AKATHIST HYMN TO THE SPIRITUAL LADDER, THE PRECIOUS CROSS



WHAT IS AN AKATHIST?

An Akathist is a service, which can be chanted in church or at home. It is usually dedicated to the glory of Christ, the Theotokos, or to some particular saint or scriptural event. The term Akathist comes From the Greek word akathistos, which literally means "not sitting". During the service, participants stand in reverence while it is being chanted The Akathist hymn itself is usually comprised of thirteen Kontakia and twelve Oikos (Stanzas).

The origin of the Akathist service can be traced to the year 626 A.D. when Constantinople was being attacked by the Persians. During the many months of a long siege, and with the situation of the Christian community becoming quite desperate, Patriarch Sergius led a continuous procession around the inner walls of the great city carrying an Icon of the Theotokos in his hands This religious parade and the hymns sung by the faithful bolstered the soldier's morale and encouraged the people. As they fought on to repel the attacks, an unexpected storm suddenly caused most of the enemy's fleet to be destroyed, forcing them to retreat.

Upon witnessing this "miracle", all of the faithful in Constantinople spontaneously filled the Church of the Theotokos, and with Patriarch Sergius officiating, offered prayers of joy and thanksgiving to the Mother of God throughout the entire night, without sitting. This, then, is how the Akathist service came to be so named.

Since that time, many Akathist Hymns have been written, including this one, to the Precious Cross.

AKATHIST HYMN TO THE SPIRITUAL LADDER, THE PRECIOUS CROSS

Priest: Blessed is our God always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Clergy/Faithful: Amen. O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who are everywhere and fill all things Treasury of blessings, and Giver of Life Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Reader: Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most holy Trinity, have mercy on us. Lord, cleanse us from our sins. Master, pardon our transgressions. Holy One, visit 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 unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who are in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your

Kingdom come. Your 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 the evil one.

Priest: For Yours are the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Kontakion 1

Clergy/Faithful: Amen. O thrice blessed and all worshipped Cross of Christ, / we the faithful venerate and magnify you, / being joyous at your divine Exaltation. / But as the trophy and unconquered weapon that you are, / by your Grace, protect, cover, and shelter those / who cry to you: /// Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Ikos 1

Priest: Angels from Heaven invisibly circle the life-bringing Cross in fear, and seeing it now brilliantly shed light-bestowing Grace upon the faithful, they stand amazed and cry to you such words as these:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, O Cross, guardian of the world! Rejoice, the glory of the Church! Rejoice, you that bountifully gush forth with healings! Rejoice, you that enlighten the ends of the earth! Rejoice, wood fragrant with life, and treasury of wonders!

Rejoice, fitly-joined, thrice-blessed, and bestower of Grace!

Rejoice, for you are the divine **foot**stool

Rejoice, for you were ordained for the worship of all.

Rejoice, bowl of nectar, full to the brim!

Rejoice, torch of the radiance above!

Rejoice, you through which creation is blessed!

Rejoice, you through which the Creator is worshipped!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 2

Priest: Perceiving the longing within her, Helen spoke to the Emperor boldly: The great desire of your soul seems most agreeable to my zeal; therefore, seeking that most excellent trophy for you as you said, I cry: Alleluia

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 2

Priest: Knowing knowledge formerly unknown, the Queen called out to her attendants: From the bowels of the earth, hasten with speed to discover and give me the Cross, to which, when she saw it, she spoke in fear, crying:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, the sign of veritable joy!

Rejoice, redemption from the ancient curse!

Rejoice, treasure in the earth, hidden by envy!

Rejoice, that which appeared in the stars as a sign!

Rejoice, four-rayed shining and fire-like Cross!

Rejoice, ladder set on high, once foreseen of old!

Rejoice, tranquil-appearing wonder of angels!

Rejoice, greatly-bemoaned wounding of demons!

Rejoice, welcome relic of the Word!

Rejoice, quencher of deception's fire!

