

Glossary of Liturgical Terminology

Akathistos – a long hymn of 24 stanzas, similar to the ancient **Kontakion**. Greek word itself means that the hymn is to be sung while everyone stands. Many Akathistos hymns have been composed for saints and even particular icons. They are generally used for devotional purposes and may be inserted after the ode 6 of the Matins **Canon** during the celebration of a feast (for which an Akathistos has been composed). The Akathistos to the Theotokos is in regular liturgical use and is prescribed in the **Triodion**¹ for the 5th Saturday of Great Lent. In Greek and Antiochian use this Akathistos is divided into sections and spread throughout the Friday evenings of Great Lent.

All-Night Vigil - a service consisting of Vespers, Matins, and the First Hour. In Slav use it is celebrated in the evenings before Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feasts. In Greek and Antiochian use it is served only on major feasts.

Anabathmoi or Hymns of Ascent, based on the Psalms of Ascent (Pss. 120-134). These are to be found in Matins.

Antiphon – a general title for a hymn or a section of the Psalter; the title describes the manner in which the hymn or Psalter are to be chanted, i.e., by two choirs in turn.

Apodosis - The "octave-day" of a feast day which lasts more than one day and usually occurs eight days after the actual feast day. The Apodosis of Easter occurs forty days after the feast, on the eve of the Ascension.

Apolytikion – The dismissal hymn, sung first at the end of Vespers in the daily cycle and repeated at different points in Matins and in the Liturgy. It is a **troparion** celebrating the main liturgical event of the day, i.e., the Resurrection on an ordinary Sunday.

Apostikha² – **stikhera** that appear together with selected Psalm verses before St. Simeon's Prayer at Vespers as well as near the end of Daily and Lenten Matins.

Artoklasia - a service held near the end of Vespers before the **Aposticha**. Five round loaves of leavened bread are blessed, together with wheat, wine and oil. In Slav usage, wheat is not used. The items are arranged on a special artoklasia tray, which is adorned with candles. The blessing is performed on Sundays and Feast days, as part of the All-Night Vigil or in Greek / Antiochian usage generally on Feast Days in Vespers alone.

Automelon (*samopodoben*) – a **stikheron** having its own meter and melody and serving in turn as a model for other **stikhera**.

Canon – a principal element in Matins (although it may also appear elsewhere); a lengthy hymn composed of nine odes, with each ode being made up of many hymns (usually 12-14), the number and source of which are regulated by the **Typikon**. At least theoretically each ode takes its theme from the Biblical canticle (e.g., Ode 1 is patterned after Exodus 15:1-19, the Canticle of Moses) which serves as its

¹ See Glossary of Liturgical books.

² Endings in "a" are plural forms of singular endings "on." So:- troparion (singular), troparia (plural).

prototype. Historically the 2nd Ode has been dropped so one jumps from the 1st to the 3rd Ode. In parish use the canon in Resurrectional Matins is sometimes reduced to the 9th Ode only.

Compline - a service served after supper. There are two types: Little Compline served daily, and Great Compline which is served during fasts and on the eve of some major feasts, e.g., the Nativity of Christ, Theophany, and Annunciation. Compline consists primarily of psalm readings and prayers.

Dogmatikon – those **Theotokia** that conclude the **stikhera** on "Lord, I call" at Great Vespers on the eves of the Lord's Day. Their title comes from the fact that they are usually succinct presentations of the dogma of the Incarnation, with particular stress on the ever-virginity and motherhood of Mary.

Doxasticon – A **troparion** or **stikheron** verse inserted between a split **doxology** ("Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit ... Doxasticon ... Now and ever and unto ages of ages, Amen.")

Ektenia – a Litany of Prayer in various forms.

Eothina – the 11 Resurrectional (dawn) gospels.

Evlogetaria – **troparia** sung at Matins with the refrain: "Blessed art thou, O Lord: Teach me thy statutes."

