

AKATHIST OF THANKSGIVING, GLORY TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS

The title is taken from the last words uttered by St John Chrysostom, "glory to God for all things," as his life ebbed away in the presence of the Lord at the end of his forced journey of cruel exile in 407 AD. The akathist was written in Russian by Metropolitan Tryphon (Prince Boris Petrovich Turkestanov) shortly before his death in 1934 at the height of the Soviet persecution. Its radiant spirit of transcendent gratefulness quietly sustained Orthodox Christians suffering under that violent persecution of the Church.

The manuscript of the akathist comes to us from Archpriest Grigoriy Petrov, imprisoned in a Soviet labor camp. It was found among his personal effects after his death in the gulag in 1940, or perhaps 1942, by which some assumed at first that he was the author. Nevertheless, even if he didn't compose it, Fr Grigoriy's transcendent joy in the midst of suffering is being transmitted to us through this akathist that he not only certainly covertly celebrated for the persecuted faithful, but also preserved for us who follow.

This hymn asserts again and again an Orthodox view of man and the world, an optimistic anthropology and cosmology that contrasts starkly with the pessimism of the West. This theme of thankful praise, born in the midst of terrible sufferings, fills the akathist with the beauty and the joy found in everyday blessings by hearts attuned to gratefulness in God.

The power of the akathist lies in ascribing gratefulness to Christ for every event in every facet of life, in joy, in pain, in family, in friends, in work, in livestock and pets, in sufferings, in death. The format of the akathist, beginning with Ode 1 and Ikos 1, and then reversing that to end with Ikos 1 and Ode 1, collects our tears of joy and sorrow, and presents them again to God, offering them as in an *inclusio* between the bookends, between the parentheses, between the arms of our *Everlasting King*.

—St Brendan the Navigator Orthodox Church, Astoria, Oregon

(Adapted from St Basil Greek Orthodox Church, San Jose;

Akathist of Thanksgiving adapted from St John the Baptist Cathedral (ROCOR) in Washington DC)

ODE 1

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Everlasting King, Thy will for our salvation is full of power. Thy right arm controlleth the whole course of human life. We give Thee thanks for all Thy mercies, seen and unseen: For eternal life, for the heavenly joys of the Kingdom which is to be. Grant mercy to us who sing Thy praises, both now and in the time to come. Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

IKOS 1

PRIEST

I was born a weak, defenseless child, but Thine angel spread his wings over my cradle to defend me. From birth until now, Thy love hath illumined my path, and hath wondrously guided me towards the light of eternity. From birth until now the generous gifts of Thy Providence have been marvelously showered upon me. I give Thee thanks, with all who have come to know Thee, who call upon Thy Name:

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee for calling me into being.

Glory to Thee, showing me the beauty of the universe.

Glory to Thee, spreading out before me heaven and earth, like the pages in a book of eternal wisdom.

Glory to Thee for Thine eternity in this fleeting world.

Glory to Thee for Thy mercies, seen and unseen.

Glory to Thee, through every sigh of my sorrow.

Glory to Thee for every step of my life's journey, for every moment of glory.

Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 2

PRIEST

O Lord, how lovely it is to be Thy guest. Breeze full of scents — mountains reaching to the skies — waters like a boundless mirror, reflecting the sun's golden rays and the scudding clouds. All nature doth murmur mysteriously, breathing depths of Thy tenderness. Birds and beasts of the forest bear the imprint of Thy love. Blessed art thou, mother earth, in thy fleeting loveliness, which doth waken our yearning for happiness that will last forever in the land where, amid beauty that groweth not old, the cry ringeth out: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 2

PRIEST

Thou hast brought me into life as if into an enchanted paradise. We have seen the sky like a chalice of deepest blue, where in the azure heights the birds are singing. We have listened to the soothing murmur of the forest and the melodious music of the streams. We have tasted fruit of fine flavor and the sweet-scented honey. We can live very well on Thine earth. It is a pleasure to be Thy guest.

