

# GREAT COMPLINE<sup>1</sup>

## &

# THE GREAT CANON OF REPENTANCE<sup>2</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

The service of GREAT COMPLINE is prescribed to be served on:

1. Tuesday and Thursday evenings of “Cheese Week” (the week before Forgiveness or Cheesefare Sunday);
2. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings of the Great Fast (except on Wednesday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of the Great Fast when the Typikon directs that LITTLE COMPLINE be served); and
3. Monday and Tuesday evenings of Great and Holy Week.

The GREAT CANON of Repentance by St Andrew of Crete is prescribed to be chanted in Compline on:

1. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of Pure Week (the week following Forgiveness or Cheesefare Sunday) during GREAT COMPLINE; and
2. Wednesday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of the Great Fast during LITTLE COMPLINE, or on Thursday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of the Great Fast during Orthros.<sup>3</sup>

### GREAT COMPLINE DURING CHEESE WEEK

Since both Wednesday and Friday of “Cheese Week” are liturgically observed as Lenten days, meaning that no Divine Liturgy may be served and that all divine services follow the Lenten order, GREAT COMPLINE is prescribed to be served on the preceding (Tuesday and Thursday) evenings. No canon is prescribed in the Triodion for those evenings, so the canon of the Theotokos in the tone of the week from the Theotokarion may be chanted following the Little Doxology. The canon from the Theotokarion concludes with “It is truly meet ...More honorable than the cherubim ...” (Cf. Liturgikon, p. 90).

### GREAT COMPLINE WITH THE GREAT CANON DURING PURE WEEK

During GREAT COMPLINE on the first four evenings (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) of Pure Week, the Typikon prescribes that the GREAT CANON of Repentance by St Andrew of Crete ? popularly known as the “King of Canons”<sup>4</sup> ? be chanted according to the order laid out in the Triodion, there being a different section of the GREAT CANON appointed for each evening.

According to the Triodion and the Mar Saba Typikon,<sup>5</sup> the order of GREAT COMPLINE with the chanting of the GREAT CANON is as follows:

1. The service begins with the Priest (vested in exorasson, epitachelion and phelonion) standing at his place at the holy table, the holy doors and curtain both being closed.
2. The Reader says Psalm 69 “O God be attentive unto helping me ...” (Cf. Liturgikon, p. 88) immediately after the first “O come, let us worship...” (Cf. Liturgikon, p. 71) instead of at its usual place later in the service (see item #10 in this section).

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<sup>1</sup> See Liturgikon, pp. 70-100 for the text and rubrics, and our Clergy Brotherhood web site’s “Hymnography” page for the music (<http://www.networks-now.net/litresswraoc/Hymnography.htm>) for Great Compline.

<sup>2</sup> See our Clergy Brotherhood web site’s “Hymnography” page for the music (<http://www.networks-now.net/litresswraoc/Hymnography.htm>) for the Great Canon of Repentance by St Andrew of Crete.

<sup>3</sup> Since the usual practice in parish churches is that the Great Canon be chanted on the 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday evening during Little Compline, it is only that order which will be given in this document.

<sup>4</sup> The Paschal Canon by St John of Damascus is considered the “Queen of Canons.”

<sup>5</sup> Followed by monasteries and also by parish churches of the “Russian” liturgical tradition.

3. Following Psalm 69, the curtain and holy doors are opened, and the Priest, carrying a lighted candle and the text of the section of the GREAT CANON appointed for that evening, exits the sanctuary through the holy doors and comes to stand in the center of the solea, facing east.
4. The Choir then begins the chanting of the GREAT CANON. The Choir chants the Heirmos of each Ode twice. The Choir also chants the refrains, and the Priest intones (straight chants) the Troparia, Doxastikon and Theotokion of each Ode. The 1<sup>st</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> Odes end with a Theotokion since those Heirmoi are not chanted as Katabasiae.
5. At the completion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ode the Reader says “Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*) Glory ... Both now ...” and then the Choir slowly chants the Kontakion “O my soul, my soul ...”
6. Then the chanting of the GREAT CANON continues with the Heirmos of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ode.
7. The 9<sup>th</sup> Ode ends with the Choir chanting (*once*) its Heirmos as Katabasia.
8. At the conclusion of the GREAT CANON, the Priest enters the sanctuary through the holy doors, extinguishes his candle, closes the holy doors and curtain, removes his phelonion, and observes the usual rubrics for the remainder of the service.
9. GREAT COMPLINE then continues with Psalm 4 “When I called upon Thee, O God ...” (*Cf. Liturgikon*, p. 71).
10. When Psalm 69 “O God be attentive unto helping me ...” appears at its usual place in the service (*Cf. Liturgikon*, p. 88) it is omitted, having been said earlier in the service (see item #2 in this section).

