

Eastern Orthodox prayers

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Jesus Prayer

The **Jesus Prayer** (Η Προσευχή του Ιησού) or "The Prayer" (Evkhee, Greek: Η Ευχή - the Wish), also called the **Prayer of the Heart**[1] (Καρδιακή Προσευχή) and "Prayer of the Mind (Nous)" (Νοερά Προσευχή), is a short, formulaic prayer often uttered repeatedly. It has been widely used, taught and discussed throughout the history of the Eastern Churches. The exact words of the prayer have varied from the simplest possible involving Jesus' name to the more common extended form:



« Κύριε Ιησού Χριστέ, Υιέ του Θεού, ελέησόν με τον αμαρτωλόν. »

« Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner. »

[2]

The Jesus Prayer is for the Eastern Orthodox one of the most profound and mystical prayers and it is often repeated continually as a part of personal ascetic practice. Its practice is an integral part of the eremitic tradition of prayer known as Hesychasm (Greek: ἡσυχάζω, *hesychazo*, "to keep stillness"), the subject of the *Philokalia* (Greek: φιλοκαλείν, "love of beauty"), a collection of fourth to fifteenth century texts on prayer, compiled in the late eighteenth century by St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite and St. Makarios of Corinth. The monastic state of Mount Athos is a centre of the practice of the Jesus Prayer.

While its tradition, on historical grounds, also belongs to the Eastern Catholics,^[3] ^[4] and there have been a number of Roman Catholic texts on the Jesus Prayer, its practice has never achieved the same popularity in the Western Church as in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Moreover, the Eastern Orthodox theology of the Jesus Prayer enunciated in the fourteenth century by St. Gregory Palamas has never been fully accepted by the Roman Catholic Church.^[5] Nonetheless, in the Jesus Prayer there can be seen the Eastern counterpart of the Rosary, which has developed to hold a similar place in the Christian West ^[6]

Origins

The prayer's origin is most likely the Egyptian desert, which was settled by the monastic Desert Fathers in the fifth century.^[7]

The practice of repeating the prayer continually dates back to at least the fifth century. The earliest known mention is in *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* of St. Diadochos of Photiki (400-ca.486), a work found in the first volume of the *Philokalia*. The Jesus Prayer is described in Diadochos's work in terms very similar to St. John Cassian's (ca.360-435) description in the *Conferences* 9 and 10 of the repetitive use of a passage of the Psalms. St. Diadochos ties the practice of the Jesus Prayer to the purification of the soul and teaches that repetition of the prayer produces inner peace.

The use of the Jesus Prayer is recommended in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* of St. John Climacus (ca.523–606) and in the work of St. Hesychios the Priest (ca. eighth century), *Pros Theodoulon*, found in the first volume of the *Philokalia*. Ties to a similar prayer practice and theology appear in the fourteenth century work of an unknown English monk *The Cloud of Unknowing*. The use of the Jesus Prayer according to the tradition of the *Philokalia* is the subject of the nineteenth century anonymous Russian spiritual classic *The Way of a Pilgrim*.

Though the Jesus Prayer has been practiced through the centuries as part of the Eastern tradition, in the twentieth century it also began to be used in some Western churches, including some Roman Catholic and Anglican churches.

Theology

The Jesus Prayer is composed of two statements. The first one is a statement of faith, acknowledging the divine nature of Christ. The second one is the acknowledgment of ones own sinfulness. Out of them the petition itself emerges: "have mercy."^[8]

The hesychastic practice of the Jesus Prayer is founded on the biblical view by which God's name is conceived as the place of his presence.^[9] The Eastern Orthodox mysticism has no images or representations. The mystical practice (the prayer and the meditation) doesn't lead to perceiving representations of God (see below Palamism). Thus, the most important means of a life consecrated to praying is the invoked *name of God*, as it is emphasized since the fifth century by the Thebaid anchorites, or by the later Athonite hesychasts. For the Eastern Orthodox the power of the Jesus Prayer comes not only from its content, but from the very invocation of the Jesus' name.^[10]

Scriptural roots

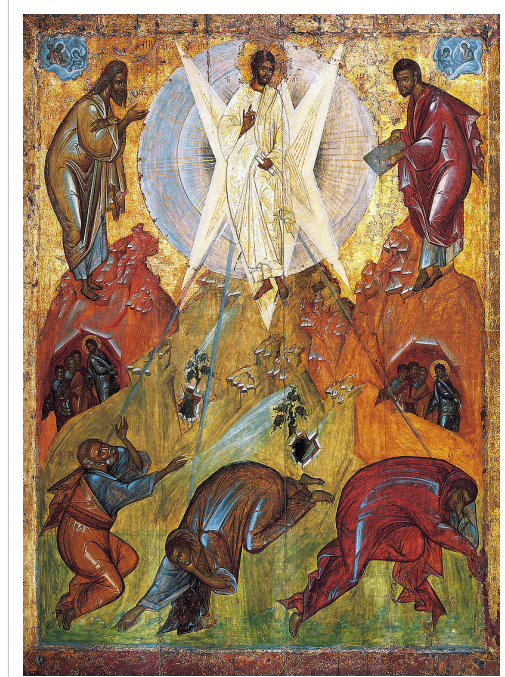
Theologically, the Jesus Prayer is considered to be the response of the Holy Tradition to the lesson taught by the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, in which the Pharisee demonstrates the improper way to pray by exclaiming: "Thank you Lord that I am not like the Publican", whereas the Publican prays correctly in humility, saying "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner" (Luke 18:10-14).^[11]

Palamism, the underlying theology

The Essence-Energies distinction, a central principle in the Eastern Orthodox theology, was formulated by St. Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth century in support of the mystical practices of Hesychasm and against Barlaam of Seminara. It stands that God's *essence* (Greek: *Οὐσία*, *ousia*) is distinct from God's *energies*, or manifestations in the world, by which men can experience the Divine. The energies are "unbegotten" or "uncreated". They were revealed in various episodes of the Bible: the burning bush seen by Moses, the Light on Mount Tabor at the Transfiguration.

Apophatism^[12] (negative theology) is the main characteristic of the Eastern theological tradition. Incognoscibility^[13] isn't conceived as agnosticism or refusal to know God, because the Eastern theology isn't concerned with abstract concepts; it is contemplative, with a discourse on things above rational understanding. Therefore dogmas are often expressed antinomically.^[14] This form of contemplation, is experience of God, illumination called the Vision of God or in Greek *theoria*.^[15]

For the Eastern Orthodox the knowledge or noesis of the uncreated energies is usually linked to apophatism.^[16] ^[17]



Icon of the *Transfiguration of Jesus* by Theophanes the Greek (15th century, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow).
Talking with Christ: Elijah (left) and Moses (right).
Kneeling: Peter, James, and John.

Repentance in Eastern Orthodoxy



Christ the Redeemer by Andrei Rublev (ca. 1410, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow).