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

*Glory to Thee for the feast-day of life.
Glory to Thee for the perfume of lilies and roses.
Glory to Thee for each different taste of berry and fruit.
Glory to Thee for the sparkling silver of early morning dew.
Glory to Thee for the joy of dawn's awakening.
Glory to Thee for the new life each day doth bring.
Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.*

ODE 3

PRIEST

It is the Holy Spirit Who maketh us find joy in each flower—the exquisite scent, the delicate color — the beauty of the Most High in the tiniest of things. Glory and honor to the Spirit, the Giver of Life, Who doth cover the fields with their carpet of flowers, doth crown the harvest with gold, and giveth to us the joy of gazing at it with our eyes. O be joyful and sing to Him: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 3

PRIEST

How glorious Thou art in the springtime, when every creature doth awaken to new life and joyfully doth sing Thy praises with a thousand tongues! Thou art the source of life, the destroyer of death. By the light of the moon, nightingales sing, and the valleys and hills lie like wedding-garments, white as snow. All the earth is Thy promised bride awaiting her spotless Husband. If the grass of the field is like this, how gloriously shall we be transfigured in the Second Coming, after the Resurrection! How splendid our bodies, how spotless our souls!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee for the warmth and tenderness of the world of nature.
Glory to Thee for the numberless creatures around us.
Glory to Thee for the depths of Thy wisdom—the whole world a living sign of it.
Glory to Thee: On my knees, I kiss the traces of Thine unseen hand.
Glory to Thee, enlightening us with the clarity of eternal life.
Glory to Thee for the hope of the unutterable, imperishable beauty of immortality.
Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 4

PRIEST

How filled with sweetness are those whose thoughts dwell on Thee: how life-giving Thine holy Word. To speak with Thee is more soothing than anointing with oil, sweeter than the honeycomb. To pray to Thee doth lift the spirit, doth refresh the soul. Where Thou art not, there is only emptiness; hearts are smitten with sadness; nature, and life itself, doth become sorrowful. Where Thou art, the soul is filled with abundance, and its song doth resound like a torrent of life: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 4

PRIEST

When the sun is setting, when quietness falleth, like the peace of eternal sleep, and the silence of the spent day reigneth, then in the splendor of its declining rays, filtering through the clouds, I see Thy dwelling-place. Fiery and purple, gold and blue, they speak prophet-like of the ineffable beauty of Thy presence, and call to us in their majesty. We turn to the Father:

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee at the hushed hour of nightfall.
Glory to Thee, covering the earth with peace.
Glory to Thee for the last ray of the sun as it setteth.
Glory to Thee for sleep's repose that restoreth us.
Glory to Thee for Thy goodness, even in time of darkness, when all the world is hid from our eyes.
Glory to Thee for the prayers offered by a trembling soul.
Glory to Thee for the pledge of our reawakening on the glorious last day, that day which hath no evening.
Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 5

PRIEST

The dark storm-clouds of life bring no terror to those in whose hearts Thy fire is burning brightly. Outside is the darkness of the whirlwind, the terror and howling of the storm, but in the heart, in the presence of Christ, there is light and peace, silence. The heart sings: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 5

PRIEST

I see Thine heavens resplendent with stars. How glorious Thou art, radiant with light! Eternity watcheth me by the rays of the distant stars. I am small, insignificant, but the Lord is at my side: Thy right arm doth guide me wherever I go.

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee, ceaselessly watching over me.
Glory to Thee for the encounters Thou arrangeest for me.
Glory to Thee for the love of parents, for the faithfulness of friends.
Glory to Thee for the humbleness of animals which serve me.
Glory to Thee for the unforgettable moments of life.
Glory to Thee for the heart's innocent joy.
Glory to Thee for the joy of living, moving, and being able to return Thy love.
Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 6

PRIEST

How great and how close Thou art in the powerful track of the storm! How mighty Thy right arm in the blinding flash of the lightning! How awesome Thy majesty! The voice of the Lord fills the fields, it speaks in the rustling of the trees. The voice of the Lord is in the thunder and the downpour. The voice of the Lord is heard above the waters. Praise be to Thee in the roar of mountains ablaze. Thou shakest the earth like a garment; Thou pilest up to the sky the waves of the sea. Praise be to Thee, bringing low the pride of man. Thou bringest from his heart a cry of penitence: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 6

PRIEST

When the lightning flash hath lit up the camp dining hall, how feeble seems the light from the lamp. Thus dost Thou, like the lightning, unexpectedly light up mine heart with flashes of intense joy. After Thy blinding light, how drab, how colorless, how illusory all else seems.

