

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
2nd edition,
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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.

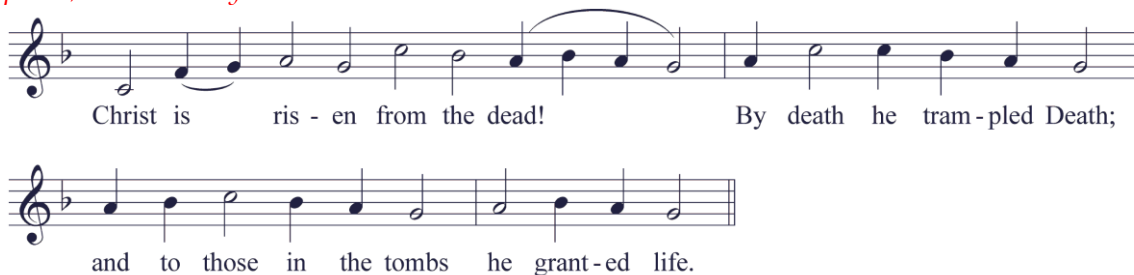
Response: Amen.

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:



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.

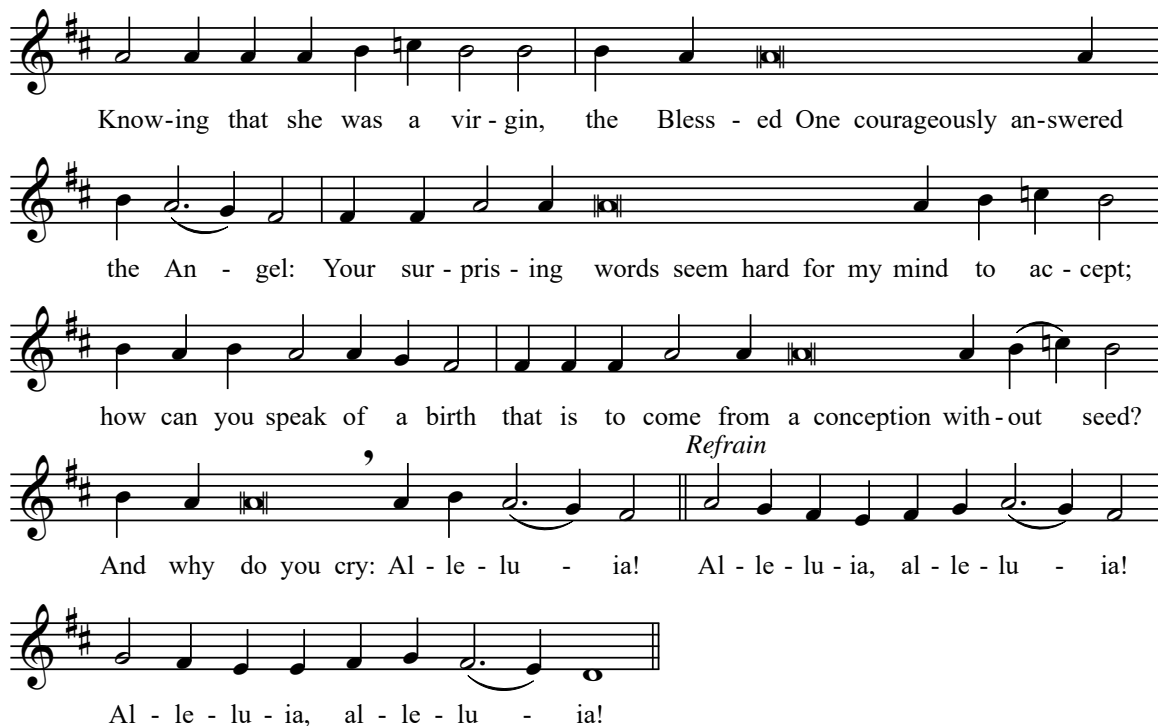
Response: Amen.

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.

