

October 26th

+ St. Demetrios the Great Martyr



ST. DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

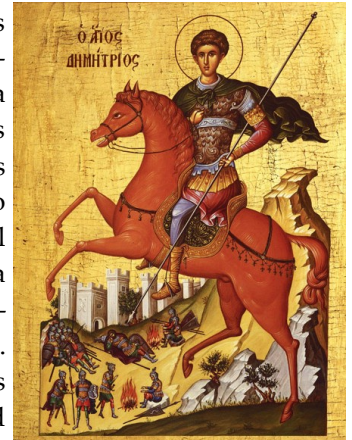
WELCOME TO VESPERS!

## A CHAMPION OF FAITH: ST. DEMETRIOS THE GREAT MARTYR

**S**t. Demetrios the Great Martyr hailed from Thessaloniki. He belonged to a noble and religious family of whom he was the most religious son. In his life, St. Demetrios taught about Christ and His love to every person who wanted to listen.

At the time St. Demetrios was alive, it was seen as “illegal” to be a Christian according to the Roman authorities. They couldn’t understand Christianity and its message of love. For hundreds of years, they killed hundreds of thousands of Christians. Christians, though, accepted martyrdom as a way to show that they believed in God.

In 290, Emperor Maximian went to Thessaloniki. When it was discovered that St. Demetrios was a Christian, he was arrested and kept bound in a bath-house. When the Olympics were taking place in the city, Maximian remained a spectator and a certain friend of his arrived. His name was Lyaeus, a barbarian and a notable wrestler because of his height and strength of his body. As Lyaeus stormed into the stadium, he challenged the citizens to a contest but all who fought with him were defeated. At that moment, a youth by the name of **Nestor**, another Christian of Thessaloniki, went to visit St. Demetrios in the bath-house. Nestor asked St. Demetrios for his blessing to fight Lyaeus single handed. Once Nestor received his blessing and sealing himself with the sign of the precious Cross, he arrived at the stadium and said, “O God of Demetrios, help me!” Immediately, Nestor began the combat and overpowered Lyaeus with a mortal blow to the heart, leaving Lyaeus lifeless upon the earth he once fought.



As Maximian became overwhelmed with grief and learned who was the cause of this defeat, he commanded that St. Demetrios be held accountable. While St. Demetrios remained in the bath-house, he was pierced with a long cavalry spear. Maximian also commanded that Nestor be slain with his own sword.

The memory of St. Demetrios is celebrated on October 26th, while St. Nestor’s memory is celebrated the day after (on October 27th).

Scriptural Readings for the Saint include: Isaiah 63:15-19, 64:15; Jeremiah 2:1-12; Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9; Luke 21:12-19; 2 Timothy 2:1-10; and John 15:17-16:2.



### ABOUT VESPERS...

The service of **Vespers** is the first service of the ecclesiastical day in the Orthodox Church’s cycle of services. The service itself is called an “Office”, because no Sacrament or Sacramental blessing takes place during the rite. It is merely a service where the community of faith comes together to worship—thanking God for the day and asking Him to bless the evening and the night. Vespers usually takes place at about 7:00 p.m. on Saturday evenings and the evenings before major feastdays.

## The “Enarxis” - Beginning of Vespers

The “**Enarxis**” (or ‘beginning’) of Vespers is held in the front of the Church (called the “Narthex”). The Church bells ring joyfully as the Priests, in order of seniority, exit the Altar and meet the Bishop in the Narthex. After a short petition, the clergy enter the Church as the choir chants “Many Years, Master!” (“Eis polla eti, Despota!”) for the Hierarch. During this, the Bishop blesses the clergy that will take part in the service (offering “kairos”). People customarily come to the throne of the bishop to receive his blessing by kissing his hand.

After the customary doxological proclamation is said by the Senior Priest (“Blessed is our God

always, now and forever, and to the ages of ages”), the Bishop recites **Psalm 104** (103 LXX), as it is a Psalm that thanks God for all of creation. During Great Vespers services, the last few verses of the Psalm are chanted along with hymns in glorification of the Holy Trinity (called the **Anoixantaria**).



*Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the beginning of Vespers.*

## “The Great Litany of Peace” – Opening Petitions

The Great Litany of Peace follows, with the deacon leading the worshippers in praying for, “the peace from on high...the salvation of our souls...for all the clergy and the laity...for every city and country...for the sick, the suffering, the captives...[and] to deliver us from all affliction, wrath, danger and distress” (amongst other things). To each of these prayers, the chanter and people respond, “**Lord, have mercy**” (or,

Κύριε, ελέησον). A prayer of remembrance of the Theotokos (along with all the saints) is recited, and then a final prayer to the Holy Trinity is exclaimed by the Senior Priest.

If a deacon is not present, the Senior Priest usually recites the prayers from inside the Altar.



*St. Stephen the First Martyr and Protodeacon*

## “Lord, I have cried to You...” - Psalm 141 (140 LXX)

After the opening petitions, the chanting of Psalm 141 (140 LXX) begins. Psalms 142, 130 and 117 [or Psalms 141, 129 and 116 in the LXX] are then chanted, although Psalms 142 and the first half of 130 are omitted in parishes of the Greek Orthodox Church during Great Vespers.

The aforementioned Psalms have been chanted for many centuries during vespers. God is asked to forgive our sins and deliver us from troubles,

with the hope of all Christians resting in His love and mercy.

Incense is offered at this time, as we ask that our prayers rise up to God as the incense. The censer has twelve bells on it, which symbolize the 12 Apostles who preached the Gospel to the whole world.



## “Stichera and Doxastika” - Hymns honouring St. Demetrios

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The last few verses of Psalm 130 and Psalm 117 precede hymns dedicated to the Saint, called “stichera”. The hymns discuss the life and martyrdom of St. Demetrios, along with others involved in his martyrdom: St. Nestor the Martyr, Lyaeus the Pagan fighter, Emperor Maximian, and others. The hymns also deal with St. Demetrios’ glorification as a Saint in the Kingdom of



*The Relics of St. Demetrios in  
Thessaloniki, Greece.*

God and how the faithful offer their prayers to him, so he may intercede to the Lord on our behalf.

The final two hymns, which are

more drawn out, are called the “Doxastika” (as the verse of the first hymn is “Doxa”, or “Glory”). The text of the first hymn speaks of St. Demetrios: **“Today the universal festival of the Champion calls us together. Come then, lovers of feasts, let us radiantly celebrate his memorial, as we say: Hail, who tore apart the tunic of impiety through the faith, clothing yourself in the courage of the Spirit! Hail, who destroyed the purposes of the lawless with the strength given you by God! Hail, who when your limbs were pierced by the lance depicted for us spiritually the blessed passion of Christ! Implore him, Demetrios, ornament of Athletes, that we may be rescued from visible and invisible foes, and that our souls may be saved.”**

## “O Gladsome Light” - The Small Entrance and Prokeimenon

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The clergy will exit the Altar for the Small Entrance. After the deacon says, “Wisdom! Arise!”, both clergy and laity chant the oldest hymn in the history of the Orthodox Church still chanted today which is outside of Scripture: **The Thanksgiving of the Lighting of the Lamps**. It reads:

*O Gladsome Light of the Holy Glory, of the Immortal Father, holy, blessed Jesus Christ. Now that we have come to the setting of the sun and seen the evening light, we praise God: Father, Son and Holy*

*Spirit. It is right at all times to worship You with voices of praise, O Son of God and Giver of Life, therefore the world glorifies You!*



The deacon censes the icons and the people during the hymn. Then, the **Prokeimenon** (a verse of a particular Psalm) is chanted. The Monday Prokeimeon is from **Psalm 4:3**: **“The Lord will hear me when I cry unto Him.”**

## Old Testament Readings, The Litany of Fervent Supplication & Prayer

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Three Old Testament are read at this service: **Isaiah 63:15-19, 64:15; Jeremiah 2:1-12; and Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9.**

