

THE PARAKLESIS TO THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS

(corrected rubrics)

What is the Paraklesis?

The Paraklesis is a service of supplication for the welfare of the living. It is addressed to the Most Holy Theotokos or a Saint whose intercessions are sought through the chanting of a supplicatory canon and other hymns. The most popular Paraklesis Service is that in which the supplicatory canon and other hymns are addressed to the Most Holy Theotokos.

Who authored the Paraklesis to the Most Holy Theotokos?

The Small Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos was authored by Theosterictus the Monk (9th century), and the Great Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos was authored by Emperor Theodore I Ducas Lascaris (13th century).

When is the Paraklesis to the Most Holy Theotokos celebrated?

Though it may be celebrated at other times during the year (in time of particular need, at the request of one of the faithful, or, as in some parish churches, every Wednesday or Friday evening), it is traditional that the Paraklesis Service, with the chanting of either the Small or Great Supplicatory Canon to the Most Holy Theotokos, be celebrated each evening during the Dormition Fast (August 1st through 14th) *except on Saturday evenings, on the eve of the Transfiguration (August 5th), and on the eve of the Dormition (August 14th) when no Paraklesis is celebrated.*

How do I know which Supplicatory Canon is to be chanted?

Outside the Dormition Fast it is always the Small Supplicatory Canon which is chanted. During the Dormition Fast, however, the Typikon prescribes that the Small and Great Supplicatory Canons be chanted on alternate evenings. There are two rules of thumb regarding this: (1.) the cycle of the Paraklesis Services begins on August 1st with the Small Supplicatory Canon if August 1st falls on a Monday through Friday, and (2.) on Sunday evenings it is always the Great Supplicatory Canon which is chanted. For example, August 1, 1999, fell on a Sunday, therefore that year's cycle of Paraklesis Services began with the Great Supplicatory Canon, followed by the Small on Monday, the Great on Tuesday, etc. *If your parish does not know how to chant the Great Supplicatory Canon, the more commonly known Small Supplicatory Canon may be used throughout the Dormition Fast.*

Where can I find the text of the service?

The text for the Paraklesis Service with both the Small and Great Supplicatory Canons may be found in [A Prayer Book for Orthodox Christians](#) and [The Great Horologion](#) (both published by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, MA); in the prayer book the Small Supplicatory Canon begins on p. 249 and the Great begins on p. 277.

Where can I find the music for the service?

The music for the Small Supplicatory Canon may be obtained from the Wichita Chancery. The music for the Great Supplicatory Canon may be found in [The Great Paraklesis](#) (published by the St Nikodemos the Hagiorite Publication Society - 6149 Fairway Lane - Wescosville, PA 18106).

What are the rubrics for the Paraklesis Service?

All page numbers in the following rubrical notes refer to A Prayer Book for Orthodox Christians unless otherwise noted.

The Paraklesis Service may stand alone as a distinct service, in which case it begins with “Blessed is our God” (p. 249/277) or it may be combined with Daily Vespers (note that during the Dormition Fast Daily Vespers is celebrated with an entrance). When it is combined with Daily Vespers, immediately following the aposticha and the Hymn of Simeon the God-receiver, the curtain and holy doors being closed, the priest goes to stand with the readers and the Paraklesis begins with Psalm 142 “O Lord, hear my prayer” (p. 250).

Before the service begins, the faithful may submit to the priest the Christian names of the *living* whom they wish remembered during the service. A lighted censer with its stand is placed on the solea near the icon of the Theotokos before which the service will be celebrated. The curtain and holy doors remain closed throughout the service. This service is celebrated by a priest without the assistance of a deacon.

The priest, vested in exorasson and a (blue or white) epitachelion and phelonion, comes to stand on the solea before an icon of the Most Holy Theotokos Hodigitria placed upon an analogion set in the center of the solea. (If the service will take place in a home, he comes to stand before the icon corner.) Signing himself with the cross, the priest begins the service by intoning “Blessed is our God” (p. 249/277) and what follows. When the proestos or the reader begins Psalm 142 “O Lord, hear my prayer” (p. 250), the priest goes to stand with the readers. *The Typikon prescribes that the patronal apolytikion of the church temple be chanted after the “Glory” rather than repeating “To God’s Birthgiver”* (p. 252).

When the Supplicatory Canon is chanted, the Heirmos (first paragraph) of each ode is omitted; thus each Ode begins immediately with the refrain “Most holy Theotokos, save us” (p. 255/278). At the end of Ode 3, during the chanting of “Preserve and save” and “In thy good will” (p. 257/280) the priest comes to stand before the icon of the Theotokos and then intones the petitions of the “Have mercy” ektenia (p. 258/281). While “O fervent advocate” (p. 259/282) is chanted, the priest returns to stand with the readers.

