

Gregorian chant also emerged from this **shared Christian musical heritage**, but developed its **distinct identity between the 6th and 7th centuries**, during a time when the Western Church was working to **unify its liturgical practices**.

It was organized under **Pope Gregory I**, who held the papacy from **590 to 604 A.D.**, and whose name became associated with the chant.

In reality — much like **Saint John of Damascus** in the East — **Gregory collected, refined, and organized** existing material, and **promoted it** as a **standard liturgical style** across the West.

However:

- The **term "Gregorian"** was not widely used until the **9th century**.
- Notation (used primarily as a **memory aid**) **only began in the 10th century**, around the same time Byzantine notation also started to be codified.
- **Precise notation** came later in the **11th century**, with the innovations of **Guy d'Arezzo**.

Root Influences of Gregorian Chant:

- **Old Roman chants**, which existed before Gregory's unification.
- Elements from **Gallo-Roman, Milanese**, and other Western traditions.
- Possibly **indirect Eastern influences**, such as **Syriac or Byzantine** chant traditions.

4. The Influence of the Byzantine Empire in 4th-Century Jerusalem

a. Rule of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire:

- In the 4th century, Jerusalem was under the control of the Eastern Roman Empire (commonly referred to today as the Byzantine Empire).
- The emperor at the time was **Theodosius I**, who reigned from **379 to 395 A.D.**, and played a crucial role in establishing Christianity as the official state religion.

b. Christian Dominance in Public Life:

- Many pagan temples were closed, and non-Christian rituals were restricted, especially following the **First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325 A.D.)**, as the state began adopting defined Christian doctrines and combating heresies.
- Jerusalem became a major Christian pilgrimage site, particularly after **Empress Helena** (mother of Constantine) visited in the 330s and founded the **Church of the Holy Sepulchre**, believed to mark the tomb of Christ.

5. The Role of Saint John of Damascus

- Saint John of Damascus was born in **675 A.D.** and died in **749 A.D.**
- He became a monk at **Mar Saba Monastery** near Jerusalem.
- Although Egeria came to Jerusalem more than 200 years before John, in the Church, each generation inherits and builds upon the spiritual and liturgical legacy of those before. John played a key role in **systematizing the Byzantine musical tradition** into the **eight-mode system**, organizing and expanding what preceded him. Which means that the works of St John can give us as well some idea about hymns that were used at Egeria time.

6. Jerusalem's Relationship with the Patriarchate of Antioch in the 4th Century

According to most scholars, **Jerusalem was administratively under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch** during the 4th century. Later, at the **Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.)**, Jerusalem was granted the status of an "autocephalous church." Therefore, **Antiochian influence on liturgy in Jerusalem should have been significant** during that period.

7. Influence of Jewish Chant in 4th-Century Jerusalem

Early Christians began by practicing **Jewish rituals**, gradually introducing Christian-themed hymns. Even Byzantine music was later influenced by Jewish liturgical music, especially in the **chanting of Psalms**, which remains central to the liturgy.

In the 4th century, just under 400 years after the birth of Christianity, Jewish musical influence remained significant in Christian chant, especially in **Jerusalem**, the historic center of Judaism.

From a historical perspective:

- Although some Jewish presence persisted in and around the city during the 4th century, **after the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 A.D.)**, Jews were banned from residing in Jerusalem, which had been renamed **Aelia Capitolina**.
- By **382 A.D.**, most residents of Jerusalem were Christians or of Greco-Roman (Byzantine) origin. **Jewish communities had shifted outside the city.**

8. The Syriac Presence in 4th-Century Jerusalem

Saint Ephrem the Syrian:

- Born around **306 A.D.**, died in **373 A.D.**, just a few years before **Egeria's pilgrimage to Jerusalem**.
- He had an immense influence on regional liturgy through his hymns and theological writings.

- He was a **poet, theologian, and hymnographer**, known as the "**Harp of the Holy Spirit**." Thousands of his hymns and poetic sermons ("memre") are still used in Syriac liturgy today.

Syriac presence in Jerusalem in the 4th century:

The Syriac presence in Jerusalem in the 4th century was evident due to the following evidences:

a. Syriac as a widespread liturgical language:

- Syriac was the primary church language in regions like Syria, Edessa, Nisibis, and Mesopotamia. Many monks and clergy migrated to the Holy Land.
- Numerous pilgrims who visited Jerusalem were from Syriac-speaking churches.

b. Monastic and ascetic connections:

- The 4th century witnessed a flourishing **monastic movement** in the desert regions surrounding Jerusalem and the eastern Jordan Valley. Among them were **Syriac monks living in caves and monasteries**.
- Some references suggest **Syriac-influenced monks** lived in monasteries near Jerusalem, such as **Mar Saba**, which developed later but was rooted in diverse Eastern monastic traditions.

c. Connections between Ephrem and the Church in Palestine:

- There is no definitive evidence that **Ephrem himself visited Jerusalem**, but he was intellectually and spiritually connected to the Christian world there, especially through his emphasis on **the theology of the Incarnation and the Nativity**, which were also central in Jerusalem.

d. Relationship between the hymns of Romanos the Melodist and Ephrem the Syrian:

- Scholar **Egón Wellesz** compares the hymns of **Ephrem** and **Romanos the Melodist** (c. 490–560), considered a founder of Byzantine hymnography. In some cases, **Romanos' hymns appear to be Greek adaptations of Ephrem's Syriac originals**, adjusted to fit Byzantine liturgical poetic structure (e.g., the hymn "Today the Virgin comes to the cave").
- This suggests not only textual borrowing but likely **musical influence**, supporting the idea that **Syriac chant played a formative role in early Byzantine music**.

In summary:

- **Saint Ephrem** lived from **c. 306 to 373 A.D.**
- By **382 A.D.**, after his death, there was a real Syriac presence and influence in Jerusalem through monastic life and pilgrimage, and Jerusalem's global role as a Christian center.
- **Syriac liturgical and musical traditions partially influenced the liturgy in Palestine**, particularly through hymnography and poetic forms.

9. Coptic Music in the 4th Century

Origins of Coptic Music:

1. Pharaonic Roots:

Coptic music is believed to preserve elements from **ancient Pharaonic religious music**. After Christianity entered Egypt in the 1st century A.D., many melodies were adapted to Christian worship, maintaining the overall spirit and **oral transmission methods**.

2. Other Influences:

Influenced by **Hellenistic Greek music**, especially due to the **Greek cultural presence in Alexandria**.

Later influences possibly include **Byzantine, Syriac, and Arabic** traditions, although the core spirit remained distinctly Pharaonic.

Coptic chant is sung primarily in the **Coptic language** (the final stage of ancient Egyptian), sometimes mixed with **Greek or Arabic**.

Coptic hymns are **very ancient, undocumented in notation**, yet **highly consistent**. This is evidenced by the **uniformity of melodies** between cities like **Alexandria and Cairo**, showing that oral preservation maintained stability over centuries.

Moreover, **Byzantine influence** is undeniable — for instance, the hymn "**Ton Sina**" is exactly the **text and melody of the 5th-mode Byzantine Resurrectional troparion**, though extended and ornamented with traditional **Coptic melismatic flourishes (hazzat)**.

Studies of long-form Coptic hymns — once stripped of these hazzat — show that their **melodic structure aligns with Byzantine modal rules**.

Conclusion:

Coptic music can be a **valuable source** for exploring **ancient Byzantine melodies** that may have entered Egypt and been preserved **orally**, even while disappearing from mainstream Byzantine practice.

10. Introduction to the Hymns Used in This Service

The hymns of the service are as follows:

- i. "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (**Hebrew**)
- ii. "But I, through the abundance of your mercy, will enter your house" (**Syriac**)
- iii. "You were favorable, O Lord, to your land" (Byzantine - **Koukouzelian**)
- iv. "Kyrie Eleison" (Shared Byzantine-**Gregorian** melody)
- v. "O Lord, I have cried" (Melody of **Saint John of Damascus**)
- vi. Kekragaria Chants (**Isson** Introduction)
- vii. "Many Years" (**Bishop** Entrance)
- viii. "O Gladsome Light" (**People's** Choir)
- ix. "Your mercy, O Lord, shall follow me" (**Coptic**)
- x. Liatny of Supplications (**Chikdren** Choir)
- xi. "Through the prayers of our holy fathers" (**Antiochian** melody)
- xii. Polykhronion of the Byzantine Emperor (**Latin Chant**)

We expand on each below:

i. "Bless the Lord, O my soul"

This is Psalm 104, which is still used today to open the Vespers service.

For this piece, we used the ancient Hebrew melody that is still known today for this psalm, and we chant it in Hebrew, the original language in which the Psalms were written.

We then adapted the melody into Arabic, following the metrical structure of Kate Plagi Iosif — the same meter used in the well-known hymn "Do not marvel, O Mary."

