The Akathist Hymn
to the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary

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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.
The Service of the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos

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

Response: 

Psalm Tone

A - men.

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.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal,

have mercy on us. (3 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.
Priest: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever.

Response: Amen.

Ordinarily, the faithful STAND throughout the entire service. The priest chants those portions for which only text is given, and the congregation sings the hymns and refrains.

Preamble: As soon as the Angel had received his command, he hastened to Joseph's house and said to the Ever-Virgin: “Behold, heaven was brought down to earth when the Word himself was fully contained in you! Now that I see him in your womb, taking a servant's form, I cry out to you in wonder: Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever-pure!”

Chant refrain

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

Ikos 1: An Archangel was sent from heaven to greet the Theotokos, and as he saw you assuming a body at the sound of his bodiless voice, O Lord, he stood rapt in amazement and cried to her in these words:

Ikos 1: melody of the Pochaiv Monastery

Rejoice, O you through whom joy will shine forth; Rejoice, O you through

whom the curse will dis-ap-pear! Rejoice, O Restoration of the fall-en A-dam;

Rejoice, O Redemption of the tears of Eve! Rejoice, O Peak above the
reach of human thought; Rejoice, O Depth even beyond the sight of angels!

Rejoice, O you who have become a kingly Throne; Rejoice, O you who carry him who carries all! Rejoice, O Star who manifests the Sun;

Rejoice, O womb of the divine Incarnation! Rejoice, O you through whom creation is renewed; Rejoice, O you through whom the Creator becomes a Babe!

Chant refrain

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

Kontakion 1 - Kontakion melody, Tone 8

Knowing that she was a virgin, the Blessed One courageously answered the Angel: Your surprising words seem hard for my mind to accept;
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:
ever–hurting to the demons! Re-joice, O you who gave birth to light

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

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

en-light-en faith-ful minds!

Chant refrain


Kontakion 2

When the pow'r of the Most High o-ver-shad-owed the one who had never

known the nup-tial bed, her fruit-ful womb con-ceived, and she be-came

for all a de-li-cious field for those who wished to reap sal-va-tion by sing-ing:
Refrain

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

Ikos 3: Pregnant with God, the Virgin hastened to Elizabeth, and her unborn child rejoiced, immediately knowing her embrace. Bouncing and singing, he cried out to the Theotokos:

Re-joice, O Ten-dril whose Bud shall not wilt; Re-joice, O Soil whose Fruit shall not perish! Re-joice, O Tender of humanity's lov-ing Ten-der;

Re-joice, O Gardener of the Gar-den-er of life! Re-joice, O Earth who yielded a-bun-dant mer-cies; Re-joice, O Table full-laden with ap-pease-ment!

Re-joice, for you have greened a-new the pas-tures of de-light; Re-joice, for you have prepared a ha-ven for the souls! Re-joice, accep-ta-ble In-cense of pray'r;

Re-joice, Expiation of the whole u-ni-verse! Re-joice, O Favor of God to
Chant refrain


Kontakion 3

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 sus-pect-ed you of secret guilt, All-Blame-less One! Learn-ing that
your con-cep-tion 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:
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 de-spoiled; Rejoice, O you through whom we were clothed with glory!

Chant refrain
Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ever-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ever-pure!
When they saw the star moved by God, the Magi followed its glittering light. ——

Using it as a beacon, they found through it the Mighty King; and reaching—

the One beyond all reach, they rejoiced and cried out to him: Alleluia! ———

Refrain

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

Iкос 5: The sons of Chaldea saw in the Virgin's hands the One whose hands had fashioned men; and acknowledging him as the Master, although he had taken the form of a servant, they hastened to honor him with their gifts, and cried out to the Blessed One:

Rejoice, O Mother of the Star Without Setting; Rejoice, O Radiance of the mystical day! Rejoice, O you who quenched the flame of error;

Rejoice, O Light of those who search the Trinity! Rejoice, O you who un-throned the enemy of men; Rejoice, O you who showed forth Christ the Lord,
the Lover of us all! Rejoice, O you who cleansed us from the stain of pagan worship; Rejoice, O you who saved us from the mire of evil deeds!