Rejoice, O Cross, protector of the helpless!

Rejoice, the stern trainer of the victors!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 3

Priest: The might of the Tree was then shown forth as a true pledge to all; and it raised her that was voiceless and dead to life — an awesome sight to them that shall reap salvation by singing: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 3

Priest: Holding the invincible weapon, Helen ran back to her offspring; and she gave a great leap straightway when she looked upon the Cross most great. She rejoiced and with leaps and songs she cried to it such words as these:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, O Cross, vessel of light!

Rejoice, O Cross, treasury of life!

Rejoice, bestower of the gifts of the Spirit!

Rejoice, storm-free port of those at sea!

Rejoice, table that holds Christ as Sacrifice!

Rejoice, vine that bear the cluster dripping mystical wine!

Rejoice, for you protect the scepters of **Princes!**

Rejoice, for you crush the heads of great serpents!

Rejoice, illustrious sign of the faith!

Rejoice, preservation of all the world!

Rejoice, blessing of God upon mortals!

Rejoice, mediation of mortals with God!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 4

Priest: Receiving divine zeal within, Helen diligently sought and found the Cross hidden in the earth, though displayed in the sky to the King, who exalted and upon seeing it, the people cried in faith: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 4

Priest: Like the sun, did the Cross appear in the world, and all men were filled with its light, and running as towards a star, they viewed it as the cause of good raised up by hands divine; hymning it, they said:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, dawn of the spiritual Sun!

Rejoice, unfailing fount of myrrh!

Rejoice, summoning of Adam and Eve!

Rejoice, death-blow to the princes of hades!

Rejoice, that in being exalted, you now also exalt us!

Rejoice, that in being venerated, you sanctify men's souls!

Rejoice, the world-proclaimed report of the Apostles!

Rejoice, most plentiful strength of Martyrs!

Rejoice, O Cross, reproach to the Jews!

Rejoice, praise to men of Faith!

Rejoice, you through which Hades was cast down!

Rejoice, you through which Grace did rise up!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 5

Priest: Having beheld the God-crowned Tree, let us come under its protection Taking it up as a weapon, with it we put our enemies to flight, and touching the untouchable, with our lips we cry to it: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 5

Priest: The great Constantine beheld a light from heaven, displaying the sign of the Cross in the stars, through which also he was to conquer a multitude of adversaries; he made haste to reveal the Tree, and to cry to it such words as these:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, accomplishment of the ineffable counsel!

Rejoice, the horn of godly people!

Rejoice, you that turn back the ranks of our foes!

Rejoice, flame that burns the demons!

Rejoice, heavenly scepter of the faithful King!

Rejoice, invincible trophy of the Christ-loving troops!

Rejoice, you that humble the arrogance of barbarians!

Rejoice, you that care tenderly for the souls of men!

Rejoice, defense against many evils!

Rejoice, awarder of many good things!

Rejoice, you on whose account the Christ-bearers rejoice!

Rejoice, you on whose account the Jews lament!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 6

Priest: The Cross of the Lord become a ladder as lofty as Heaven, leading up all from earth to the height of Heaven, that they might always dwell together with the choirs of angels, abandoning things present as though they were not, and knowing how to chant: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 6

Priest: Shining as a light upon all in Hades, O Savior, you enlightened them that lay below, and the gatekeepers of Hades, not enduring your, dawning, fell down as dead; but they that were delivered from them, now behold the Cross and cry:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, resurrection of the dead!

Rejoice, consolation of them that mourn!

Rejoice, despoiling of the treasuries of Hades!

Rejoice, enjoyment of the **Par**adise of delight!

Rejoice, rod that drowned the Egyptian army!

Rejoice, that which in turn watered the Israelite people!

Rejoice, living Tree, the thief's salvation!

Rejoice, fragrant rose, sweet scent of the godly!

Rejoice, food of those who hunger in spirit!

Rejoice, seal that men have received!

Rejoice, O Cross, doorway to mysteries!

