



Akathist to the Theotokos

Troparion - Tone 8

Taking knowledge of the secret command / the bodiless Archangel went with haste to Joseph's dwelling / and said to her that knew not wedlock: / 'He who in His self-abasement bowed the heavens and came down / is housed wholly and unchanged in thee. / I see Him take the form of a servant in thy womb / and in wonder cry to thee: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!'¹

Kontakion 1 - Tone 8

O Victorious Leader of triumphant hosts, / we, thy servants², delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to thee, O Theotokos. / As thou dost possess invincible might set us free from every calamity / so that we may sing: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

Section One. The Annunciation. Luke 1: 26 - 56.

Α Ikos 1*

A prince of the angels was sent from heaven, to say to the Theotokos, Rejoice! And seeing Thee, O Lord, take bodily form at the sound of his bodiless voice, filled with amazement he stood still and cried aloud to her:

Rejoice, for through thee joy shall shine forth:

Rejoice, for through thee the curse shall cease.

Rejoice, recalling of fallen Adam:

Rejoice, deliverance from the tears of Eve.

Rejoice, height hard to climb for the thoughts of men:

Rejoice, depth hard to scan even for the eyes of angels.

Rejoice, for thou art the throne of the King:

Rejoice, for thou holdest Him who upholds all.

Rejoice, star causing the sun to shine:

Rejoice, womb of the divine Incarnation.

Rejoice, for through thee creation is made new:

Rejoice, for through thee the Creator becomes a newborn child.

Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

¹ Ps 17 [18]: 9; Phil. 2: 7.

² In the original Greek, "I, thy city ..."

* The Akathist Hymn has an acrostic of the Greek Alphabet, here marked in read Greek letters.

B Kontakion 2

The Holy Maiden, seeing herself in all her purity, said boldly unto Gabriel: 'Strange seem thy words and hard for my soul to accept. From a conception without seed how dost thou speak of childbirth crying: Alleluia!

F Ikos 2

Seeking to know what passes knowledge, the Virgin said to the ministering Angel: 'From a maiden womb how can a Son be born? Tell me.' And to her in fear he answered, crying:

Rejoice, initiate of God's secret counsel:

Rejoice, faith in that which must be guarded by silence.

Rejoice, beginning of Christ's wonders:

Rejoice, crown and fulfillment of His teachings.

Rejoice, heavenly ladder by which God came down:

Rejoice, bridge leading men from earth to heaven.

Rejoice, marvel greatly renowned among the angels:

Rejoice, wound bitterly lamented by the demons.

Rejoice, for ineffably thou shalt bear the Light:

Rejoice, for thou hast revealed the mystery to none.

Rejoice, wisdom surpassing the knowledge of the wise:

Rejoice, dawn that illumines the minds of the faithful.

Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

A Kontakion 3

Then the power of the Most High overshadowed her that knew no wedlock, so that she might conceive: and He made her fruitful womb as a fertile field for all who long to reap the harvest of salvation, singing: Alleluia!

E Ikos 3

Bearing God within her womb, the Virgin hastened to Elizabeth; whose unborn child, knowing at once the salutation of the Theotokos, rejoiced, and, leaping up as if in song, cried out to her:

Rejoice, vine whence springs a never-withering branch:

Rejoice, orchard of pure fruit.

Rejoice, for thou tendest the Husband-man who loves mankind:

Rejoice, for thou hast borne the Gardener who cultivates our life.

Rejoice, earth yielding a rich harvest of compassion:

Rejoice, table laden with mercy in abundance.

Rejoice, for through thee the fields of Eden flower again:

Rejoice, for thou makest ready a haven for our souls.

Rejoice, acceptable incense of intercession:

Rejoice, propitiation for the whole world.

Rejoice, loving-kindness of God unto mortal man:

Rejoice, freedom of approach for mortals unto God.

Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

Z Kontakion 4

Tossed inwardly by a storm of doubts, prudent Joseph was troubled: knowing thee to be unwedded, O blameless Virgin, he feared a stolen union. But when he learnt that thy conceiving was from the Holy Spirit, he said: Alleluia!

