

The Great Canon

In the First Week of Lent, during Great Compline, after Psalm 69, the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete is sung. The Irmosi are sung twice, at the beginning and end of each Ode. Before each Troparion we make the sign of the Cross and bow three times.

On Thursday morning of the Fifth week of Lent, Matins are served as usual up through the kathisma hymn following the final reading from the Psalter. Then at once we read the first half of the Life of St. Mary of Egypt and Psalm 51. Then we begin the Great Canon which is read in its entirety without the Biblical Canticles:

Ode 1

Tone 6

Irmos: A Helper and Protector is there unto salvation: He is my God, and I will glorify Him: the God of my fathers, and I will exalt Him: for He has triumphed gloriously.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

Where shall I begin to mourn the deeds of my wretched life? What can I offer as first-fruits of repentance? In Your compassion, O Christ, forgive my sins.

Come, my wretched soul, and confess your sins in the flesh to the Creator of all. From this moment forsake your former foolishness and offer to God tears of repentance.

Having rivaled the first-created Adam by my transgression, I realize that I am stripped naked of God and of the everlasting kingdom and bliss through my sins.

Alas, my wretched soul, why are you so like the first Eve? For you have wickedly looked and been bitterly wounded, and you have touched the tree and rashly tasted the forbidden fruit.

Instead of the person of Eve I have within my inward being an “Eve” of passionate thoughts which, though seemingly sweet, never lose their bitter taste.

For failing to observe just one of Your commandments, O Savior, Adam was rightly exiled from Eden. What then shall I suffer for continually ignoring Your words of life?

Tuesday:

Deliberately have I imitated blood-thirsty Cain, O Lord, enlivening my flesh while murdering my soul by striking it with my evil deeds.

I have not resembled Abel in his righteousness, O Jesus, never having offered to You actions worthy of God - pure gifts, an appropriate sacrifice, an unblemished life.

Like Cain, O my wretched soul, my offering to the Creator of all has been filthy deeds, a polluted sacrifice, and a worthless life - and like him I now stand condemned.

You formed my flesh and bones as a Potter, O my Creator, my Redeemer and my Judge, by molding clay into flesh and infusing in it the breath of life. Accept me now as I repent.

O my Savior, I confess the sins which I have committed, the wounds which murderous thoughts, like thieves within me, have inflicted on my soul and body.

Though I have sinned, O Savior, I know that in Your love for mankind Your punishment is merciful and Your compassion profound. Seeing my tears You will run to me as the Father calling His lost son.

Wednesday:

From my youth, O Christ, I have disregarded Your commandments, and passed my life in passions and laziness. But now I cry to You, O Savior, "At least at the end, save me!"

O Savior, do not cast me down to Hades, even though in old age I lie at Your gate empty of virtue. But in Your love for mankind forgive my sins before I die.

My soul has been wasted in evil habits, and now empty of the fruits of virtue I am in great hunger. Therefore, I cry to You, O merciful Father, “Watch over me and have mercy on me.”

My own thoughts like thieves have attacked me, wounding me and covering me with sores. Stand by me, O Christ my Savior, and heal me.

A priest was the first to see me naked and in dreadful condition, but he passed by on the opposite side of the road. Then a Levite came but he too ignored me. O Jesus, Who dawned on the world from Mary, stand by me and have compassion on me.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

Grant me that illuminating grace from Divine Providence, O Mary, that escaping the darkness of passions I may fervently sing of your blessed conversion.

Thursday:

O Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of all, take from me the heavy burden of sin, and in Your compassion grant me tears of repentance.

I fall down before You, O Jesus, imploring Your mercy, for I have sinned against You. Take now from me the heavy burden of sin, and in Your mercy grant me tears of repentance.

Do not enter into judgment with me, by recording my deeds, demanding an account of my words, and examining my motives and desires. But in Your compassion disregard my terrible past and save me, O God All-Powerful.