Rejoice, that from which divine streams pour forth!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 7

Priest: When Moses was about to deliver his much-troubled race from the Spoiler, you were given to him as a rod; but you were made known to him also as a symbol of God. Wherefore, amazed at your sovereign might, O Cross, he cried: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 7

Priest: He Who on Sinai gave the law to the God-seer of old, by His own will is nailed to the Cross lawlessly by lawless men; and He loosed the ancient curse of the law, so that beholding the might of the Cross, we might all now cry:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, uplifting of the fallen! Rejoice, downfall of those who adore the world! Rejoice, inauguration of the Resurrection of Christ! Rejoice, divine joy of monastics!

Rejoice, shady-leafed Tree, under which believers are **shel**tered!

Rejoice, prophet-proclaimed Tree, which has been **plan**ted on earth!

Rejoice, alliance of the Kingdom against the enemy

Rejoice, mighty protection of the state!

Rejoice, manifestation of the just Judge!

Rejoice, condemnation of offending mortals!

Rejoice, O Cross, help of orphans!

Rejoice, O Cross, enricher of the poor!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 8

Priest: Seeing the strange wonder, let us live our life as strangers, lifting our minds up to Heaven; since for this was Christ nailed to the Cross, and suffered in the flesh, having willed to draw to the heights them that cry to it: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 8

Priest: Perfectly whole, He came down from on high, retaining His divinity, the only Word from before all ages; and being born of a Virgin Mother, He appeared to the world as a lowly man, accepting the Cross, and gave life to them that cry thereto:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, O Cross, weapon of peace! Rejoice, starting-point and goal of travelers!

Rejoice, wisdom and firm support of the saved!
Rejoice, folly and destruction to the damned!
Rejoice, fruitful, immortal, and life-bearing plant!
Rejoice, flower that blossomed with our salvation!
Rejoice, for you join together things on earth with things above!

Rejoice, for you enlighten the hearts of **them** below! Rejoice, you through which corruption is **ban**ished! Rejoice, you through which sorrow has **van**ished! Rejoice, myriad-numbered wealth of **good** things! Rejoice, myriad-named boast of believers! Re**joice**, O **Tree** most **bles**sed!

Kontakion 9

Priest: Fallen is the profane legion of demons, and the race of Jews is put to shame, seeing that the Cross is worshiped by all with longing, as it ever streams forth healing to them that cry: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 9

Priest: The floods of the heretics' notions were checked when you, O Christ, were nailed to the Tree; for they are confounded at how you both endured the Cross and avoided corruption; but we, glorifying your Resurrection, cry out:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, height of the wisdom of God!

Rejoice, depth of His providence!

Rejoice, ignorance of irrationally-rational babblers!

Rejoice, misfortune of the foolish fortune-tellers!

Rejoice, for you manifest the Resurrection of Christ!

Rejoice, for you revive His Passion!

Rejoice, undoer of the trespass of the first-created!

Rejoice, opener of the entrance to Paradise!

Rejoice, O Cross, revered by all!

Rejoice, adversary of faithless nations!

Rejoice, O Cross, healer of the sick!

Rejoice, constant help of them that weep!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 10

Priest: With the purpose of saving the world, the Lord of the world ineffably descended to it and submitted to the Cross; and being God, for us He accepts all that pertains to our nature. 'Wherefore, having also redeemed us, He hears from all: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 10

Priest: O Cross, impregnable and divine, we perceive you to be a rampart of the inhabited world; for the Creator of Heaven and earth Who prepared you stretches out His hands— O strange account!—and teaches all to proclaim:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, foundation of godliness!

Rejoice, conquest of the **prom**ised land

Rejoice, you that put the spiritual Amalek to flight!

Rejoice, you that were prefigured by the hands of Jacob!

Rejoice, for you fulfilled the prophetic proclamations!

Rejoice, you that upheld the Savior of all

Rejoice, you that destroyed the corrupter of souls!