However, according to the Typikon of the Great Church of Christ,<sup>6</sup> the order of GREAT COMPLINE with the chanting of the GREAT CANON is as follows:

1. The service begins with the priest (vested in exorasson and epitachelion) standing on the solea before the closed holy doors, facing east. (*Cf. Liturgikon*, p. 70).
2. The order of GREAT COMPLINE is served as usual (*Cf. Liturgikon*, pp. 70-100), without the displacing of Psalm 69 (*Cf. numbers 2 & 10 above*).
3. Following the Little Doxology “Glory to God in the highest ...” (*Cf. Liturgikon*, pp. 89 & 90), the Choir begins the chanting of the GREAT CANON. During the chanting of the GREAT CANON it is customary for the Priest to go and stand before the icon of the Master Christ on the iconostasis and hear Confessions.
4. For the GREAT CANON, the Choir chants the Heirmos of each Ode twice. The Choir also chants the refrains, and the Reader intones (straight chants) the Troparia, Doxastikon and Theotokion of each Ode. The 1<sup>st</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> Odes end with a Theotokion since those Heirmoi are not chanted as Katabasiae.
5. At the completion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ode the Reader says “Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*) Glory ... Both now ...” and then the Choir slowly chants the Kontakion “O my soul, my soul ...”
6. Then the chanting of the GREAT CANON continues with the Heirmos of the 7<sup>th</sup> Ode.
7. The 9<sup>th</sup> Ode ends with the Choir chanting (*once*) its Heirmos as Katabasia.
8. At the conclusion of the GREAT CANON, the priest leaves off hearing Confessions and goes to stand on the solea before the closed holy doors, facing east and observes the usual rubrics for the remainder of the service.
9. GREAT COMPLINE then continues with “Holy God ...” and the rest of the trisagion prayers (*Cf. Liturgikon*, p. 90).
10. It should be noted that it has become customary for a gospel pericope to be chanted at GREAT COMPLINE during Pure Week<sup>7</sup> (*Cf. Liturgikon*, p. 96 and footnotes 3, 4 & 5).

#### **GREAT COMPLINE DURING THE REMAINDER OF THE GREAT FAST AND HOLY WEEK**

On the remaining Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays of the Great Fast and on Monday and Tuesday of Great and Holy Week the order of GREAT COMPLINE is served as usual (*Cf. Liturgikon*, pp. 70-100).

<sup>6</sup> Followed by parish churches of the “Greek” liturgical tradition (including those of the Patriarchate of Antioch).

<sup>7</sup> It is also customary for a gospel pericope to be chanted at Little Compline on Friday of Pure Week. It should be noted that if Great Compline is not served on Pure Wednesday, it is customary that the gospel pericope appointed for that day be chanted during the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. These pericopes, found in the book of the Holy Gospels, were originally appointed for Pannychis.

1. After Pure Week no canon is prescribed in the Triodion for GREAT COMPLINE during the remainder of the Great Fast, so the canon of the Theotokos in the tone of the week from the Theotokarion may be chanted following the Little Doxology, and/or the canon of the saint of the day from the Menaion, and/or his Vespéral stichera may be chanted. At the conclusion, “It is truly meet ... More honorable than the cherubim ...” is chanted (Cf. Liturgikon, p. 90).
2. The Triodion does appoint a three-canticle canon by St Andrew of Crete for GREAT COMPLINE on Monday and Tuesday of Great and Holy Week. It is chanted following the Little Doxology. Note that on these days “It is truly meet ... More honorable ...” is not chanted at the conclusion.