At the end of Ode 6, during the chanting of “Preserve and save” and “O spotless one” (p. 262) or “In thy good will” (p. 287) the priest comes to stand before the icon of the Theotokos and then intones the petitions of the “Have mercy” ektenia (p. 263/287). The priest does not go to stand with the readers, but remains standing before the icon. Notice that one gospel pericope is appointed for when the Small Canon is chanted (p. 265), and another for when the Great Canon is chanted (p. 289); but in places where only the Small Canon is used during the Dormition Fast, these gospel pericopes may be alternated. After the chanting of the gospel, the priest remains standing before the icon until after he intones the exclamation “By the mercy and compassions” (p.268/291), at which time he returns to stand with the readers.

During the chanting of “Both now” at the end of Ode 9 (p. 272/296) the priest comes to stand before the icon of the Theotokos and takes up the censer. Throughout the chanting of “It is truly meet” (p. 272/297) the priest censens the icon of the Theotokos. Then, during the chanting of “Higher than the heavens” (p. 272/297) and the other megalynaria, the priest does a great censening of the church temple or house. *If you do not have the megalynarion of the patron saint of your church temple (p. 273/298), contact the Wichita Chancery.* The final megalynarion “O all ye arrays” (p. 273/298) is chanted very slowly as the priest, again standing before the icon of the Theotokos, censens the icon. At the conclusion of the megalynaria, the priest gives away the censer and remains standing before the icon as “Holy God” (p. 273/298) and the rest of the trisagion prayers are said.

Then the three troparia of contrition “Have mercy on us...Lord, have mercy on us...Do thou open the portal of compassion” (p. 274/299) are chanted. *The Typikon prescribes that instead of chanting the three troparia of contrition on August 4th the apolytikion of the Forefeast of the Transfiguration is chanted once (Great Horologion, p. 568; Nasser, p. 569), on August 6th through 12th the apolytikion of the feast of the Transfiguration is chanted once (p. 140), and on August 13th the apolytikion of the Forefeast of the Dormition is chanted once (Great Horologion, p. 575; Nasser, p. 584).*

Then, still standing before the icon of the Theotokos, the priest intones the petitions of the final “Have mercy” ektenia of the service (p. 275/299). *The Typikon prescribes that the text for this final ektenia of the service (p. 275/299) is the “Have mercy” ektenia from the Sunday Midnight Office (Liturgikon, p.107 through the “Amen” on p. 108) rather than that used elsewhere in the Paraklesis Service.*

Following the exclamation on the final ektenia, the priest says “Wisdom. Christ our God, the Existing One” and the rest of the Little Dismissal (Liturgikon, p. 50). However, before saying “Through the prayers,” the priest and all the faithful come forward to venerate the icon of the Theotokos while the appointed hymns are chanted (p. 275/300). *During the Dormition Fast the four exaposteilaria (p. 300) are chanted at the end of both the Small and Great Paraklesis rather than the usual hymns appointed to be chanted at the end of Small Paraklesis, e.g. “All those who in faith” etc. (p. 275).*

When the last person has venerated the icon of the Theotokos, the priest says “Through the prayers of our holy fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us, and save us.” And the reader ends the service with “Amen.”

NOTE: If a bishop is present he presides from his throne. The bishop says “Glory to thee...O heavenly King” at the opening of the service (p.249), reads Psalm 142 “O Lord, hear my prayer” (p. 250) and blessing says “Peace be unto all” before the chanting of the holy gospel (p. 264). For the megalynarion “Speechless be the lips” (p. 273) the bishop leaves his throne to reverence the icon of the Theotokos; he then blesses the people while the choir chants “Many years, master,” and returns to his throne as the patronal megalynarion of the of the church temple and the final megalynarion “O all ye arrays of

Angelic Hosts” (p. 273) are chanted. But when the exaposteilaria are chanted at the end of the service, as all during the Dormition Fast, the bishop does not reverence the icon of the Theotokos during the chanting of the megalynaria, but during the chanting of the third exaposteilarion “I have thee as Mediatress” (p. 300); he then blesses the people while the choir chants “Many years, master,” and returns to his throne as the final exaposteilarion “Thou art a gold-entwined tower” (p. 300) is chanted. During the final ektenia, the bishop says the prayer “Hear us, O God our Saviour” with its exclamation (Liturgikon, p. 108). During the dismissal the bishop says “Preserve, O God” (Liturgikon, p. 50). After the priest says the Little Dismissal, the bishop blesses the people while “Preserve, O Lord, our master and chief priest” is chanted. Then the bishop says “Through the prayers of our holy fathers,” the priest says “Through the prayers of our holy master,” and the service concludes with “Amen.”