Section 2. *On the Nativity. Luke 2: 1 – 40; Matt. 1: 18 – 2: 23*

H Ikos 4

The shepherds heard the angels glorify Christ's coming in the flesh. Quickly they ran to the Shepherd, and beheld Him as a lamb without spot, that had been pastured in the womb of Mary; and they sang praises to her, saying:

Rejoice, Mother of the Lamb and Shepherd:

Rejoice, fold of spiritual sheep.

Rejoice, protection against unseen enemies:

Rejoice, key to the door of Paradise.

Rejoice, for heaven exults with earth:

Rejoice, for things on earth rejoice with the heavens.

Rejoice, never-silent voice of the apostles:

Rejoice, unconquered courage of the victorious martyrs.

Rejoice, firm foundation of the faith:

Rejoice, shining revelation of grace.

Rejoice, for through thee hell is stripped bare:

Rejoice, for through thee we are clothed in glory.

Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

θ Kontakion 5

Seeing the star pointing to God, the Magi followed its radiance. Keeping it before them as a beacon, with its help they sought the mighty King; and attaining the Unattainable, they rejoiced and cried to Him: Alleluia!

I Ikos 5

The children of the Chaldaens saw the Virgin holding in her hands Him who with His hands fashioned mankind. Though He had taken the form of a servant, yet they knew Him as their Master. In haste they knelt before Him with their gifts and cried out to the Blessed Virgin:

Rejoice, Mother of the Star that never sets:

Rejoice, bright dawn of the mystical day.

Rejoice, for thou hast quenched the furnace of deception:

Rejoice, for thou dost illumine all who love the mystery of the Trinity.

Rejoice, for thou hast cast down from his dominion the tyrant that hates man:

Rejoice, for thou hast made known the Lord Christ who loves mankind.

Rejoice, deliverance from the worship of pagan idols:

Rejoice, liberation from the filth of sin.

Rejoice, for thou hast quenched the worship of fire:

Rejoice, for thou hast released us from the flames of passion.

Rejoice, guide of the faithful to chastity:

Rejoice, joy of all generations.
Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

K Kontakion 6

Becoming God's messengers, the Magi returned to Babylon. Having fulfilled the prophecy concerning Thee,³ and preaching Thee to all as Christ, they left Herod to his raving, for he knew not how to sing: Alleluia!

1 Ikos 6

Shining upon Egypt with the light of truth,⁴ Thou hast dispelled the darkness of falsehood; for the idols of that land fell down, unable to endure Thy power, O Savior, and all who were delivered from them cried unto the Theotokos:

Rejoice, restoration of men:

Rejoice, downfall of demons.

Rejoice, for thou hast trampled on the delusion of error:

Rejoice, for thou hast exposed the snares of the idols.

Rejoice, sea that has drowned the invisible Pharoah:

Rejoice, rock that gives drink to all who thirst for life.

Rejoice, pillar of fire, guiding those in darkness:

Rejoice, protection of the world, wider than the cloud in the wilderness.⁵

Rejoice, food that takes the place of manna:

Rejoice, minister of holy joy.

Rejoice, promised land:

Rejoice, source of milk and honey.

Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

M Kontakion 7

As Simeon drew near to the time of his departure from this world of error, he received Thee as an infant in his arms, but he knew Thee to be perfect God; and struck with wonder at Thine ineffable wisdom, he cried: Alleluia!

Section 3. The Incarnation

N Ikos 7

A new creation has the Creator revealed, manifesting Himself unto us His creatures. From a Virgin's womb He came, preserving it inviolate as it was before: that, beholding the miracle, we might sing her praises, crying:

Rejoice, flower of incorruption:

Rejoice, crown of chastity.

Rejoice, bright foreshadowing of the resurrection glory:

Rejoice, mirror of the angels' life.

Rejoice, tree of glorious fruit on which the faithful feed:

Rejoice, wood of shady leaves where many shelter.

