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
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

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 ever. 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 ever. 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.


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

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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 Maid-en

Refrain

ev-er pure! Re-joice, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure! Re-joice, 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:
Rejoice, O you through whom joy will shine forth; Rejoice, O you through whom the curse will disappear! Rejoice, O Restoration of the fallen Adam;

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!
Refrain


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 con-cep-tion 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 vir-ginal womb? Tell me.” And he answered her with awe, cry-ing 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 Fore-cast 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!

Refrain

Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ever-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ever-pure!
Kontakion 3

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:

Rejoice, O Tender whose Bud shall not wilt; Rejoice, O Soil whose Fruit shall not perish!
Rejoice, O Gardener of the Gardener of life! Rejoice, O Earth who yielded abundant mercies; Rejoice, O Table full-laden with appeasement!
Rejoice, for you have greened anew the pastures of delight; Rejoice, for you have prepared a haven for the souls! Rejoice, acceptable Incense of pray'r; Rejoice, Expiation of the whole universe! Rejoice, O Favor of God to mortals; Rejoice, O Trust of mortals before God!

Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-on ev'er-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-on ev'er-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-Blame-less One! Learning that your conception was of the Holy Spirit, he cried out: Alleluia!
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 depoiled; Rejoice, O you through whom we were clothed with glory!

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

Refrain

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-joiced and cried out to him: Al-le-lu-ia!

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

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

Re-joice, O Light of those who search the Tri-ni-ty! Re-joice, 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-joice, O you who made cease the cult of fire; Re-joice, O you who dispelled the
flames of pas-sion! Re-joice, O you who guide the faith-ful toward wis-dom;
Re-joice, O Delight of all the na-tions!

Refrain


Kontakion 6

The Ma-gi, having become God-bear-ing her-alds, re-turned to Babylon, con-form-ing
to your com-mand, an-nounc-ing you, the Christ, to all, and leav-ing Her-od
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-joice, O Resurrec-tion of us all; Re-joice, O Downfall of the de-mons!

Re-joice, O you who crushed the er-ror of de-ceit; Re-joice, O you who ex-posed the fraud of i-dols! Re-joice, O Sea who drowned the sym-bolic Pha-raoh;

Re-joice, O Rock who quenched those who thirst for life! Re-joice, O Pillar of Fire who guided those in dark-ness; Re-joice, O Shelter of the world, wi-der than the clouds! Re-joice, O Food who took the place of man-na;
Rejoice, O Servant of holy delight! Rejoice, O Land of the promised good;
Rejoice, O you who flow with milk and honey!
Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure!

As Sim-e-on was about to leave the present deceit-ful world, you were
ten-ted 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! 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-master-y!

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!

Refrain

Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-ever-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-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 Cher-ubim; Rejoice, perfect Dwelling of the One above the Ser-a-phim! 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 Maid-en ev-er-pure! Rejoice, O Bride and Maid-en ev-er-pure!

Kontakion 9

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,
living with us and hearing all cry out: Alleluia!

Refrain

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia!

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:

Rejoice, O Container of God's wisdom; Rejoice, O Treasury of his providence!

Rejoice, O Reproof of foolish philosophers; Rejoice, O Confusion of speechless wise men! Rejoice, for you perplexed the inquisitive minds;

Rejoice, for you dried up the inventors of myths! Rejoice, for you ripped the Athenians' meshes; Rejoice, for you filled the fishermen's nets!

Rejoice, O Retriever from the abyss of ignorance; Rejoice, O Lamplight of
knowledge to man—y! Re-joice, O Ship for those who seek salva-tion;

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

Refrain


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!
Iкос 10:  О Вирин Нейрос, вы являетесь Силой Вирин и всех тех, кто обращается к вам. Для Создателя Небес и Земли покрывали вас своим тенью, О Чистая, и пришли обитать в вашем животе, и научили нас всех кричать к вам:

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 Foster-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 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!

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,
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-ru-as-ed 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!

Refrain

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 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!

Refrain

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

Kontakion 13

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!

Alleluia, alleluia!
Dismissal

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

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.-- Amen.

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.

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 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:

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!