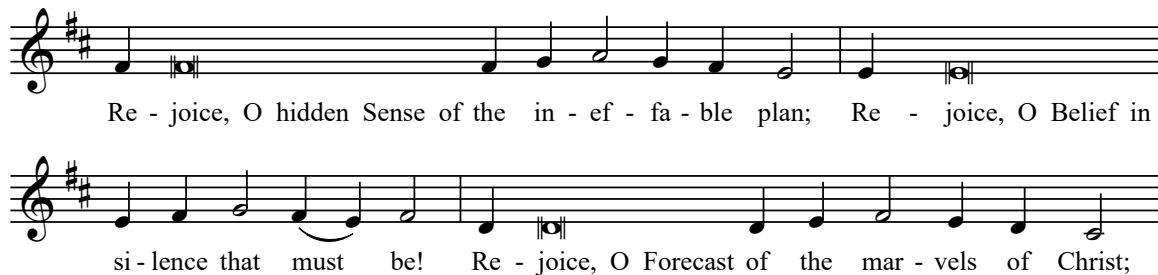
If the Akathist is sung as a part of another service, it begins here.

Kontakion 2



Know-ing 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-joyce, O hidden Sense of the in-ef-fa-ble plan; Re-joyce, O Belief in
si-lence that must be! Re-joyce, O Forecast of the mar-vels of Christ;

Re-joyce, O Fountainhead of truths con-cern-ing him! Re-joyce, celestial Ladder

by whom God came down; Re-joyce, O Bridge leading earthly ones to heav - en!

Re - joyce, O Wonder ever-thrilling to the an - gels; Re - joyce, O Wound

ever-hurting to the de - mons! Re - joyce, O you who gave birth to light

in - ef - fa - bly; Re - joyce, O you who told no one how it was done!

Re - joyce, O you who sur-pass the wis - dom of the wise; Re - joyce, O you who

en - light - en faith - ful minds!

Refrain

Re-joyce, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure! Re-joyce, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure!

Kontakion 4



Filled with a storm of con - tra - dic - to - ry thoughts, the wise Jo - seph was
great - ly dis - turbed: un - til then, he had seen you a vir - gin,
and now he suspected you of secret guilt, All - Blame - less One! Learn-ing that
your conception was of the Ho - ly Spir - it, he cried out: Al - le - lu - ia!

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:

Re-joyce, O Mother of Lamb and Shep - herd; Re-joyce, O Fold of ra-tion-al sheep!

Re - joyce, O Protection a-against un - seen foes; Re - joyce, O Key to the doors of

par - a - dise! Re - joyce, for the heavenly rejoice with the earth - ly;

Re - joyce, for the earthly meet the heav-en - ly in song! Re - joyce, the unsilenced Voice

of a - pos - tles; Re - joyce, the undaunted Might of mar - tyrs!

Re - joyce, O stead-fast Foun-da-tion of faith; Re-joyce, O shin-ing Em-blem of grace!

Re - joyce, O you through whom death was de-spoiled; Re - joyce, O you through whom

we were clothed with glo - ry!

Refrain

Re-joyce, O Bride and Maid-en ev er-pure Re-joyce, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure!

Kontakion 6



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



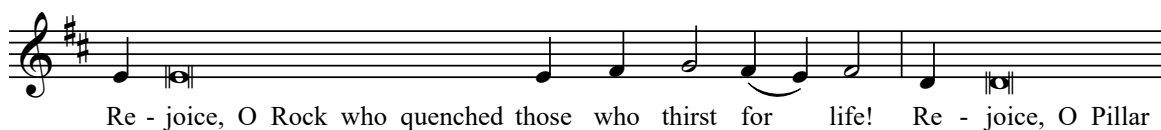
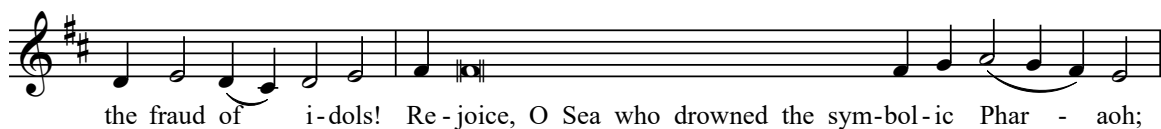
as a fool who did not know how to sing: Al - le - lu - ia!

