

Singing God's Praises in the Morning: The Service of Matins

Services in the Orthodox Church

In the worship of the Orthodox Church, all services are separated into three sections.

Sacraments are services that have a specific part where the Holy Spirit is invoked to bless the people present and, at times, certain gifts offered. They are necessary for the existence of the Church and for our salvation, bringing us closer to God. In the Orthodox Church today, the Sacraments include: Baptism, Chrismation, Holy Communion, Repentance and Confession, Ordination, Marriage and Holy Unction.



Other services that are not “sacraments”, but where the Church asks for the invocation of the Holy Spirit are called **Sacramental Blessings**. These include both complete services (like the *Blessing of the Waters*) and simple prayers (like the *Phanouropita* blessing).

The final category of services is the **Offices**. These services are common prayers that are usually (but not always) chanted in the Church and can be prayed without a priest, if one is not available. They include: Matins, Vespers, Compline, Akathists, Supplicatory Canons, and many other services.

The purpose of this handout is to explain the Matins service and to help you throughout your prayer life at our Church.

The Theme of Sunday Matins

Just like any other service in the Church, Matins has various themes. One theme is that of “**the Fall of Adam**” (see *Genesis 3*). The remembrance of the Fall reminds us that we live in a sinful reality, the world where sin exists because of the Fall. Therefore, we must be watchful throughout the day in order for us not to fall as Adam did when he sinned.

Along with this theme of “the Fall”, we also remember that **Light has dawned in the world through Jesus Christ**, “the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.” (Jn. 1:9) The Matins service guides the believer from the Fall to Illumination. “*The Church announces every morning that God is the Lord, and she begins to organize life around God.... Matins refers morning to the Christian experience of the Church as ‘morning’, as ‘beginning’.*” (*For the Life of the World*, 63-64)

On feast days, Matins also has a theme centred around the feast celebrated (either of the Lord, the Theotokos, a particular Saint, etc.) On Saturdays, we remember all those who have passed away. On Sundays, we commemorate the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Your Map Through Matins

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Inside Story 2

Inside Story 3

Inside Story 3

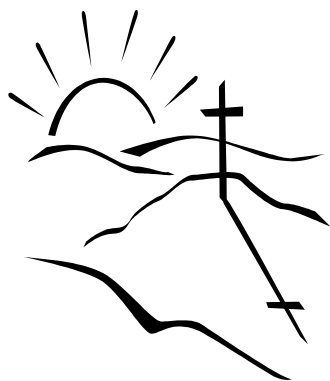
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FYI: During the reading of the *Six Psalms*, it is tradition to pray while standing..



Apolytikion:

Also called “Dismissal Hymn”, the *Apolytikion* is a short description of the feast or saint celebrated. It is chanted during Vespers, Matins and the Divine Liturgy (amongst other services).



FYI: *Kathismata* literally mean “seats”. This part of the service is called “the *Kathismata*” because people would sit now.

The Enarxis, the Six Psalms (*Exapsalmos*) & The Litany of Peace

As every service, Matins begins with the **Enarxis**, which consists of the **Trisagion Prayers** (short prayers ending with the Lord's Prayer), hymns and a short **litany** (a set of prayers—in this case, asking for God to have mercy on us).

The Priest then says: “**Glory to the holy, consubstantial, life-giving and undivided Trinity, both now and forever, and to the ages of ages!**” The “*Exapsalmos*” (or *Six Psalms*) is then read, consisting of the following Psalms:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| - Psalm 3 | - Psalm 37 (38) | - Psalm 61 (62) |
| - Psalm 87 (88) | - Psalm 102 (103) | - Psalm 142 (143) |

At the conclusion of the *Six Psalms*, the Priest prays the “**Litany of Peace**”, asking God for peace in the world, for the salvation of our souls, to bless our Church, those who are living and in need, etc. At the conclusion of this litany, the chanting of the service begins with the hymn “*God is the Lord*”.

“God is the Lord” and the Apolytikia

Verses 27a and 26a of Psalm 117 are then chanted: “**God is the Lord and has revealed Himself to us! Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!**”. This hymn emphasizes the theme of divine Illumination.