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee, the highest peak of men's dreaming.
Glory to Thee for our unquenchable thirst for communion with God.
Glory to Thee, making us dissatisfied with earthly things.
Glory to Thee, turning on us Thine healing rays.
Glory to Thee, subduing the power of the spirits of darkness and dooming to death every evil.
Glory to Thee for the signs of Thy presence, for the joy of hearing Thy voice and living in Thy love.
Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 7

PRIEST

In the wondrous blending of sounds, it is Thy call we hear. In the harmony of many voices, in the sublime beauty of music, in the glory of the works of great composers, Thou leadest us to the threshold of paradise to come, and to the choirs of angels. All true beauty hath the power to draw the soul towards Thee and make it sing in ecstasy: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 7

PRIEST

The breath of Thy Holy Spirit doth inspire artists, poets, scientists. The power of Thy supreme knowledge maketh them prophets and interpreters of Thy laws, who reveal the depths of Thy creative wisdom. Their works speak unwittingly of Thee. How great Thou art in Thy creation! How great Thou art in man!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee, showing Thine unsurpassable power in the laws of the universe.

Glory to Thee, for all nature is filled with Thy laws.

Glory to Thee for what Thou hast revealed to us in Thy mercy.

Glory to Thee for what Thou hast hid from us in Thy wisdom.

Glory to Thee for the inventiveness of the human mind.

Glory to Thee for the dignity of man's labor.

Glory to Thee for the tongues of fire that bring inspiration.

Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 8

PRIEST

How near Thou art in the day of sickness. Thou Thyself visitest the sick. Thou Thyself dost bend over the sufferer's bed; his heart speaketh to Thee. In the throes of sorrow and suffering, Thou bringest peace; Thou dost bring unexpected consolation. Thou art the Comforter. Thou art the Love which watcheth over and doth heal us. To Thee we sing the song: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 8

PRIEST

When in my childhood I called upon Thee consciously for the first time, Thou heardest my prayer; Thou didst fill mine heart with the blessing of peace. At that moment I knew Thy goodness, knew how blessed are those who turn to Thee. I started to call upon Thee, night and day, and even now, I call upon Thy Name

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee, satisfying my desires with good things.
Glory to Thee, watching over me day and night.
Glory to Thee, curing affliction and emptiness with the healing flow of time.
Glory to Thee; no loss is irreparable in Thee, giver of eternal life to all.
Glory to Thee, making immortal all that is lofty and good.
Glory to Thee, promising us the longed-for meeting with our loved ones who have died.
Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 9

PRIEST

Why is it that on a feast-day the whole of nature mysteriously doth smile? Why is it that then a heavenly gladness filleth our hearts, a gladness far beyond that of earth, and the very air in church and in the altar becometh luminous? It is the breath of Thy gracious love; it is the reflection of the glory of Mount Tabor. Then heaven and earth sing Thy praise: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 9

PRIEST

When Thou didst call me to serve my brothers and didst fill my soul with humility, one of Thy deep-piercing rays shone into mine heart; it became luminous, full of light, like iron glowing in the furnace. I have seen Thy face, face of mystery and of unapproachable glory.

