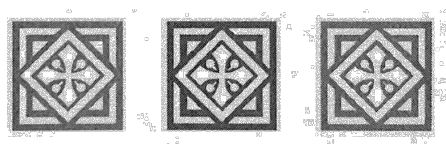


AKATHIST TO THE MERCIFUL SAVIOR
HEALER OF THE WOUNDS
OF AMERICAN SLAVERY



Fellowship of St. Moses the Black
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FSMB

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Printed with the blessing of His Grace
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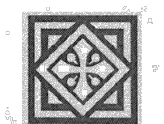
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
MATUSHKA MICHAILA (THELMA) ALTSCHUL



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INTRODUCTION

THIS *AKATHIST* WAS WRITTEN with the awareness that all ethnically Orthodox people have reflected theologically on their own history as a people. The era of the early martyrs, the Battle of Kosovo, the era of communist rule and so on are understood in the light of the salvation story by the faithful. And they have literature, prayers, and services to honor their spiritual ancestors who have demonstrated exceptional devotion to our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is unthinkable to be an Orthodox people without these things. Even Orthodox converts of Western European descent can point to the lives and services of the pre-schism saints such as St. Martin of Tours, St. Patrick, and St. Brigid.

But regarding African Americans, our shared history of enslavement in the Americas has forged a unique destiny for us and has made us a unique ethnic group. And while we greatly revere the saints of Africa, we have no literature or prayers as a lens through which to reflect on our American history, and so to deepen our identity as Christians. The *Akathist to the Merciful Savior* was written to that end: It serves to wrap the wounds of our spiritual ancestors with beautiful liturgical language, to praise the spiritual heroes who shed their blood on this soil for the love of Christ, to acknowledge our debt to those who went before us, and to pray the merciful Savior to remember their souls. It was also written to foster racial reconciliation in a way that only a spiritual lens and prayerful reflection are able to do.

The *Akathist*, as you will readily observe, does not call any of our enslaved spiritual ancestors “saints” or direct prayers to them. It acknowledges those whose spiritual ardor and heroism are known to us through the research published in *An Unbroken Circle*¹ and in *Wade in the River*.² The *Akathist*’s refrain: “Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who died in bitter bondage, and hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both known and unknown,” sets the tone for the whole piece. In the sixth section the refrain begins to commemorate “the souls of those who *lived* in bitter bondage ...” as the focus shifts to those spiritual ancestors who lived to enjoy blessed freedom in this life, as may we all in the life to come.

—Nun Katherine Weston

President, FSMB

June 5, 2021



¹ Fr. Paisius Altschul, Ed., *An Unbroken Circle: Linking Ancient African Christianity to the African-American Experience* (St. Louis, MO: Brotherhood of St. Moses the Black, 1997).

² Fr. Paisius Altschul, *Wade in the River: The Story of the African Christian Faith* (Kansas City, MO: CrossBearers Publishing, 2001).

AKATHIST: KONTAKION

Voice

O Lord, who didst will to be sold as a slave for

thir-ty pie-ces of sil-ver in Thy plan for the re -

demp-tion of all the sons of No-ah, thus re-mov-ing the

shame of the Af-ri-can sold in-to bond-age in the A -

mer-i-can lands, trust-ing in Thy bound-less com -

pas-sion we cry out to Thee:

AKATHIST: REFRAINS

Refrain

Voice

Re - mem - ber, O Mer - ci - ful

3

Sav - ior, the souls of those who died in bit - ter

5

bon-dage, and hear the in - ter - ces-sions of Thine A -

9

mer - i - can Saints, both known and un - known.

Voice

Al - le-lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al-le-lu - ia!

AKATHIST TO THE MERCIFUL SAVIOR
HEALER OF THE WOUNDS OF AMERICAN SLAVERY

TONE 8

Kontakion 1

O Lord who didst will to be sold as a slave for thirty pieces of silver¹ * in Thy plan for the redemption of all the sons of Noah * thus removing the shame of the African sold into bondage in the American lands, * trusting in Thy boundless compassion we cry out to Thee:

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who died
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints both
known and unknown.

