The Akathist Hymn

to the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

containing only the even numbered kontakia & ikoi

Metropolitan Cantor Institute
of the
Archeparchy of Pittsburgh
Byzantine Catholic Seminary
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edited by Rev. John R.P. Russell
to include Paschal & Reader Service variations,
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Foreword

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,' ending with the refrain “Rejoice, O Bride and maiden ever pure!”, 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 Hymn is deeply connected with the feast of the Annunciation on March 25. For example, most of the texts at Friday Vespers before the Vigil of the Akathistos are taken directly from the office for March 25. The Annunciation almost always falls within the period of the Great Fast, and that is why this special office of praise to the Theotokos has found a place in the Lenten Triodion.

Adapted from “The Inner Unity of the Triodion,”
from *The Lenten Triodion* of Kallistos Ware and Mother Mary.

This edition of the Akathist is a revision of the text published by the Rev. Msgr. William Levkulic, bringing the text into conformity with *The Divine Liturgies of Our Holy Fathers John Chrysostom and Basil the Great* published by the Byzantine Catholic Church sui juris of the U.S.A. It is published by the Metropolitan Cantor Institute of the Archeparchy of Pittsburgh.

Second edition (2018): the text, and the numbering of the kontakia, were edited to bring them into line with the official Church Slavonic text in the Ruthenian *Chasoslov* (1950), and a harmonization of the Pochaiv melody was added at the end.
The Service of the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos

Deacon: Reverend Father, give the blessing.

Priest: + Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and forever.

Response: Amen.

If a priest is not present:

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

Response: Amen.

Glory to you, our God, glory to you!

Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, everywhere present and filling all things. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life, come and dwell within us, cleanse us of all stain, and save our souls, O gracious One.

From Pascha until Pentecost, “Glory to you…” and “Heavenly King…” are not said. From Pascha until Ascension, the following Paschal Troparion is sung three times, first by the priest, then twice by all:

Christ is risen from the dead! By death he trampled Death;

and to those in the tombs he granted life.
Trisagion Prayers

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal,  
have mercy on us. *(three times)*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,  
now and ever and forever. Amen.

Most Holy Trinity, have mercy on us;  
Lord, cleanse us of our sins;  
Master, forgive our transgressions;  
    Holy One, come to us and heal our infirmities  
    for your name’s sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.  
    Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,  
now and ever and forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us,  
and lead us not into temptation,  
    but deliver us from evil

If a priest is not present:

**Priest:** For thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory, Father, Son, and  
Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

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

**Response:** Amen.

**Response:** Amen.
Ordinarily, the faithful STAND throughout the entire service. The priest (or leader) chants those portions for which only text is given, and the congregation sings the hymns and refrains.

If the Akathist is sung as a part of another service, it begins here.

Kontakion 2

Knowing that she was a vir-gin, the Bless-ed One courageously an-swered

the An-gel: Your sur-pris-ing words seem hard for my mind to ac-cept;

how can you speak of a birth that is to come from a conception with-out seed?

Refrain

And why do you cry: Al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia!

Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia!

Ikos 2: Trying to grasp the meaning of this mystery, the Virgin asked the holy messenger: “How is it possible that a son be born from a virginal womb? Tell me.” And he answered her with awe, crying out in these words:

Re-joice, O hidden Sense of the in-eff-a ble plan; Re-joice, O Belief in si-lence that must be! Re-joice, O Forecast of the mar-vels of Christ;
Rejoice, O Fountainhead of truths concerning him! Rejoice, celestial Ladder by whom God came down; Rejoice, O Bridge leading earthly ones to heaven!

Rejoice, O Wonder ever-thrilling to the angels; Rejoice, O Wound ever-hurting to the demons! Rejoice, O you who gave birth to light ineffably; Rejoice, O you who told no one how it was done!

Rejoice, O you who surpass the wisdom of the wise; Rejoice, O you who enlighten faithful minds!

Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ever-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ever-pure!
Filled with a storm of contradictory thoughts, the wise Joseph was greatly disturbed: until then, he had seen you a virgin, and now he suspected you of secret guilt, All-Blameless One! Learning that your conception was of the Holy Spirit, he cried out: Alleluia!

Refrain

Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia!

Ikos 4: The shepherds heard the angels singing hymns of praise to the coming of Christ in the flesh. And running to him as to a shepherd, they saw him as a spotless Lamb grazing at Mary's breast. They sang a hymn to her and said:
Rejoice, O Mother of Lamb and Shepherd; Rejoice, O Fold of rational sheep!

Rejoice, O Protection against unseen foes; Rejoice, O Key to the doors of paradise! Rejoice, for the heavenly rejoice with the earthly;

Rejoice, for the earthly meet the heavenly in song! Rejoice, the unsilenced Voice of apostles; Rejoice, the undaunted Might of martyrs!

Rejoice, O steadfast Foundation of faith; Rejoice, O shining Emblem of grace!

Rejoice, O you through whom death was despoiled; Rejoice, O you through whom we were clothed with glory!

Refrain

The Ma-gi, having become God-bear-ing her-alds, re-turned to Babylon, conform-ing
to your com-mand, an-nounc-ing you, the Christ, to all, and leav-ing Her-od
as a fool who did not know how to sing: Al-le-lu-ia!

Refrain

Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia!

Ikos 6: Illuminating Egypt with the light of truth, you cast away the darkness of error. For the idols, unable to stand your might, fell down, and those who had been delivered from them cried out to the Theotokos:
Rejoice, O Resurrection of us all; Rejoice, O Downfall of the demons!

