

*The Akathist Hymn
to the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary*

Metropolitan Cantor Institute of the
Archeparchy of Pittsburgh
Byzantine Catholic Seminary
2nd edition, June 2018

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 Levkolic, 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

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

Response: 
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: 
A - men.

*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.*

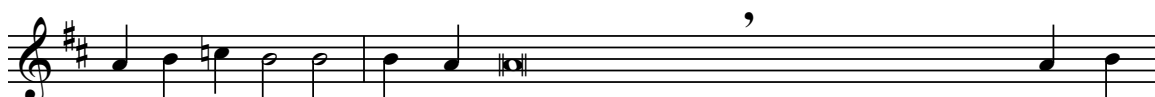
Kontakion 1 - Kontakion melody, Tone 8



O The-o - to-kos, val-iant de - fend - er, your serv-ants offer you hymns of victo-ry



in thanks-giv-ing, for you have de-liv-ered us. But since you have invincible power, free



us from all per - il, that we may exclaim to you: Rejoice, O Bride and Mai - den

Refrain



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



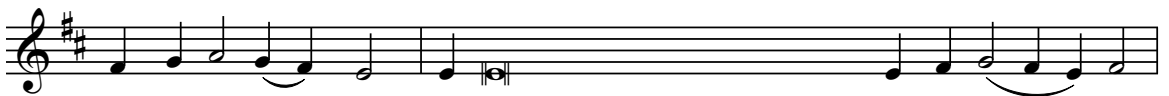
Re - joice, O you through whom joy will shine forth; Re - joice, O you through



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



Re - joice, O Redemption of the tears of Eve! Re - joice, O Peak above the



reach of hu - man thought; Re-joyce, O Depth even beyond the sight of an - gels!



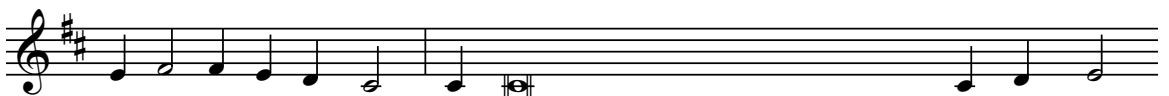
Re-joyce, O you who have be-come a king-ly Throne; Re - joice, O you who carry



him who car - ries all! Re-joyce, O Star who man - i - fest the Sun;



Re-joyce, O womb of the divine In-car-na - tion! Re - joice, O you through whom



cre - a - tion is re-newed; Re - joice, O you through whom the Crea-tor be - comes



a Babe!

Refrain



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

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?



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 3



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

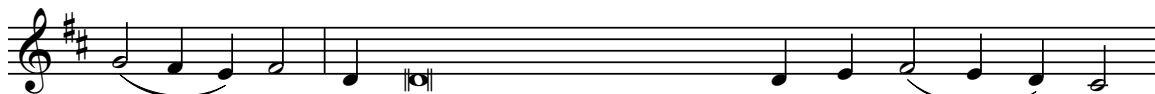


Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

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



per - ish! 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 - joyce, for you have greened a-new the pas-tures of de-light; Re - joyce, for you

have prepared a ha-ven for the souls! Re-joyce, accept-a-ble In-cense of pray'r;

Re - joyce, Expiation of the whole u - ni - verse! Re - joyce, O Favor of God to

mor - tals; Re - joyce, O Trust of mor-tals be - fore God!

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!