After the readings, the deacon leads the Litany of Fervent Supplication. Upon its conclusion by the Priest, the Bishop reads a prayer: **“Grant, Lord, to keep us this evening without sin. Blessed are you, Lord, the God of our fathers, praised and glorified is Your Name to the ages.**

**Amen. Let your mercy, Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in you. Blessed are you, Lord, teach me your statutes. Blessed are you, Master, make me understand your statutes. Blessed are you, Holy One, enlighten me with your statutes. Lord, your mercy is for ever; do not scorn the work of your hands. To you praise, song and glory is due: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.”**

## “Let us complete our prayer” – The Completed Litany

After the Prayer, the Deacon leads the faithful in “**The Completed Litany.**” In this litany, we ask that the evening to be “perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless”; that our Guardian Angel protect us; that our sins be forgiven; for peace in the world; that the time we are on earth be spent in peace and in repentance; and for “a Christian end to our lives, peaceful, without shame and suffering, and for a good account before the awesome Judgment Seat of Christ.” The Bishop will then offer “**the peace**”, blessing the people with his hand and saying, “Peace be to all” (to which the people respond, “[May peace also be] with your spirit”).

**The Prayer of the Bowing of the Heads is then** prayed: *Lord our God, who bowed the heavens and came down for the salvation of the human race, look*

*upon Your servants and upon Your inheritance, for to You, the awesome Judge who loves mankind, your servants have bowed their heads and inclined their necks, not waiting for any human help, but awaiting your mercy and looking for your salvation. Guard them at every moment, during both the present evening and the approaching night, from every foe, from every hostile operation of the devil and from vain thoughts and evil desires. Blessed and glorified be the might of Your Kingdom forever!*



*His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I offering “the peace” during Vespers.*

## The Lity and the Artoklasia – Procession & Blessing of the Bread

At this point, the clergy will process with the icon of St. Demetrios and his relics (if they are found in the Church). After the procession, the Blessing of the Bread (or, *Artoklasia*) will take place. Bread, wine and oil are brought as offerings of health and thanksgiving to the Church by people, especially those who celebrate their namedays on this day. This Sacramental Blessing calls to remembrance Christ’s miracle as He fed the 5,000 (*cf. Mth. 14:13-21, Mk. 6:33-44, Lk. 9:10-*

*17, Jn. 6:5-15*). We ask Him to bless all those who offer and partake of the gifts offered. The hymns chanted include one based on **Luke 1:28** (dedicated to the Virgin Mary Theotokos) and **Psalm 34(33):10**: “*Rich men grow weary and hungry, but those who trust in the Lord will not lack any good thing.*”



## “Apostiha and Doxastika” - Hymns to St. Demetrios

After the Artoklasia, the “Apostiha” and final “Doxastika” are chanted. In some traditions, the hymns chanted ask God to spare us from tribulations. This is in remembrance of a great earthquake that hit the city of Constantinople on October 26th. Other Churches, though, chant hymns that are dedicated to St. Demetrios, reminding us of the great example he is for all Christians in the face of adversity. The final chant is dedicated to the Virgin Mary: **O Virgin**

**without bridegroom, All-blameless Mother of God, who ineffably conceived God the Most High in the flesh, receive the entreaties of your servants; you grant cleansing of faults to all; now accept our supplications and implore that we may all be saved.”**



## The “Nunc Dimittis” — The Song of Symeon and the Trisagion

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Approaching the end of the service, the Bishop recites the **Nunc Dimittis**, otherwise known as the Song of Symeon. This very famous evening prayer, which is taken from Luke 2:29-32, is the Prayer of Symeon the Righteous as he held the Christ Child in his arms: **Now, Lord, let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a Light to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel.**” Outside the Greek Orthodox tradition, it is recited by the entire congregation.