Exapostilarion – a Greek word implying "to dismiss" which is used for the title of a short hymn that comes at the end of the **Canon** at Matins. In the service books this hymn is often referred to as a "Hymn of Light." For Sunday Matins, after the brief "Holy is the Lord our God," there are eleven other Exapostilaria – one for each week depending upon which of the eleven Gospel lessons of Sunday Matins is read.

Gospel Stikhera – hymns sung during Resurrectional Matins at "Glory" of the Verses on the Praises. There are eleven Gospel Stikhera, and they vary from week to week depending upon which of the eleven Gospel lessons for Sunday Matins is read.

Hours - services sanctifying different times of the day with appointed themes:-

First hour (6:00 A.M.): Thanksgiving for the new morning and prayer for a sinless day.

Third hour (9:00 A.M.): the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Sixth hour (12:00 noon): the nailing of Christ to the Cross.

Ninth hour (3:00 P.M.): the death of Christ.

Hypakoe – perhaps the most ancient title used by the Church to denote a piece of composed hymnography. In Greek this word means "to be obedient," "to hear," "to respond." Presently, the Hypakoe is the particular title of a hymn sung during Resurrectional Matins. It varies according to the tone of the week from the Octoechos and comes after the Resurrectional hymns which are sung together with the refrain from Ps. 119: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes." The Hypakoe of Pascha is the one most commonly known. It is sung after the third ode of the Paschal Canon, during the Paschal Hours, and again after the Little Entrance at Divine Liturgy. The Hypakoe in Resurrectional Matins is followed by the **Anabathmoi** or Hymns of Ascent, based on the Psalms of Ascent (Pss. 120-134).

Idiomelon (*samoglasen*) – a **stikheron** having its own meter and melody which never serve as a model for other **stikhera**.

Irmos (Heirmos) – a word meaning "link" in Greek. The Irmos is the theme-song and the first hymn of each ode of a **Canon**. It has a double function: it "links" the ode thematically with the Biblical canticle which serves as its prototype, and, by establishing the meter and melody for all the other hymns (**troparia**) of the ode, it is the first "link" in their chain.

Katavasia – in Greek this word implies the act of "descending" or "coming down." It is the name given to the hymn that concludes the ode of a **Canon**. During the singing of the Katavasia the two choirs are to "descend" from their places (the *kliros*) and assemble in the center of the church. The Katavasia may be the **Irmos** from another canon, or, as on Pascha, it may be the **Irmos** of the given ode repeated. These matters are regulated by the **Typikon**. In Antiochian and Greek practice the appointed canon is usually abbreviated to the katavasia of each ode.

Kathisma – one of the twenty sections into which the Psalter is divided in the liturgical use of the Orthodox Church. Each Kathisma is composed of a number of Psalms, e.g., Kathisma #1 = Psalms 1-8, Kathisma #2 = Psalms 9-17, etc. A Kathisma is further subdivided into three parts called **Antiphons**, i.e., Kathisma #1, Antiphon #1 = Psalms 1-3. Kathisma means literally "to sit down" as the congregation should sit whilst they are being chanted.

Kathisma Hymn (Sedalen) – a hymn sung as an introduction to "sitting," i.e., a period of rest following such things as the lengthy chanting of the Psalter, the singing of the **Polyeleos**, or the singing of several Odes from the Canon at Matins.

Kontakion – derived from a Greek word that made reference to a wooden stick around which a parchment was wrapped. Originally, the Kontakion was a hymn of many stanzas (18-24) whose lengthy text indeed required the use of a scroll. St. Roman the Melodist (+556) is the most famous composer of such lengthy, free-style hymns. The hymns in their original, lengthy form have all but fallen into disuse in Orthodox worship. What now remains in the liturgical books as **Kontakia** are merely the short, preliminary stanzas of the earlier and longer hymns. The Kontakion is sung after ode 6 (together with the Ikos, or first strophe of the more ancient, lengthy kontakion) of the **Canon** at Matins, during the Hours, and after the **Troparia** at the Divine Liturgy. The kontakion is sung to the same melody as the **apolytikion** according to the tone of the week.

