

Holy Supper: Great Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ

[*God is with us... chant*]

The Holy Supper **Great Feast of the nativity of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ** *Order of Prayer¹*

Provisional text: *Bishop Job*

Priest: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us.

All: Amen.

Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with the forty days of the Nativity Fast so that we may prepare ourselves through prayer, fasting and repentance for the celebration of your birth. In your humility, you have assumed our nature that you may raise it up to its original beauty, to the image of your glory. Having entered into the splendor of your feast, we gather together as family to partake of this Holy Supper, praying that you will be with us, blessing and strengthening us as we celebrate your divine nativity.

¹ Adapted from the text used in northern parishes of the Diocese of New England.

For you, O Christ our God, are our strength and salvation, and to you we send up glory, together with your Father who is without beginning, and your All-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages!

All: Amen

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

Priest: God is with us, understand you nations and submit yourselves, for God is with us!

All: God is with us, understand you nations and submit yourselves, for God is with us!

Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ, before we sit down to partake of this Holy Supper, we remember the animals that were present at your birth. We also remember at those time the animals that you provide for the benefit of the human race, both domestic and in the wold, and especially our pets that bring joy to our homes and to our lives. We remember the endangered species of the earth, and ask that you bless and preserve them from disease, pollution and from the excesses and cruelty of fallen humanity.

For all of creation praises you, O our God, and to you we send up glory: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages!

All: Amen

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

(At the lighting of the main candle)

Priest: O Lord, we light this candle, knowing that you are the Light of the world. May our light, which we receive from you, so shine before all people that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven, with you, His only begotten Son, and All-holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of Ages!

All: Amen

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

(At the blessing of the straw)

Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ, bless this straw which reminds us of the humble surroundings in which you were born for our salvation. May your humility always be an example to us as we strive to be humble in every aspect of our lives.

For you are the way, the truth, and the Life, and to you we send up glory: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages!

All: Amen

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

(At the blessing of the linen)

Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ our God, bless this linen cloth as a reminder of the swaddling clothes with which you were wrapped following your birth. May this pure linen also remind us of our baptismal garments as we shared in your death and resurrection at the time of our baptism into your kingdom.

For you are our Life, O Christ our God, and to you we send up glory, with your Father who is without beginning, and your All-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages!

All: Amen

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

(At the lighting of the three candles)

Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ, our God, you are the Light of the world and those who follow you do not walk in darkness but in the light of your life and truth. We light these candles in remembrance of the three Wise Men who followed your star and came to worship you.

For you are the King of Peace, O Christ our God and to you we send up glory, with your Father who is without beginning and your All-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages!

All: Amen

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

(At the blessing of the incense)

Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ, the icon of your most glorious Nativity is central to our celebration. May it always inspire us to give thanks for your coming to earth and taking flesh for our salvation.

For you are a merciful God who loves mankind, and to you we send up glory, O Christ our God, with your Father who is without beginning and your All-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages!

All: Amen

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

Priest: We offer you incense, O Christ our God, for a sweet spiritual fragrance. May you receive it upon your heavenly altar and send down upon us in return the grace of your All-holy Spirit!

[The festal icon, the food, and all present are now censed].

(At the blessing of the food).

Priest: The poor shall eat and be satisfied, and those who seek the Lord shall praise him; their hearts shall live forever.

All sing: The Nativity troparion.... Glory... now and ever... blessing.

Priest: We also pray, O Lord, for the repose of the souls of all who have fallen asleep during the past year, and all our beloved departed: fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, spouses, children, relatives and friends. Remember them in your kingdom, O Lord.

For you are the Resurrection, the life and the repose of your servants who are fallen asleep, O Christ our God, and to you we send up glory, together with your Father, who is without beginning, and your All-holy, and good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages!

All: Amen.

Priest: Grant rest eternal in blessed repose, O Lord, to your servants who have fallen asleep, and make their memory to be eternal!

All sing: Memory eternal.

(At the traditional toast)

Priest: O Lord, our God, we pray that you will always be in our thoughts, our words, our tears and our laughter, and that you will always direct our every deed. We pray that we will all be able to be together next year to celebrate your holy Nativity. Bless us, O Lord, with health, peace, love and length of days for many, blessed years!

All sing: God grant you many years!

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

(At the serving of garlic and honey)

Priest: May our God give us the strength and courage to bear faithfully the crosses that he has chosen for us, enabling us to accept cheerfully the unpleasant things in life: pain, sorrow, disappointment, anxiety, failure and fear, as symbolized by this love of garlic. [The garlic is dipped in honey].

We also pray that all that is bitter in life will be overcome by that which is sweet: faith, hope, love, peace, friendship, joy, as symbolized by the sweetness of this honey. May we all enjoy newness of life which is given to us by our Savior, Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless you from Zion; may you see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of your life!

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

(At the breaking of the bread)

Priest: Blessed are you, O Lord, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth!

Bless us, O Lord, as we break this bread and partake of it together in love and fellowship in your holy name. We remember those who are less fortunate than we: those who are starving, those who are persecuted for their faith, those who suffer from war, civil strife, injustice, cruelty, tyranny, addiction, poverty and loneliness. May we always remember, O master, that all that we have is from you. May we always be reminded to share with those who have less. May our tables be filled with wheat, wine, and oil, and may we always show love and generosity to everyone. May we be united to one another in the Holy Eucharist. May our communion of the Holy Mysteries of this great feast be for the healing of soul and body, and may it be unto everlasting life in your kingdom.

O Lord, may we also be united as one family, loving and respecting one another, united in your love!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

All: Amen.

Priest: Christ is Born!

All: Glorify Him!

Symbolism in the Holy Supper

The animals who were near Jesus –	- We pray for all animals, including pets.
The main candle –	- Christ, the Light of the world
The straw –	- Jesus' humble surroundings, our humility
The table cloth, linen –	- The swaddling clothes, our baptismal garments
The three candles –	- The three wise men, our following Christ
The incense –	- Our prayers of thanksgiving for Jesus coming into the world
The garlic –	- The hard things we are asked to bear
The honey –	- That the bitterness of life would be overcome by that which is sweet
The breaking of the bread –	- Christ – the bread of life; those less fortunate.

Bishop Job's Hand-drawn Instructions

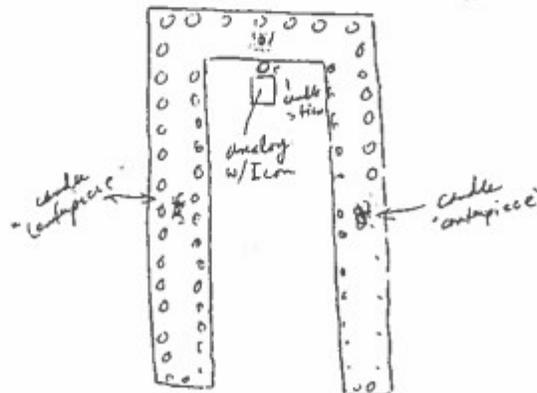
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Holy Supper

1. Tables are arranged in a "U" shaped arrangement.
 - a. A little straw is scattered over the tables.
 - b. They are covered with white tablecloths.
2. An analogy is placed at the "head" of the table (see diagram).
On this is placed the decorated Nativity icon. Directly behind this is a tall candlestick.
3. Three other candles (representing the 3 wise Men) are placed on the tables. Around these candles, straw & pine branches with bows, decorations, are to be arranged.
4. At the "head" of the table, a small table covered with live charcoal and incense is placed near the icon.
5. Extra places are set for unexpected guests and also in memory of those fallen asleep during the past year.
6. There must be one very large loaf of bread which will be broken and distributed during the Supper.
7. A small glass of sweet wine is to be at every place. (Brandy can substitute). (Additional wines can be served at buffet).
8. "Cold foods" - honey, garlic, nuts etc. are to be in bowls or plates on the table. The other foods may be served buffet style (for convenience).



About the service: The Holy Supper (also known as *Vilija* (or *Velija*) – “the Vigil,” or “the Holy Evening” (*Svjatyj Večer, Štedrý večer*), is a traditional Nativity Fast (meatless, and dairy-free) Christmas Eve meal celebrated in Orthodox communities of western Slavs: Slovaks, Ukrainians, and Carpatho-Rusyns and others. The specific customs and dishes can vary by region and family, but the core theme is a shared, spiritually significant family gathering in anticipation of the Nativity of Jesus Christ.

About the author: His Eminence Bishop Job (March 18, 1946 – December 18, 2009) of Hartford was the ruling bishop of the Diocese of New England from 1983 to 1992. From 1993 to 2009, he led the Diocese of the Midwest as Archbishop of Chicago. Born Richard John Osacky, he attended Northern Illinois University, and Saint Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary. In 1973, Reader John was ordained to the diaconate and consequently to the priesthood. He was tonsured a monk in 1975.