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:



Refrain

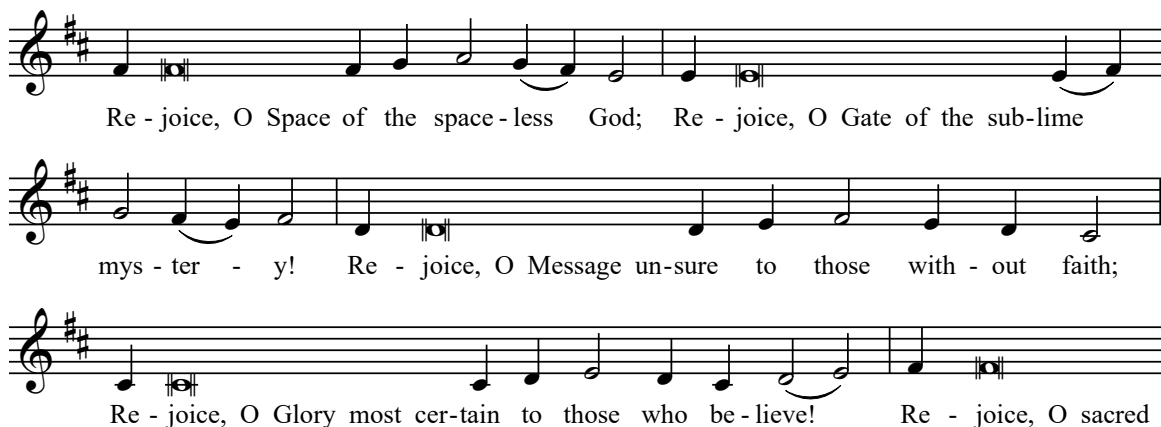


Kontakion 8



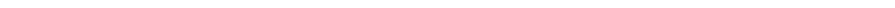
Now that we have seen this strange birth, let us es - trange our - selves
from the world and turn our minds to heav - en; in - deed, it is for this
that the God Most High ap - peared on earth as a low - ly man,
de - sir - ing to draw up to heav - en those who cry out to him: Al - le - lu - ia!
Refrain
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

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:



Re - joice, O Space of the space - less God; Re - joice, O Gate of the sub - lime
mys - ter - y! Re - joice, O Message un - sure to those with - out faith;
Re - joice, O Glory most cer - tain to those who be - lieve! Re - joice, O sacred

Chariot of the One a-bove the Cher-u - bim; Re - joice, perfect Dwelling of the One



a - bove the Ser - a - phim! Re - joice, O you who rec - on-ciled op - po - sites;


Re - joice, O you who combined maiden-hood with moth - er - hood!

Re - joice, O you through whom trans-gres - sion was e - rased; Re - joice, O you

through whom para-dise was o - pened! Re-joyce, O Key to the king-dom of Christ;