After this, both clergy and laity recite the **Trisagion** prayers:  
**Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (x3)**

*Glory to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.*

**All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on us! Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our iniquities. Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for Your Name’s sake.**

*Lord, have mercy (x3).*

*Glory to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.*

**Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.**

## The Apolytikia — Celebrating the Day!

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The **Apolytikia** are the last hymns to be chanted during the Great Vespers service. They are, in short, what the feast is about.



*For St. Demetrios — Tone 3*

**A great champion has the whole world\* found you to be when in grave perils;\* for you did put to flight the heathen, O victorious one.\* As you did humble Lyaeus’ arrogance\* and gave**

**boldness to Nestor in the stadium,\* thus, O Holy Great Martyr Demetrios,\* do you entreat Christ God\* that we may be granted great mercy.**

*In Commemoration of the Earthquake — Tone 8*  
**O Christ our God, who look upon the earth and make it tremble, deliver us from the dread threat of the earthquake and send down upon us Your rich mercies, through the prayers of the Theotokos, O lover of mankind!**

## The Dismissal

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The last prayers of the service are recited at this moment, with the bishop asking God to bless us and have mercy upon us. The Senior Priest will read the Dismissal Prayer, asking God to save us through the prayers of all the Saints of the Church. At this time, the people ask God to grant the Bishop presiding at the Vespers “many years” to rightly teach the word of His Truth.

The Bishop will then say the last prayer: **“Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, be merciful to us and save us!”**

It is customary to venerate the icon of St. Demetrios the Great Martyr at the conclusion of the service.





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 "St. Demetrios Toronto is my Church!"

*The third Greek Orthodox Church in Toronto, St. Demetrios Church was founded in 1962. Since then, our Church has been the spiritual home of thousands of Orthodox faithful from Toronto and vicinity. It is one of the four Churches of the Greek Community of Toronto. The Religious Education programs have been attended by many children, youth and young adults. Our tireless staff works to promote the Good News of Jesus Christ.*

**Parish Priests**

Rev. Fr. Konstantine Pavlidis

Rev. Fr. Triantafillos Porfiris

**Religious Education Director**

Basile Polidoulis

**Religious Education Advisor**

Komissa Polidoulis

**Homiletic Speakers**

John Kapsalis, Tim Prattas

**5-and-Under Class Teachers**

Linda Hudson, Georgia Vlahos, Patty Tsiolis

**JK-SK Class Teachers**

Despina Epaminondas, Chrysoula Kapogiannis

**Gr. 1 Class Teachers**

Kathe Bouzios, Eleni Skandalakis

**Gr. 2 Class Teacher**

Maria Douvis, Kassiani Logotheti

**Gr. 3 Class Teachers**

Vicky Nikolaos, Vasilis Papagiannis

**Gr. 4-5 Class Teachers**

Elena Qirjazi, Marina Derpanis

**Gr. 6-7 Class Teachers**

Georgia Panagiotopoulos-Grivogiannis,

Eftila Qirjazi

**Gr. 8-9 Class Teachers**

Kiki Zourbanos, Fotini Kapsalis

**Gr. 10-12 Class Teacher**

Chrysostom Makropoulos

**Young Adult League Leaders**

Vicki Vokas, Niko Sotiropoulos

*Join us every other Tuesday for **Re-Catechism**, a new way of learning about our Faith! Sessions take place from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in our Church, where our Clergy and Religious Education workers discuss the Divine Liturgy and its importance in our daily lives. Go to "St. Demetrios is my Church!" on Facebook for more information!*

**WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR FAITH?**  
**GO TO [RE-CATECHISM.COM](http://RE-CATECHISM.COM)**  
**OR E-MAIL US AT**  
**[STDEMETRIOS.TORONTO@GMAIL.COM](mailto:STDEMETRIOS.TORONTO@GMAIL.COM)**

## Icons of St. Demetrios



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1	St. Demetrios teaching the Faith to Christians
2	St. Demetrios blessing & St. Nestor before his fight against Lyaeus
4	The Martyrdom of St. Demetrios
5	The Dormition of St. Demetrios