The **Apolytikia** are then chanted. For Sundays, there is a hymn recounting the Resurrection. If a particular Saint is celebrated, his or her hymn is chanted, as well. Finally, a hymn to the Virgin Mary (or, Mother of God/“*Theotokos*”) is chanted to conclude this section (called a **Theotokion**).

~ FYI: If a Divine Liturgy was to take place on a regular Saturday (with no great feast), the “*Alleluia*” would be chanted, which has a more sombre tone to it. Usually, memorials would be held on Saturdays, as that is the day to remember those who have passed away.

Kathismata, Evlogitaria and Hymns of Ascent

After a short litany by the Priest, the **Kathismata** are sung, reflective hymns that discuss the Resurrection of the Lord. The theme is carried over to the **Evlogitaria**, a set of hymns that start with the verse, “Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your commandments” (or, in Greek, “*Evlogitos ei Kyrie*”, where the hymns get their name from).

The **Anavathmi** (or, the “Hymns of Ascent”) and the **Prokeimenon** are verses from the *Book of Psalms* of Old Testament.

~ FYI: In some Churches, some short hymns are chanted at this moment, called the “*Mid-Ode Kathismata*”, describing the Saint of the day.

Kontakion, Oikos, Synaxarion & The Katavasiae Hymns

The **Kontakon** is a short hymn about the feast, usually chanted in Monasteries (although it is read in Parishes). Some of these hymns are as old as the 6th century (and even older), written by Saints of the Orthodox Church. The **Oikos** is usually an acrostic poem that is read in honour of the Resurrection of Christ or (in some cases) about a great feast which is being celebrated. The **Synaxarion** lists all the Saints and events being celebrated by the Church on a given day.

The **Katavasiae Hymns** are then chanted. They change during different ecclesiastical periods. For example:

- From November 21st to December 31st, the Katavasiae centre around the feast of Christmas.
- For the first 39 days of Pascha (Easter), the Katavasiae are about the Resurrection of Christ.
- From January 1st to 14th, the Katavasiae are about Theophany/Epiphany.

There are 7 Katavasiae chanted at this time, and the last one chanted after the *Magnificat*. (later on in Matins)

The Rite of the Eothinon (Sunday Morning) Gospel

After the short chant, “**Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!**”, the Priest reads the **Eothinon Gospel**, said on Sunday morning. It is about the Resurrection of Christ, and read next to the Altar Table. This resembles how the Myrrh-bearing women went to the Tomb of Christ on Easter Sunday and found that He Resurrected from the dead. A small **doxological prayer**, “Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ” is then read in praise of the Resurrection.

Psalm 50 (51) is then chanted, keeping with the theme of *repentance* (and remembering “The Fall of Adam”). Then, hymns are chanted to the Holy Apostles and the Mother of God to pray that God “wipes out our many offenses”. The last hymn says that Christ, through His Resurrection, gave us “eternal life and great mercy.”

~ FYI: On weekdays (and in some cases on Sundays), Psalm 50 is read (and not chanted).

The Prayer of Intercession

The **Prayer of Intercession** asks Christ, through the *intercessions* (or, *prayers*) of all the Saints, to hear our prayer and have mercy on us. Orthodox Christians believe that people do not “cease to be”, but merely “fall asleep” in wait of the world to come. The glorified Saints of the Church are people whom God has chosen to reveal as blessed, in order to give us—who are still on earth—examples of faith. They are like “big brothers and sisters” in our Orthodox family, guiding us on the way to salvation.

Orthodox Christians worship God alone, for He is the Saviour of our souls. However, we honour the Saints, the Angelic Powers and the Life-Giving Cross of our Lord, knowing they can grant us strength when we are spiritually downtrodden. May they pray for us always in the heavenly Kingdom!



FYI: Many *Kontakia* were composed by **St. Romanos the Melodist**.

The Doxological Prayer of Matins

Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ, let us worship the Holy Lord, Jesus, the only sinless One. We worship Your cross, O Christ, and we praise and glorify Your Holy Resurrection. For You are our God, and we know no other than You, and we call upon Your Name. Come, all faithful, let us worship the Holy Resurrection of Christ. For behold, through the Cross, joy has come to all the world. Ever blessing the Lord, let us praise His Resurrection. For enduring the Cross for us, He destroyed death by His death.