Rejoice, for thou hast conceived a Guide for the wanderers:

3 Psalm 71 [72]: 10.

4 Isa. 19: 1; Matt. 2: 14.

5 Exod. 13: 21.

Rejoice, for thou hast borne a Deliverer for the captives.
 Rejoice, intercessor with the Righteous Judge:
 Rejoice, forgiveness for many who have stumbled.
 Rejoice, robe for the naked and bereft of hope:
 Rejoice, love surpassing desire.
 Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

Z Kontakion 8

Seeing this strange birth, let us become strangers to the world, fixing our minds in heaven. To this end has the most high God appeared on earth as a lowly man, because He wishes to draw heaven-ward all who cry aloud to Him: Alleluia!

O Ikos 8

The boundless Word was wholly present here below, yet in no wise absent from the realm on high: God descended to earth yet underwent no change of place. He was born of a Virgin, over-shadowed by divine power, and unto her we sing:

Rejoice, enclosure of the God whom nothing can enclose:
 Rejoice, gate of the hallowed mystery.
 Rejoice, tidings doubted by unbelievers:
 Rejoice, undoubted glory of the faithful.
 Rejoice, most holy chariot of Him who rides upon the cherubim:
 Rejoice, best of all dwellings for Him who is above the seraphim.
 Rejoice, for thou bringest opposites to harmony:
 Rejoice, for thou hast joined in one childbirth and virginity.
 Rejoice, for through thee our sin is remitted:
 Rejoice, for through thee Paradise is opened.
 Rejoice, key of Christ's Kingdom:
 Rejoice, hope of eternal blessings.
 Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

II Kontakion 9

All the ranks of angels marveled at the great work of Thine incarnation. For they saw God, whom none can approach, as a man approachable by all, dwelling in our midst, and hearing from our lips: Alleluia!

P Ikos 9

Eloquent orators we see dumb as the fishes in thy presence, O Theotokos, for they are at a loss to say how thou remainest virgin and yet hast power to bear a child. But we, marveling at the mystery, cry aloud in faith:

Rejoice, vessel of God's wisdom:
 Rejoice, treasury of His providence.
 Rejoice, for thou revealest lack of wisdom in the lovers of wisdom:
 Rejoice, for thou provest devoid of reason those skilled in reason's art.
 Rejoice, for the cunning disputants are shown to be fools:
 Rejoice, for the myth-makers have withered into silence.
 Rejoice, for thou hast torn asunder the tangled webs of the Athenians:

Rejoice, for thou hast filled the nets of the fishermen.
 Rejoice, for thou dost draw men from the depths of ignorance:
 Rejoice, for thou dost illumine multitudes with knowledge.
 Rejoice, ship of all who would be saved:
 Rejoice, haven for the seafarers of life.
 Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

Ⲙ Kontakion 10

Wishing to save the world, the Fashioner of all things came to it of His own free choice. As God, He is our Shepherd, yet has He appeared for our sake as a man like us; and calling like by means of like, as God, He hears our cry: Alleluia!

Section 4. *On the Mother of God.*

Ⲛ Ikos 10

For virgins and all who flee to thee thou art a wall, O Virgin Theotokos undefiled: for the Creator of heaven and earth has made thee ready and adorned thee, dwelling in thy womb, and teaching all to sing to her:

Rejoice, pillar of virginity:
 Rejoice, gate of salvation.
 Rejoice, beginning of the new and spiritual creation:
 Rejoice, provider of God's mercy.
 Rejoice, for thou hast given birth to those conceived in shame:
 Rejoice, for thou hast given good counsel to those robbed of understanding.
 Rejoice, for thou bringest to naught the corrupter of man's mind:
 Rejoice, for thou bringest to birth the Sower of purity.
 Rejoice, bridal chamber of a marriage without seed:
 Rejoice, for thou joinest in union the faithful to their Lord.
 Rejoice, fair nursing-mother of virgins:
 Rejoice, bridal escort of holy souls.
 Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

Ⲛ Kontakion 11

No hymn can recount the multitude of Thy many mercies. For though we offer unto Thee, O holy King, songs numberless as the sand upon the seashore, yet we do nothing worthy of the blessings Thou hast given us, who cry unto Thee: Alleluia!