The Eastern Orthodox Church holds a non-judicial view of sin, by contrast to the satisfaction view of atonement for sin as articulated in the West, firstly by Anselm of Canterbury (as debt of honor) and Thomas Aquinas (as a moral debt). The terms used in the East are less legalistic (*grace, punishment*), and more medical (*sickness, healing*) with less exacting precision. Sin, therefore, does not carry with it the guilt for breaking a rule, but rather the impetus to become something more than what men usually are. One repents not because one is or isn't virtuous, but because human nature can change. Repentance (Greek: *μετάνοια, metanoia*, "changing one's mind") isn't remorse, justification, or punishment, but a continual enactment of one's freedom, deriving from renewed choice and leading to restoration (the return to man's original state).^[18] This is reflected in the Mystery of Confession for which, not being limited to a mere confession of sins and presupposing recommendations or penalties, it is primarily that the priest acts in his capacity of spiritual father.^{[9] [19]} The Mystery of Confession is linked to the spiritual development of the individual, and relates to the practice of choosing an elder to trust as his or her spiritual guide, turning to him for advice on the personal spiritual development, confessing sins, and asking advice.

As stated at the local Council of Constantinople in 1157, Christ brought his redemptive sacrifice not to the Father alone, but to the Trinity as a whole. In the Eastern Orthodox theology redemption isn't seen as *ransom*. It is the *reconciliation* of God with man, the manifestation of God's love for humanity. Thus, it is not the anger of God the Father but His love that lies behind the sacrificial death of his son on the cross.^[19]

The redemption of man is not considered to have taken place only in the past, but continues to this day through theosis. The initiative belongs to God, but presupposes man's active acceptance (not an action only, but an attitude), which is a way of perpetually receiving God.^[18]

Distinctiveness from analogues in other religions

The practice of contemplative or meditative chanting is known from several religions including Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam (e.g. *japa, zikr*). The form of internal contemplation involving profound inner transformations affecting all the levels of the self is common to the traditions that posit the ontological value of personhood.^[20] The history of these practices, including their possible spread from one religion to another, is not well understood. Such parallels (like between unusual psycho-spiritual experiences, breathing practices, postures, spiritual guidances of elders, peril warnings) might easily have arisen independently of one another, and in any case must be considered within their particular religious frameworks.

Although some aspects of the Jesus Prayer may resemble some aspects of other traditions, its Christian character is central rather than mere "local color." The aim of the Christian practicing it is not limited to attaining humility, love, or purification of sinful thoughts, but rather it is becoming holy and seeking union with God (*theosis*), which subsumes all the aforementioned virtues. Thus, for the Eastern Orthodox:^[8]

- The Jesus Prayer is, first of all, a prayer addressed to God. It's not a means of self-deifying or self-deliverance, but a counterexample to Adam's pride, repairing the breach it produced between man and God.

- The aim is not to be dissolved or absorbed into nothingness or into God, or reach another state of mind, but to (re)unite^[21] with God (which by itself is a process) while remaining a distinct person.
- It is an invocation of Jesus' name, because Christian anthropology and soteriology are strongly linked to Christology in Orthodox monasticism.
- In a modern context the continuing repetition is regarded by some as a form of meditation, the prayer functioning as a kind of mantra. However, Orthodox users of the Jesus Prayer emphasize the *invocation* of the name of Jesus Christ that St Hesychios describes in *Pros Theodoulon* which would be contemplation on the Triune God rather than simply emptying the mind.
- Acknowledging "a sinner" is to lead firstly to a state of humbleness and repentance, recognizing one's own sinfulness.
- Practicing the Jesus Prayer is strongly linked to mastering passions of both soul and body, e.g. by fasting. For the Eastern Orthodox not the body is wicked, but "the bodily way of thinking" is; therefore salvation also regards the body.
- Unlike mantras, the Jesus Prayer may be translated into whatever language the pray-er customarily uses. The emphasis is on the meaning, not on the mere utterance of certain sounds.
- There is no emphasis on the psychosomatic techniques, which are merely seen as helpers for uniting the mind with the heart, not as prerequisites.

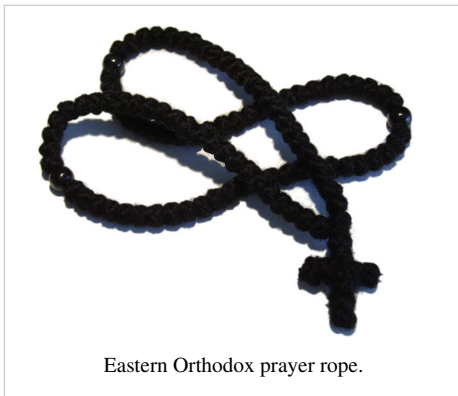
A magistral way of meeting God for the Eastern Orthodox,^[22] the Jesus Prayer does not harbor any secrets in itself, nor does its practice reveal any esoteric truths.^[23] Instead, as a hesychastic practice, it demands setting the mind apart from rational activities and ignoring the physical senses for the experiential knowledge of God. It stands along with the regular expected actions of the believer (prayer, almsgiving, repentance, fasting etc.) as the response of the Orthodox Tradition to St. Paul's challenge to "pray without ceasing" (Thess 1 5:17).^{[8] [11]} It is also linked to the Song of Solomon's passage from the Old Testament: "I sleep, but my heart is awake" (Song of Solomon 5:2) [24]. The analogy being that as a lover is always conscious to his or her beloved, people can also achieve a state of "constant prayer" where they are always conscious of God's presence in their lives.

Practice

"There isn't Christian Mysticism without Theology, especially there isn't Theology without Mysticism", writes Vladimir Lossky, for outside the Church the personal experience would have no certainty and objectivity, and "Church teachings would have no influence on souls without expressing a somehow inner experience of the truth it offers". For the Eastern Orthodox the aim isn't knowledge itself; theology is, finally, always a means serving a goal above any knowledge: theosis.^[14]

The individual experience of the Eastern Orthodox mystic most often remains unknown. With very few exceptions, there aren't autobiographical writings on the inner life in the East. The mystical union pathway remains hidden, being unveiled only to the confessor or to the apprentices. "The mystical individualism has remained unknown to the spiritual life of the Eastern Church", remarks Lossky.^[14]

The practice of the Jesus Prayer is integrated into the mental ascesis undertaken by the Orthodox monastic in the practice of hesychasm. Yet the Jesus Prayer is not limited only to monastic life or to clergy. All members of the Christian Church are advised to practice this prayer, laypeople and clergy, men, women and children.



Eastern Orthodox prayer rope.