Ikos 1

The angels were struck with dismay on seeing slave ships pull up to the shores of Africa, that mighty land that had fed the Hebrew children in days of old. She nourished them through lean years of famine, collecting their tears and sweat when cruel taskmasters were put over them; nevertheless they multiplied and waxed strong.² Heaven wept seeing pillagers from afar docked off the shores of Africa, that mighty land that had held the infant Savior in her sanctified embrace. She protected Him from the murderous King Herod³ who in his mad jealousy foamed at the thought of a rival King. Heaven wept

¹ Mt 26:15

³ Mt 2:13–16

² Exo 1:12

seeing pillagers hold council with man-stealing tribesmen, evilly agreeing on the price of human flesh while villages and families were rent apart. Lamentation and bitter weeping were heard as in Ramah in days of old.⁴

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who died
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 2

Passing through the Door of No Return⁵ thy sons and daughters were dead to thee, O Mother Africa. They passed through fire and water: the branding iron and the trial by sea, but they did not find a place of refreshment.⁶ Two million of thy children died at sea and six times two million arrived in their land of exile and of bitter toil. Trusting in Thy redemption, O Lord who watchest over sparrows and numberest our hairs,⁷ we cry out: Alleluia!

Ikos 2

Unlike the ark, which Noah built at Thy command for the salvation of the few,⁸ the slave ships carried many whom their brothers had sold, like Joseph, into the slavery of destruction. Joseph was sold to the sons of Ishmael for twenty pieces of silver,⁹ but the sons and daughters of Africa were sold for knives and guns, vessels and cotton cloth. In the holds of the ships they dreamed of open skies; they dreamed of their villages, their ceremonies, and all the life they had ever known. When they awoke

⁴ Jer 31:15

⁵ At the Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, through which millions of Africans were forced onto slave ships.

⁶ Cf. Psa 65:12 LXX

⁷ Mt 10:29, 30; Lk 12:6, 7

⁸ Gen 6:18

⁹ Gen 37:28

in the dark, dank stench they groaned in misery. Some cried: Where is the Supreme Creator whom we have faithfully worshiped? Some cried: Where is Allah the all-merciful? Some cried: Where is our sweetest Lord Jesus? Who will save us from our bitter fate? The bellies of young women swelled with the seed of their captors and innocents wailed.¹⁰ But though their brothers evilly plotted this enslavement, Thou hadst from the beginning a plan of redemption.¹¹

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who died
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 3

When the native peoples of America saw great wind-driven canoes arriving with the sunrise they showed hospitality to their new guests. Once Abraham and Sarah, in return for hospitality, received a son,¹² but in return for their hospitality these native peoples received plagues and death. In return for their trust they received broken treaties and trails of tears. But to Thee, all-seeing Lord who shall wipe away all tears from the eyes¹³ of those who love Thee, we sing: Alleluia!

Ikos 3

Native peoples and native trees were roughly uprooted to make room for the settlers and their new way of life. The work was great and the laborers were few; from the island empire to the shores of Africa, men were taken and compelled to work. They replaced the native sons and daughters with their own; they

¹⁰ Cf. Mt 2:16

¹² Gen 18:1–10

¹¹ Cf. Gen 45:5

¹³ Rev 7:17; 21:4

replaced the native trees with rice and tobacco, cotton and cane. They invoked Thy Name in churches and in hush harbors,¹⁴ in swelling hymns and in whispers on the wind. The ancient ship of the Church, with its cargo of wisdom, the West had lost in the storm—the wisdom of how to worship Thee through a life of repentance and humility of mind. These new settlers held to verses and fragments of Scripture as those men of old, some on boards and some on broken pieces of their ship,¹⁵ had once escaped peril at sea. But the partial Gospel did not condemn the betrayal of the native hosts or the burdening of the African with heavy toil.

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who died
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 4

In the fields of Virginia, laboring for a cruel and doubtful Thomas, Thy martyr Ezekiel toiled in the heat of day. But by starlight he and his fellow Africans assembled for revival in prayer. The father of Thomas went walking in the cool of the evening and heard Ezekiel's voice raised in supplication: "O Lord change the heart of my master and deliver me from slavery so that I may enjoy the freedom of sonship in Thee." The next day Ezekiel had vanished, slain by the master for whom he prayed, though his fellow Africans could sometimes still hear him praying in the swamp.¹⁶ O Savior, for this his voice of prayer which could not be silenced we cry to Thee: Alleluia!

¹⁴ Hush harbor: an outdoor chapel by the waterside where the enslaved could pray without being heard.

¹⁵ Acts 27:44

¹⁶ This and all the martyrologies of enslaved Africans are taken from *An Unbroken Circle* and *Wade in the River*.

See above, p. x.

Ikos 4

In the Florida countryside, O Savior, Thy martyr Martin was forbidden to pray by the tyrannous taskmaster or to hold any assemblies. He and his fellow Africans nevertheless met often, Lord Jesus, to praise Thy Name. When apprehended each leader, like a latter-day Paul, received stripes on his innocent back.¹⁷ For praying in joyful assembly with Thy saints, Martin was flogged unto death, thus putting an end to outward services of worship. His blood with Ezekiel's cries out of the ground to Thine ears,¹⁸ O Lord of hosts. As Cain once slew Abel,¹⁹ jealous to keep his primacy as first son, so these sons of Cain, not even recognizing their flesh and blood brothers, born of the womb of the same Mother Earth, slew Ezekiel and Martin without reverence for Thy law.²⁰ But, free at last,²¹ Thy martyrs offer Thee unceasing praise and we, too, sing to Thee:

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who died
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 5

Andrew of Savannah, who answered Thy Gospel call to be born again,²² was first among African ministers of the word and first among those to spill blood for Thee, O Savior, on the American soil. With the ardor of the early confessors he proclaimed: "I rejoice not only to be whipped, but I would freely suffer death for the cause of Jesus Christ!" He was a rock on

¹⁷ Cf. 2Co 11:24

¹⁸ Cf. Gen 4:10

¹⁹ Gen 4:8

²⁰ Exo 20:13

²¹ Negro Spiritual.

²² Jn 3:7

which Thou wast able to establish Thy congregation²³ unmo-
lested by envy or pride. For this we cry to Thee: Alleluia!

Ikos 5

Andrew and his brother Samson were hauled before magis-
trates, twice imprisoned, in perils by their own country-
men, in perils among false brethren.²⁴ Beaten with fifty of his
flock they were uncowed, shedding abroad the spirit of valor.
Preacher James withstood the lash unto blood, not bending the
knee to the command to stop his prayer. Preacher Isaac for pray-
ing received not only the lash, but the brine bath upon his back.
Joseph and the mother of Judy and all those with them were
imploping the Lord to set them free; their taskmaster tied them
to the stake to do his bloody deed. The husband of Candus, who
prayed with a strong voice, could not be hushed or broken. And
one who could do all things through Christ who strengthened
him,²⁵ exclaimed: “My master was determined to whip the
Spirit out of me, but he could never do it, for the more he
whipped, the more the Spirit made me content to be whipped!”
O my soul, perfect love banishes fear.²⁶

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who died
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 6

Like a new David, who forbore to slay his master and enemy
the king, when Thou hadst delivered him into his hands,²⁷

²³ Cf. Mt 16:18

²⁴ Cf. 2Co 11:26

²⁵ Cf. Php 4:13

²⁶ 1Jn 4:18

²⁷ 1Sa 24:4–11

so Thy servant Josiah lay down his axe, forbearing to slay his master when Thou hadst likewise surrendered him. Righteous Josiah heeded the warning of his angel: “What, and thou a Christian?” and resigned himself to the will of God. Then saying: “It is better to die with a Christian’s hope and a quiet conscience,” he cried: Alleluia!

Ikos 6

With the firmness of Thy holy ones Barbara²⁸ and Christina,²⁹ righteous Sylvia persevered in supplicating Thee, O Lord. Not a day dawned before morning prayer which her cruel taskmaster forbade. Finding herself with child her resolve grew day by day as did the fruit of her womb, not deterred, but made stronger by the lash. When the time for the birth drew near, this new Herod grew wroth, punishing her to the limits of his strength. But by night Sylvia, the namesake of woodlands, crept to refuge there, tending her wounds and tearing her garment to make ready the swaddling clothes. Thou, O Savior, hid her from Herod’s pursuit until she had given birth to twins, Patience and Humility. O Lord, of such as these the world is not worthy.³⁰ O my soul, imitate the righteousness of Josiah and the courage of Sylvia, and so be pleasing to thy God.

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

²⁸ St. Barbara, †December 4, 306.

³⁰ Heb 11:38

²⁹ St. Christina, †July 24, 300.

Kontakion 7

The first man, Adam, brought in sin and death;³¹ but Thy confessor Adam longed to put off the old man³² in the baptismal stream unto life. Discovered in the water by his task-master, who threatened him with one hundred stripes for this holy act, Adam declared which master he would serve,³³ and bowed himself in the river to his God. As water and blood once streamed from Thy side,³⁴ O Savior Jesus, so Thy confessor was baptized in water and in blood, singing to Thee: Alleluia!

Ikos 7

In Georgia, Charles, Thy man of prayer, O Lord, was sold to an infidel as a punishment for loving Thee. But Thou hast made him a son of the Heavenly Father, for he loved his enemy and prayed for his abuser.³⁵ The more he was scourged, the more devout he grew. When that infidel lay dying and the embers of his conscience flamed to life, he sent his wife to summon Charles to his bedside. The Lord's freeman kept vigil beside the slave of sin, praying till the early morning light, and God heard his prayer. Restored to life, renewed in faith, he sealed it in the baptismal waters, and then he freed Charles from his earthly bonds. The two became brother evangelists, sharing a carriage and sharing in ministry and in the preaching of the word of God. How good it is, O Savior, for Thy brethren to dwell in unity!³⁶

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

³¹ Rom 5:12

³² Cf. Rom 6:6

³³ Cf. Mt 6:24; Lk 16:13

³⁴ Jn 19:34

³⁵ See Mt 5:44, 45

³⁶ Psa 132:1 LXX

Kontakion 8

O Savior, Thine indomitable preacher, James, was sold away from his wife and children to the land of no return. Scourged and branded for his resolute preaching spirit, Thy fearless confessor put all his hope on Thee. Yet like Thy holy ones of old Eustathios and Theopiste,³⁷ the faithful couple were joyfully reunited after seventeen years of hardship and trial. Such as these have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,³⁸ crying: Alleluia!

Ikos 8

Like a new Saint Margaret,³⁹ this Margaret of Maryland suffered for purity. Her rebuffed taskmaster took cruel revenge by selling her husband to New Orleans when she was carrying their child. She worked the tobacco fields like a man as her time for birth drew near, then went back to work with her newborn, Samuel, at her breast. She left him daily in the shade of a bush, but at last returned to find him motionless beneath a deadly serpent. With his mother's love, tears, prayers, and Thy mercy, Merciful Savior, Samuel revived for, like his namesake, he was to be given back to Thee. Straightway Margaret vowed to God that, on her life, she would free Samuel from cruel slavery; she made her prostration, and followed the guiding star. They hid by day, traveling by night, for the taskmasters hunted them with hounds. Thou, Savior, delivered them from the monsters' mouths and from every peril along the way. In New York Samuel grew to be Thy faithful servant, saving bodies from slavery and souls from ignorance of Thee.

³⁷ Great Martyr Eustathios [Ef-sta-thi-os] Placidus and his wife St. Theopiste [Thay-o-pees-ty] Tatiana, †September 20, 118.

³⁸ See Rev 7:14

³⁹ St. Margaret (or Marina) of Antioch, †July 17, 4th century.

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 9

No greater love had any man than Amos the almsgiver who, though promised freedom, offered himself as a ransom for his master's heirs in debt.⁴⁰ Twice a prince: by birth and by spirit, he labored hard at tanning and bought his liberty. Then he saved and purchased the old, the young, the ailing and the weak. If they lived a single year, then died, he said: "But they died free." When his time drew nigh to leave this earth he gave all that still remained to the children's school and for a chalice set of silver for his church, and cried: Alleluia!

Ikos 9

After perilous escape, armed warfare, recapture, and a final escape at last, Thou didst bring Thy servant, Boston, into a place of refreshment,⁴¹ to the land of Nova Scotia where he began to liberate his soul. "I thought I was not worthy to be among the people of God, nor even to dwell in my own houses, but was fit only to reside among the beasts of the forest. This drove me into the woods, when the snow lay upon the ground three or four feet deep, with a blanket, and a firebrand in my hand. I cut the boughs of a spruce tree and kindled a fire. In this lonely situation I frequently entreated the Lord for mercy. At last I thought I heard a voice saying to me, 'Peace be unto thee!' All my doubt and fears vanished away: I saw, by faith, heaven opened to my view, and Christ and His holy angels rejoicing

⁴⁰ Cf. Jn 15:13

⁴¹ See Psa 65:12 LXX

over me.” O my soul, likewise imitate the desert dwellers of old in purity of heart, that thou mayest see God.⁴²

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 10

What more shall we say? For the time would fail us to tell of Thomas, the confessor, and righteous Phebe, of Joseph and Praying Jacob, of Eli and suffering Samuel, and of the preachers and prophets: who through faith subdued the kingdom of this world, wrought righteousness, obtained spiritual freedom, stopped the mouths of infidels, escaped the sting of the lash, out of weakness were made strong, while others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection⁴³ crying: Alleluia!

Ikos 10

The Moses of her people, Harriet bowed to Thee alone, O Savior. As the wind blows where it will,⁴⁴ so was she directed in her travels, singing through the trees, “Steal away.”⁴⁵ Escaping her own bondage to escape being sold, she felt the emptiness of solitary freedom. But like her namesake the prophet, she prayed the Lord to send another savior in her stead to bring His people out of the Egypt of chattel slavery. Then she heard in her spirit: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in this way which thou shalt go; I will fix Mine eyes upon thee.”⁴⁶ It is thee I want,

⁴² Mt 5:8

⁴³ Cf. Heb 11:32-35

⁴⁴ See Jn 3:8

⁴⁵ Negro Spiritual.

⁴⁶ Psa 31:8 LXX

Harriet. Go.” She returned for other family; she returned for friends and strangers, thirteen times for seventy souls in all. She settled them in safety, seeing little of her home—for then she joined the greater struggle to set all the captives free, by turns a nurse, a scout, a spy, a conveyor to sweet liberty. After a lifetime of labors directed by Thy voice, O Lord, the last words on her lips were Thine own: “I go to prepare a place for you.”⁴⁷

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 11

And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: being destitute, afflicted, tormented. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided the fullness of the Faith for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.⁴⁸ For this we cry out with them: Alleluia!

Ikos 11

George was born into bondage, but was soon a young orphan, paradoxically free of parents and of chains. A small and sickly frame afforded him liberty from heavy labors and allowed him to learn from his foster mothers the homely arts and herbal medicine. He lived by these as he pursued learning in

⁴⁷ Jn 14:2, 3

⁴⁸ Cf. Heb 11:36–40

classrooms and in the woods where he delighted to walk and spend his time in prayer. Virginal like the Beloved Disciple, George was also beloved of Thee, O Savior, learning the secrets of life as he leaned on Thy breast⁴⁹ in the contemplation of nature. The Lord Jesus revealed to His servant George the mysteries of legumes and roots and other plants. Like the Unmercenary Physicians⁵⁰ of old, he healed without fee, using prayer and natural remedies. “Put off the finite, put away every material problem, and then you are given a glimpse into the Infinite, and its secrets are revealed.” In all thy ways thou hast acknowledged the Lord and He directed thy paths.⁵¹

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 12

The blood of Christians is the good seed which the Father sows⁵² unto a bountiful harvest:⁵³ Once it was sown in the springtime planting of the five Great Patriarchates,⁵⁴ and again in the summer planting of the Church in Slavic lands, and now in the autumnal planting of the Holy Orthodox Faith in the fertile American soil. Whereas Joseph’s coat of many colors once was dipped in blood,⁵⁵ now in the American lands the blood of Thy martyrs and confessors, O Lord, sprouts forth into a many-hued garden of flowers, for which we sing to Thee: Alleluia!

⁴⁹ See Jn 13:23

⁵⁰ Some of the best known are St. Panteleimon, †July 27, 305, and Sts. Cosmas and Damian of which there are three commemoration dates.

⁵¹ Cf. Prv 3:6

⁵² Cf. Mt 13:37

⁵³ Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, AD 195.

⁵⁴ Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.

⁵⁵ Gen 37:31

Ikos 12

Saint Herman,⁵⁶ that earthly angel from Valaam, was the protector of the Aleut peoples; when plagues destroyed their villages he raised the orphans as his own. Saint Jacob,⁵⁷ the first priest of the native sons of Alaska, searched widely for the lost coins among his brethren, and when he found them they rejoiced in baptisms. Our father Raphael,⁵⁸ the first Orthodox priest in America from among the sons of Africa, entered behind the veil of monastic repentance—Savior, Thou knowest his heart. Saint Nikolai⁵⁹ from Serbia preached to the sons and daughters of Africa living in New York. He showered their children with grandfatherly love and sweet blessings. John the Wonderworker,⁶⁰ that universal Saint, also preached the word in Africa, O Lord. Through the prayers of all the Saints and righteous ones of America, all the martyrs and confessors, both known and unknown, have mercy on us; let not the descendants of these spiritual witnesses remain in ignorance of the Gospel of Thy love.