We may observe the following:

- The striking **similarity** between the ancient Hebrew melody and the Byzantine chant, since the early apostles based their worship on the Jewish Temple liturgy. Therefore, the music of the Jewish Temple became the foundation for all Christian liturgical music traditions, which later branched into Byzantine, Gregorian, and others — especially in the chanting of the Psalms, which were sung in the earliest centuries exactly as they were chanted in the Temple.
- On the other hand, note the **simplicity** of the ancient Jewish irmologic style melody (fast-paced), which was followed by both Byzantine and Gregorian chant in a theological sense: the rhythm is not fixed, but instead follows the natural rhythm of the text, not the other way around. Thus, the words remain the structure that carries the melody, and the melody has no value on its own without the text. As a result, the focus of the faithful remains on the words, and the melody serves merely as a vehicle for delivering the message.

ii. "But I, through the abundance of your mercy, will enter your house"

This is the seventh verse of Psalm 5, recited today by the faithful upon entering the church. It is chanted at the beginning of the Vigil Service.

For this service, we borrowed an ancient Syriac melody, specifically the “Yawmono” melody.

This chant is particularly striking because it follows the exact same melodic structure as the Byzantine kontakion for Theophany, Epiphany Simeron. This can be observed through a melodic comparison we made in this hymn between the Syriac and Byzantine versions.

In our opinion, it is nearly impossible that this resemblance is a mere coincidence — especially considering the pause on the note Zo at the end of the Syriac melody. In the Byzantine version, a phrase seems to have been added in order to conclude on the finalis Gha, in accordance with Byzantine modal rules that require the melody to resolve on the final tone — a requirement not present in Syriac music.

iii. "You were favorable, O Lord, to your land"

This hymn is taken from Psalm 84 (“You have been gracious, O Lord, to Your land”), which in that era replaced Psalm 103 (“Bless the Lord, O my soul”) at the opening of Vespers.

For the melody of this psalm, instead of the traditional Anixandaria, we adopted the Koukouzeles-style melodies of the 14th century—some scholars even trace them back to the 12th century—a period when Byzantine chant reached its peak of splendor under Saint John Koukouzeles.

We then enriched it with elements from the style of Protopsaltis Theodoros Phokaeos (1790 – 1851), to whom the most commonly used Anixandaria melody for this part of Vespers is attributed. The melodic phrases we borrowed from him were also found in the compositions of Dimitrie Cantemir (1673 – 1723), written for the Ottoman court.

It is worth noting that Theodoros Phokaeos is regarded as the ancestor of Antiochian chanting, as he was the teacher of Deacon Prokopios in Constantinople. Deacon Prokopios later came to the Mariamite Cathedral in Damascus, where he served as first chanter alongside Patriarch Methodios (1824 – 1850) and taught Youssef al-Doumani of Damascus (1821 – 1897), who in turn trained both Michel Abboud and Nicolas Asstatieh of Damascus, culminating in Protopsaltis Mitri al-Murr (1880 – 1969), the first chanter of the Antiochian See.

iv. "Kyrie Eleison"

We based this chant on the research of Marcel Pérès, who reconstructed it as closely as possible to how it might have sounded in the 6th century.

This period reflects what Alexander Lingas also refers to as the common chant tradition that predates both the Byzantine and Gregorian styles in Jerusalem — a shared foundation from which both traditions later emerged.

We then developed the melody ourselves, continuing in the same stylistic vein.

v. "O Lord, I have cried"

Note that in the hymn "O Lord, I Have Cried to You" as we know it today, there is an added refrain to the Psalm which is: "Hear me, O Lord":

*"O Lord, I have cried to You, hear me (Hear me, O Lord)
O Lord, I have cried to You, hear me. Attend to the voice of my supplication when I cry to You
(Hear me, O Lord)
Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening
sacrifice (Hear me, O Lord)"*

In fact, in the past, this refrain continued with the following verses: "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth..." and other refrains followed with the subsequent verses as well.

In this recording, we are restoring the full Psalm along with all of its original refrains as they were performed in ancient times.

As for the melody, we have taken it from the Beit Jala (Palestine) chant tradition.

The melodies of this region are particularly interesting because they are unwritten and have been passed down orally from generation to generation. What confirms their ancient origin is that the entire congregation sings them with the choir (even during the complete services of Holy Week).

According to what has been passed down among the people, these melodies were learned by their ancestors from Saint John of Damascus himself, who lived as a hermit in the Monastery of Saint Sabbas near their region. They have preserved them since that time.

Saint John of Damascus (+749), who lived during the 7th and 8th centuries AD, is considered the one who organized Byzantine melodies into the eight tones and is regarded as one of the founders of this music. Several prolonged hymns found in our books today are attributed to him in the written tradition.

vi. Kekragaria Chants

Egeria hints at the presence of these chants in the evening service as early as her time. These verses change depending on the liturgical mode, day, or feast.

In our setting, we revive an ancient practice known as "**prompting**" (or "**verse feeding**"). Traditionally, a *prompter*—someone who could read well—would recite each line of the chant aloud before the cantor sang it. The reason for this practice was simple: many chanters were not literate, so the prompter helped them remember the text.