In the Eastern tradition the prayer is said or prayed repeatedly, often with the aid of a prayer rope (Russian: *chotki*; Greek: *komvoskini*), which is a cord, usually woolen, tied with many knots. The person saying the prayer says one repetition for each knot. It may be accompanied by prostrations and the sign of the cross, signaled by beads strung along the prayer rope at intervals. The prayer rope is "a tool of prayer". The use of the prayer rope, however, is not compulsory and it is considered as an aid to the beginners or the "weak" practitioners, those who face difficulties practicing the Prayer. It should be noted here that the Jesus Prayer is ideally practiced under the guidance and supervision of a spiritual guide (pneumatikos,

πνευματικός) especially when Psychosomatic techniques (like rhythmical breath) are incorporated. A person that acts as a spiritual "father" and advisor. Usually an officially certified by the Church Confessor (Pneumatikos Exolmologitis) or sometimes a spiritually experienced monk (called in Greek Gerontas (Elder) or in Russian Starets). It is not impossible for that person to be a layperson, usually a "Practical Theologian" (i.e. a person well versed in Orthodox Theology but without official credentials, certificates, diplomas etc.) but this is not a common practice either or at least it is not commonly advertised as ideal.

Psychosomatic techniques

There are not fixed, invariable rules for those who pray, "the way there is no mechanical, physical or mental technique which can force God to show his presence" (Metropolitan Kallistos Ware).^[22]

People who say the prayer as part of meditation often synchronize it with their breathing; breathing in while calling out to God (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God) and breathing out while praying for mercy (have mercy on me, a sinner). Another option is to say (orally or mentally) the whole prayer while breathing in and again the whole prayer while breathing out and yet another, to breathe in recite the whole prayer, breathe out while reciting the whole prayer again. One can also hold the breath for a few seconds between breathing in and out. It is advised, in any of these three last cases, that this be done under some kind of spiritual guidance and supervision.

Monks often pray this prayer many hundreds of times each night as part of their private cell vigil ("cell rule"). Under the guidance of an Elder (Russian *Starets*; Greek *Gerondas*), the monk aims to internalize the prayer, so that he is praying unceasingly. St. Diadochos of Photiki refers in *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* to the automatic repetition of the Jesus Prayer, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, even in sleep. This state is regarded as the accomplishment of Saint Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing" (Thessalonians 1 5:17).

The Jesus Prayer can also be used for a kind of "psychological" self-analysis. According to the "Way of the Pilgrim" account and Mount Athos practitioners of the Jesus Prayer [25], "one can have some insight on his or her current psychological situation by observing the intonation of the words of the prayer, as they are recited. Which word is stressed most. This self-analysis could reveal to the praying person things about their inner state and feelings, maybe not yet realised, of their unconsciousness."^[26]

"While praying the Jesus Prayer, one might notice that sometimes the word "Lord" is pronounced louder, more stressed, than the others, like: LORD Jesus Christ, (Son of God), have mercy on me, (a/the sinner). In this case, they say, it means that our inner self is currently more aware of the fact that Jesus is the Lord, maybe because we need reassurance that he is in control of everything (and our lives too). Other times, the stressed word is "Jesus": Lord JESUS Christ, (Son of God), have mercy on me, (a/the sinner). In that case, they say, we feel the need to personally appeal more to his human nature, the one that is more likely to understands our human problems and shortcomings, maybe because we are going through tough personal situations. Likewise if the word "Christ" is stressed it could be that we need to appeal to Jesus as Messiah and Mediator, between humans and God the Father, and so on. When the word "Son" is stressed maybe we recognise more Jesus' relationship with the Father. If "of God" is stressed then we

could realise more Jesus' unity with the Father. A stressed "have mercy on me" shows a specific, or urgent, need for mercy. A stressed "a sinner" (or "the sinner") could mean that there is a particular current realisation of the sinful human nature or a particular need for forgiveness." "In order to do this kind of self-analysis one should better start reciting the prayer relaxed and naturally for a few minutes – so the observation won't be consciously "forced", and then to start paying attention to the intonation as described above. Also, a person might want to consciously stress one of the words of the prayer in particular when one wants to express a conscious feeling of situation. So in times of need stressing the "have mercy" part can be more comforting or more appropriate. In times of failures, the "a sinner" part, etc....)"[26]

Levels of the prayer

Paul Evdokimov, a twentieth century Russian philosopher and theologian, writes^[27] about beginner's way of praying: initially, the prayer is excited because the man is emotive and a flow of psychic contents is expressed. In his view this condition comes, for the modern men, from the separation of the mind from the heart: "The prattle spreads the soul, while the silence is drawing it together." Old fathers condemned elaborate phraseologies, for one word was enough for the publican, and one word saved the thief on the cross. They only uttered Jesus' name by which they were contemplating God. For Evdokimov the acting faith denies any formalism which quickly installs in the external prayer or in the life duties; he quotes St. Seraphim: "The prayer is not thorough if the man is self-conscious and he is aware he's praying."

"Because the prayer is a living reality, a deeply personal encounter with the living God, it is not to be confined to any given classification or rigid analysis"^[11] an on-line catechism reads. As general guidelines for the practitioner, different number of levels (3, 7 or 9) in the practice of the prayer are distinguished by Orthodox fathers. They are to be seen as being purely informative, because the practice of the Prayer of the Heart is learned under personal spiritual guidance in Eastern Orthodoxy which emphasizes the perils of temptations when it's done by one's own. Thus, Theophan the Recluse, a nineteenth century Russian spiritual writer, talks about three stages.^[11]

- The oral prayer (the prayer of the lips) is a simple recitation, still external to the practitioner.
- The focused prayer, when "the mind is focused upon the words" of the prayer, "speaking them as if they were our own."
- The prayer of the heart itself, when the prayer is no longer something we do but who we are.

Once this is achieved the Jesus Prayer is said to become "self-active" (αυτενεργούμενη). It is repeated automatically and unconsciously by the mind, having a Tetris Effect, like a (beneficial) Earworm. Body, through the uttering of the prayer, mind, through the mental repetition of the prayer, are thus unified with "the heart" (spirit) and the prayer becomes constant, ceaselessly "playing" in the background of the mind, like a background music, without hindering the normal everyday activities of the person [26].

Others, like Father Archimandrite Ilie Cleopa, one of the most representative spiritual fathers of contemporary Romanian Orthodox monastic spirituality,^[28] talk about nine levels (see External links). They are the same path to theosis, more slenderly differentiated:

- The prayer of the lips.



Icon of *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (the steps toward theosis as described by St. John Climacus) showing monks ascending (and falling from) the ladder to Jesus.

- Church Slavonic: Господи Исусе Христе Сыне Божий помилуй мя грѣшнаго. (*грѣшную* if prayed by a female)
- Croatian: Gospodine Isuse Kriste, sine Božji, smiluj se meni grešniku.
- Czech: Pane Ježíši Kriste, Syne Boží, smiluj se nade mnou hříšným.
- Dutch: Heer Jezus Christus, Zoon van God, ontferm U over mij, zondaar.
- Finnish: Herra Jeesus Kristus, Jumalan Poika, armahda minua syntistä.
- Georgian: უფალო იესუ ქრისტე, ძეო ღმრთისაო, შემინყალე მე ცოდვილი.
- German: Herr Jesus Christus, Sohn Gottes, erbarme dich meiner, eines Sünders. (*einer Sünderin* if prayed by a female)
- Greek: Κύριε Ἰησοῦ Χριστέ, Υἱέ τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐλέησόν με τὸν ἁμαρτωλόν (*τὴν ἁμαρτωλόν* if prayed by a female)
- Latin: Domine Iesu Christe, Fili Dei, miserere mei, peccatoris. (*peccatricis* if prayed by a female)
- Lithuanian: Viešpatie Jėzau Kristau, Dievo Sūnau, pasigailėk manęs nusidėjelio. (*nusidėjelės* if prayed by a female)
- Macedonian: Господи Исусе Христе, Сине Божји, помилуј ме грешниот. / Gospodi Isuse Hriste, Sine Bozhji, pomiluj me greshniot.
- Maltese: Mulej Ġesù Kristu, Iben ta' Alla l-ħaj, ikollok ħniena minni, midneb.
- Norwegian: Herre Jesus Kristus, forbarm deg over meg.
- Polish: Panie Jezu Chryste, Synu Boga, zmiłuj się nade mną, grzesznikiem.
- Romanian: Doamne Iisuse Hristoase, Fiul lui Dumnezeu, miluieste-mă pe mine păcătosul. (*păcătoasa* if prayed by a female)
- Russian: Господи Иисусе Христе, Сыне Божий, помилуй мя грешнаго. (*грешную* if prayed by a female)
 - Variants: Господи, помилуй (The shortest form).
- Serbian: Господе Исусе Христе, Сине Божји, помилуј ме грешног. / Gospode Isuse Hriste, Sine Božiji, pomiluj me grešnog.
- Slovak: Pane Ježíšu Kriste, Synu Boží, zmiluj sa nado mnou hriešnym.
- Spanish: Señor Jesucristo, Hijo de Dios, ten piedad de mí, el pecador.
- Ukrainian: Господи Исусе Христе, Сину Божий, помилуй мене грішного. (*грішну* if prayed by a female)/Господи, помилуй (The shortest form).

Languages of non autocephaly Orthodox Churches. (For example: The Hungarian Orthodox Church is subject to the Patriarchate of Moscow)

- Chinese: 主耶穌基督，上帝之子，憐憫我罪人。
- French: Seigneur, Jésus Christ, Fils de Dieu, aie pitié de moi, pécheur.
- Hawaiian: ʻĒ ka Haku 'o Iesu Kristo, Keiki kāne a ke Akua: e aloha mai ia'u, ka mea hewa.
- Hungarian: Uram Jézus Krisztus, Isten Fia, könyörülj rajtam, bűnösön!
- Italian: Signore Gesù Cristo, Figlio di Dio, abbi misericordia di me peccatore.
- Japanese: 主 イイスス・ハリストス、神の子よ、我、罪人を憐れみ給え。
- Korean: 하느님의 아들 주 예수 그리스도님, 죄 많은 저를 불쌍히 여기소서.[35]
- Malay: Wahai Isa-al-Masih, Putra Allah, kasihanilah aku, sesungguhnya aku ini berdosa.
- Portuguese: Senhor Jesus Cristo, Filho de Deus, tende piedade de mim pecador!

In art

Jesus Prayer is referred in J. D. Salinger's pair of stories *Franny and Zooey*. It is also a central theme of the 2006 Russian film *Ostrov*.

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Part Four of the Catechism, which is dedicated to the Christian Prayer, devoted paragraphs 2665 to 2669 to the Jesus Prayer.

“This simple invocation of faith developed in the tradition of prayer under many forms in East and West... It combines the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 with the cry of the publican and the blind men begging for light. By it the heart is opened to human wretchedness and the Savior's mercy.”^[3]

“The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humbly attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases, but holds fast to the word and "brings forth fruit with patience." This prayer is possible "at all times" because it is not one occupation among others but the only occupation: that of loving God, which animates and transfigures every action in Christ Jesus.”^[36]

See also

- Theology:
 - Theosis (deification, the search of union with God)
 - Tabor Light (or Divine Light, or Palamism), doctrine formulated by St. Gregory Palamas arguing for God's Essence-Energies distinction
- Asceticism:
 - Hesychasm (ascetical tradition of prayer)
 - Cardiognosis (ascetical method)
 - Hermit (solitary monk); Starets (elder teacher, in Russian tradition)
- Praying:
 - Kyrie eleison (Greek: Lord, have mercy), prayer of Christian liturgy
 - Prayer in Christianity
 - Prayer beads; Prayer rope; Prayerbook; Poustinia (prayer room)
- Imiaslavie (Russian dogmatic movement)
- Rosary (similar Roman Catholic devotion)
- Fatima Prayer (Roman Catholic tradition)
- Roman Catholic prayers to Jesus

External links

- The article at the Orthodox Wiki [2]
- The Jesus Prayer ^[37] by Fr. Steven Peter Tschlis (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America)
- Saying the Jesus Prayer ^[38] by Albert S Rossi (St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary)
- The Jesus Prayer ^[39] by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom
- On Practicing the Jesus Prayer ^[40] by St. Ignatius Brianchaninov
- Introduction to the Jesus Prayer ^[41] by Mother Alexandra
- Prayer of Jesus or Prayer of the Heart ^[42] by Archimandrite Fr. Jonah Mourtos
- The Power of the Name ^[43] by Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia
- An Orthodox Christian Study on Unceasing Prayer ^[1] by John K. Kotsonis, Ph.D.

- Becoming the Jesus Prayer ^[44] by Fr. Michael Plekon
- The Jesus Prayer ^[45] by Ken E. Norian, TSSF
- Hieromonk Ilie Cleopa preaching on the levels of the Prayer of the Heart ^[46] (video)
- The Psychological Basis of Mental Prayer in the Heart ^[47] (online book) by Fr. Theophanes (Constantine)
- The Jesus Prayer ^[48] A site for gazing (English and Greek)
- Russian tradition in worship of God's Name and the Jesus Prayer ^[49] (Russian)
- On the Jesus Prayer ^[26] Greek site in English with practical advice
- "Death to the World" an Orthodox Ascetic Website ^[50]
- Praying the Jesus Prayer ^[51] Guide for practice and numerous articles