Rejoice, you through which we are united with angels!

Rejoice, you through which we are illumined by light!

Rejoice, for with honor we worship you!

Rejoice, for with glory we praise you!

Rejoice, for crying out we address you:

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 11

Priest: Every hymn, that would comprehend the multitude of your many wonders, falls short; for though we should offer you a multitude of praises, O precious Cross, we should do nothing worthy of what you have granted us, but still we cry: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 11

Priest: This Life-giving Cross bestows the radiance that gives light to them in darkness; for it has shown us the immaterial light, and has illumined the way for all to divine knowledge; and being lifted up, it now lifts up our minds that we might chant these words:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, luminary that shines on them in darkness!

Rejoice, star that dawns upon the world!

Rejoice, lightning that blinds the slayers of Christ!

Rejoice, thunder that terrifies the faithless!

Rejoice, for you made radiant the choirs of the Orthodox!

Rejoice, for you consumed the altars of idols!

Rejoice, you whose form has appeared from Heaven!

Rejoice, you whose Grace drives away evil!

Rejoice, you that signify mortification of the flesh!

Rejoice, you that slay the insurrection of the passions!

Rejoice, you upon which Christ was crucified!

Rejoice, you by which all the world was saved!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 12

Priest: Having willed to grant Grace unto men, Christ stretched out His hands on the Tree, and calls all the nations together, granting the Kingdom of Heaven to all that worthily sing the hymn, and faithfully cry: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 12

Priest: Chanting your hymn, out of love we praise you as the living Tree of the Lord; for being nailed upon you in the flesh, He that rules over the Hosts on high has sanctified, glorified, and taught us to cry these words unto you:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, O Cross, spiritual sword!

Rejoice, holy gaze of saints!

Rejoice, prediction of the prophets and righteous!

Rejoice, brilliant ruse of Christ!

Rejoice, beauty and crown of pious Kings!

Rejoice, strength and stronghold of reverent priests!

Rejoice, most noble jewel of truth!

Rejoice, fairest haven of salvation!

Rejoice, joyful splendor of all!

Rejoice, banishment of Hagar's sons!

Rejoice, lamp of purest light!

Rejoice, gladness of my soul!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 13

Priest: O most laudable Tree which held the Word, the most holy of all holy beings, having received our entreaties, deliver from every calamity and redeem from eternal torment all them that cry to you: Alleluia!

Clergy/Faithful: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Ikos 1

Priest: Angels from Heaven invisibly circle the life-bringing Cross in fear, and seeing it now brilliantly shed light-bestowing Grace upon the faithful, they stand amazed and cry to you such words as these:

Clergy/Faithful: Rejoice, O Cross, guardian of the world!

Rejoice, the glory of the Church!

Rejoice, you that bountifully gush forth with healings!

Rejoice, you that enlighten the ends of the earth!

Rejoice, wood fragrant with life, and treasury of wonders!

Rejoice, fitly-joined, thrice-blessed, and bestower of Grace!

Rejoice, for you are the divine **foot**stool

Rejoice, for you were ordained for the worship of all.

Rejoice, bowl of nectar, full to the brim!

Rejoice, torch of the radiance above!

Rejoice, you through which creation is blessed!

Rejoice, you through which the Creator is worshiped!

Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

Kontakion 1

Clergy/Faithful: O thrice blessed and all worshiped Cross of Christ, / we the faithful venerate and magnify you, / being joyous at your divine Exaltation. / But as the trophy and unconquered weapon that you are, / by your Grace, protect, cover, and shelter those / who cry to you: /// Rejoice, O Tree most blessed!

The Evening Litany (Lenten melody)

Deacon: Let us complete our evening prayer unto the Lord.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Your grace.

Choir: Lord, have mercy.

