

The Fathers of the Church

The Most Ancient Providers and Protectors of God's House

Like father, like son



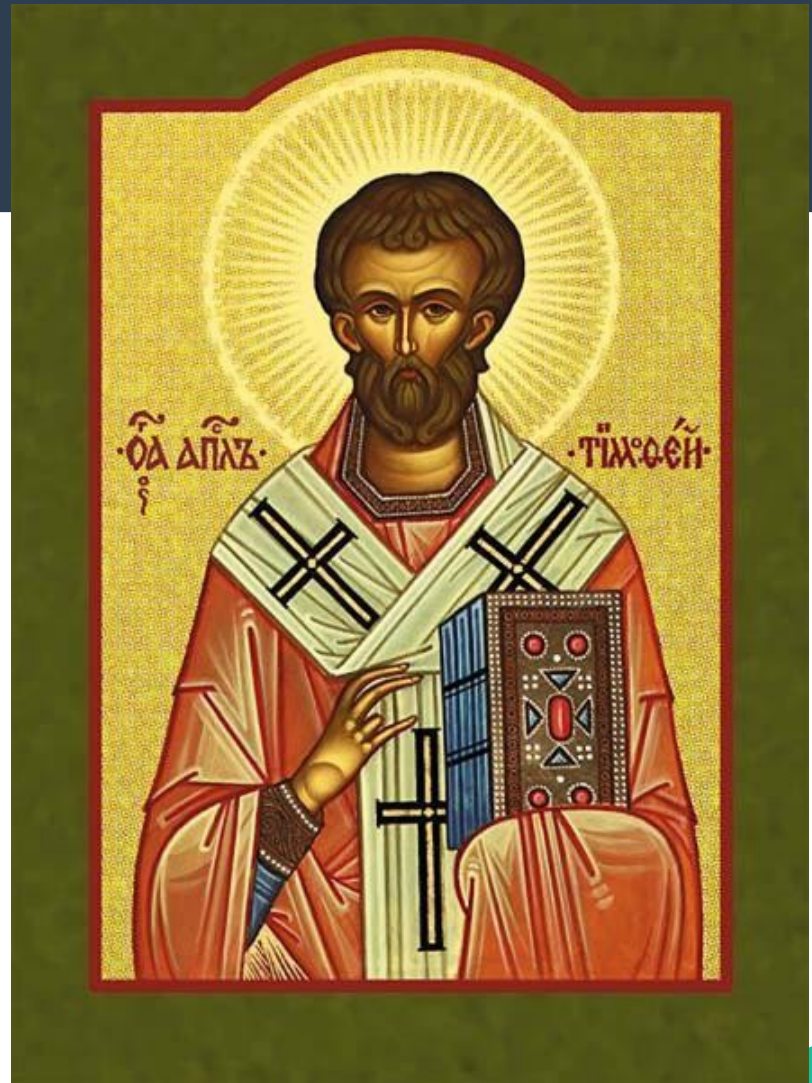
What is a father?

- One who generates life
 - Provider
 - Protector



Fatherhood

- “Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven” (Matt. 23:9)
- “To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (2 Tim. 1:2)
- “I do not write this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:14–15).



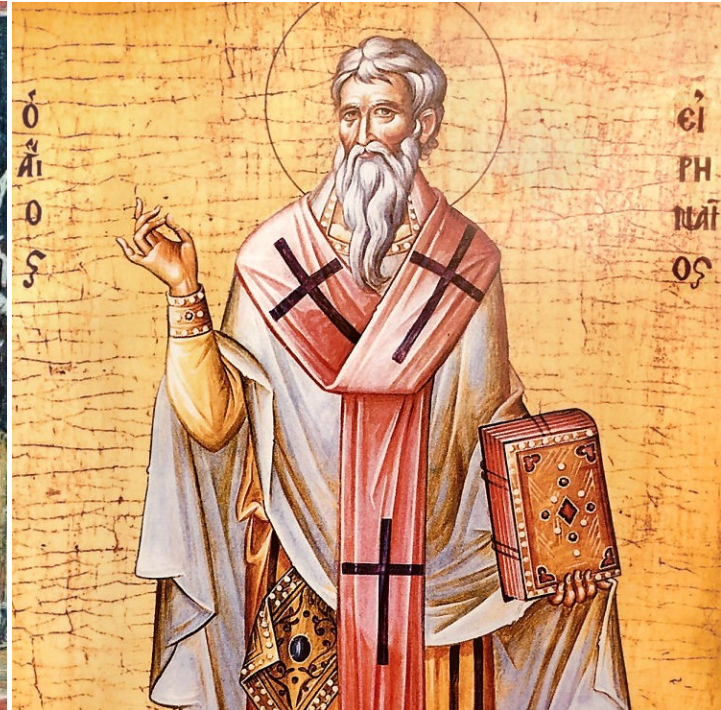
Son, soldier, athlete, farmer: father

- You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything. (2 Tim 2:2)