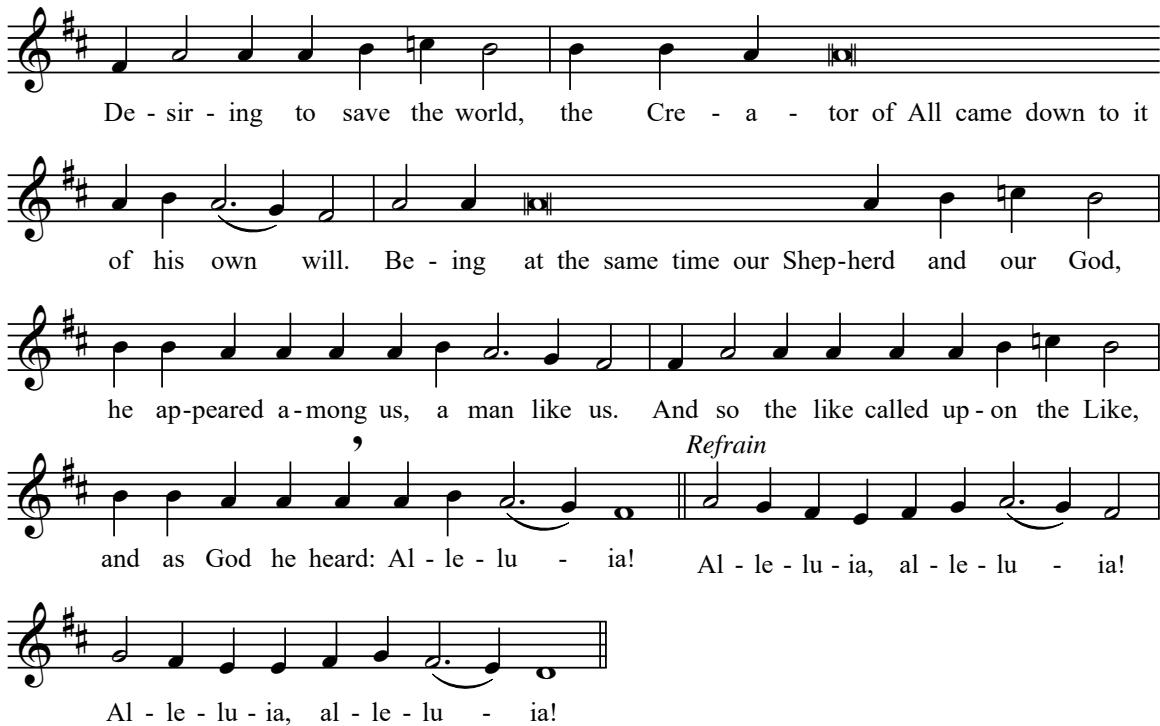
Re - joice, O Hope for the a - ges of bliss!

Refrain



Re-joyce, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure! Re-joyce, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure!

Kontakion 10



De - sir - ing to save the world, the Cre - a - tor of All came down to it
of his own will. Be - ing at the same time our Shep-herd and our God,
he ap-peared a-mong us, a man like us. And so the like called up-on the Like,
and as God he heard: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

The musical score is written on five staves in G major (one sharp). The first four staves contain the main text, and the fifth staff contains the refrain. The melody is a simple, flowing line with some rests and ties. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The word "Refrain" is written above the fifth staff.

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:

Re - joyce, O Pillar of vir - gin - i - ty; Re - joyce, O Gateway of sal - va - tion!

Re - joyce, O Principle of the new cre - a - tion; Re - joyce, O Dispenser of God's

boun - ties! Re - joyce, for you re - stored those born in shame; Re - joyce,

for you gave sense to those who had lost it! Re - joyce, O you who stopped

the cor - rup - tor of minds; Re - joyce, O you who bore the Sow - er of

chas - ti - ty! Re - joyce, holy Chamber of vir - gin - al wed - lock;

Re - joyce, O you who join the faith - ful with God! Re - joyce, O gracious Foster -

Moth - er of vir - gins; Re - joyce, O Brides - maid of ho - ly souls!

Refrain

Re - joyce, O Bride and Maid - en ev - er - pure! Re - joyce, 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:

Re - joice, O Taberna-cle of God the Word; Re - joice, holy One, more ho - ly

than the saints! Re - joice, O Ark that the Spir-it has gild - - ed;

Re - joice, inexhaust-i - ble Treas - ure of life! Re - joice, precious Crown of

right-ful au - thor - i - ties; Re - joice, sacred Glo-ry of rev - er - ent priests!

Re - joice, unshak-a - ble Tow - er of the Church; Re - joice, unbreachable Wall

of the King - dom! Re - joice, O you through whom the tro-phies are raised;

Re - joice, O you through whom the ene-mies are rout - ed! Re - joice, O Healing

of my bod - y; Re - joice, O Sal - va - tion of my soul!

Refrain

Re-joyce, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure! Re-joyce, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure!

