

One Ode of the Canon

Content:

The number of canons read at Matins depends on the number of commemorations on a given day. The commemorations vary from one to three, and the maximum number of canons is four.

One commemoration: Typically Great Feasts of the Lord, and of the Theotokos (if not on a Sunday). On those days, only the festal canon or canons (sometimes there are two) will be read.

Two commemorations: Most Sundays have two commemorations: the Resurrection, and the Saint(s) of the day. On these days there will usually be four canons: three from the Sunday Octoechos (Resurrection, Cross and Resurrection and Theotokos) and one from the Menaion (Saint/s). Great Feasts of the Theotokos occurring on Sunday will be a two-commemoration day as well, but in that case the number of canons will be smaller.

Three commemorations: This most often occurs on Sundays during fore- or afterfeasts, and entails the Resurrection (from the Octoechos), the Feast (usually from the Menaion) and the Saint(s) (Menaion). Typically on those days four canons will be read: two from the Octoechos (Resurrection and Theotokos), one for the Feast, and one for the Saints (Menaion).

Mechanics:

Normally the Eirmos of the first canon is sung. On Sundays, this will normally be the Resurrection canon from the Octoechos; on Great Feasts, it will be the Festal canon.

The troparia of the first canon are read with the appropriate verse before each one.

The troparia of all other canons are read with appropriate verses before each one. The eirmoi of these canons are not sung (with rare exceptions for some Great Feasts).

Before the next-to-last troparion of the last canon, the verse is: Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. (Except at the Eighth Ode, when it is "We bless the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Lord.")

Before the last troparion of the last canon, the verse is: Both now and ever and unto the ages of ages, Amen.

On Sundays and Feastdays (and in general when the service is of Polyeleos rank or higher), we end every Ode of the canon by singing the Katavasia. This is the eirmos of another canon, and the appointed Sunday/Festal Katavasia varies depending on the season. When no special Festal Katavasia is appointed, we sing the eirmoi of the Great Intercessory Canon of the Theotokos in the fourth tone: I will open my mouth... For this reason those eirmoi are called the "Katavasia of the whole year" in the Typicon.