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee, transfiguring our lives with deeds of love.
Glory to Thee, making wonderfully sweet the keeping of Thy commandments.
Glory to Thee, making Thyself known where man showeth mercy on his neighbor.
Glory to Thee, sending us failure and misfortune, that we may understand the sorrows of others.
Glory to Thee, rewarding us so well for the good we do.
Glory to Thee, welcoming the impulse of our heart's love.
Glory to Thee, raising to the heights of heaven every act of love in earth and sky.
Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 10

PRIEST

No one can put together what hath crumbled into dust, but Thou canst restore a conscience turned to ashes; Thou canst restore to its former beauty a soul lost and without hope. With Thee, there is nothing that cannot be redeemed. Thou art Love; Thou art Creator and Redeemer. We praise Thee, singing: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 10

PRIEST

Remember, my God, the fall of Lucifer, full of pride; keep me safe with the power of Thy grace. Save me from falling away from Thee; save me from doubt. Incline mine heart to call upon Thee, present in everything.

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee for every happening, every condition Thy Providence hath put me in.

Glory to Thee for what Thou speakest to me in mine heart.

Glory to Thee for what Thou revealest to me, asleep or awake.

Glory to Thee for scattering our vain imaginations.

Glory to Thee for raising us from the slough of our passions through suffering.

Glory to Thee for curing our pride of heart by humiliation.

Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 11

PRIEST

Across the cold chains of the centuries, I feel the warmth of Thy breath; I feel Thy blood pulsing in my veins. Part of time hath already gone, but now Thou art the present. I stand by Thy cross; I was the cause of it. I cast myself down in the dust before it. Here is the triumph of love, the victory of salvation. Here the centuries themselves cannot remain silent, singing Thy praises: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 11

PRIEST

Blessed are they that will share in the King's banquet; but already on earth Thou givest me a foretaste of this blessedness. How many times with Thine own hand hast Thou held out to me Thy Body and Thy Blood, and I, though a miserable sinner, have received this Sacrament, and have tasted Thy love, so ineffable, so heavenly!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Glory to Thee for the unquenchable fire of Thy grace.

Glory to Thee, building Thy Church, a haven of peace in a tortured world.

Glory to Thee for the life-giving water of baptism in which we find new birth.

Glory to Thee, restoring to the penitent purity white as the lily.

Glory to Thee for the Cup of Salvation and the Bread of eternal joy.

Glory to Thee for exalting us to the highest heaven.

Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.

ODE 12

PRIEST

How oft have I seen the reflection of Thy glory in the faces of the dead. How resplendent they were, with beauty and heavenly joy; how ethereal, how translucent their faces; how triumphant over suffering and death, their felicity and peace. Even in the silence they were calling upon Thee. In the hour of my death, enlighten my soul, too, that it may cry out to Thee: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

IKOS 12

PRIEST

What sort of praise can I give Thee? I have never heard the song of the cherubim, a joy reserved for the spirits above. But I know the praises that nature doth sing to Thee. In winter, I have beheld how silently in the moonlight the whole earth doth offer Thee prayer, clad in its white mantle of snow, sparkling like diamonds. I have seen how the rising sun rejoiceth in Thee, how the song of the birds is a chorus of praise to Thee. I have heard the mysterious murmurings of the forests about Thee, and the winds singing Thy praise as they stir the waters. I have understood how the choirs of stars proclaim Thy glory as they move forever in the depths of infinite space. What is my poor worship? All nature doth obey Thee, I do not. Yet while I live, I see Thy love, I long to thank Thee, pray to Thee, and call upon Thy Name:

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

*Glory to Thee, giving us light.
Glory to Thee, loving us with love so deep, divine, and infinite.
Glory to Thee, blessing us with light, and with the host of angels and saints.
Glory to Thee, Father All-Holy, promising us a share in Thy Kingdom.
Glory to Thee, Holy Spirit, Life-giving Sun of the world to come.
Glory to Thee for all things, holy and most merciful Trinity.
Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age.*

ODE 13 (three times)

PRIEST

Life-giving and merciful Trinity, receive my thanksgiving for all Thy goodness. Make us worthy of Thy blessings, so that, when we have brought to fruit the talents Thou hast entrusted to us, we may enter into the joy of our Lord, forever exulting in the shout of victory: Alleluia!

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

(Conclude by repeating first Ikos 1, and then, Ode 1, in that order)