References

- [1] <http://www.theandros.com/kotsonispart1.html>
- [2] http://orthodoxwiki.org/Jesus_Prayer
- [3] Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2667 (<http://www.vatican.va/archive/catechism/p4s1c2a2.htm>)
- [4] See also Rosaries in other Christian traditions.
- [5] Pope John Paul II's Angelus Message (<http://www.catholicculture.org/library/view.cfm?recnum=5660>), 11 August 1996.
- [6] Rosarium Virginis Mariae (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_letters/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20021016_rosarium-virginis-mariae_en.html)
- [7] Antoine Guillaumont reports the finding of an inscription containing the Jesus Prayer in the ruins of a cell in the Egyptian desert dated roughly to the period being discussed - Antoine Guillaumont, *Une inscription copte sur la prière de Jesus in Aux origines du monachisme chrétien, Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, pp. 168–83. In *Spiritualité orientale et vie monastique*, No 30. Bégrolles en Mauges (Maine & Loire), France: Abbaye de Bellefontaine.
- [8] (Romanian) Christopher Panagiotis, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus. Unirea minții cu inima și a omului cu Dumnezeu (Jesus prayer. Uniting the mind with the heart and man with God)*, translation from Greek, second edition, Panaghia Ed., Rarău Monastery, Vatra Dornei, pp. 6, 12-15, 130, ISBN 978-973-88218-6-6.
- [9] (Romanian) Fr. Vasile Răducă, *Ghidul creștinului ortodox de azi (Guide for the contemporary Eastern Orthodox Christian)*, second edition, Humanitas Ed., Bucharest, 2006, p. 81, ISBN 978-973-50-1161-1.
- [10] (Romanian) Sergei Bulgakov, *Ortodoxia (The Orthodoxy)*, translation from French, Paideia Ed., Bucharest, 1997, pp. 161, 162-163, ISBN 973-9131-26-3.
- [11] Fr. Steven Peter Tsihchlis, The Jesus Prayer (<http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article7104.asp>), Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, accessed March 2, 2008.
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- [37] <http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article7104.asp>
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Akathist

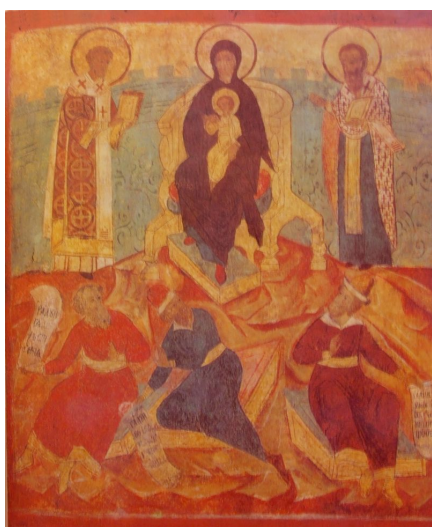
The **Akathist Hymn** (Ἀκάθιστος Ὕμνος, *unseated hymn*) is an Eastern Orthodox Christian hymn dedicated to a saint, holy event, or one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The name derives from the fact that during the chanting of the hymn, or sometimes the whole service, the congregation is expected to remain standing in reverence, not sitting down (Ancient Greek ἀ- (a), [without, not] + κάθισις (káthisis), [sitting]), except for the aged or infirm. During Orthodox religious services in general, sitting, standing, bowing and the making of prostrations are set by an intricate set of rules, as well as individual discretion. Only during readings of the Gospel and the singing of Akathists is standing considered mandatory for all. The akathist *par excellence* is that written in the 6th century to the Theotokos. In its use as part of the service of the Salutations to the Theotokos (used in the Byzantine tradition during Great Lent), it is often known by its Greek or Arabic names, *Chairetismoι* (Χαιρετισμοί, "Rejoicings") and *Madayeh*, respectively; in the Slavic tradition it is known as *Akafist*.

The writing of akathists (occasionally spelled *acathist*) continues today as part of the general composition of an *akolouthia*, particularly in the Slavic tradition, although not all are widely known nor translated beyond the original language. Reader Isaac E. Lambertsen has done a large amount of translation work, including many different akathists. Most of the newer akathists are pastiche, that is, a generic form imitating the original 6th century akathist to the Theotokos into which a particular saint's name is inserted. In the Greek, Arabic, and Russian Old Rite, the only akathist permitted in formal liturgical use is the original akathist.



Icon of the Theotokos Orans from Spasky Cathedral in Yaroslavl (13th-century).

Origin



Icon of the Akathist of the Theotokos. Fresco detail, 1644. Church of the Deposition of the Robe of the Mother of God, Moscow Kremlin.

Franciscus Junius wrongly interpreted Acathistus as one who neither sits nor rests, but journeys with child; as for instance when the Blessed Virgin was brought by Joseph to Bethlehem. Gretser [Commentarius in Codin. Curop. (Bonn, 1839), 321] easily refutes the interpretation by citing from the Synaxarion (account of the feast, similar to the Roman Martyrology) in the Triodion (book containing the propers for the liturgical season of Great Lent). The origin of the feast is assigned by the Synaxarion to the year 626, when Constantinople, in the reign of Heraclius, was attacked by the Persians and "Scythians" (Avars and Slavs) but saved through the intervention of the Most Holy Theotokos (literally, "She who bore God"). A sudden hurricane dispersed the fleet of the enemy, casting the vessels on the shore near the Great church of the Theotokos at Blachernae, a quarter of Constantinople inside the Golden Horn. The people spent the whole night, says the account, thanking her for the unexpected deliverance. "From that time, therefore, the Church, in memory of so great and so divine a miracle, desired this day to be a feast in honour of the Mother of God . . . and

called it Acathistus" (Synaxarion). This origin is disputed by Sophocles (Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods, s. v.) on the ground that the hymn could not have been composed in one day, while on the other hand its twenty-four oikoi contain no allusion to such an event and therefore could scarcely have been originally composed to commemorate it. Perhaps the kontakion, which might seem to be allusive, was originally composed for the celebration on the night of the victory. However the feast may have originated, the Synaxarion commemorates two other victories, under Leo III the Isaurian, and Constantine Pogonatus, similarly ascribed to the intervention of the Theotokos.

No certain ascription of its authorship can be made. It has been attributed to Patriarch Sergius I of Constantinople, whose pious activities the Synaxarion commemorates in great detail. Quercius (P.G., XCII, 1333 sqq.) assigns it to George Pisida, deacon, archivist, and sacristan of Hagia Sophia whose poems find an echo both in style and in theme in the Akathist; the elegance, antithetic and balanced style, the vividness of the narrative, the flowers of poetic imagery being all very suggestive of his work. His position as sacristan would naturally suggest such a tribute to the Theotokos, as the hymn only gives more elaborately the sentiments condensed into two epigrams of Pisida found in her church at Blachernae. Quercius also argues that words, phrases, and sentences of the hymn are to be found in the poetry of Pisida. Leclercq (in Cabrol, Dict. d'archéol. chrét. et de liturgie, s.v. "Acathistus") finds nothing absolutely demonstrative in such a comparison and offers a suggestion which may possibly help to a solution of the problem.

Structure

When an akathist is chanted by itself, the Usual beginning, a series of prayers which include the Trisagion ('thrice-holy') is often said as a prelude to the akathist hymn. The akathist may also be included as a part of another service, such as Matins or a Molieben.

The hymn itself is divided into thirteen parts, each of which is composed of a *kontakion* and an *oikos* (Greek: οἶκος, 'house', possibly derived from Syriac terminology). The *kontakion* usually ends with the exclamation: 'Alleluia!', which is repeated by a choir in full settings, or chanted by the reader in simple settings. Within the latter part of the *oikos* comes an anaphoric entreaty, such as 'Come!' or 'Rejoice!'

