

Jooa VUORINEN

What if God was One of Us?

This worship is basically formed according to the structure of Orthodox vespers, containing traditional Orthodox prayers. Yet some parts of the vespers¹ have been left out and ecumenical elements from WSCF-E worships are included. Inspiration for this worship has been sought from the daily worships of the WSCF-E solidarity conference, "I Was a Stranger and You Invited Me In: Homelessness and Poverty Housing in Europe Today," held in Cluj, Romania, 3–9 May 2006.

Leader: God, our Creator and Saviour, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

All: Glory to you, our God, glory to you.

O Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who are everywhere and fill all things, the Treasury of blessings and Giver of life, come and abide in us, cleanse us from all impurity, and in Your goodness, save our souls.

Song suggestion: "Nada te turbe"

1st reading: Psalm 142

All: O Jesus Christ, You gentle light of the holy glory of the immortal, heavenly, holy, blessed Father. Now that we have come to the setting of the sun and behold the evening light, we sing in praise to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For You are worthy to be praised at every hour with songs of worship, O Son of God, giver of life. Therefore the world glorifies You.

(This ancient hymn from the IInd–IIIrd century is either read or sung. At the same time candles are lit as a symbol of Christ, the Light who came into the world.)

2nd Reading: Genesis 18,1–8

Song suggestion: "O Lord Hear My Prayer"

Intercessions ("Kyrie Eleison" is sung between the prayers):

For the peace from above, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace of the whole world, the welfare of the holy churches of God, and for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord.

For travellers by land, sea and air; for migrants and refugees far away from their families and home countries; for the sick and suffering; for the homeless and the hungry; for the victims of wars and violence; for captives and for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

For the victims of trafficking; for those who face domestic violence and abuse in their daily lives; for those who live under fear and terror, insecurity and hopelessness, let us pray to the Lord.

For those who love us and those who hate us; for those who help us and those who need our help; for all who have gathered here together and for all our sisters and brothers in Student Christian Movements, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, O God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of those far off upon the sea, and show mercy, O Master, upon us sinners, for You are a merciful God, and love mankind, and unto You we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and unto ages of ages. **Amen.**

Leader: Lord, now You 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 people: a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people, Israel.

Holy God, holy Strong, holy Immortal, have mercy upon us. (3 times)
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.
All-holy Trinity, have mercy upon 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. (3 times)

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

All: Lord's Prayer

Song suggestion: "El mensaje que hoy proclamamos"

3rd Reading: Luke 24,13–35

(After the Gospel reading an Agape Meal can take place; it is a good way to close the worship, reminding us of and linking us to the charity of Abraham, the apostles, and Christ Himself.)²

Leader: God, let us always keep in our hearts our sisters and brothers who are in need, and be ready to serve them in all possible ways, remembering that any stranger we meet might be an angel or even Christ. Let us become instruments of your transforming salvation and mercy in this world. Let this common prayer increase our mutual love, understanding, tolerance and unity, so that one day we all could be One.

All: God, our Creator and Saviour, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

Song suggestion: "Jubilate, Everybody"

Jooa VUORINEN was born in Tohmajärvi, Finland, in 1981. She graduated as a Master of Theology from the University of Joensuu in 2005. Currently she is the Links Coordinator of WSCF Europe and works as a choir conductor – *cantor* – for the Orthodox parish of Helsinki. Her e-mail address is jooa.vuorinen@ort.fi.

1 Roughly described, the Orthodox vesper is built around four themes that are repeated in every vesper: Creation (psalm 104, which here is excluded); the Fall of Man (psalms 141&142); Salvation (Christ's coming to the world; as a symbol of this a procession with a candle, the evening light, is made just before the hymn "O Jesus Christ, You Gentle Light"); and Conclusion (the prayer "Lord, now You let Your servant depart in peace" and conclusion of the worship). This way the whole salvation history is brought back to our mind every evening.

2 The Agape Meal used to take place after the liturgy, a worship where Eucharist is celebrated, in the early Church. It does not belong to Orthodox vespers, and in the ecumenical encounter it does not replace common communion, but it can be a beautiful, concrete action expressing our mutual love.