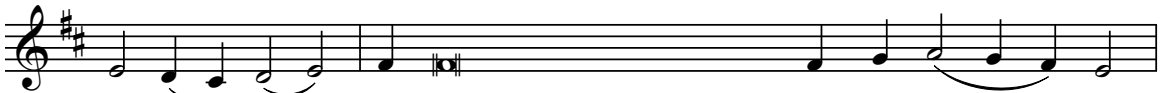
Ikos 4: The shepherds heard the angels singing hymns of praise to the coming of Christ in the flesh. And running to him as to a shepherd, they saw him as a spotless Lamb grazing at Mary's breast. They sang a hymn to her and said:



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



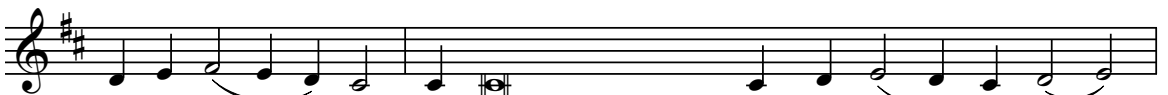
Re - joyce, O Protection a - gainst un - seen foes; Re - joyce, O Key to the doors of



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 5



When they saw the star moved by God, the Ma-gi fol-lowed its glit-t'ring light.



Us-ing it as a bea-con, they found through it the Might-y King; and reach-ing



the One be-yond all reach, they re-joyced and cried out to him: Al-le-lu-ia!

Refrain

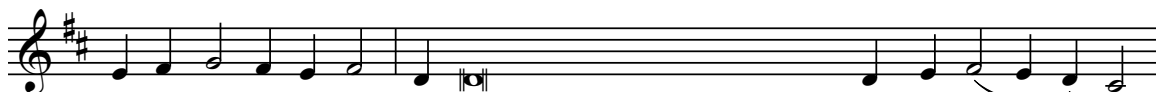


Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia! Al-le-lu-ia, al-le-lu-ia!

Ikos 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:



Re-joyce, O Mother of the Star With-out Set-ting; Re-joyce, O Radiance



of the mys-tic-al day! Re-joyce, O you who quenched the flame of er-ror;



Re-joyce, O Light of those who search the Trin-i-ty! Re-joyce, O you who

un-throned the en - e-my of men; Re - joice, O you who showed forth Christ the Lord,

the Lov-er of us all! Re - joice, O you who cleansed us from the stain of pa - gan

wor - ship; Re - joice, O you who saved us from the mire of e - vil deeds!

Re-joyce, O you who made cease the cult of fire; Re-joyce, O you who dispelled the

flames of pas - sion! Re-joyce, O you who guide the faith-ful toward wis - dom;

Re - joice, O Delight of all the na - tions!

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!

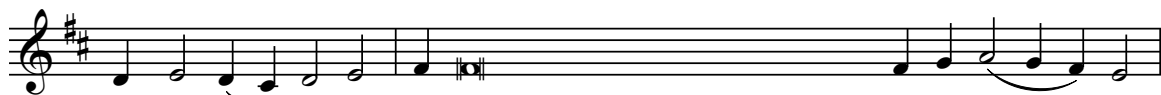
Ikos 6: Illuminating Egypt with the light of truth, you cast away the darkness of error. For the idols, unable to stand your might, fell down, and those who had been delivered from them cried out to the Theotokos:



Re - joi - ce, O Re - sur - rec - tion of us all; Re - joi - ce, O Downfall of the de - mons!



Re - joi - ce, O you who crushed the er - ror of de - ceit; Re - joi - ce, O you who ex - posed



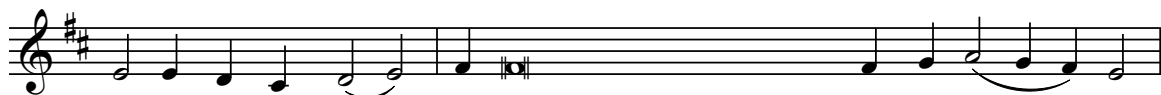
the fraud of i - dols! Re - joi - ce, O Sea who drowned the sym - bol - ic Phar - aoh;



Re - joi - ce, O Rock who quenched those who thirst for life! Re - joi - ce, O Pillar



of Fire who guided those in dark - ness; Re - joi - ce, O Shelter of the world,



wi - der than the clouds! Re - joi - ce, O Food who took the place of man - na;



Re - joyce, O Ser - vant of ho - ly de - light! Re - joyce, O Land of the prom - ised good;



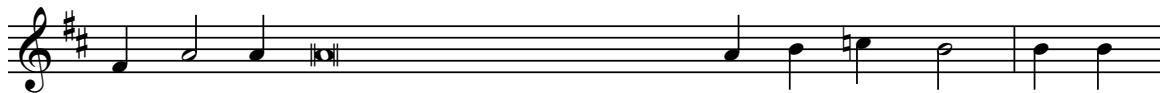
Re - joyce, O you who flow with milk and hon - ey!