For example, the Akathist to the Theotokos:

Kontakion One

Queen of the Havenly Host, Defender of our souls, we thy servants offer to thee songs of victory and thanksgiving, for thou, O Mother of God, hast delivered us from dangers. But as thou has invincible power, free us from conflicts of all kinds that we may cry to thee:

- Rejoice, unwedded Bride!

Oikos One

An Archangel was sent from Heaven to say to the Mother of God: Rejoice! And seeing Thee, O Lord, taking bodily form, he was amazed and with his bodiless voice he stood crying to her such things as these:

- Rejoice, thou through whom joy will flash forth!
- Rejoice, thou through whom the curse will cease!
- Rejoice, revival of fallen Adam!
- Rejoice, redemption of the tears of Eve!
- Rejoice, height hard to climb for human thoughts!
- Rejoice, depth hard to contemplate even for the eyes of Angels!
- Rejoice, thou who art the King's throne!
- Rejoice, thou who bearest Him Who bears all!
- Rejoice, star that causeth the Sun to appear!
- Rejoice, womb of the divine incarnation!
- Rejoice, thou through whom creation becomes new!
- Rejoice, thou through whom the Creator becomes a babe!
- Rejoice, unwedded bride!

The thirteenth *kontakion* (which, unlike the preceding twelve, does not have a corresponding *oikos*) is usually followed by the repetition of the first *oikos* and *kontakion*. After the thirteen *kontakia* and *oikoi*, additional prayers are added, such as a *troparion* and another *kontakion*. The final *kontakion* is the famous "*Tēi Hypermáchōi Stratēgōi*" ("Unto the Defender General"), a hymn addressing Mary as the savior of Constantinople in the 626 siege:

Unto the Defender General the dues of victory,
 and for the deliverance from woes, the thanksgiving
 I, Thy city, ascribe Thee, O Theotokos.
 And having your might unassailable,
 deliver me from all danger
 so that I may cry unto Thee:
 Rejoice, O Bride unwedded.

Akathist to the Theotokos

When the word *akathist* is used alone, it most commonly refers to the original hymn by this name, the 6th century Akathist to the Theotokos, attributed to St. Romanos the Melodist. It is said the Theotokos appeared to him, gave him a scroll and commanded him to eat it. And here a miracle was performed: Romanus received a beautiful, melodic voice and, simultaneously, the gift of poesy. This hymn is often split into four parts and sung at the "Salutations to the Theotokos" service on the first four Friday evenings in Great Lent; the entire Akathist is then sung on the fifth Friday evening. Traditionally it is included in the Orthros (Matins) of the Fifth Saturday of Great Lent, which for this reason is known as the "Saturday of the Akathist". In monasteries of Athonite tradition, the whole Akathist is usually inserted nightly at Compline.

The four sections into which the Akathist is divided correspond to the themes of the Annunciation, Nativity, Christ, and the Theotokos herself.

The hymn itself forms an alphabetical acrostic—that is, each *oikos* begins with a letter of the Greek alphabet, in order—and it consists of twelve long and twelve short *oikoi*. Each of the long *oikoi* include a seven-line stanza followed by six couplets employing rhyme, assonance, and alliteration, beginning with the greeting *Chaíre* (translated as either "Hail!" or "Rejoice!"; *Ave* in Latin) and ending with the refrain, "Hail, Bride without bridegroom!" (also translated as "Rejoice, thou Bride unwedded!") In the short *oikoi*, the seven-line stanza is followed by the refrain, "Alleluia!"

The Salutations to the Theotokos service, often known by its Greek name, the *Χαιρετισμοί/Chairetismoí* (from the *Χαίρε/Chaíre!* so often used in the hymn), consists of Compline with the Akathist hymn inserted. It is known in Arabic as the *Madayeh*.

Icons

There are also several icons of the Theotokos which are known by the title of "Akathist":

Hilandar

The Icon of the Theotokos "Of the Akathist" is on the iconostasis of Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos. In 1837 a fire occurred at this monastery, and the monks were chanting the Akathist Hymn in front of this icon. Though the fire caused great destruction around it the icon itself remained untouched by the flames.

The feast day of the Icon of the Theotokos "Akathist-Hilandar" is celebrated on January 12 (for those churches which follow the Julian Calendar January 12 falls on January 25 of the modern Gregorian Calendar).



Detail of the icon of the *Praises of the Theotokos*, before which the Akathist may be chanted. The Theotokos is shown enthroned in the center, with Christ Emmanuel above her. To either side are shown the prophets who foretold the Incarnation. In the full icon ^[1], scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary surround this vignette.

Zographou

A similar icon is venerated in the Monastery of Zographou, also on Mount Athos. The feast day of the Icon of the Theotokos "Akathist-Zographou" is celebrated on October 10 (October 23).

References

- Some material for this article taken from Akathist^[2], an OrthodoxWiki article.
- G. Papagiannis, Ακάθιστος Ύμνος. Άγνωστες πτυχές ενός πολύ γνωστού κειμένου. Κριτικές και μετρικές παρατηρήσεις, σχολιασμένη βιβλιογραφία. Thessaloniki 2006.

[1] <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=100918>

[2] <http://www.orthodoxwiki.org/Akathist>

External links

- Akathist Hymn (<http://www.legionofmarytidewater.com/prayers/stand.htm>)
- The Akathist Hymn and background (<http://home.it.net.au/~jgrapsas/pages/Akathist.htm>)
- Acathistus (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01092c.htm>) article from *The Catholic Encyclopedia*
- Saturday of the Akathist (<http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=17>) Orthodox icon and synaxarion
- Icon of the Theotokos of the Akathist-Hilandar (<http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=100161>)
- Icon of the Theotokos of the Akathist-Zographou (<http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?FSID=102935>)
- Article with akathists to different saints (<http://orthodoxwiki.org/Akathist>)

Axion Estin

Axion estin (Greek: *Άξιον εστίν*, Slavonic: Достóйно ёсть, *Dostóino yest*), or **It is Truly Meet**, is a theotokion (sticheron composed in honor of the Theotokos, or Virgin Mary), which is chanted in the Divine Services of the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches. It is also a style of icon of the Theotokos.

The hymn in Greek is:

Άξιον εστίν ως αληθώς
μακαρίζειν σε την Θεοτόκον,
την αιμακάριστον και παναμώμητον
και μητέρα του Θεού ημών.
Την τιμιωτέραν των Χερουβείμ
και ενδοξοτέραν ασυγκρίτως των Σεραφείμ
την αδιαφθόρως Θεόν Λόγον τεκούσαν,
την όντως Θεοτόκον,
Σε μεγαλύνομεν.

One translation of the hymn goes as follows:

It is truly right to bless thee, O Theotokos,
ever blessed, and most pure, and the Mother of our God.
More honorable than the cherubim,
and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim.



Russian icon of the Theotokos, *Dostóino yest'* (*Axion Estin*), 19th century.

Without corruption thou gavest birth to God the Word.

True Theotokos, we magnify thee.