One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic: Tradition

- “I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2)
- “As I said before, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although she is disseminated throughout the whole world, yet guarded it, as if she occupied but one house. She likewise believes these things just as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart; and harmoniously she proclaims them and teaches them and hands them down, as if she possessed but one mouth. For, while the languages of the world are diverse, nevertheless, the authority of the tradition is one and the same” (St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1:10:2 [A.D. 189]).

Passing down the flame



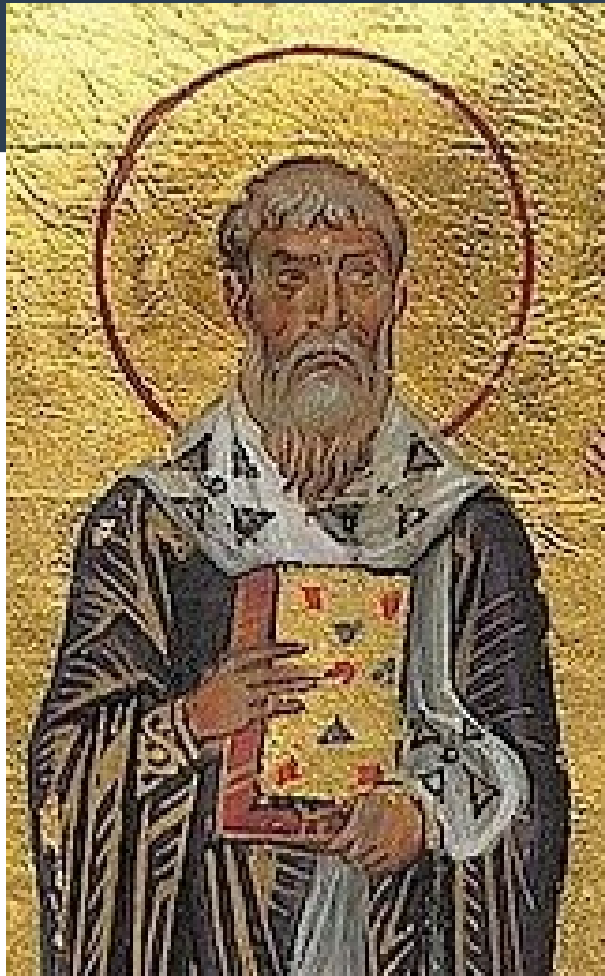
Hey, remember Vatican II?

“This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit... For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.

The words of the holy fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church. Through the same tradition the Church's full canon of the sacred books is known, and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and unceasingly made active in her...” (Dei Verbum 8)

Apostolic Succession: Links in the chain

“Through countryside and city [the apostles] preached, and they appointed their earliest converts, testing them by the Spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers. Nor was this a novelty, for bishops and deacons had been written about a long time earlier. . . . Our apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife for the office of bishop. For this reason, therefore, having received perfect foreknowledge, they appointed those who have already been mentioned and afterwards added the further provision that, if they should die, other approved men should succeed to their ministry” (St. Clement of Rome, Letter to the Corinthians 42:4–5, 44:1–3 [A.D. 80]).





Get off my land: protecting God's House

- “Who are you ... Marcion, by what right do you chop my wood? By whose permission, Valentinus, are you diverting my streams? By what power, Apelles, are you removing my landmarks? This is my property.... I hold sure title-deeds from the original owners themselves, to whom the estate belonged. I am the heir of the Apostles.” (Tertullian, *Prescription Against Heretics*, 37 [A.D. 200])



What makes a Church Father?

- “Those alone who, though in diverse times and places, yet persevering in the communion and faith of the one Catholic Church, have been approved teachers.” (St. Vincent of Lerins)
 - 1) Sound doctrine
 - 2) Holiness of life
 - 3) Church approval
 - 4) Antiquity

Who are the Church Fathers?