Kontakion 13

O Moth - er wor - thy of all praise, you who have giv - en birth to the Word,
the Ho - li - est of the Ho - ly, ac - cept this pres - ent of - fer - ing,
de - liv - er all of us from ev - 'ry af - flic - tion, and save from the fu - ture pun - ish - ment
Refrain
those who cry out to you: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

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

Ga - bri - el was rapt in a - maze - ment as he beheld your vir - gin - i - ty

and the splen - dor of your pu - ri - ty, O The - o - to - kos,

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

I am be - wil - dered, I am lost! I shall greet you as I was com - mand - ed to do:

Re - joice, O Wom - - - an Full of Grace!

Notes

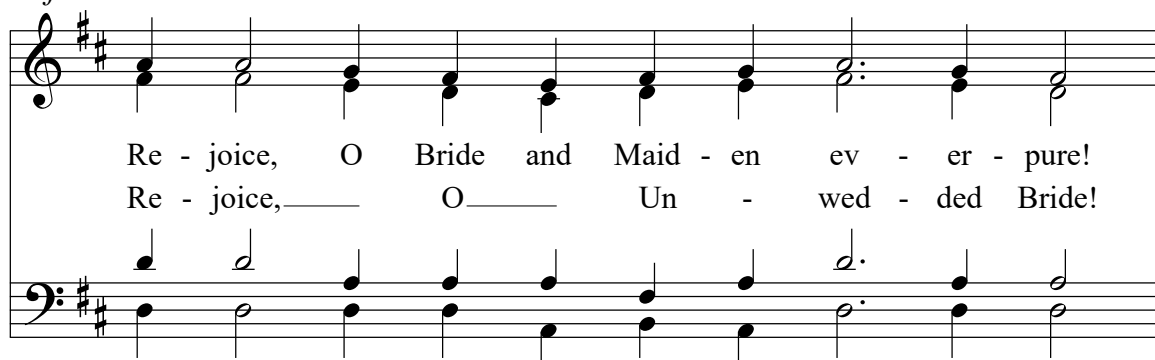
In Greek and Slavonic, the refrain rendered in English as "Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever-pure!" is a play on words: "Rejoice, O Unwedded Bride!" Since this translation is also used in our current official translation of the kontakion for Akathistos Saturday, it is given here as an option.

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

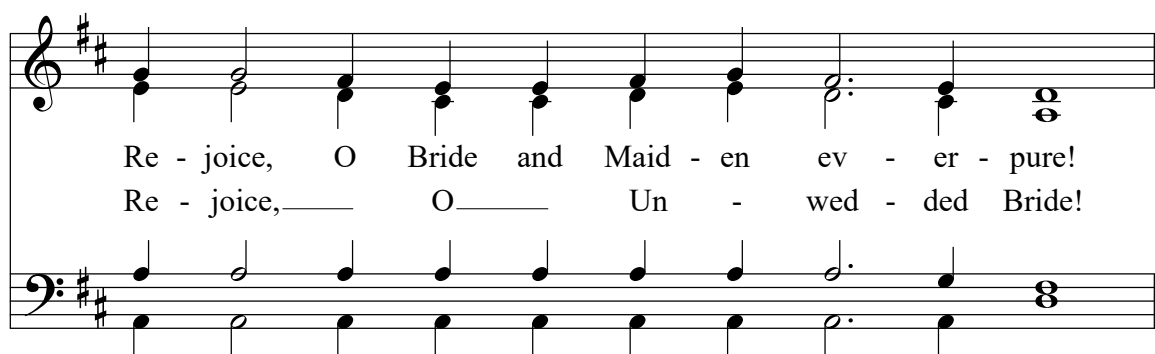
The musical score consists of two systems, each with a treble and a bass staff. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The time signature is 8/8, indicated by a large '8' in a box at the beginning of each system. The melody is primarily composed of eighth and quarter notes, with some half notes in the bass line. The treble staff features several measures with beamed eighth notes and half notes, often with a slur. The bass staff provides a steady accompaniment with quarter and half notes. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and note heads with stems.

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



Re - joice, O Bride and Maid - en ev - er - pure!
Re - joice, O Un - wed - ded Bride!



Re - joice, O Bride and Maid - en ev - er - pure!
Re - joice, O Un - wed - ded Bride!



Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!