The second half of the hymn, beginning with the words, "More honorable than the cherubim..." is the older part of the hymn, and is an Irmos attributed to St. Cosmas the Hymnographer († 773). The introduction, "It is truly meet..." was, according to tradition, revealed by the Archangel Gabriel to a monk on Mount Athos.

The hymn is chanted at Matins, Compline, and other services; but its most important occurrence is at the Divine Liturgy, where it is chanted at the conclusion of the Anaphora. The second half of the hymn, "More honorable..." is frequently chanted before the dismissal which concludes services.

Often, the chanting of this hymn is followed by either a metania or a prostration.

Icon and legend

Axion Estin is also the name given to the icon of the Theotokos (Mother of God) before which, according to tradition, the hymn was revealed. It stands in the high place of the altar (sanctuary) of the *katholikon* (main church) of Karyes on Mount Athos.

According to tradition, an Elder and his disciple lived in a cell on Mount Athos. One Saturday night the Elder left to attend the All-Night Vigil in Karyes. He told his disciple to chant the service alone. That evening an unknown monk who called himself Gabriel, came to the cell, and they began the Vigil together. During the Ninth Ode of the Canon, when they began to sing the Magnificat, the disciple sang the original hymn "More honorable than the Cherubim..." and afterwards the visiting monk chanted it again, but with "It is truly meet..." preceding the original Irmos. As he sang, the icon began to radiate with Uncreated Light. When the disciple asked the visiting monk to write the words of the new hymn down, he took a roof tile and wrote on it with his finger, as though the tile were made of wax. The disciple knew then that this was no ordinary monk, but the Archangel Gabriel. At that moment the Archangel disappeared, but the icon of the Mother of God continued to radiate light for some time afterward.

The *Eleousa* ("merciful") Icon of the Mother of God, before which the hymn "It Is Truly Meet" was first chanted, was transferred to the *katholikon* (main church) at Karyes, known as the *Protaton*. The tile, with the hymn written on it, was taken to Constantinople when St. Nicholas II Chrysoberges was Patriarch (984-996). The hymn became integrated in the Eastern Orthodox worship books and since then it plays an important role in everyday worship, being chanted in the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and recited at the Compline.

Since that time the icon has been considered the protector of the Holy Mountain and its holiest object.

Feast Day

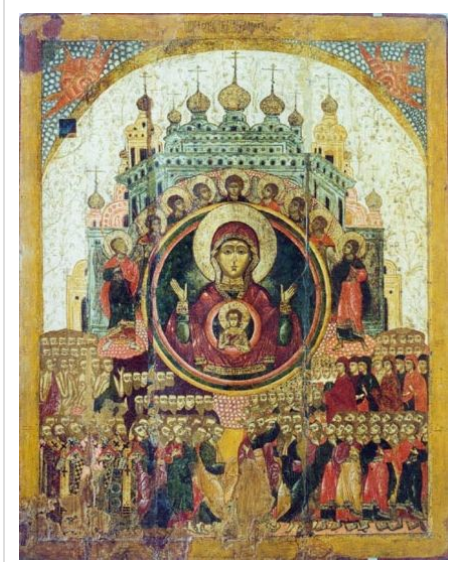
The feast day celebrating the revelation of the hymn by the Archangel Gabriel, and the Icon of the Theotokos of the same name, is celebrated on June 11.

Hymns in place of *Axion Estin*

During the Divine Liturgy, *Axion Estin* is sometimes replaced by another hymn to the Theotokos. These hymns are referred to in the service books as "in place of *Axion Estin*" (Slavonic: Задостойникъ, *Zadostoinnik*), or by the term "eis to Exairetos", meaning "at the Especially (petition)," from the petition that precedes them calling "especially" for the intercessions of the Theotokos.

At the Liturgy of St. Basil, it is replaced by the hymn:

All of Creation rejoices in thee, O full of grace:
 the angels in heaven and the race of men,
 O sanctified temple and noetic paradise,
 the glory of virgins, of whom God was incarnate
 and became a child, our God before the ages.
 He made thy body into a throne,
 and thy womb more spacious than the heavens.
 All of creation rejoices in thee, O full of grace:
 Glory be to thee.



Icon of the Theotokos, "All of Creation Rejoices in Thee."

On the Great Feasts, it is replaced by the Irmos of the ninth Ode of the Canon of the Feast.

See also

- Agni Parthene

External links

- The Revelation of *Axion Estin* ^[1]
- *It is Truly Meet* ^[2] the Synaxarion of the feast (note: the icon depicted here is not "Axion Estin")
- Miraculous Icon of *Axion Esti* ^[3]

References

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 [2] <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=101694>
 [3] http://www.orthodoxchristian.info/pages/axion_esti.htm

Theotokion

A **Theotokion** is a hymn (troparion or sticheron) to the Theotokos (Birthgiver of God), which is read or chanted during the Divine Services (Canonical hours and Divine Liturgy) of the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches.

In the fifth century, Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople (428 - 431), publicly attacked the use of the term Theotokos to describe the Virgin Mary. His opinion caused a stir in the church and led to his deposition as Patriarch. The reason for this is that the term "Theotokos" is understood by Orthodox Christians to have not only pious but also theological significance: in calling the Virgin Mary the "Birthgiver of God," it is affirmed that Christ possesses a human nature as well as a divine nature (as opposed to being purely divine). This is an essential understanding in the Orthodox doctrine of theosis. Thus the title "Theotokos" is as much a statement about Christ and the incarnation as it is about the Virgin Mary herself; it is this particular view of the incarnation that allows Mary to bear this title.

After the defeat of Nestorianism at the First Council of Ephesus in 431, the use of theotokia during the course of the Divine Services gradually increased. Today, every single service of the Orthodox Church contains theotokia. The inclusion of Theotokia in every service is sometimes accredited to Peter the Fuller, the monophysite Patriarch of Antioch (471 - 488), an ardent opponent of Nestorianism.^[1]

Theotokia often occur at the end of a series of troparia or stichera, usually after the verse: "(Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,) Both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen."

A **Stavrotheotokion** is a hymn to the Theotokos that also refers to the Crucifixion of Christ. The correlation between the Theotokos and the Cross is natural because of the Virgin Mary's standing by the Cross throughout the Passion. Stavrotheotokia occurs most commonly on Wednesdays and Fridays, days which are dedicated to the commemoration of the Cross.

The theotokion that occurs at the end of "Lord, I Have Cried" at Vespers is called a **Dogmaticon** because the text of the hymn deals with the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. It is during the Dogmaticon that the Little Entrance is made during Vespers. The Dogmaticon is often chanted in a solemn manner, and while the choir is singing it the Deacon or Priest will cense the icon of the Theotokos on the Iconostasis. A Little Entrance is also made during the Divine Liturgy while the choir chants the theotokion that ends the Beatitudes.

Theotokia of all types are found in the Horologion, Octoechos, Triodion, Pentecostarion and other liturgical books.