Now is the time for repentance and I draw near to You, my Creator. Take from me the heavy burden of sin, and in Your compassion grant me tears of repentance.

I have wasted my soul in evil habits, and now barren of the fruits of virtue I am in great hunger. Therefore, I cry to You, O merciful Father, “Watch over me and have mercy on me.”

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

In submitting to the laws of Christ, you renounced all uncontrollable lust and drew near to Him, piously adopting every virtue.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

O Trinity above all essence and worshipped as One God, take from me the heavy burden of sin, and in Your compassion, grant me tears of repentance.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Theotokos, hope and intercessor of those who sing to you, take from me the heavy burden of sin and as our pure Lady accept me as I repent.

Ode 2

Irmos: Listen, O Heaven: I will proclaim and praise Christ, come in the flesh, through the Virgin.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

Listen, O Heaven, and I will speak. O Earth, hear the cry of one returning to God and singing His praises.

Look down on me in Your mercy, O compassionate God and Savior, and accept my fervent confession.

More than all have I sinned; I alone have sinned against You, O God my Savior, but have compassion on me, Your creature.

Through love of pleasure, I have formed the deformity of my passions and the beauty of my inward being has been marred.

O compassionate One, as You saved Peter when he was about to sink, so reach out now to me, for a storm of passions surges around me.

O Savior, I have defiled the garment of my flesh and soiled that which You fashioned within me according to Your own image and likeness.

With passionate pleasures I have darkened the beauty of my soul and permitted my whole inward being to become a mire.

I lie naked, having torn the first garment which my Creator fashioned for me in the beginning.

I am ashamed, for the serpent deceived me and I have put on a torn garment.

O merciful Lord, like the prostitute who anointed Your feet, so now do I offer You tears. In Your compassion, O Savior, have mercy on me.

I lie naked and ashamed, for I was deceived by the beauty of the tree which I saw in the middle of the Garden.

The demons have cut deep wounds of passion into my back; their lawlessness has made it like a plowed field.

Tuesday:

Sin stripped me of the garment created for me by God, leaving me in a coat of skin.

Sensing his shame, Adam dressed himself in fig leaves, and like him I now wear a garment of shame which reveals my selfish passions.

A soiled garment clothes me - one shamefully stained with blood flowing from a life of passion and love of pleasurable things.

I fell beneath the weight of the passions and the corruption of my flesh, and from that moment has the Enemy oppressed me.

Instead of seeking poverty of spirit, I prefer a life of greed and self-gratification; therefore, O Savior, a heavy weight hangs from my neck.

Joseph's was a splendid coat of many colors, but mine is one of shameful thoughts which condemns me even as it covers my flesh.

I persist in caring only for my outer garment, while neglecting the temple within - one made in the image of God.

The woman searched her house for the lost coin until she found it. Now the beauty of my original image is lost, O Savior, buried in passions. Come and as she did, search to recover it.

Like the prostitute I cry to You, O Savior, that I have sinned. I alone have sinned against You! But accept my tears as You did hers when she came to anoint Your feet.

Like the tax-collector I cry to You: "Be merciful, O Savior, be merciful to me; for no child of Adam has sinned against You more than I."

Wednesday:

Like David stealing Bathsheba, I have fallen and become polluted through passions. O Savior, cleanse me with my tears.

I have no tears, no repentance, no compunction - O my God and Savior, grant these to me!

I lie naked, having torn the garment which my Creator fashioned for me in the beginning.

Despite their calling to the Bridegroom, "Lord, Lord, let us in," the foolish virgins found the door to the feast still locked to them. Yet like them will I entreat You, O Lord: Open Your door to me as I repent.

O Savior, hear the sighing of my soul. Accept the tears which drop from my eyes and save me.

O Lover of mankind, Whose wish it is that all be saved, in Your goodness receive me as I repent.

Refrain: Most-holy Theotokos, save us.

O spotless Theotokos, most-praised Virgin, fervently pray that we may be saved.