Ⲙ Ikos 11

We see the Holy Virgin as a lamp to those in darkness. Kindling the immaterial Fire, she guides all men to divine knowledge; she illumines our mind with radiance, and we sing these praises in her honor:

Rejoice, beam of the spiritual Sun:
 Rejoice, ray of the Moon that never wanes.
 Rejoice, lightning flash that shines upon our souls:
 Rejoice, thunder that brings terror to our enemies.
 Rejoice, dawn that maketh the manifold Splendor to arise:
 Rejoice, spring that maketh the River with many streams to flow.

Rejoice, for thou dost prefigure the baptismal font:

Rejoice, for thou takest away the filth of sin.

Rejoice, water washing clean the conscience:

Rejoice, cup wherein is mixed the wine of mighty joy.

Rejoice, scent of Christ's fragrance:

Rejoice, life of mystical feasting.

Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

✠ Kontakion 12

Wishing to release from ancient debts, the Redeemer of all men came of His own will to those who were exiled from His grace; He has torn up the record of our sins, and from all He hears the cry: Alleluia!⁶

✠ Ikos 12

We all sing in honor of thy Son, O Theotokos, and praise thee as a living temple. For the Lord who holds all things in His hand made His dwelling in thy womb; He hallowed and He glorified thee, teaching all to cry to thee:

Rejoice, tabernacle of God the Word:

Rejoice, greater Holy of Holies.

Rejoice, ark made golden by the Spirit:

Rejoice, never-empty treasure-house of life.

Rejoice, precious crown of orthodox kings:

Rejoice, honored boast of godly priests.

Rejoice, unshaken fortress of the Church:

Rejoice, unconquered rampart of the Kingdom.

Rejoice, for through thee the standards of victory are raised on high:

Rejoice, for through thee our enemies are cast down.

Rejoice, healing of my body:

Rejoice, salvation of my soul.

Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

⊕ Kontakion 13

O Mother worthy of all praise, who hast borne the Word, the Holiest of all Holies accepting this our offering, deliver from every ill and from the punishment to come, all those who cry aloud to thee: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Kontakion 13 is read 3 times, and then Ikos One is read again:

Ikos 1

A prince of the angels was sent from heaven, to say to the Theotokos, Rejoice! And seeing Thee, O Lord, take bodily form at the sound of his bodiless voice, filled with amazement he stood still and cried aloud to her:

Rejoice, for through thee joy shall shine forth:

Rejoice, for through thee the curse shall cease.

Rejoice, recalling of fallen Adam:

Rejoice, deliverance from the tears of Eve.

⁶ Col. 2: 14.

Rejoice, height hard to climb for the thoughts of men:

Rejoice, depth hard to scan even for the eyes of angels.

Rejoice, for thou art the throne of the King:

Rejoice, for thou holdest Him who upholds all.

Rejoice, star causing the sun to shine:

Rejoice, womb of the divine Incarnation.

Rejoice, for through thee creation is made new:

Rejoice, for through thee the Creator becomes a newborn child.

Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

Then Kontakion 1 is sung again:

Kontakion 1 - Tone 8

O Victorious Leader of triumphant hosts, / we, thy servants, delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to thee, O Theotokos. / As thou dost possess invincible might set us free from every calamity / so that we may sing: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!

Troparion - Tone 8

Taking knowledge of the secret command / the bodiless Archangel went with haste to Joseph's dwelling / and said to her that knew not wedlock: / 'He who in His self-abasement bowed the heavens and came down / is housed wholly and unchanged in thee. / I see Him take the form of a servant in thy womb / and in wonder cry to thee: Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!'

Prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God.

Receive from us, thine unworthy servants, O all-powerful for good, most pure, Sovereign Lady, Mother of God, these honorable gifts, which can be offered only to thee, who art the one chosen out of all generations, and who hast become higher than all creation, heavenly and earthly. For through thee the Lord of Powers was with us, and through thee we came to know the Son of God, and were granted His holy Body and most pure Blood. Therefore thou art blessed by all generations, the Favorite of God, more radiant than the Cherubim, and more honorable than the Seraphim. And now, O all-hymned, most holy Mother of God, cease not to pray for us, thy unworthy servants, to be delivered from every snare of the subtle one, and from all besetting sins, and preserve us unharmed from every poisonous temptation of the devil. But preserve us to the end uncondemned by thy prayers; for saved by thy help and protection, we send up glory, praise, thanksgiving and adoration for all, to the One God, in Trinity and Creator of all, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.