Rejoice, O you who crushed the error of deceit; Rejoice, O you who exposed the fraud of idols! Rejoice, O Sea who drowned the symbolic Pharaoh;

Rejoice, O Rock who quenched those who thirst for life! Rejoice, O Pillar of Fire who guided those in darkness; Rejoice, O Shelter of the world, wider than the clouds! Rejoice, O Food who took the place of manna;

Rejoice, O Servant of holy delight! Rejoice, O Land of the promised good;

Rejoice, O you who flow with milk and honey!

Refrain

Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever-pure!
Kontakion 8

Ikos 8: While fully present amid those below, the Uncircumscribed Word was in no way absent from those above, for what happened was a divine condescension, and not a moving from one place to another; and it was a birth from a Virgin inspired by God, who heard these words:

Now that we have seen this strange birth, let us estrange ourselves from the world and turn our minds to heaven; indeed, it is for this that the God Most High appeared on earth as a lowly man, desiring to draw up to heaven those who cry out to him: Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

Rejoice, O Space of the spaceless God; Rejoice, O Gate of the sublime mystery! Rejoice, O Message unsure to those without faith; Rejoice, O Glory most certain to those who believe! Rejoice, O sacred
Chariot of the One above the Cherubim; Rejoice, perfect Dwelling of the One above the Seraphim! Rejoice, O you who reconciled opposites;

Rejoice, O you who combined maidenhood with motherhood!

Rejoice, O you through whom transgression was erased; Rejoice, O you through whom paradise was opened! Rejoice, O Key to the kingdom of Christ;

Rejoice, O Hope for the ages of bliss!

Refrain

Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever-pure!
Desiring to save the world, the Creator of All came down to it of his own will. Being at the same time our Shepherd and our God, he appeared among us, a man like us. And so the like called upon the Like, and as God he heard: Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

Refrain

Alleluia, alleluia!

Ikos 10: O Virgin Theotokos, you are the Strength of Virgins and of all those who have recourse to you. For the Maker of Heaven and Earth covered you with his shadow, O Pure One, and came to dwell in your womb, and taught us all to cry out to you:
Rejoice, O Pillar of virginity; Rejoice, O Gateway of salvation!

Rejoice, O Principle of the new-creation; Rejoice, O Dispenser of God's bounties! Rejoice, for you restored those born in shame; Rejoice, for you gave sense to those who had lost it! Rejoice, O you who stopped the corruptor of minds; Rejoice, O you who bore the Sower of chastity! Rejoice, holy Chamber of virginal wedlock;

Rejoice, O you who join the faithful with God! Rejoice, O gracious Mother of virgins; Rejoice, O Bridesmaid of holy souls!

Refrain

Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure!
Kontakion 12

Be-cause he wished to grant re-lease from all the an-cient debts,

the One who pays our dues came down himself to those who had spurned his grace.

He tore up their ob-li-ga-tions and heard from all of them this cry: Al-le-lu-ia!

Refrain

Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia!

Ikos 12: By singing praise to your maternity, we all exalt you as a Spiritual Temple, O Theotokos! For the One who dwelt within your womb, the Lord who holds all things in his hands, sanctified you, glorified you and taught all humanity to sing to you:
Rejoice, O Tabernacle of God the Word; Rejoice, holy One, more holy than the saints! Rejoice, O Ark that the Spirit has gilded; Rejoice, inexhaustible Treasure of life! Rejoice, precious Crown of right-ful authorities; Rejoice, sacred Glory of reverent priests!

Rejoice, unshakable Tower of the Church; Rejoice, unbreachable Wall of the Kingdom! Rejoice, O you through whom the trophies are raised; Rejoice, O you through whom the enemies are routed! Rejoice, O Healing of my body; Rejoice, O Salvation of my soul!

Refrain

Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ever-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ever-pure!
O Mother worthy of all praise, you who have given birth to the Word,

the Holyest of the Holy, accept this present offering,

deliver all of us from every affliction, and save from the future punishment

those who cry out to you: Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia!
If the Akathist is being sung as a part of another service, that service now continues and we do not proceed with the following dismissal.

Dismissal

If a priest is not present:

Priest: Glory to you, O Christ God, our hope; glory to you!

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

Response: Amen.

If a priest is not present, the Akathist ends here

Response: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Give the blessing.

Throughout Pascha, the following is sung in place of “Glory to the Father... Give the blessing.”

Christ is risen from the dead! By death he trampled Death; and to those in the tombs he granted life.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Give the blessing.

Priest: May Christ our true God, [risen from the dead,] have mercy on us and save us through the prayers of his most pure Mother and of the holy, glorious, and illustrious apostles, [through the prayers of (Name,) whom we commemorate today,] and of all the saints; for Christ is good and loves us all.

Response: A - - - - - - - - men.
The following hymn may be sung as the faithful come forward to venerate an icon of the Annunciation.

Sticheron

Tone 6 samohlasen

Gabriel was rapt in amazement as he beheld your virginity

and the splendor of your purity, O Theotokos,

and he cried out to you: By what name shall I call you?

I am bewildered, I am lost! I shall greet you as I was commanded to do:

Rejoice, O Woman an Full of Grace!
Notes

In Greek and Slavonic, the refrain rendered in English as "Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever-pure!" is a play on words: "Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride!" Since this translation is also used in our current official translation of the kontakion for Akathistos Saturday, it is given here as an option.

The Pochaiv Monastery melody used in this setting is traditionally harmonized as follows:

This harmonization is intended to be based on the congregational pitch chosen by the cantor. If rehearsing with a piano or pitch pipe, it should be sung a step or two higher than written.
Refrains

Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever pure!
Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride!

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!