

THE ORTHODOX WEEKLY BULETIN VESTAL, CLIFFWOOD, NEW JERSEY

A JEWEL OF LENTEN WORSHIP

Great Lent is known to be a time of incresed prayer and devotion. With is in mind, Our Holy Mother Church wisely prescribes a full cycle of services during this 40 day period. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts and reading from the Great Canon of St. Anadrew of Crete tend to play a dominant part in our Lenten worship. There is another service, however, that merits our attention:

THE AKATHIST TO THE MOTHER OF GOD.

The word *AKATHIST* comes from a Greek word, which literally means “ not sitting.” As you may have determined, the faithful are expected to stand throughout the entire service! The Akathist Service is prescribed for the fifth Friday evening of Great Lent. The Akathist to the Mother of God was instituted as an expression of thanksgiving for her protection of the city of Constantinople on three separate occasions from enemy invasions. Its authorship is unknown, although names such as Romanos the Melodist and Patriarch Photius of Constantinople are among those mentioned as possible composers of this elaborate hymn of praise to the Theotokos.

There are two main parts to the Akathist. The songs of the first section tough upon the historical aspect of the life of Christ and His Blessed Mother, while the melodies and verses of the second are impassioned declarations of dogmatic and moral reflections. We sing of the Virgin’s many virtues and qualities, which we are called upon to imitate.

The concluding hymn of the Akathist Servie beautifully expresses our feeling for the Theotokos: **“O ever-praise Mother, who gave birth to the Word, holliest of the Saints, accept our present prayer and deliver us from every affliction, and from everlasting punishment. Save us who sing to you.”**