Irmos: See, see that I AM God, Who, by My right hand, and by My strength alone, rained manna and made water spout from the rock for my people in the wilderness.

"See, see that I AM God!" Hear this cry of our Lord, O my soul, and turn from your past sins. Fear Him as the righteous Lord, you Judge and your God.

O my soul, truly have you come to resemble those first two murderers, Cain and his descendent Lamech; for you have stoned your body with evil deeds and murdered your inward being with senseless appetites.

Let us consider those who lived before the Law was given: Adam's son Seth and his son Enosh; Enoch, who, pleasing God, was carried up to heaven; and Noah called "the only good man of his time." Have you imitated any of these, O my soul? Is there any righteousness to be found in you?

O my soul, you alone have opened the floodgates of God's wrath anew, and, as the earth was covered with water long ago, so have your flesh, your deeds, your whole life become covered with sin, and you remain outside the Ark of salvation.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

You abandoned your life of sin, O Mary, and eagerly ran to Christ, following His path through a pathless wilderness. And in purity and love you fulfilled His commandments.

Thursday:

Lamech cried, "I have wounded myself by killing a man, and a young man to my own hurt!" How can you hear this, O my soul, and not tremble? For you, too, have polluted your flesh and defiled your inward being.

You, O my soul, desire to build a tower as a fortress for your lusts, as the people of Babel erected a tower. But, as He did with them, so will the Creator also overthrow your desires and shatter all your plans.

How well have I imitated those first murderers, Cain and Lamech! Through the desires of the flesh, I have killed my soul as Lamech killed the man, and my mind as once he did a young man. I have also murdered my body as did Cain his brother.

Long ago, the Lord rained burning fire on the city of Sodom to consume its flagrant wickedness. But you, O my soul, have kindled within yourself the fires of Hades, which now are about to consume you!

I am wounded; I am pierced. See how the Enemy's arrows have sunk into my soul and body! See the bruises, the sores, and the mutilations which cause me to cry out - the wounds resulting from the blows of my own passions.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

O Mary, as you sank into the depths of sin you reached out to our merciful God, and as He once saved Peter on the water, He caught you, seeking, in His love for mankind, your conversion.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

O Uncreated Trinity, Indivisible Unity, accept my repentance and save me, a sinner. Do not despise me, Your creation, but spare me and deliver me from the flames of condemnation.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Theotokos, hope of those who flee to you and haven of those in distress - pray fervently to the merciful One, your Son and Creator, that we may be saved.

Ode 3

Monday and Thursday:

Irmos: On the immovable rock of Your commandments, O Christ, establish Your Church.

Tuesday and Wednesday:

Irmos: On the rock of Your commandments, O Lord, establish my wavering heart, for You alone are holy and the Lord.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

The Lord once caused fire to rain down from heaven, O my soul, and the land of Sodom was consumed.

Save yourself from sin, O my soul! Like Lot on the mountain, take timely refuge in the town of Zoar.

Run from the flames, O my soul! Run from the burning of Sodom! Run from the destruction caused by fire sent from God!

O Christ my Savior, I have sinned more than anyone; I alone have sinned against You, yet do not forsake me!

As a Good Shepherd search for me, Your lamb who has gone astray, and do not forsake me.

You are the sweet Jesus, You are my Creator: in You, O Savior, I shall be justified.

I confess, O Savior, that I have sinned against You, but in Your compassion, absolve and forgive me.

Tuesday:

In You, the Conqueror of death, I have found the Fountain of Life, and now from the heart I cry to You before my death: "I have sinned. Be merciful and save me!"

I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned against You, but be merciful to me, though there is no one whose sins I have not surpassed.

I have imitated those who were licentious in the days of Noah, and like them I deserve to perish in a flood.

Noah's son Ham failed to conceal his father's nakedness, and even dared to look at him in his shame. And you have imitated him, O my soul, in not concealing your neighbors shame.

Run, O my soul! Run from sin, as Lot ran from the fire! Run from Sodom and Gomorrah! Run from the flame of every deceiving desire!

"Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on me," so shall I cry to You when You come with Your angels to render to us all that our actions deserve.

Wednesday:

You have neither inherited a blessing like Shem, O my wretched soul, nor like Japheth acquired vast possessions in the land of forgiveness.

Come out from sin, O my soul, as Abraham once came out of the land of Haran. Come to the land flowing with everlasting incorruption which he inherited.

You have heard, O my soul, how Abraham left the Land of his ancestors to become a wanderer. Imitate his resolution.

At the Oak of Mamre the Patriarch Abraham offered hospitality to angels, and in his old age inherited the prize of God's promise.

O my wretched soul, knowing Isaac to be a new sacrifice mystically offered to the Lord, imitate also his resolution.

You have heard, O my soul, of Ishmael, who as the child of a slave was driven out. Beware, lest the same befall you because of your lusting.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

I am caught in a storm and tossed about by sin, O Mother, but guide me through and lead me to the safe harbor of repentance.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

As I now offer my supplications before the compassionate Theotokos, intercede with her before God for me, O venerable Mary of Egypt, that He may open to me the way to His Kingdom.

Thursday:

Like Hagar the Egyptian of long ago, you, O my soul, are by your own choice a slave and have given birth to a new Ishmael - your own stubborn self-will.

You know, O my soul, of Jacob's ladder which appeared from earth to heaven. Why then have you not held fast to the secure rung of piety?

Imitate Melchizedek - that image of the royal and priestly life of Christ in the world among men.

Turn, O wretched soul and lament, even before the festivity of life comes to an end, before the Lord locks the door of the bridal chamber.

Do not become a pillar of salt, O my soul, by turning back to what you have left behind; let the destruction of Sodom fill you with fear, and save yourself in Zoar.

O Master, do not reject the prayers of those who praise You, but in Your love for mankind, be merciful and grant forgiveness to all who ask in faith.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

Monday:

O God - Trinity yet one - save us from delusions, temptations and misfortunes!

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday:

One simple and uncreated nature without beginning Whom we praise as God in Trinity - save us who in faith worship Your power.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Monday:

Rejoice, O Womb which received God! Rejoice, O Throne of the Lord! Rejoice, O Mother of our life!

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday:

Without seed you gave birth in time to the timeless Son of the Father, O Theotokos, and - O strange wonder! - you nourished Him at your breast while remaining a virgin.

Ode 4

Irmos: The Prophet heard of Your coming, O Lord, and was frightened, that You should be born of a Virgin, and made manifest unto men, and he said: "I have heard Your tidings, and was afraid of the glory of Your power, O Lord.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

Do not forget Your works, O righteous Judge, or turn away from Your Creatures, but in Your compassion forgive me, though I have sinned more than all. For Yours is the power to remit the sins of all.

The end is approaching, O my soul - it is approaching! So why do you not care or prepare yourself for it? Arise! The time is short! The Judge already stands at the door. Life is vanishing like a dream - so why do you continue living in vanity?

Come to your senses, O my soul, and consider the evil things you have done. Ponder them well and allow your tears to flow. Then confess your deeds and thoughts openly to Christ, and be forgiven.

There has never been a sin, a deed, an evil act which I have not cherished, O Savior. I have sinned in my thoughts, my words, and my deeds - and no one has sinned more than I.

Despair condemns me in the tribunal of my conscience where judgment is harsher than by any law on earth. O my Judge - Who created and redeemed me - spare, deliver and save me Your servant.

The ladder which long ago Jacob the great Patriarch saw is for you, O my soul, an image to consider. The bottom-most rung is a first step towards doing the will of God, while those which follow lead to a true knowledge of Him. Therefore, renew your life if you wish to do God's work, to live in knowledge and contemplation.

Wishing to marry Rachel, Jacob tended her father's sheep for seven years through the scorching heat of day and the frost of night. When given Leah by deceit, he struggled and slaved yet another seven, finally to win his chosen bride.

