

Reading the Psalter at Home

The 150 Psalms of King David are collected into the liturgical book called the Psalter. This book is used in daily services in churches and monasteries, but it has also been the custom for Christians to read the psalms privately, at home, especially during the periods of fasting, like the Great Lent or Nativity Fast. The Psalter can be read as part of your evening or morning prayers or as a separate set of prayers.

The order for reading the psalter at home

Standing in front of the icons, we start by reading the following prayers.

The Beginning Prayers

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

Then the beginning prayers. You can find those at the beginning of any prayer book, they are abridged here for brevity.

O Heavenly King...

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal... (3)

Glory... Both Now...

O Holy Trinity...

Lord have mercy (3) Glory... Both now...

Our Father...

Then we read the following troparia:

Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for we are empty of all defense, as sinners we offer this supplication to You, O Master; have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Heaven reveals to the Church, O Lord, your honorable prophet David, and angels in gladness join mankind. Through his holy prayers, O Christ God, direct our life in peace.

Both now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Many are the multitudes of my sins, O Theotokos, but I run to you, O Pure One, seeking salvation: look upon my weary soul and pray to your Son and our God to grant me forgiveness of my iniquities, O only blessed one!

Then "Lord, have mercy" (40 times), and we make as many prostrations as we are able. Then we recite the following Prayer to the Holy Trinity:

O Holy Trinity, God, Creator of the world, help me and direct me to begin with wisdom and conclude with good deeds the reading of these God inspired psalms, which the Holy Spirit spoke through the lips of David, and which I hope to recite now, unworthy that I am. But knowing my ignorance, I fall down before you, praying and beseeching your help as I cry out: O Lord, direct my mind, and do not permit my lips to grow tired, but grant me to rejoice in the understanding of Your words and meditate to the fulfilment of good works, so that enlightened by these good works, at the time of judgment, You will make me worthy to have a place at Your right side with all your chosen ones. Now, Master, bless me to begin reading with all my heart as thus:

Come, let us worship our King and God. Come, let us worship Christ, our King and God. Come, let us worship and bow before the only Lord Jesus Christ, the King and our God. *(With a prostration at each verse) Then we begin reading the Psalter slowly and with attention, continuously meditating at the meaning of the words.*

The Kathismata of the Psalter

The 150 psalms of David are divided into twenty "sittings" (*kathismata* in Greek). Each *kathisma* is divided into three "standings" (*staseis*). After each *stasis* we say:

Glory.... Both now...

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! Glory to you, O God! *(3 times)*

Lord, have mercy *(3 times)*

Glory... Both now...

At the end of the third *stasis*, we recite the hymns (troparia or sessional hymns) which follow each *kathisma*, and then say "Lord, have mercy" (40 times) and the prayer that concludes the *kathisma*.

(NOTE: These final troparia and prayers may not be included in all English editions of the Psalter, but you can replace them by 40 *Lord have mercy* and *Through the prayers...* at the conclusion.)