Lity (litia) – a word implying a fervent, prolonged prayer. It generally designates the procession to the narthex of the church for petitions, hymns and the blessing of loaves, which is a typical feature of the latter part of Great Vespers on feast days.

Molieben - (also called a moleben, service of intercession, or service of supplication) is a supplication prayer service in honor of either our Lord Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, or a particular saint or martyr. It is a Slavic service, but closely related to the Paraklesis service. A molieben is usually served by an ordained priest, but a laymen can also do a molieben, although in a modified form

Ode - one of the component parts of a **Canon**, which consists of the irmos and the troparia that follow it.

Panikhida - a service commemorating the departed, which consists essentially of the Trisagion, troparia, and a canon (usually in abridged form), as well as special prayers and litanies. Structurally in its unabridged form, it resembles the Matins service.

Paraklesis - (pl., parakleses) is a service of supplication specifically for the living (as opposed to a Memorial Service, which is a supplication for the departed). This service is most often addressed to the Theotokos,

but may be used to seek the intercessions of any saint. The distinguishing feature of a paraklesis is the inclusion of a supplicatory canon to the saint whose intercessions are being sought. A paraklesis can be served as a standalone service or, in a slightly abbreviated form, in conjunction with vespers. It is appropriate to be served at any time of need.

Polychronion - (Gr. "for many years"). A prayer sung by the chanter or choir in honour of the celebrant bishop or presbyter. Its full version is: "for many years of life" (Gr. Eis Polla Eti Despota; Sl. Mnogaya Lyeta).

Polyeleos – The Psalms of "much oil" or "many mercies" (Psalms 135-136) sung during Resurrectional and Festal Matins.

Prokeimenon – the Greek word implies something that is "set before" or "introduces." The Prokeimenon was originally an entire Psalm that served to "introduce" the reading of Scripture that followed it. One verse from the Psalm was selected as the refrain to the chanting of all the others. In current liturgical use, the Prokeimenon is reduced to the refrain and one to four verses of the Psalm being employed.

Prosomoia (*podoben*) – a *stikheron* whose meter and melody are taken from those of an **automelon**.

Stavrotheotokion – hymns to the Theotokos that refer to her standing at the Cross of Christ. They are typically found in the Octoechos in the hymnography for Wednesdays and Fridays.

Stikheron – another general title referring to a composed hymn written in verses. Such hymns occur throughout Orthodox worship, e.g.: they are inserted at the places appointed by the **Typikon** during the chanting of "Lord, I call" (Psalms 141, 142, 130 and 117) at Vespers. They are usually associated with Psalmody.

Theotokion – a hymn to the Theotokos that usually concludes a larger body of hymnography, e.g.: **troparia** at the end of Vespers, **stikhera** on "Lord, I call," **apostikha**, etc.

Tone - 4x2 basic melodic forms with variants (eg., sedalion variants for the stikhera differ from the tones appointed for the troparia). In Greek notation reference is to the plagal. In Slavic notation "plagal" is not generally used but the tones simply listed from 1 to 8.

One	Five	(Plagal of Tone 1)
Two	Six	(Plagal of Tone 2)
Three	Seven	(Grave Tone – no Plagal)
Four	Eight	(Plagal of Tone 4)

Troparion – one of the oldest titles used in the Church for a particular piece of composed hymnography. In Greek the word means "a sign of victory" or a "way of life," and in general implies that the composed hymn is a succinct summary of the event or saintly person being celebrated in the Church. As a title, Troparion can be applied to virtually any composed hymn used in worship. Present use, however, usually limits it to the hymn sung after the Lord's Prayer at Vespers, after "God is the Lord" at Matins, and after the Little Entrance at the Liturgy. It also denotes the hymns that follow the **Irmos** in the ode of a canon.

Verses on the Praises – stikhera inserted at those places appointed by the **Typikon** during the chanting of the Psalms of Praise (148-150) at Matins.

Weekly Cycle – Sunday - Resurrection; Monday - Angels; Tuesday – John the Baptist; Wednesday – Cross; Thursday – St. Nicholas, The Apostles; Friday – Cross; Saturday – The Departed, The Theotokos.