Now consider these two wives as images of action and true knowledge. Leah, who bore many children is untiring action, while Rachel is that true knowledge which one acquires only through much effort. Neither, however, is possible, O my soul, without your effort.

Tuesday:

Prepare yourself, O my soul! Be courageous like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that acquiring diligence and wisdom you too may see God. Through contemplation may you reach the awesome depths in which He dwells and in so doing become a good steward of the Lord.

Jacob and his sons, the Patriarchs, established for you, O my soul, an example in the ladder of active ascent. By his way of life Jacob took the first step, fathering twelve sons and offering them as farther rungs which, step-by-step, ascend to God.

But you, my hopeless soul, have rather imitated Esau, surrendering to the crafty Devil the beauty you inherited from God. In two ways - action and knowledge - have you been deceived, and now is the time for you to change your ways.

Esau's consuming lust for women, his burning passion, and his soul marred by senseless pleasures, earned for him the Hebrew name: "Edom" (meaning "red") - for his soul was like a flame burning with love for sin.

O my soul, have you not heard of Job, who even while sitting on a dunghill was sanctified? Why then, in times of temptation, have you not imitated his courage or firmness of purpose, or endured with patience?

Once Job sat on his throne surrounded by children and greatly admired, but now he lies naked on a dunghill, childless, homeless, and covered with sores. Even so, he considers his dunghill a palace and his sores precious pearls.

Wednesday:

My body is defiled, my spirit is impure. I am covered with sores. But as our Physician, O Christ, wash, heal and cleanse me in repentance to make me whiter than snow.

You offered Your body and blood for all, O crucified Word, that I might be renewed and washed. You surrendered Your Spirit, O Christ, that I might be brought to the Father.

Accepting voluntarily to be nailed to a Tree, You accomplished salvation in the midst of the earth, O Creator. Eden, which had been closed to us is open again, and all of creation, both in heaven and on earth, is saved and worships You.

Let the blood and water which flowed from Your side be a fountain of living water and deliverance from captivity to sin. May they cleanse, refresh and anoint me as do Your living words, O Word.

The Church has been given Your life-creating side as a chalice, O our Savior, from which to drink both deliverance and knowledge - which we understand as images of the two Covenants, both Old and New.

Cast out of the banquet for lack of clothes fitting to wear, I awoke with empty lamp like the foolish virgins to find the door to the bridal chamber also closed to me. The supper is eaten but I lay cast out, bound tightly hand and foot.

Thursday:

My fleeting life is full of pain and wickedness, but accept me, O Lord, in repentance and allow me to behold Your presence. May the Enemy never possess me; may I never fall prey to him. O Savior, have mercy on me.

Job, once crowned and regally-attired, abounding in both wealth and virtue, found himself suddenly a beggar, cut off from all his riches and the glory of his kingdom.

Job, whom God deemed more righteous and blameless than anyone else alive, did not escape the traps of the Deceiver, so what will you do, O my sin-loving soul, if something unexpected happens to you?

Like the Pharisee I am boastful and my heart is cold; my life I have passed in vanity. O my merciful and righteous Judge, do not condemn me with him, but grant me the tax collector's humility and accept me.

I know, O merciful Lord, that I have sinned and corrupted the temple of my soul, but accept me in repentance and allow me to behold Your presence. May the Enemy never possess me; may I never fall prey to him. O Savior, have mercy on me.

I have become an idol to myself, and in passions have I injured my soul. But accept me now in repentance, O merciful Lord, and allow me to behold Your presence. May the Enemy never possess me; may I never fall prey to him. O Savior, have mercy on me.