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

Kontakion 13

O Savior Jesus Christ, Lover of mankind, holiest of all the Saints, to Thee we entrust the souls of the sons and

⁵⁶ St. Herman of Alaska, †November 15, 1836.

⁵⁷ St. Jacob Netsvetov, †July 26, 1867.

⁵⁸ Archimandrite Raphael Morgan, †July 29, 1922.

⁵⁹ St. Nikolai Velimirović, †March 18, 1956.

⁶⁰ St. John of San Francisco, †July 2, 1966.

daughters of Africa who departed this life in bitter bondage in the American lands. Grant that they may be God's freemen⁶¹ who, like Lazarus, received their measure of evil things here.⁶² Grant them rest in the bosom of Abraham, a place at the banquet of the Heavenly Father where He shall gather them in from the four corners of the earth.⁶³ And to their descendants and all the American people grant spiritual awakening, that together we may cry out to Thee: Alleluia! (*Thrice*)

Ikos 1

The angels were struck with dismay on seeing slave ships pull up to the shores of Africa, that mighty land that had fed the Hebrew children in days of old. She nourished them through lean years of famine, collecting their tears and sweat when cruel taskmasters were put over them; nevertheless they multiplied and waxed strong.⁶⁴ Heaven wept seeing pillagers from afar docked off the shores of Africa, that mighty land that had held the infant Savior in her sanctified embrace. She protected Him from the murderous King Herod⁶⁵ who in his mad jealousy foamed at the thought of a rival King. Heaven wept seeing pillagers hold council with man-stealing tribesmen, evilly agreeing on the price of human flesh while villages and families were rent apart. Lamentation and bitter weeping were heard as in Ramah in days of old.⁶⁶

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.

⁶¹ See 1Co 7:22

⁶² Cf. Lk 16:25

⁶³ Lk 13:29

⁶⁴ Exo 1:12

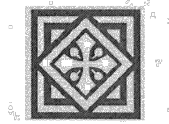
⁶⁵ Mt 2:13

⁶⁶ Jer 31:15

Kontakion 1

O Lord, who didst will to be sold as a slave for thirty pieces of silver ⁶⁷ * in Thy plan for the redemption of all the sons of Noah, * thus removing the shame of the African sold into bondage in the American lands, * trusting in Thy boundless compassion we cry out to Thee:

Remember, O Merciful Savior, the souls of those who lived
in bitter bondage,
And hear the intercessions of Thine American Saints, both
known and unknown.



⁶⁷ Mt 26:15

PRAYER

O MERCIFUL AND ALL-MERCIFUL SAVIOR, we praise Thee for the witness of Thy martyrs Ezekiel and Martin, and of Thy confessors Sylvia and Joseph with his companions. We bless Thee for the example of Thy confessor Adam and of the righteous Josiah, for the patience of Charles and James, and for the witness of Thomas and Phebe, and of Joseph and Jacob, Eli and Samuel. We glorify Thee for the zeal for purity of Margaret and George, and for the philanthropy of Amos, for the humble-mindedness of Boston, and the valor of Harriet. We give thanks to Thee for these and the many other martyrs and confessors who lived in bitter bondage in the American lands, whose names are known to Thee. Our Lord, who hast willed that no flesh glory in Thy presence, who hast called the low-born and the despised⁶⁸ to be Thy servants, accept the blood shed for love of Thee by these martyrs and confessors and number them with Thy Saints. Firmly establish and spread Thy Holy Orthodox Faith on the American soil made fruitful by their blood.

Merciful Savior, who hast chosen the fishermen to preach,⁶⁹ who hast given to Thine anchorite Anthony⁷⁰ the wisdom which comes before the book and hast, through Thy word which is living and active, taught knowledge to Thy penitent Mary,⁷¹ accept the labors and blood of the unlettered Africans who preached Thy Name in the American lands: Andrew and Samson, James

⁶⁸ See 1Co 1:26-29

⁶⁹ Mt 4:18, 19; Mk 1:16, 17

⁷⁰ St. Anthony the Great, †January 17, 356.

⁷¹ St. Mary of Egypt, †April 1, 530.

and Isaac, and Samuel with all the rest, that their lives, with ours, may be fruitful unto Thee.