Deacon: That the whole evening may be perfect, holy, peaceful and sinless, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: An angel of peace, a faithful guide, a guardian of our souls and bodies, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: Pardon and remission of our sins and transgressions, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: All things that are good and profitable for our souls, and peace for the world, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: That we may complete the remaining time of our life in peace and repentance, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: A Christian ending to our life; painless, blameless, and peaceful; and a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ, let us ask of the Lord.

Choir: Grant it, O Lord.

Deacon: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

Choir: To You, O Lord.

Priest: For You are a good God and love mankind, and unto You we ascribe glory; to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

Priest: Peace be unto all.

Choir: And to your spirit.

Deacon: Let us bow our heads unto the Lord.

Choir: To You, O Lord.

The Prayer at the Bowing of the Heads

Priest: O Lord our God, who bowed the heavens and came down for the salvation of mankind: Look upon Your servants and Your inheritance; for unto You, the awesome Judge, who loves mankind, have Your servants bowed their heads, and submissively inclined their necks, awaiting not help from men, but asking Your mercy, and looking confidently for Your salvation. Guard them at all times, both during this present evening and in the approaching night, from every foe, from all adverse powers of the Devil, from vain thoughts and from evil imaginations.

Blessed and glorified be the majesty of Your kingdom: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

The Prayer of St. Simeon

Reader: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word. For mine eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Your people,

Israel.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us! (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity: have mercy on us. O Lord: cleanse us from our sins. O Master: pardon our transgressions. O Holy One: visit and heal our infirmities, for Your Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. 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 Yours is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Choir: Amen.

The Lenten Troparia

Choir: Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you:

Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb,

For you have borne the Savior of our souls. (Prostration)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:

O Baptizer of Christ, remember us all, That we may be delivered from our iniquities, For to you is given grace to intercede for us. (*Prostration*)

Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O pure apostles and all you saints, pray, for our sakes,
That we may escape tribulations and sorrows,
For we have taken you as fervent intercessors with the Savior.

(Prostration)

We have taken refuge under the wings of your compassion O Theotokos,

Turn not away from our beseechings in tribulations, But save us from distresses, O You who alone are pure and blessed

Reader: Lord, have mercy. (40)

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos we magnify you!

In the Name of the Lord, bless, father.

Priest: Christ, our God, the Existing One, is blessed always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Reader: Amen. O Heavenly King, establish the Orthodox Christians, confirm the Faith, quiet the heathen, give peace to the world, place our departed fathers and brethren in the tabernacles of the Righteous, and accept us sorrowers and penitents, for Thou art good, and the Lover of mankind.

The Prayer of St. Ephraim

Priest: O Lord and Master of my life! Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk. (*Prostration*)

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to Your servant. (*Prostration*)

Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me to see my own transgressions and not to judge my brother, for blessed are You, unto ages of ages. (*Prostration*)

O God, cleanse me, a sinner. (12 times with bows)

(Then the entire Prayer of St. Ephraim is read and a single prostration is made at the end.)

Dismissal

Priest: Glory to You, O Christ, our God and our Hope, glory to You!

Choir: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Father, bless.

Priest: (Pronounces the proper dismissal.)

The Parishes of the Cleveland Deanery

St Theodosius Cathedral

Cleveland - 1896

Holy Assumption Church

Marblehead - 1899

SS Peter & Paul Church

Lorain - 1913

St Nicholas Church

Mogadore - 1917

St John the Baptist Church

Campbell - 1917

SS Peter & Paul Church

Lakewood - 1917

Archangel Michael Church

Broadview Heights - 1922

St John the Baptist Church

Warren - 1927

Holy Assumption Church

Canton - 1958

Holy Trinity Church

Parma - 1963

Christ the Savior Church

Byesville - 1967

St Andrew Church

Maple Heights - 1968

St Nicholas Church

Mentor - 1974

St Innocent Church

Olmsted Falls - 1984

St Gregory of Nyssa Church

Columbus - 1983

St Nicholas Church

Columbus - 2000

Produced and compiled by the Cleveland Deanery of the Diocese of the Midwest.

Orthodox Church in America.

Please return to the candle desk after the service