



August 18, 2008

Teleturgical Encyclical 21

The Priests and Deacons of
the Holy Metropolis of Denver

Most-holy Theotokos, save us!

Beloved in the Lord,

One of the most-beautiful and most well-attended services of our holy Orthodox tradition is that of the Small Paraklesis to the most-holy Mother of God.

It is celebrated daily on the evenings of the first thirteen days of August, although in parishes it is replaced by the Great Vespers of Transfiguration on the evening of August 5, and by Great Vespers on Saturday evenings.

The Paraklesis is also celebrated in many parishes weekly or monthly, according to the pastoral needs of the faithful.

I encourage you to schedule the Paraklesis in your parishes, and teach the faithful about the comfort and peace that comes to us through the intercessions of the Virgin Mary.

Traditionally, the priest simply exits the Beautiful Gate and stands before the icon of the Theotokos on the iconostasion during the chanting of the Odes. In some parishes it has also become customary to place an icon of the Theotokos on an analogion located in the middle of the soleas; this is probably a carry-over from the practice at the Akathist Hymn in Great Lent.

The priest begins the Paraklesis vested in his exorasson and epitachelion, and as the service begins, the priest stands before the Holy Altar. Just before the chanting of the odes, the priest exits the Holy of Holies through the Beautiful Gate and, stands before the icon of the Theotokos. After the odes are finished, he reenters the Holy of Holies through the Beautiful Gate.

Chanters should note that the Eirmoi (the first hymn of each Ode) are not sung. Instead each ode begins with "*Most-holy Theotokos, save us,*" and the hymn that follows. The reason is because these Eirmoi prefigure and refer to Christ whereas the Paraklesis hymns are addressed to the Theotokos.

The exception to this rule is the Eirmos of the Ninth Ode which should be sung. The reason is that this Eirmos, characteristic of the ninth ode of Kanons, refers to the Mother of God.

Petitions are offered after the Third Ode and the Sixth Ode for the living. The faithful should be encouraged to send names of their loved ones to the sanctuary before and during the Service. It should go without saying that the Paraklesis is for the living, whereas the Trisagion and Mnymosynon are for those fallen asleep, but some are not aware of this.

After the Anavathmoi the priest reads the Gospel of the Feasts of the Paraklesis, facing the people from the Beautiful Gate. After the Troparia which follow the Gospel, the priests intones the Intercessory Prayer, "*God, save Your people and bless Your inheritance ...*" He then again exits the Holy of Holies to stand before the icon of the Theotokos as the Seventh Ode is chanted.

At the end of the Ninth Ode, the priests reenters the Holy of Holies and prepares to cense, putting on his felonion. As the hymn "*Truly it is worthy ...*" the priest censes the whole church and the faithful as at Matins.

As at Vespers, the chanter (or reader) may stand in the middle of the soleas to recite the Trisagion prayers. This indicates that he is leading all the faithful (who should join with him) in these prayers.

After the Troparia are sung, the priest intones the third and final set of petitions for the living. This is followed by the Dismissal and by either the usual Troparia (*All those do you shelter, O good one ...*) or, during the *Dekapentavgousto*, the Exaposteilaria. The priest should exit the Holy of Holies through the Beautiful Gate during the chanting of these final hymns and venerate the icon of the Theotokos.

Finally, please note that the expression is always, "*Most-holy Theotokos, save us;*" you are not to say "*Most-holy Theotokos, pray for us.*" In saying "*save us*" we are not asking the Theotokos for our eternal salvation, which is in Christ, but rather we are asking her to pray to her Son and our God to "*save us*" from the heartaches, tragedies, and traumas of this life.

With Paternal Blessings,



✠ Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver