

## Melodies for Litany Responses

In addition to the various melodies in the eight tones, the prostopinije tradition provides traditional melodies for readings, prayers, and the people's responses at the Divine Liturgy, Vespers and Matins, and other services. This handout explains the response melodies use for litanies; these melodies usually come in pairs, to be sung in alternation, or involve repetition.

### Lord, have mercy (once)


A litany consists of a series of directives for the faithful to pray for a particular intention, followed by a priestly prayer, and a concluding Amen. Litanies occur in practically all services of the Byzantine Rite.

In most litanies, the faithful respond to each petition that is intoned by the deacon (or in his absence, by the priest) with a single, sung "Lord, have mercy." In most cases, a pair of melodies is used, in alternation. This provides variety in the singing, and helps us maintain our focus on the intentions being named.

As with the priest's prayers and blessings, the deacon's petitions at the litanies set the scale and starting pitch for the litany responses.

At the Litany of Peace, the deacon intones, "In peace, let us pray to the Lord", and the faithful respond:

Deacon:



The image shows two musical staves in G-clef and F-sharp key signature. The first staff, labeled "Deacon:", contains a single note on the second line (D4) with a circled cross symbol below it. The second staff contains a melody starting on the second line (D4) and moving stepwise up to the fifth line (G4), with a fermata over the final note. The lyrics "...let us pray to the Lord." are written below the first staff, and "Lord, have mer - cy." are written below the second staff.

...let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mer - cy.

Note that this response does *not* begin, as do most of the simple responses, on the deacon's ending pitch; instead, it starts a perfect fourth down (from *do* down to *so*).

Then the deacon intones the next petition ("For peace from on high..."), and the faithful respond:

Deacon:



The image shows two musical staves in G-clef and F-sharp key signature. The first staff, labeled "Deacon:", contains a single note on the second line (D4) with a circled cross symbol below it. The second staff contains a melody starting on the second line (D4) and moving stepwise up to the fifth line (G4), with a fermata over the final note. The lyrics "Lord, have mer - cy." are written below the second staff.

Lord, have mer - cy.

This petition starts major second *up* from the deacon's ending pitch, on *re*.

These two responses are sung in alternation; the Divine Liturgies book indicates which response is used for each petition by placing the numbers, circled, after the petition.

Finally, the deacon invokes the Mother of God and the saints (“Remembering our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady.... let us commit ourselves... to Christ our God.”), and the faithful respond:

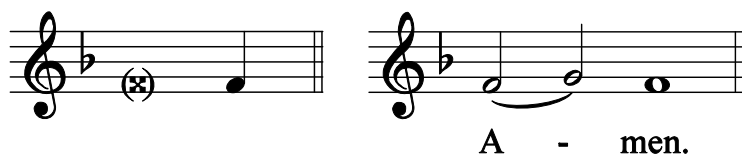
**Deacon:**



The musical notation consists of two staves in G major. The first staff shows a whole note G4 with a circled 'x' below it, followed by a whole note B4. The second staff shows a half note G4, a half note B4, a half note D5, and a half note E5. The lyrics 'To you, O Lord.' are written below the second staff.

Finally, at the end of the priest's prayer, the faithful sing the short Amen:

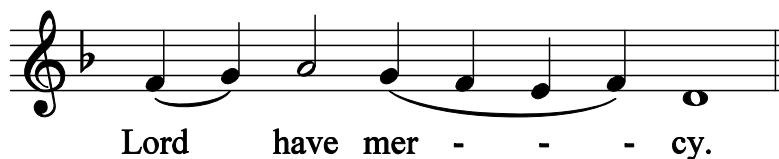
**Priest:**



The musical notation consists of two staves in G major. The first staff shows a whole note G4 with a circled 'x' below it, followed by a whole note B4. The second staff shows a half note G4, a half note B4, a half note D5, and a half note E5. The lyrics 'A - men.' are written below the second staff.

Note: there are also special melodies for responses to petitions for the departed; these are not used at the Sunday Divine Liturgy, and will be covered when we discuss commemorations for the dead.

There is also a different “Lord, have mercy” which is sung (once) at the end of the Divine Liturgy, before the Ambon Prayer:



The musical notation is a single staff in G major. It begins with a whole note G4, followed by a half note B4, a half note D5, a half note E5, a half note G5, a half note F5, a half note E5, and a whole note G4. The lyrics 'Lord have mer - - - cy.' are written below the staff.

## Grant it, O Lord

Certain litanies contain a series of petitions for the needs of the faithful and of the world, to which response at each petition is, “Grant this, O Lord.”

The response to the first such petition is:

**Deacon:**



The musical notation consists of two staves in G major. The first staff shows a whole note G4 with a circled 'x' below it, followed by a whole note B4. The second staff shows a half note G4, a half note B4, a half note D5, and a half note E5. The lyrics 'Grant this, O Lord.' are written below the second staff.



If there are special petition intoned at this point, then the following response melody is sung after each one:

Lord, have mer - cy, Lord, have mer - cy,

Lord, have mer - cy.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one flat). The first staff contains the melody for 'Lord, have mercy, Lord, have mercy,' with a repeat sign at the end. The second staff contains the melody for 'Lord, have mercy.' with a repeat sign at the end.

The final petition is always, “Again we pray for the people here present...”, and the response is the same triple “Lord, have mercy” that began the litany:

Lord, have mer-cy, Lord, have mer-cy, Lord, have mer - cy.

The image shows a single staff of musical notation in G major. The melody consists of three phrases: 'Lord, have mer-cy,' followed by 'Lord, have mer-cy,' followed by 'Lord, have mer - cy.' with a repeat sign at the end.

Note the progression: the first melody consists primarily of scalewise motion; this melody is also used as a response before Holy Communion:

Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord:

The Lord is God and has re-vealed him-self to us.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major. The first staff contains the melody for 'Bless-ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord:' with a repeat sign at the end. The second staff contains the melody for 'The Lord is God and has re-vealed him-self to us.' with a repeat sign at the end.

The next melody is still scalewise, but includes several ornamental “leaps”. The third melody, for special petitions, is the most ornate. The final occurrence of the first melody brings us “back to earth” for the priestly exclamation that concludes the litany

There are also triple “Lord, have mercy” responses sung at the Litany for the Deceased, which will be covered along with the commemorations for the dead.