A historical theory suggests that this method of prompting may have contributed to the development of the **ison**, the sustained drone note heard in Byzantine chant. The prompter would intone the verse line on the base note of the mode (the *ison*), and the chanter would follow, sometimes overlapping with or anticipating the prompter's line. Over time, this overlapping between the prompter and the chanter evolved into the ison we know today.

Interestingly, **iconographic evidence** shows that the prompter was often depicted as a child. This practice can still be seen in **Constantinople chant** today.

vii. "Many Years"

According to **Egeria**, the bishop entered the church during the hymn "O Gladsome Light" as lights were kindled. We placed this hymn here as a **welcome and blessing for the bishop**.

viii. "O Gladsome Light"

This hymn is considered **one of the earliest Christian hymns** to be added to the Jewish chants that were used by early Christians in the first centuries.

The use of refrains (**responses**) was widespread in the early liturgical services, even in the hymn "O Gladsome Light."

The earliest reference to this comes from **St. Ignatius of Antioch**, who was martyred between the years 107 and 110 AD. It is said that he had a vision of angels praising God in alternating chant and then he taught the congregation to chant accordingly. In the letters he wrote on his journey to martyrdom in Rome, he placed strong emphasis on the following points:

- The **unity of the congregation** in worship
- The **responsive participation** of the faithful with the bishop and clergy
- The importance of **everyone forming one choir**, singing with one voice and one heart, as a sign of unity in faith.

For this hymn, we appointed a leader of the people's choir to guide the congregation in chanting. There are references to this leader, known as Laosinaki—from laos, meaning "people"—in ancient icons from Romania where liturgical services were used to be painted in Icons. In these depictions, the leader of the people's choir is shown performing hand gestures (chironomia), which suggests that the congregation was musically educated and even capable of executing the Byzantine melodic ornamentations indicated by these gestures. (Of course, all of this developed in later centuries, after the Koukouzelian period of the 14th century.)

ix. "Your mercy, O Lord, shall follow me"

This is the **Prokeimenon of Monday Vespers**, chanted in the first tone.

For this hymn, we selected a Coptic melody at random, removed the characteristic melismatic ornamentations (the "shakes"), and then added a Byzantine-style cadential phrase at the end of each line.

The result is a purely Byzantine-sounding melody.

x. Litany of Supplications

Here, Egeria mentions that the deacon would recite the people's intentions, and the children's choir would respond with "Kyrie eleison" ("Lord, have mercy").

As for the intentions (supplications), we took them from ancient Byzantine mosaics found in Lebanon, dating back to the 5th century, which had Greek inscriptions of supplications for the souls of certain individuals—likely those who contributed to the building of churches.

xi. "Through the prayers of our holy fathers"

This hymn, which concludes Orthodox services, **certainly did not exist in the 4th century**, as it was added later — when cities abandoned their own local liturgical services and adopted monastic **services** instead. The phrase "our holy fathers" refers to the monks living in the monastery.

As for the melody, we **expanded it** based on **Patriarch Ignatius IV's** eight-tone melodies for the *Kekragaria*, crafting from it a **lengthened Antiochian chant**, as a symbolic reference to the historical **dependency of Jerusalem on Antioch** at the time.

We conclude the hymn with a **kratima (terirem)** drawn from the *Cherubic Hymns* of the late, great **Antiochian protopsaltis Mitri El-Murr (1880–1969)**.

xii. Polychronion of the Byzantine Emperor

To close, we composed a **Polychronion for Emperor Theodosius I**, who ruled the Eastern Roman Empire in the 4th century. This hymn, once sung for emperors, was later directed to bishops and patriarchs after the fall of the empire.

We perform this Polychronion in both Latin and Greek, because Latin was still the language of the Byzantine Empire in Constantinople at the time, before Greek was officially adopted. However, Egeria confirms that the chanting in Jerusalem at that time was already in Greek. So we can imagine a mix of Greek and Latin languages in the service in Jerusalem at the visit of the Byzantine Emperor.

*« Dona vitam longam, Domine Deus,
piissimo imperatori nostro Theodosio
Conserva eum, Domine,
ad multos annos.»*

According to the Synaxarion, in the relationship between Saint John Chrysostom (343–407) and Emperor Theodosius, it appears that the emperor at that time did not yet have a throne in the church and would sit among the general congregation. In fact, it was Theodosius who helped develop the relationship between the Church and the State. Therefore, we do not know whether the Polychronion was introduced during his reign or afterward. However, most historical studies consider that the emperor's formal place within the liturgy did not begin until the sixth century.