I have never listened to Your words nor obeyed Your commands, O Law-giver. But accept me in repentance and allow me to behold Your presence. May the Enemy never possess me; may I never fall prey to him. O Savior, have mercy on me.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

The depths of sin to which you were dragged were unable to hold you captive. After careful reasoning you returned to safety in God through repentance, and in deeds you attained the heights of virtue - beyond all expectation of the angels.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

I confess You as One God in Trinity, a single essence unconfused in Persons, co-enthroned and co-ruling. And I sing to You: "Holy! Holy! Holy!" - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

As a virgin you gave birth, and a virgin you remained by nature, your womb giving birth painlessly, for He Who was born of you renewed the laws of nature, since when God wills its order is overthrown.

Ode 5

Irmos: Enlighten him who earnestly seeks You through the night, I implore You, the Lover of mankind; also guide me by Your statutes, and teach me, O Savior, to accomplish Your will.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

In the darkness of night has my whole life passed, amidst shadowy delusions I cannot escape. But, O Savior, make me now a child of the day.

My soul is in despair, for like Reuben who defiled his father's bed, I have disobeyed the will of God my Father by defiling His image within me.

I confess my sins to You, O Christ, my King: like Joseph's brothers have I sold into slavery him who was chaste and pure.

As a type of our Lord, righteous Joseph was cast out by his brothers and sold into slavery, while you, O my soul, have sold yourself into your own evil hands.

O suffering and hopeless soul, imitate the purity of mind in righteous Joseph, and do not sin by being led astray by irrational desires.

Joseph's being placed in a pit formed an image of Your burial and resurrection, O Lord and Master. Will I ever be able to endure such things for Your sake?

Tuesday:

You have heard, O my soul, how the waves and waters of the river formed a protective chamber for the baby Moses, allowing his basket of reeds to escape the cruel edict of the Pharaoh.

The midwives, though instructed by Pharaoh to kill the male infants of the Hebrews, obeyed their God instead. Now that you, O my hopeless soul, have been spared death like Moses, like him also be nourished on the wisdom of the Lord.

By killing the oppressive Egyptian, Moses severed his bond to Pharaoh. But you, O my hopeless soul, have not even begun to attack the wickedness of your mind. If you have not accomplished even this much, how can you expect to pass through the time of repentance, which alone can drive away our sinful passions?

O my soul, go and imitate the great Moses in the wilderness, that, through contemplation, you, too may obtain the vision of God in the burning bush.

Think of the staff which Moses stretched over the waters to divide them. It is an image of the Cross of Christ whereby you, O my soul, can also accomplish great things.

Aaron's faithfulness was shown by his offering an acceptable sacrifice to God. But you, O my soul, like the priests Hophni and Phineas, have offered only your deceitful and selfish life.

Wednesday:

Like Jannes and Jambres, the magicians in service to Pharaoh who opposed Moses, I have opposed You, O Lord, and become burdened in body and soul. My mind has fallen into grief. Come now to help me.

I am wretched, O Lord, for my mind is immersed in corruption. Cleanse me now in my tears to make the garment of flesh whiter than snow.

In considering my deeds, O Savior, I see that in sin I surpass all people - for the wrong I commit is done knowingly rather than in ignorance.

Spare me Your creature, O Lord, for I have sinned. Forgive me, for You alone are pure by nature; no one else is free from defilement.

For my sake, O Savior, You became incarnate and worked miracles: helping lepers, freeing paralytics, and stopping a woman's severe bleeding at just the touch of Your robe.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

You found peace, O Mother Mary, after crossing the Jordan River, for the soul-destroying pleasures enjoyed a deserted place to roam. Now by your prayers deliver us also from these evil pleasures.

Thursday:

Imitate the desire of the crippled woman, O my powerless soul; come and fall down at Jesus' feet and allow Him to heal you that your path may lead toward God.

As a deep well of Living Water, O Lord, pour upon me the rivers of life which flow from Your wounds. Let me, like the Samaritan woman, drink of them that I may thirst no more.