Refrain



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


Kontakion 7



As Sim - e - on was about to leave the present de - ceit - ful world, you were



en - trust - ed to him as an in - fant, but you made your - self known to him



as the Per - fect God. Where - fore he mar - veled at your wisdom be - yond words,



and cried out: Al - le - lu - ia! *Refrain* Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

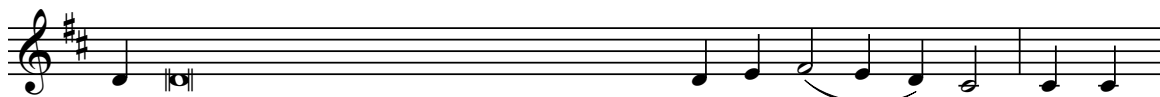


Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

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:



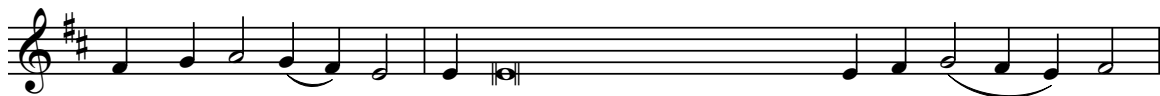
Re-joyce, O Blossom of in-cor-rup - tion; Re-joyce, O Crown of self-mas-ter - y!



Re - joyce, O you who shone forth as a Sign of res - ur - rec - tion; Re-joyce,



O you who dis-played the life of an - gels! Re - joyce, fruitful Tree from



whom be-liev - ers feed; Re - joyce, shady Glen where man-y are shel - tered!



Re-joyce, O you who have borne the Guide of the lost; Re-joyce, for you have borne a



De-liv-er-er for the cap-tives! Re-joyce, O our Advocate be-fore the just judge;



Re - joyce, Indulgence of many who have fall - en! Re - joyce, O Stole for those



who lack free-dom to speak; Re - joyce, O Tenderness who ex-ceeds all de-sire!

Refrain



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

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 - joyce, O Space of the space - less God; Re - joyce, O Gate of the sub - lime



mys - ter - y! Re - joyce, O Message un - sure to those with - out faith;



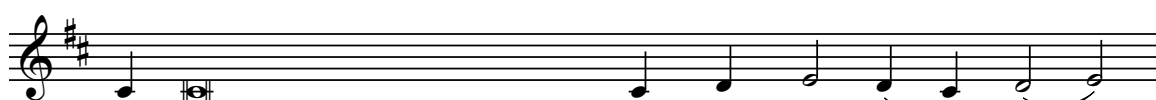
Re - joyce, O Glory most cer - tain to those who be - lieve! Re - joyce, O sacred



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-joice, O Key to the king-dom of Christ;



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

Refrain



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

Kontakion 9



The whole or-der of an-gels mar-veled at the great work of your be-com-ing a man.



For they saw the One inacces-si-ble as God be-come a Man ac-ces-si-ble to all,



liv - ing with us and hear - ing all cry out: Al - le - lu - ia!

Refrain



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

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:



Re-joyce, O Container of God's wis - dom; Re-joyce, O Treasury of his prov-i - dence!