Another Prayer to the Most Holy Mother of God, from the Akathist

O most holy Sovereign Lady Theotokos! Higher art thou than all the angels and archangels, and more honorable than all creation, a helper of the wronged art thou, the hope of the hopeless, an intercessor for the poor, the consolation of the sorrowful, a nourisher of the hungry, a robe for the naked, healing for the sick, the salvation of sinners, the help and protection of all Christians. O all-merciful Sovereign Lady Virgin Theotokos! Through thy mercy, save and have mercy on [our Metropolitan the most blessed Tikhon, our Archbishop, the most reverend Benjamin,] the most holy Orthodox patriarchs, the most holy metropolitans, archbishops and bishops, and all the priestly and monastic orders, and all Orthodox Christians; and this land, its president, civil authorities, armed forces, and people; do thou defend by thy precious omophorion, and entreat, O Lady, Christ our God Who was incarnate of thee without seed, that He gird us with His power from on high against our enemies, visible and invisible, O all-merciful Sovereign Lady Theotokos! Raise us up out of the depths of sin, and deliver us from famine, destruction, from earthquake and flood, from fire and the sword, from invasion of aliens and civil war, and from sudden death, and from noxious winds, and from death-bearing plagues, and from all evil. Grant, O Lady, peace and health to thy servants, all Orthodox Christians, and enlighten their minds, and the eyes of their hearts unto salvation; and vouchsafe unto us, thy sinful servants, the kingdom of thy Son, Christ our God; for blessed and most-glorified is His dominion, together with His unoriginate Father, and His Most-Holy and good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.



This Translation

This follows the Translation in “The Lenten Triodion” trans. Mother Mary & Archimandrite (now Metropolitan) Kallistos Ware, Faber & Faber, London, 1977. pp. 422 - 437.

The translation of the Kontakion, “O Victorious Leader ...” follows the usual OCA translation in “The Divine Liturgy” 3rd Edition, 2013. The refrains have all been adjusted to match, “Rejoice, O unwedded Bride!”. Likewise, because of this OCA translation and the usual usage of the hymn “Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Mary full of Grace ...”, the text here uses “Rejoice” instead of “Hail” throughout.

The prayers at the end have been taken from the different editions of the prayerbook published by Holy Trinity Monastery, the first from the original editions, the second from the current editions. Both prayers can be found in Orthodox Prayerbooks with the Akathist.

The Greek Alphabetical Acrostic is marked. The four sections are suggested by Fr Ephraim (Lash)’s translation.

From the Introduction to “The Lenten Triodion”

Met Kallistos (Ware) pp 54 - 55

At Mattins on Saturday, there is sung the *Akathistos Hymn to the Mother of God*. One of the greatest marvels of Greek religious poetry, with a richness of imagery that is the despair of any translator, the Akathistos Hymn has twenty-four main stanzas, alternatively long and short: each long stanza bears the title ‘Ikos’ and ends with the refrain ‘Hail, Bride without bridegroom’, while each short stanza is termed ‘kontakion’ and ends with the refrain ‘Alleluia’. The title ‘Akathistos’ means literally ‘not sitting’, the Hymn being so called because all remain standing while it is sung. The greater part of the Hymn is made up of praises addressed to the Holy Virgin, each beginning with the salutation of the Archangel Gabriel, ‘Hail’ or ‘Rejoice’ (Luke 1: 28). The Hymn passes in review the main events connected with Christ’s Incarnation, starting with the Annunciation (first ikos) and ending with the Flight into Egypt (sixth ikos) and the Presentation in the Temple (seventh kontakion).

The Akathistos Hymn, so it seems, was originally composed at an epoch when the Annunciation was still celebrated together with Christmas and had not yet become a separate festival. 69 Perhaps at one time it was sung on 26 December, the Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos. It was probably during the reign of the Emperor Justinian (527-65) that the Annunciation first began to be celebrated on 25 March; and either when this happened or else soon after – and in any case not later than 718 – the Akathistos Hymn was also appointed to be sung on 25 March. More recently, perhaps during the period of the *Turcocratia* after the fall of Constantinople (1453), the Hymn was transferred from the fixed to the movable calendar, and instead of being sung on 25 March it was appointed for Saturday in the fifth week. The custom of singing a portion of the Hymn at Compline on the first four Fridays of Lent is more recent still: while found among the Greeks, such a

practice is not part of the Slav use.