### LITTLE COMPLINE WITH THE GREAT CANON & THE LIFE OF ST MARY OF EGYPT

According to the Typikon of the Great Church of Christ,<sup>8</sup> the complete GREAT CANON is chanted and the LIFE OF OUR VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF EGYPT is read during LITTLE COMPLINE on Wednesday evening during the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of the Great Fast.<sup>9</sup> For this reason the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts appointed for that 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday is served either that morning or early afternoon or is omitted so that the faithful may be edified by the GREAT CANON and the LIFE OF OUR VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF EGYPT. The order is as follows:

1. The service begins with the priest (vested in exorasson and epitachelion) standing on the solea before the closed holy doors, facing east. (Cf. Liturgikon, p. 57).
2. Following “It is truly meet ... More honorable ...” (Cf. Liturgikon, p. 62) the Reader says “The Life of our Venerable Mother Mary of Egypt. Father, bless.” The Priest says “Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.” The Reader responds “Amen” and reads the first half of the LIFE (up to, but not including, “Zosimas asked her, ‘How many years have gone by ...’”).
3. Then the Choir begins the chanting of the GREAT CANON. During the chanting of the GREAT CANON it is customary for the Priest to go and stand before the icon of the Master Christ on the iconostasis and hear Confessions.
4. For the GREAT CANON, the Choir chants the Heirmos of each Ode twice. The Choir also chants the refrains, and the Reader intones (straight chants) the Troparia, Doxastikon and Theotokion of each Ode.
5. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Ode is concluded with the chanting of its Heirmos as Katabasia. Then the Reader says “Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*) Glory ... Both now ...” and then the Mesodion Kathisma (Sessional Hymn) with its accompanying Theotokion is read.
6. Then the Reader says “The continuation of the Life of our Venerable Mother Mary of Egypt” and reads the second half of the LIFE (beginning with, “Zosimas asked her, ‘How many years have gone by ...’”).
7. Then the three-canticle Canon of the Holy Apostles is quickly read, followed by the continuation of the chanting of the GREAT CANON, beginning with the 4<sup>th</sup> Ode.
8. The 6<sup>th</sup> Ode is concluded with the chanting of its Heirmos as Katabasia. Then the Reader says “Lord, have mercy. (*thrice*) Glory ... Both now ...” and the Choir slowly chants the Kontakion “O my soul, my soul ...”
9. The Reader says the Oikos and the Choir chants the Beatitudes with the verses appointed in the Triodion.
10. Following the Theotokion on the Beatitudes, the chanting of the GREAT CANON continues with the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Odes. It should be noted that when the GREAT CANON is chanted at Little Compline we proceed from the Theotokion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ode directly to the Heirmos of the 9<sup>th</sup> Ode ? omitting “The Theotokos and Mother of the Light ... My soul doth magnify ... More honorable ...” and the accompanying great censing since these are appointed to be done only during a canon at Orthros.
11. The 9<sup>th</sup> Ode ends with the Choir chanting (*once*) its Heirmos as Katabasia.

<sup>8</sup> Followed by parish churches of the “Greek” liturgical tradition (including those of the Patriarchate of Antioch).

<sup>9</sup> When the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25) coincides with Thursday of the 5<sup>th</sup> Week of the Great Fast, LITTLE COMPLINE with the GREAT CANON and the LIFE OF VENERABLE MARY OF EGYPT is transferred to the preceding Tuesday evening (March 23). Please refer to the document on our Clergy Brotherhood web site which gives directions from the Typikon for properly ordering divine services when this coincidence occurs: <http://www.networks-now.net/litresswraoc/Annunciation%20Rubrics.htm>

12. At the conclusion of the GREAT CANON, the priest leaves off hearing Confessions and goes to stand on the solea before the closed holy doors, facing east and observes the usual rubrics for the remainder of the service (omitting “It is truly meet... More honorable ...”).
13. LITTLE COMPLINE then continues with “Holy God ...” and the rest of the trisagion prayers (*Cf. Liturgikon*, p. 62).
14. The Reader says the Kontakion of the GREAT CANON “O my soul, my soul ...” (*Cf. Liturgikon*, p.62) and then the service continues with “Lord, have mercy” (*40 times*) and the rest (*Cf. Liturgikon*, p. 63-69).