St. Ambrose of Milan (d. 397) * St. Anastasius Sinaita (d. 700) St. Andrew of Crete (d. 740) St. Aphrahat (fourth century) St. Archelaus (d. 282) Arnobius (d. 330) St. Asterius of Amasea (fourth century) St. Athanasius (d. 373) * St. Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) * St. Athenagoras (second century) St. Basil the Great (d. 379) * St. Benedict of Nursia (d.c. 550) St. Caesarius of Arles (d. 542) St. Caesarius of Nazianzus (d. 369) St. Celestine I, Pope (reigned 422–432) St. Clement of Alexandria (d. 215) St. Clement I of Rome, Pope (reigned 88–97) St. Cornelius, Pope (reigned 251–253) St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386) St. Damasus I, Pope (reigned 366–384) Didymus the Blind (d.c. 398) Diodore of Tarsus (d. 392) St. Dionysius, Pope (reigned 259–268) St. Dionysius the Great (d.c. 264) St. Ennodius (d. 521) St. Epiphanius (d. 403) St. Eucherius of Lyons (d.c. 450) Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 340) St. Eustathius of Antioch (fourth century) St. Firmilian (d. 268) St. Fulgentius (d. 533) Gennadius I of Constantinople (fifth century) St. Germanus (d. 732) St. Gregory I the Great, Pope (reigned 590–604) * St. Gregory of Elvira (d.c. 392) St. Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390) * St. Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395) St. Gregory of Pontus (d. 268) Hermas (second century) St. Hilary of Poitiers (d. 367) St. Hippolytus (d. 236) St. Ignatius of Antioch (d.c. 107) St. Innocent I, Pope (reigned 401–417) St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d.c. 202) St. Isidore of Pelusium (d.c. 450) St. Isidore of Seville (d. 636) St. Jacob of Serugh (d. 521) St. Jerome (d. 420) * St. John Cassian (d. 435) St. John Chrysostom (d. 407) * St. John Climacus (d. 649) St. John of Damascus (d. 749) St. Julius I, Pope (reigned 337–352) St. Justin Martyr (d. 165) Lactantius (d. 323) St. Leo I the Great, Pope (reigned 440–461) St. Leontius of Byzantium (sixth century) St. Macarius (d.c. 390) Marius Mercator (d. 451) Marius Victorinus (fourth century) St. Maximus the Confessor (d. 662) St. Melito of Sardis (d.c. 180) St. Methodius of Olympus (d.c. 311) Minucius Felix (second century) St. Nilus the Elder (d.c. 430) Novatian (d.c. 257) St. Optatus (fourth century) Origen (d. 254) St. Prudentius (fourth and fifth centuries) St. Pacian (d.c. 390) St. Pamphilus (d. 309) St. Paulinus of Nola (d. 431) St. Peter Chrysologus (d. 450) St. Phoebadius of Agen (fourth century) St. Polycarp (d.c. 155) St. Proclus (d.c. 446) Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (sixth century) St. Romanus the Melodist (sixth century) Rufinus of Aquileia (d. 410) Salvian (fifth century) St. Serapion (d.c. 370) St. Siricius, Pope (reigned 384–399) St. Sophronius (d. 638) Tatian (second century) Tertullian (d.c. 222) Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428) Theodoret of Cyrrhus (d.c. 458) St. Theophilus of Antioch (second century) St. Venantius Fortunatus (sixth century) St. Vincent of Lérins (d.c. 450)