The link between the Akathistos Hymn and the Feast of the Annunciation still continues to be much in evidence: for example, most of the texts at Friday Vespers before the Vigil of the Akathistos are taken directly from the office for 25 March.⁷ The Annunciation almost always falls within the period of the Great Fast,⁸ and that is why this special office of praise to the Mother of God has found a place in the Lenten Triodion.

At the beginning of the Akathistos Hymn, there is sung a Kontakion greatly loved by the Orthodox people, 'To thee, our leader in battle and defender ...' celebrating the deliverance of the city of Constantinople from its enemies through the aid of the Mother of God. It seems that this Kontakion was not originally part of the Akathistos Hymn, for in the Hymn itself there is nowhere any allusion to such a deliverance. [*In the context, it seems that the Troparion "Taking knowledge of the secret command ..." originally had the place now taken by "O Victorious Leader ..." Editor.*] Most probably the Kontakion was written by Patriarch Sergios to celebrate the escape of the Byzantine capital from the attack of the Persians and Avars in 626; in that case, the Akathistos Hymn is almost certainly more ancient than the Kontakion. Perhaps this Kontakion, and the Akathistos Hymn itself, were also sung at the thanksgiving celebrations after other deliverances of Constantinople: from the Arabs in the mid-670s, from the Arabs again in 717 - 18, and from the Russians (not yet converted to Orthodoxy) in 860. Understood in a broader sense, the Kontakion expresses, in the conscience of the Orthodox faithful, their sense of continuing dependence on the protecting intercession of the Holy Virgin at all moments of crisis and peril.

Background Information

THE AKATHIST HYMN is one of the most well-loved services of devotion in the Orthodox Church. Although there is some debate concerning the particulars of its authorship, many scholars agree with the pious tradition which states that the Akathist was composed in the imperial city of Constantinople, "the city of the Virgin," by St. Romanos the Melodist, who reposed in the year 556. The Akathist Hymn has proved so popular that many other hymns have been written following its format, particularly in the Russian Orthodox Church. These include Akathists to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Cross, to various saints, etc.

The word "*akathistos*" literally means "not sitting," i.e., standing; normally all participants stand while it is being prayed. The hymn is comprised of 24 stanzas, alternating long and short. Each short stanza (kontakion) ends with the singing of "*Alleluia*." Each longer stanza (ikos) ends with the refrain: "*Rejoice, O Bride Unwedded*."

7 According to the Typikon of St. Sabas, the earliest point in the movable calendar at which the Feast of the Annunciation can occur is Thursday in the third week of Lent; the latest point, Wednesday in Bright Week (Wednesday after Easter). The Typikon of St. Sabas also specifies that the Feast of the Annunciation shall never be transferred, even if it falls on Great Friday. These regulations are modified in the present-day Greek practice (see *The Festal Menaion*, p. 435, n. 1).

8 See the Synaxarion in *Triodion Katanyktikon*: (ed. Apostoliki Diakonia), pp. 302 - 3. It has also been suggested that the Kontakion 'To thee, our leader in battle and defender ...' was written in 532, to celebrate the safe escape of the city from the Nika riots. On such a hypothesis the Kontakion could be contemporary with the rest of the Akathistos Hymn, and might even be the work of Romanos. But the Synaxarion says nothing of the Nika riots.

The majority of the hymn is made up of praises directed to the Mother of God, always beginning with the salutation of the Archangel Gabriel: "Rejoice." In each of them, one after the other, all the events related to our Lord's incarnation pass before us for our contemplation. The Archangel Gabriel (in Ikos 1) marvels at the Divine self-emptying and the renewal of creation which will occur when Christ comes to dwell in the Virgin's womb. The unborn John the Baptist (Ikos 3) prophetically rejoices. The shepherds (Ikos 4) recognize Christ as a blameless Lamb, and rejoice that in the Virgin "the things of earth join chorus with the heavens." The pagan Magi, (Kontakion 5) following the light of the star, praise Her for revealing the light of the world.

