02/04/2020

The Akathist Hymn: ode to the Invincible General



Apart from its usual dedication to the Menaion (the commemoration of the lives of the Saints) and the early custom to celebrate Kontakia (a type of hymn) during the Pannychis (festive night vigil celebrated at the Blachernae chapel), the Akathist had also the function to celebrate military victories or to ask, during wars, for divine protection intermediated by prayers of the Mother of God, the Invincible General.

The origin of the Akathist Hymn

The origin of the feast is assigned by the Synaxarion (the catalog of feasts) to the year 626, when Constantinople, in the reign of Heraclius, was attacked by the Persians and Avars—but was saved through the intervention of the Most Holy Mother of God.

After a litany held by the citizens of the town on the walls of the city, having in front the icon of Mother of God, a sudden hurricane dispersed the fleet of the

enemy, casting the vessels on the shore near the Great church of the Mother of God at Blachernae, with a quarter of Constantinople located inside the Golden Horn. The account says that the people spent the whole night, thanking the Virgin Mary for the unexpected deliverance. The words Ἀκάθιστος Ὕμνος in Greek means “unseated hymn” (hymns while standing, not sitting down).

The kontakion was originally composed for the celebration on the night of the victory and alludes to it and, after the kontakion, was composed the entire hymn. At the feast, we commemorate two other victories, under Leo III the Isaurian, and Constantine Pogonatus, similarly ascribed to the intervention by the Mother of God.

We must understand that God and His saints, especially the Mother of God, are not separated from our day-to-day life. In fact, that’s why we believe in them in the first place: because they can help us in our needs, especially in times of crisis, from which one of the most important ones is war (or plague).

The Invincible General

Our faith is not abstract. We saw during our history the concrete help of the Mother of God and that’s why we call her (in the famous kontakion of the hymn) “Defender Invincible General” (Τῇ ὑπερμάχῳ στρατηγῷ τὰ νικητήρια). Why do we then forgot our history during times of peace?

I want to gain peace, not war—however, it is better to choose a commendable war than peace which separates us from God. The faith which I was taught by the Holy Fathers, which I taught at all times without adjusting according to the times, this faith I will never stop teaching; I was born into it and I live by it.

We must give thanks to God for everything. Try to be courageous. Pull yourselves together a bit. Do you know what Christians are suffering in other countries? There are such difficulties in other countries! But here, many exhibit indifference. There’s not enough disposition to kindness, and love of devotion.

You see, if we don’t begin to make war against evil, to expose those who tempt believers, then evil will grow larger. If we throw aside fear, then the faithful will be emboldened a bit. And those who wage war against the Church will have a harder time.

In the past, our nation lived spiritually, so God blessed her, and the saints helped us in miraculous fashion. And we were victorious against our enemies, who always outnumbered us. Today, we continue to call ourselves Orthodox Christians, but we don’t live Orthodox lives.

We must never forget that the real combative force of a good army depends of its closeness to God, its spirituality. Let us not tarnish our uniform which our ancestors cleansed with their blood.

Based on Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Paisios the Athonite

The explanation of photographs
The photos are from the service of the Akathist hymn, Vatopedi monastery, Mount Athos. In the second part of the photo report you will see the barque Mircea anchored in the bay of Vatopedi, the symbol ship of the Romanian navy, the only navy that has par excellence the Mother of God as protector.

At this link you have the service of akasthist hymn that Vatopedi monastery will held on April 03, 2020 at 20:00, Athens time – if you want to join us.

The audio is the famous kontakion of the feast:

https://www.orthodoxianewsagency.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Track-03-2.mp3

























































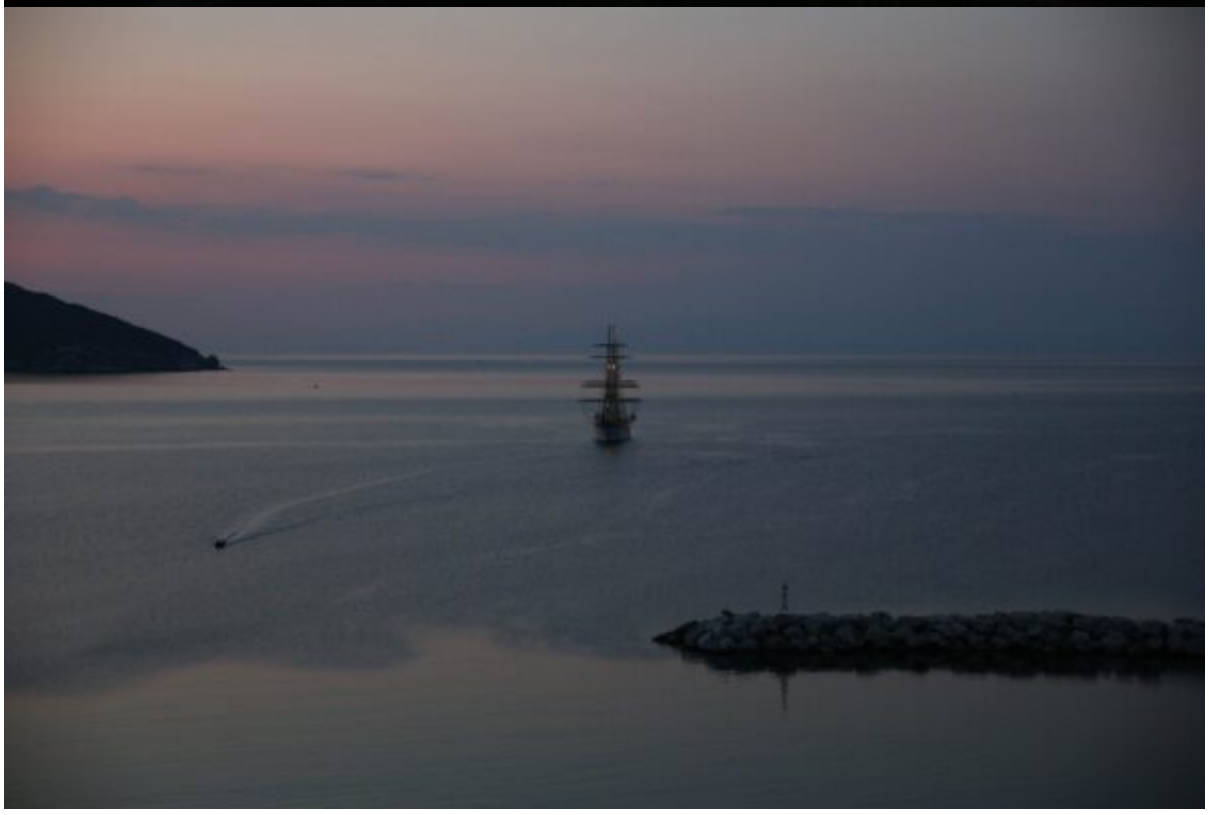














asceticexperience.com