Divide and Conquer

- **By time**

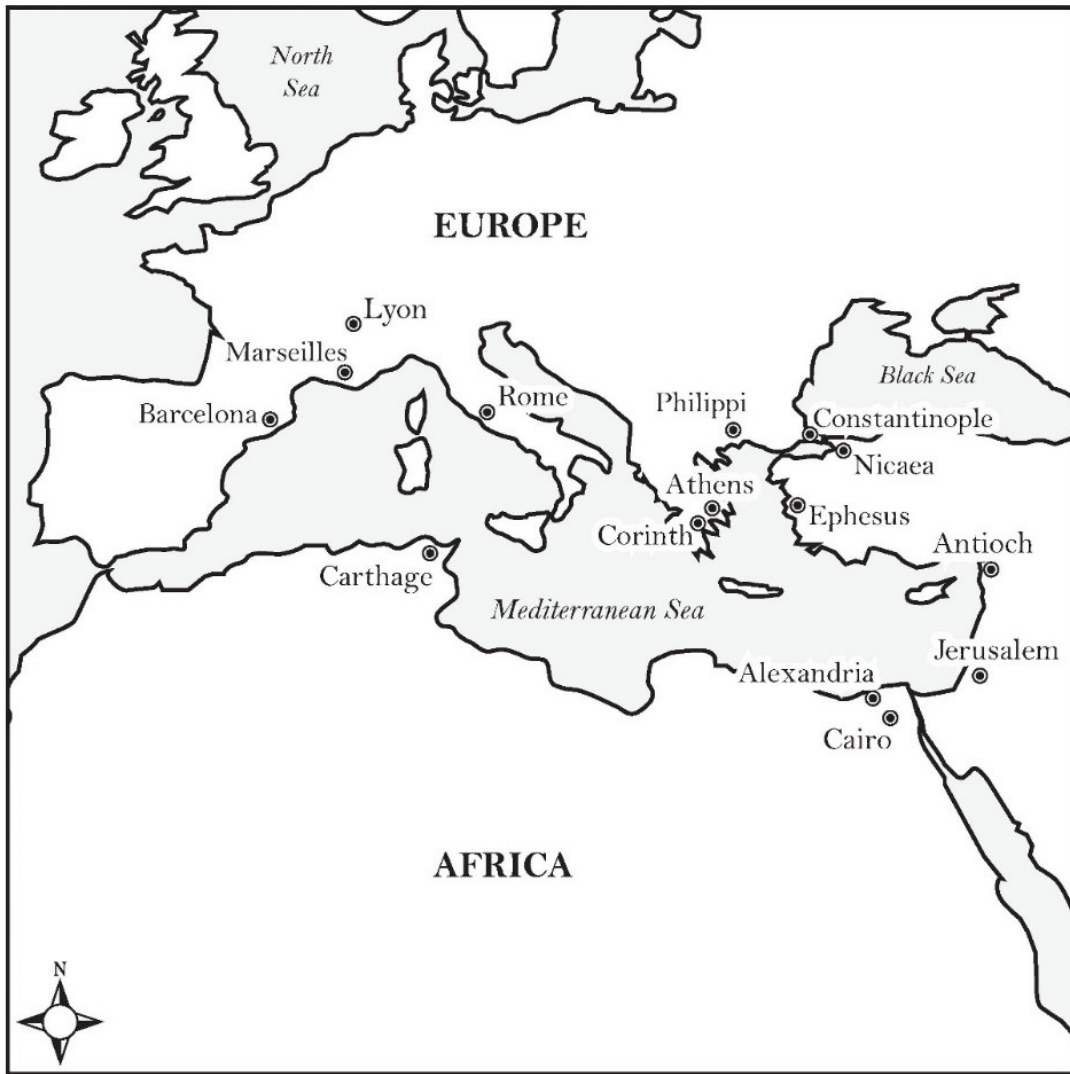
- 1) Ante-Nicene Fathers (before 325)
- 2) The Great Fathers (325-451)
- 3) Later Fathers (451-787)

- **By language**

- Greek
- Latin
- Syriac, Coptic, Ge'ez, Armenian

- **By region**

- Jerusalem
- Asia Minor
- Greece and Rome
- The Far West
- North Africa



Take Council

- 1) Nicaea (325)
- 2) Constantinople (381)
- 3) Ephesus (431)
- 4) Chalcedon (451)
- 5) Constantinople II (553)
- 6) Constantinople III (680)
- 7) Nicaea II (787)



Some highlights, please?

- Apostolic Fathers: St. Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp
- Ante-Nicene: St. Justin, St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen
- Greek Golden Age: St. Athanasius,* St. Basil,* St. Gregory of Nazianzus,* St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. John Chrysostom*
- Latin Golden Age: St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose,* St. Augustine,* St. Jerome,* St. Leo the Great
- Later Fathers: St. Gregory the Great,* Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. John of Damascus
- Syriac Fathers: St. Ephrem and St. Jacob of Serugh

Did that even help?

- Take away's:
 - Gratitude for communion in the family of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.
 - Our faith is ancient and rich, and it's worth dying for.
 - We stand on the shoulders of giants.
 - If there is a problem, it's probably already been solved.
 - We can always go deeper.



From the beginning

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete. (1 John 1:1-4)



Recommendations

- Read the Fathers themselves! Letters of St. Ignatius; Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*; Augustine, *Confessions*; John Chrysostom, *On Marriage and Family Life*
- *The Church Fathers*, Benedict XVI
- Apologetics: *The Fathers Know Best*, Jimmy Akin
- Detailed summary: *The Fathers of the Church*, Mike Aquilina
- Easy reading: *When the Church Was Young*, Marcellino D'Ambrosio
- Easy listening: the podcast “Way of the Fathers” by Mike Aquilina

Second Vespers of the Third Sunday of Lent

God, + come to my assistance.

— Lord, make haste to help me.

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

— as it was in the beginning, is
now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Faith of Our Fathers

Faith of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire and sword,
O how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
Were still in heart and conscience free;
And blest would be their children's fate,
If they, like them should die for thee:
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!

Faith of our fathers, we will strive
To win all nations unto thee;
And through the truth that comes from God
Mankind shall then indeed be free.
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!

Faith of our fathers, we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife,
And preach thee, too, as love knows how
By kindly words and virtuous life.
Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death!

Lord, all-powerful King, free us for the sake of your name. Give us time to turn from our sins.

The Lord's revelation to my Master: †

[Men] “Sit on my right: *
your foes I will put beneath your
feet.”

[Women] The Lord will wield from
Zion †
your scepter of power: *
rule in the midst of all your foes.

[Men] A prince from the day of
your birth, †
on the holy mountains; *
from the womb before the dawn I
begot you.

[Women] The Lord has sworn an
oath he will not change. †
“You are a priest for ever, *
a priest like Melchizedeck of old.”

[Together after] Lord, all-powerful King, free us for the sake of your name. Give us time to turn from our sins.

[Men] The Master standing at your right hand *
will shatter kings in the day of his great wrath.

[Women] He shall drink from the stream by the wayside *
and therefore he shall lift up his head.

[Men] Glory to the Father, and to the Son,*
and to the Holy Spirit:

[Women] as it was in the beginning, is now, *
and will be for ever. Amen.

We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, the lamb without blemish.

I will thank the Lord with all my heart *
[Men] in the meeting of the just and
their assembly.

Great are the works of the Lord, *
to be pondered by all who love them.

[Women] Majestic and glorious his
work, *
his justice stands firm for ever.
He makes us remember his wonders. *
The Lord is compassion and love.

[Men] He gives food to those who fear
him; *
keeps his covenant ever in mind.
He has shown his might to his people *
by giving them the lands of the nations.

[Women] His works are justice and truth, *
his precepts are all of them sure,
standing firm for ever and ever; *
they are made in uprightness and truth.

[Together after] We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, the lamb without blemish.

[Men] He has sent deliverance to his people †
and established his covenant for ever.*
Holy his name, to be feared.

[Women] To fear the Lord is the first stage of wisdom; †
all who do so prove themselves wise. *
His praise shall last for ever!

[Men] Glory to the Father, and to the Son,*
and to the Holy Spirit:

[Women] as it was in the beginning, is now, *
and will be for ever. Amen.

Ours were the sufferings he bore; ours the torments he endured.

Christ suffered for you, †
[Men] and left you an example *
to have you follow in his footsteps.

[Women] He did no wrong; *
no deceit was found in his mouth.
When he was insulted, *
he returned no insult.

[Men] When he was made to suffer,
he did not counter with threats.
Instead he delivered himself up *
to the One who judges justly.

[Women] In his own body *
he brought your sins to the cross,
so that all of us, dead to sin, *
could live in accord with God's
will.

[Together after] Ours were the sufferings he bore; ours the torments he endured.

[Men] By his wounds you were healed.

[Women] Glory to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit:

[Men] as it was in the beginning, is now, *
and will be for ever. Amen.

While all the runners in the stadium take part in the race, the award goes to one man. In that case, run so as to win! Athletes deny themselves all sorts of things. They do this to win a crown of leaves that withers, but we a crown that is imperishable.

(1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

Listen to us, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned against you.

— **Listen to us, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned against you.**

Christ Jesus, hear our humble petitions,

— **for we have sinned against you.**

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

— **Listen to us, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned against you.**

[Stand] Whoever drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again, says the Lord.

My + soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
†

[All] my spirit rejoices in God my Savior *
for he has looked with favor on his lowly
servant.

From this day all generations will call me
blessed: †
the Almighty has done great things for me, *
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him *
in every generation.

**He has shown the strength of his arm,

**he has scattered the proud in their
conceit.**

**He has cast down the mighty from
their thrones, *
and has lifted up the lowly.**

**He has filled the hungry with good
things, *
and the rich he has sent away empty.**

[Together after] Whoever drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again, says the Lord.

He has come to the help of his servant
Israel *
for he has remembered his promise of
mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers, *
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, *
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, *
and will be for ever. Amen

After Magnificat, there are the petitions.
The response is

Lord, be gracious to Your people.