As the hymn progresses, various individuals and groups encounter Christ and His Mother. Each has his own need; each his own desire or expectation, and each finds his or her own particular spiritual need satisfied and fulfilled in Our Lord and in the Mother of God. So too, each generation of Orthodox, and each particular person who has prayed the Akathist, has found in this hymn an inspired means of expressing gratitude and praise to the Mother of God for what she has accomplished for their salvation.

In the same way, may the readers of this booklet find the Mother of God to be a help and consolation for their souls as well.

Fr. Michael Carney

http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/m_akathist_e.htm

INTRODUCTION

The authorship of the Akathist Hymn to the Mother of God is the subject of much learned discussion, though many reputable scholars attribute it to St Romanos the Melodist, and so I have put this tentative translation on his page. The poem defies every translator and it is virtually impossible all the rhetorical devices which are such a striking feature of the Greek original. The original has an alphabetical acrostic for the first word of each Kontakion and Ikos and the lines beginning 'Hail!' are marked by many internal rhymes. These are indicated in the translation by em rules.

I have translated the Greek 'Chaire!' by 'Hail!' as this is the most natural meaning of the Greek. Even though etymologically it means 'Rejoice!', it is a standard greeting, like the Latin 'Ave!', which is what the Roman soldiers presumably said to the Lord as they mocked him. In the New Testament it often translates the Hebrew 'Shalom!'

Liturgically the Hymn forms part of Matins on the Saturday of the Akathist, and in the monasteries of the Holy Mountain it is read each night at Compline. In Greek use it is chanted solemnly in four sections at Compline on the first four Fridays of Lent, the whole being chanted at Compline on the fifth, the eve of Akathist Saturday.

Archimandrite Ephraim (Lash)

<http://www.anastasis.org/akath.htm>

Kontakia & Akathists

The Akathist hymn to the Theotokos is the original of all Akathists. It is a type of Kontakion. In a regular Kontakion, There is one (or more) Proëmion or opening hymn (now called confusingly “The Kontakion” of the hymn) followed by several Ikos hymns. All the hymns have the same or nearly the same refrain. The acrostics vary, and therefore, so do the number of Ikos hymns.

In the Akathist, the acrostic is the Greek Alphabet, so there are 24 hymns. All akathists follow this number, even if they do not produce an Alphabetical acrostic. These 24 hymns vary between long hymns, called Ikos hymns, that have the same refrain as the Proëmion, and shorter hymns with the refrain “Alleluia”, (also, confusingly, called “Kontakia”).

5th Saturday of Great Lent: of the Akathist to the Theotokos

On the Fifth Saturday of Great Lent, the Saturday of the Akathist, we commemorate the “Laudation of the Virgin” Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos.

In 625, when the emperor Heraclius was fighting the Persians, the Khan sent forces to attack Constantinople by land and by sea. Patriarch Sergius urged the people not to lose heart, but to trust in God.

A procession was made around the city with the Cross of the Lord, the robe of the Virgin, the Icon of the Savior not made by hands, and the Hodigitria Icon of the Mother of God. The Patriarch dipped the Virgin’s robe in the sea, and the city’s defenders beat back the Khan’s sea forces. The sea became very rough, and many boats sank. The invaders retreated, and the people of Constantinople gave thanks to God and to His Most Pure Mother.

On two other occasions, in 655 and 705, the Theotokos protected the city from Saracen invaders. A feastday dedicated to the Laudation of the Virgin was established to commemorate these victories. The Akathist to the Mother of God is believed to originate from this period, and its use has spread from Constantinople to other Orthodox lands.

The icon before which the Akathist was sung was given to the Dionysiou Monastery on Mt. Athos by Emperor Alexius Comnenos. There, it began to flow with myrrh. There were at least three wonderworking copies of this icon in Russia before the Revolution.

This icon shows the Mother of God seated on a throne, and surrounded by Prophets with scrolls.

<http://oca.org/saints/lives/2016/04/16/17-5th-saturday-of-great-lent-of-the-akathist-to-the-theotokos>