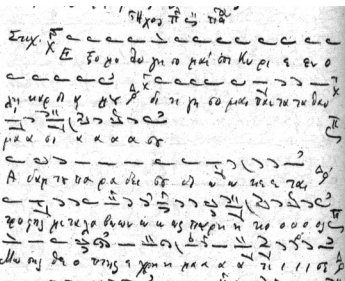


FYI: The Orthodox Church says the Virgin Mary should be called "**Mother of God**" (or, **Theotokos**), as she didn't merely give birth to a Man, but to the God-Man, Jesus Christ.



Exaposteilarion:

From the Greek word meaning "send out" (ἐξαποστειλῶ), the hymn asks God to enlighten the minds of the faithful, in order to praise God during Lauds and the Great Doxology.



FYI: Byzantine Music is the type of notation used by chanters in the Greek Orthodox tradition. Chants are done in both Greek and English.

The Magnificat and the 9th Katavasia

At the end of the Prayer of Intercession, the **Magnificat** and the **9th Katavasia** is chanted. The biblical text quoted is from Luke 1: 46-55. The first three verses are as follows: "**My soul magnifies the Lord and spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour, for He has regarded the humility of His servant. For He who is mighty has done great things for me and Holy is His Name, and His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.**"

In between each verse, the refrain hymn is chanted: "**Higher in honour than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, who without corruption gave birth to God the Logos. Most truly Theotokos, you do we magnify!**"

The Priest censes the entire Church during the chanting of the Magnificat and the **9th Katavasia**, which is a final hymn dedicated to the Mother of God. The incense symbolizes the prayers of the faithful that rise up to God, as an "offering of spiritual fragrance".

Upon the conclusion of the hymns, the Priest prays a short litany inside the Altar.

"Holy is the Lord our God" and the Exaposteilaria

A short hymn is chanted at this point: "**Holy is the Lord our God**". This hymn, together with a short verse included upon its conclusion, is taken from Psalm 98 (99). It is chanted on Sundays only.

The **Exaposteilaria** are then chanted. On Sundays, the first is always about the "Eothinon" Gospel that was read earlier, detailing what was said in the Gospel and the theological significance. If any Saint is celebrating, a short summary of their life is in the Exaposteilarion. Finally, one is chanted about the Virgin Mary.

The Lauds (or, "The Praises")

With the chanting of **Psalm 148:1-2**, Matins enters its final stage: the Lauds. The Lauds chanted are usually 8 on a Sunday. Either all eight are to do with the Resurrection, or some will sing praises of the Saint (or event) that is commemorated.

If a great feast (e.g. Birth of the Theotokos, Christmas, etc.) has been celebrated, some of the Lauds are chanted for that feast, as well. The Lauds of Pascha are chanted throughout the Paschal period (the 39 days of Pascha, i.e. until the Ascension feast).

Verses usually precede the hymns, which are taken from Psalms 149:9 and 150:1-6. As most of the verses start with the word "praise", they have been also called "The Praises" (in οἱ Αἶνοι, after «Αἰνεῖτε»).

The Eothinon Hymn and A Hymn to the Theotokos

The **Eothinon Hymn** is the longest hymn of Matins, which describes at great detail the significance of the Eothinon Gospel that was read earlier. There are 11 Eothina Hymns (just as there are 11 Gospel accounts of the Resurrection of Christ that are read). The 11 gospels and hymns deal with the following accounts:

- 1) **Matthew 28:16-20** (Christ and His disciples on the mount in Galilee);
- 2) **Mark 16:1-8** (the Myrrh-bearing Women going to the tomb and finding out Christ is Risen);
- 3) **Mark 16:9-20** (the Resurrected Lord speaking to Mary Magdalene and then His disciples);
- 4) **Luke 24:1-12** (another Myrrh-bearers account, along with Peter going to the Tomb);
- 5) **Luke 24:12-35** (the events at Emmaus);
- 6) **Luke 24:36-53** (the appearance of Christ to His disciples and the Ascension);
- 7) **John 20:1-10** (Sts. Mary Magdalene, Peter and John discovering Christ arose from the dead);
- 8) **John 20:11-18** (Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection);
- 9) **John 20:19-31** (the events surrounding St. Thomas);
- 10) **John 21:1-14** (the events around the Sea of Tiberius); and
- 11) **John 21:15-25** (the re-institution of St. Peter as an Apostle).

A **Hymn to the Theotokos** is chanted and then *the Great Doxology* begins.



The Great Doxology

The **Great Doxology** is the final part of the Matins service the laity can hear. It is a collection of small hymns, praising God and asking Him to be merciful to us on this day. On Sundays and great feasts, it is chanted by the chanters and the people. The Priest offers incense once again at this point, as a preparation for the Divine Liturgy.

At the end of Matins, the **Dismissal** is said silently by the Priest (and the other clergy) inside the Altar. If there is a Bishop present, the Dismissal is said outside by the Throne of the Bishop.



The Great Doxology

Glory to You who has shown us the light. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to all people.

We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, we give thanks to You for your great glory.

Lord, King, heavenly God, Father, almighty; Lord, the Only-Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit.

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father who take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us, You who take away the sins of the world.

Receive our prayer, you who sit at the right hand of the Father, and have mercy on us.

For You alone are holy, You alone are Lord, Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every day we will bless you, and praise Your name forever and to the ages of ages.

Lord, grant that we may be kept this day without sin.

Blessed are You, Lord, God of our fathers and praised and glorified is Your Name throughout the ages. Amen.

Let Your mercy, Lord, be upon us, as our hope is in You.

Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your commandments (3).

Lord, You have been our refuge from generation to generation. I said: O Lord, have mercy on me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.

Lord, to You have I turned for refuge; teach me to do Your will, for You are my God.

For You are the fountain of life, and in Your light we shall see light.

Extend Your mercy to those who know you. *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us (3).*

Glory to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen. Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

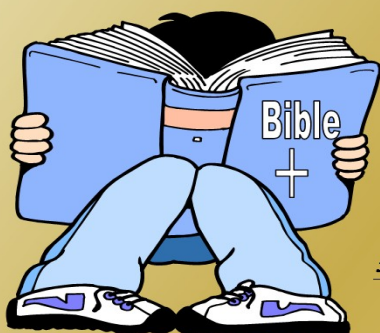
Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

"Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit..."

With Matins complete, the Priest will begin the **Divine Liturgy** with the exclamation, **"Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages!"**

The Divine Liturgy (or "The Holy Eucharist") is the centre of worship for Orthodox Christians. The apex is when Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful. Only Orthodox Christians can receive Holy Communion. All non-Orthodox Christians are welcome to observe the Liturgy.

The small books found in the pews of the Church can help you in following along during the service. Be careful: the hymns after the Small Entrance, the Epistle reading, the Gospel reading, the sermon, along with the hymns before and during the reception of Holy Communion, the *Blessing of the Breads* service and the *Memo-rial* service texts are not included in the small books.



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Learning the Faith

As always, the Sunday School program is here to teach the Orthodox Faith to all our students.

This year, we will be seeking to improve on our programs with new lessons and teachers who will learn more on the Faith through religious workshops.

All parents are encouraged to join our Church's "Re-Catechism" group to learn about Orthodoxy!

Helping our School

This year, construction will take place to improve our Sunday School facilities. Soon, we will have better, up-to-date classrooms, complete with perks like computers, wireless internet and more!

Your donation will go towards helping this great initiative of our Church and Community!



Why go to Sunday School? 2011-2012 Projects & Objectives

Participating in Worship

All students are encouraged to participate in Church services, especially the Divine Liturgy, through their participation in our Choirs, through reading the Epistle, by learning to chant, and serving as Altar Servers (for the boys) or as part of the "St. Paraskevi Reps" (for the girls).

Becoming one Family

Through the Christmas and Good Friday Retreats, Christmas pageant, food drives and various events that we are planning for our Sunday School year, our Religious Education team hopes to teach the children and youth of our Parish that we are all one spiritual family in Jesus Christ.



Check us out Online!

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Your Spiritual Home away from Home