Merciful Savior, who hast said that Thy many scattered sheep must be gathered so that there might be one fold and one Shepherd,⁷² gather unto Thyself the souls of the sons and daughters of Africa who toiled in bondage in the American lands, and who have none among the living to pray for them. Bless their descendants that they may come to know Thee through the fullness of the Holy Orthodox Faith. O Savior, as Thou hast once opened the eyes of the man blind from his birth,⁷³ so do Thou now open the eyes of those who live in the American lands to recognize in one another their brothers and sisters born of and returning to the same mother, the earth, and in that recognition, to come to share in brotherly love, and so to truly love Thee.⁷⁴

O Merciful Savior, through the prayers of Thy most-pure Mother, our holy Lady the Ever-virgin Theotokos Mary; through the prayers of our holy fathers Moses and Anthony, our holy mother Mary of Egypt, and all the Saints of Africa; through the prayers of our holy hierarch Nikolai, the New Chrysostom, and the holy Wonderworkers: our holy father Herman of Alaska and our holy hierarch John of San Francisco, and all the Saints of America; yea through the prayers of all Thy Saints, O Merciful Savior, remember the souls of the sons and daughters of Africa who toiled in bitter bondage in the American lands. In their peace, grant peace unto our land and our lives. And to us who supplicate Thee, grant remission of sins, victory over the passions, and make us worthy to behold Thy glory⁷⁵ with all Thy Saints, that in oneness of heart we may send up unceasing praise and thanksgiving and worship to Thee, our Merciful

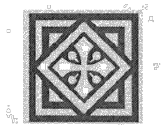
⁷² Jn 10:16

⁷⁴ See 1Jn 4:20

⁷³ Jn 9:1–7

⁷⁵ See Jn 17:24

Savior, together with Thy Father who is without beginning and Thine all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.



GLOSSARY

Akathist (or akathist): a poetic prayer in the form of 24 stanzas (*kontakia* and *ikoi*). They are commonly written in praise of the Lord, His Mother the *Theotokos*, a saint, or a festal event. (This *Akathist* is based on the form of the “Akathist for the Departed” and of the “Akathist to Jesus, Conqueror of Death,” by St. Nikolai Velimirović.)

Almsgiver: a saint who is particularly revered for generosity, sometimes to the point of impoverishment.

Anchorite: a desert hermit.

Confessor: a person who witnesses to the truth of Christ by holding fast to the Faith, despite the cost of profound suffering.

Desert Fathers and Mothers: the early monks and nuns, starting in the 4th century, who populated the deserts of Palestine and North Africa. Some of their wisdom sayings and deeds are preserved, even to this day.

Hierarch: a bishop.

Ikos or oikos (pl. *ikoi* or *oikoi*): *Oikos* is Greek for “house.” It comes after the *kontakion* and expands on it, often ending with several couplet verses. In an *Akathist*, the first *kontakion* ends with a refrain which is repeated after all the *ikoi*.

Kontakion (pl. *kontakia*): a liturgical hymn that summarizes the significance of what is being memorialized. These short hymns form the backbone of the *akathist*, where they often end in a thrice sung “alleluia.”

Martyr: from the Greek, meaning “witness.” This is a person who witnesses to the truth of Christ by holding fast to the Faith, even at the cost of death.

Orthodox Faith: the earliest expression of Christianity, which still safeguards the original apostolic beliefs and practices.

Patriarchate: in the Orthodox Church, an autonomous religious territory presided over a chief bishop known as a patriarch. There is no universal pope in Orthodoxy.

Pre-schism saint: one who lived before the split between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church (around 1054), and thus is recognized in the East and West.

Prostration: bowing to the ground in prayer. This forms a regular part of Orthodox worship, especially during penitential periods.

Theotokos: the “Birth-giver of God.” This is an ancient title for Mary, who through her consent, allowed the Son of God to take flesh from her womb.

Tone: one of eight musical scales or melodic families assigned for the singing of *kontakia* and other hymns.

Unmercenary healers: saints who healed during their lifetimes, using prayer and sometimes herbal remedies, without ever charging a fee. People still pray to them for healing today.

Virginity: a state of purity of body, mind, and soul. A virginal person is not addicted to the pleasures of this world, and is therefore free to love God wholeheartedly.

Wonderworker: a saint who is known for performing an abundance of miracles, during life and after death.