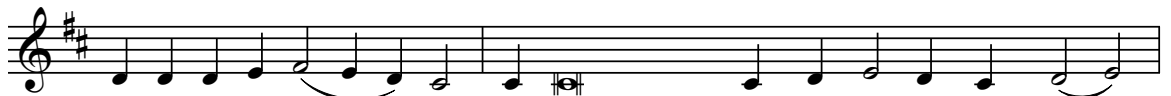
Re - joyce, O Reproof of fool-ish phil-os - o - phers; Re - joyce, O Confu-sion of



speech-less wise men! Re - joyce, for you perplexed the in - quis - i - tive minds;



Re - joyce, for you dried up the in-ven-tors of myths! Re - joyce, for you ripped the



A - the - ni - ans' mesh - es; Re - joyce, for you filled the fish - er - men's nets!



Re - joyce, O Retriever from the a-byss of ig - nor-ance; Re - joyce, O Lamplight of

knowl-edge to man - y! Re-joyce, O Ship for those who seek sal - va - tion;

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

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

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

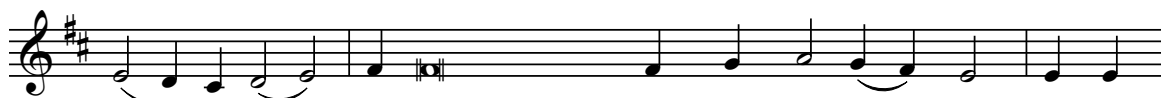
Ikos 10: O Virgin Theotokos, you are the Strength of Virgins and of all those who have recourse to you. For the Maker of Heaven and Earth covered you with his shadow, O Pure One, and came to dwell in your womb, and taught us all to cry out to you:



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



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



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



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



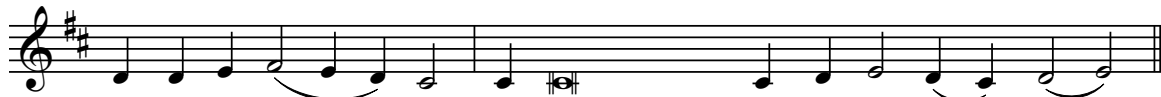
the cor - rup - tor of minds; Re - joi - ce, O you who bore the Sow - er of



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



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



Moth - er of vir - gins; Re - joi - ce, 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 11



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



We could sing to you as man-y 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!

Refrain

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:



Re-joyce, O Beam of the mys-tic-al Sun; Re-joyce, O Radiance of the Light with-out

set - ting! Re - joice, Lightning-flash that bright - ens the souls; Re-joyce,

Thun - der-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!

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

O you who e-rased the stain of sin! Re - joice, flowing Water that cleans-es

the con - science; Re-joyce, holy Vessel o-ver-flow-ing with joy! Re-joyce, O Fragrance

of the sweet-ness of Christ; Re - joice, O Life of the mys-ti - cal ban - quet!

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 - joyce, O you through whom the tro - phies are raised;

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

of my bod - y; Re - joyce, 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

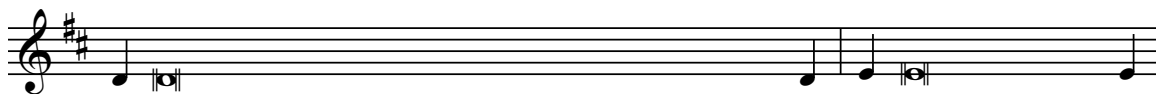
Refrain
those who cry out to you: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

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

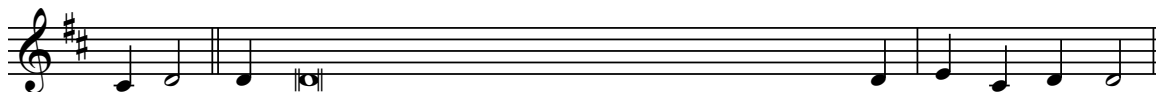
Dismissal

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 mer-cy. 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.



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-joyce, 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 of two staves each. The top staff of each system is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature. The music is written in a style typical of Orthodox chant harmonization, using a mix of quarter, eighth, and half notes, often with beamed eighth notes. The first system has a 6/8 time signature. The second system has a 4/4 time signature. The melody is primarily composed of chords, with some melodic lines in the bass staff. There are several measures with a 'C' time signature, indicating common time.

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!