Rejoice, O you who made cease the cult of fire; Rejoice, O you who dispelled the flames of passion! Rejoice, O you who guide the faithful toward wisdom;

Rejoice, O Delight of all the nations!

Chant refrain

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

Kontakion 5

The Magi, having become God-bearing heralds, returned to Babylon, conforming to your command, announcing you, the Christ, to all, and leaving Herod as a fool who did not know how to sing: Alleluia!
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 you who flow with milk and honey!

Chant refrain

Rejoice, O Bride and Maiden ever pure!

Kontakion 6

As Simeon was about to leave the present deceitful world, you were

entrusted to him as an infant, but you made yourself known to him

as the Perfect God. Wherefore he marveled at your wisdom beyond words,

and cried out: Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

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

Ikos 7: The Creator displayed a new creation to us who had come from him: he came forth from a womb that had received no seed, and he left it intact as it had been, so that at the sight of this marvel, we would sing to her and cry out:
Rejoice, O Blossom of incorruption; Rejoice, O Crown of self-mastery!

Rejoice, O you who shone forth as a Sign of resurrection; Rejoice,
O you who displayed the life of angels! Rejoice, fruitful Tree from whom believers feed; Rejoice, shady Glen where many are sheltered!

Rejoice, O you who have borne the Guide of the lost; Rejoice, for you have borne a Deliverer for the captives! Rejoice, O our Advocate before the just judge;

Rejoice, Indulgence of many who have fallen! Rejoice, O Stole for those who lack freedom to speak; Rejoice, O Tenderness who exceeds all desire!

Chant refrain

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

Refrain

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

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:

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!

Chant refrain

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

Kontakion 8

The whole order of angels marveled at the great work of your becoming a man.

For they saw the One inaccessible as God become a Man accessible to all,
Ikos 9: O Theotokos, we see the best of speakers become as mute as fish in your regard, for they could not explain how you could give birth while remaining a virgin. As for us, while marveling at the mystery, we cry out to you with faith:
Knowledge to man-y! Re-joice, O Ship for those who seek sal-va-tion;

Re-joice, O Harbor for the sail-ors of life!

Chant refrain


Kontakion 9

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,

Refrain

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

Ev’ry hymn falls short when it at-tempts to sing the multitude of your mer-cies.

We could sing to you as many songs as there are grains of sand, O Ho-ly King,

with-out ev-er do-ing an-y-thing wor-thy of what you have given to 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!

Ikos 11: We see the Holy Virgin as a brilliant luminary enlightening those who live in darkness; for having kindled the Immaterial Light, she leads us to the knowledge of God and fills our minds with radiance, so that she is worthily praised in these words:

Rejoice, O Beam of the mys-tic-al Sun; Rejoice, O Radiance of the Light with-out
Rejoice, Lightning-flash that bright-ens the souls; Re-joice,

Thunder-clap that strikes down the foes! Re-joice, for you have raised the man-y-light-ed Star; Re-joice, for you have opened the man-y-cours-ed Stream!

Rejoice, O you who traced the liv-ing Mod-el of the pool; Re-joice,

O you who e-raised the stain of sin! Re-joice, flowing Water that cleans-es the con-science; Re-joice, holy Vessel o-ver-flow-ing with joy! Re-joice, O Fragrance of the sweet-ness of Christ; Re-joice, O Life of the mys-ti-cal ban-quet!

Chant refrain


Kontakion 11

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 obligations and heard from all of them this cry: Alleluia!

Refrain

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

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 rightful authori - ties; 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!

Chant refrain

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

Kontakion 12

O Mother worthy of all praise, you who have given birth to the Word,

the Holiest of the Holy, accept this present offering,

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

Refrain

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

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

Gabriel 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!

Dismissal

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

Response:
Glo-ry to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spir-it; now and ever and forev-er.
A-men. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Give the bless-ing.
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 St. (Name,) whom we commemorate today,] and of all the saints; for Christ is good and loves us all.

Response: Amen.