The longest and most popular devotion involving Theotokia is the Akathist to the Theotokos. This is solemnly chanted on the Fifth Saturday of Great Lent, and many other times during the year as both public and private devotions.



Russian Icon of Our Lady of Vladimir

See also

- Sticheron
- Troparion
- Kontakion

References

[1] Kathryn Tsai, *A Timeline of Eastern Church History* (Divine Ascent Press, Point Reyes Station, CA, ISBN 0-9714139-2-4), p. 336.

Ektenia

Ektenia (from Greek: ἐκτένεια *ekténeia*; literally, "diligence"), often called simply **Litany**, is a prayerful petition in the Eastern Orthodox/Eastern Catholic liturgy. The prevalent ecclesiastical word for this kind of litany in Greek is *Συναπτή* *Synaptê*, *Ektenia* being the Greek word preferred in Church Slavonic (екте́нїа *ekteniya*).

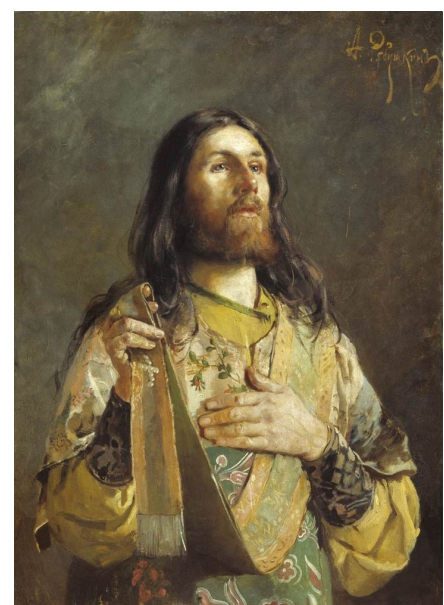
For the use of litanies in the Western Churches, see Litany.

A Litany is normally intoned by a deacon, with the choir chanting the responses. As he concludes each petition, the deacon will raise the end of his orarion as a signal to the faithful to raise their hearts and voices in prayer. If there is no deacon serving, the petitions may be intoned by a priest.^[1] Often, during the litany, the priest will be saying a silent prayer as he stands in front of the Holy Table.^[2] The last petition of a litany often praises the Theotokos. After the last petition of the litany, the priest will say an ephonesis, summing up the petitions of the faithful, which concludes with a doxology giving glory to the Holy Trinity.

When there is no priest present during the service, the litanies are not said; rather, the reader replaces them by saying "Lord, have mercy," three, twelve, or forty times, depending on which litany is being replaced.

The main forms of the Litany are:

- **Great Litany** (Greek: *Συναπτή μεγάλη*/*Synaptê Megalê*; Slavonic: *Екте́нїа Велика*/*Ekteniya Velikaya*) --so called not only because of its length, but because of its importance, coming near the beginning of major services such as the Divine Liturgy, Matins, Vespers, Baptism^[3], Great Blessing of Waters, etc. This ektenia is also called the Litany of Peace (Greek: *Εἰρηνικά*/*Eirênika*; Slavonic: *Мирна*/*Mirnaya Ekteniya*) because of the opening petition: "In peace, let us pray to the Lord."
- **Litany of Supplication**--so called because most of the petitions end with the deacon saying, "...let us ask of the Lord," to which the choir responds, "Grant this, O Lord."
- **Litany of Fervent Supplication** (Slavonic: *Екте́нїа Сугуба*/*Ekteniya Sugubaya*) also sometimes *Impetratory Litany*, *Augmented Litany*, *Fervent Litany*-- this litany is remarkable because of its fervency (its fervid fervidity), indicated by the threefold response of the choir, "Lord, have mercy" (thrice). At the Divine Liturgy, this litany may also be augmented with special petitions, according to need as the pastor sees fit.
- **Little Litany** (Greek: *Αἰτήσεις*/*Aitêsis* or *Μικρὴ Συναπτή*/*Mikrê Synaptê*; Slavonic: *Екте́нїа Мала*/*Ektenia Malaya*) --so called because of its brevity, being only three petitions long. The Little Litany has elements of the other ektenias in it: the fervency of the Litany of Supplication, and the prayer for peace of the Great Litany. The



Russian Orthodox deacon giving an ektenia. He holds the edge of his orarion in his right hand, and will raise it as he finishes each petition.

Little Litany is a brief statement of the faith and hope of the church. The Little Litany will often serve as a bridge between parts of the services.

- **Litany of the Catechumens** (Slavonic: Ектенія о Оглашенныхъ/Ekteniya o Oglashennuikh) --at the Divine Liturgy, this litany traditionally ended the part of the service which the catechumens were permitted to attend. This litany is composed of several petitions for the catechumens as they prepare for baptism, and concludes with a dismissal of the catechumens, and (in older times) the closing of the doors of the temple to all but baptized members in good standing.
- **Litany of the Faithful**--at the Divine Liturgy there are two Litanies of the Faithful. The first dismisses the catechumens, and the second begins the Liturgy of the Faithful, as all prepare for the Mystery of Holy Communion. When there is no deacon serving, this second litany is normally abbreviated. The Litanes of the Faithful are unique in that the deacon exclaims, "Wisdom!" before the priest says the ephphesis.
- **Special Litanies**--litanies that occur only in particular services. These will usually be in the form of special petitions that are added to the Great Litany (such as at Baptism, or the special Kneeling Vespers at Pentecost), or unique litanies that occur in only one service (such as those at Requiem services or Holy Unction).

At the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts many of the same litanies occur as during the Divine Liturgy, some of them being altered to conform to the needs of the Presanctified. One unique litany during this service is the Ektenia for Those Preparing for Illumination (i.e., for those catechumens in the final stages of preparation for baptism on Pascha).

There is also a special form of litany called a **Lit̅y** (Greek: Λιτή/Litê; Slavonic: Литія, *Litiya*)^[4] which is chanted at All-Night Vigils, consisting of several long petitions, mentioning the names of numerous saints, to which the choir responds with "Lord, have mercy," many times.

External links

- Listen to the Great Litany in Slavonic ^[5]
- The Litany before the Lord's Prayer ^[6]
- Hierarchical Divine Liturgy ^[7]

See also

- Vespers
- Litany

References

- [1] Some litanies, such as the ones used at the Laying-on of Hands (Ordination) of a priest or bishop, are intended to be intoned by a priest.
- [2] If there is no deacon serving, the choir will often prolong their response to the last petition to give the priest time to say his silent prayer.
- [3] <http://orthodoxwiki.org/Baptism>
- [4] Hapgood, Isabel F. (1922), *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic Church* (5th ed.), Englewood NJ: Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese (published 1975), pp. 13, 594
- [5] <http://www.novgorod.ru/eng/cult/cd2/wave/t04.mp3>
- [6] http://www.novgorod.ru/eng/cult/cd2/bl_e3.htm
- [7] <http://www.antiochianladiocese.org/liturgics/hierarch/hierarchical.htm>

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