Let my tears, O Lord and Master, be for me a pool of Siloam in which to wash my spiritual senses that I may see You, the Light Which existed before time began.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

O Blessed Mary, with unmatched fervor you longed to venerate the Tree of Life until your desire was granted. Help us now to be made worthy of attaining the heavenly glory.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

We glorify You, O Trinity, One in essence, and we praise and adore You forever, singing: "Holy! Holy! Holy!" - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

God, the Creator of all things, became incarnate through you, O Pure Virgin Mother, uniting our human nature to Himself.

Ode 6

Irmos: I cried with my whole heart, unto the compassionate God, and He heard me from the nether Hades and brought forth my life out of corruption.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

I offer You, O Savior, sincere tears and the deepest groanings of my soul, crying from the heart: "O God, I have sinned against You, be merciful to me."

When Dathan and Abiram defied Moses and turned from the Lord, the earth opened to swallow them. Now you, O my soul, having turned from the Lord as well, must cry with your whole heart from the depths of Hades to be spared, lest you share their lot.

Having lived as a stubborn mule, O my soul, like that idol-worshipper Ephraim, now as a gazelle flee the hunters and save your life, strengthening it with action, resolve, and contemplation.

Be assured, O my soul, that as God was able to turn Moses' hand white with disease and cleanse it once again, so can He also cleanse and purify a diseased life. Therefore, do not despair of yourself even though infected with many sins.

Tuesday:

The waves of my sins have turned back on me, O Savior, just as once the Red Sea turned back to engulf the Egyptian forces.

Like Israel of old, you have arrogant will, O my soul, preferring gluttony and self-gratification to the manna from heaven.

The Canaanites' wells can be likened to worldly philosophies, from which you, O my soul, have preferred to drink rather than from the rock from which, when struck by Moses, there poured out a river of wisdom - the knowledge of God.

Like the arrogant Israelites in the wilderness, you prefer the comforts of Egypt and unclean food to manna, the food sent from heaven.

Water pouring from the rock when struck by Your servant Moses, prefigured Your life-giving side, O Savior, from which we draw the Water of Life.

Find the Promised Land and explore it secretly as Joshua, son of Nun, once did. See what kind of land it is and settle there, obeying the Law of God.

Wednesday:

As Joshua subdued Amalek and the lying Gibeonites, arise, O my soul, and subdue the weakness of your flesh, subduing everything which leads your mind astray.

Pass through the River of Time as once the Ark of the Covenant crossed the River Jordan, to take possession of the Promised Land in obedience to God's command.

As once You heard Peter's cry for help, so now protect me, O Savior, and deliver me from Satan's power by raising me from the depths of sin.

I know You as a calm haven from the storm of transgressions, O Christ my Savior. Protect and deliver me from the depths of my innermost sin and despair.

Thursday:

I am the lost coin bearing Your royal likeness, O Word. Therefore, light the lamp (which is John, Your forerunner and baptizer) to find and renew that which was created in Your image.

As Joshua subdued Amalek and the lying Gibeonites, arise, O my soul, and subdue the weakness of your flesh, subduing everything which leads your mind astray.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

O Mary, a constant stream of tears fell from your eyes, extinguishing the flames of lust while setting your soul afire with love of God. Grant me, your servant, this grace of tears.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

Because you lived a heavenly life on earth, you were able to ignore the temptations of this world. Therefore, help those who praise you, that we may also be freed from temptations.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

“I AM the Trinity, simple and undivided in essence, yet distinct in Persons. I AM also the Unity, united in nature,” says God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Your womb, O Theotokos, held God Who for our sakes took human form. Implore Him, the Creator of all, that through your prayers we may be justified.

Lord, have mercy. (3x)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion

The Faithful kneel while the Kontakion is being sung.

Tone 6

My soul, O my soul, awaken. Why do you sleep? The end draws near, and you should be troubled. Arise, therefore, that Christ our God may spare you. He is present everywhere and fills all things.

Ode 7

Irmos: We have sinned, we have dealt unlawfully and unjustly before You: we have neither kept nor done what You commanded us: yet do not cast us away at the last, O God of our fathers.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

I have sinned, I have erred, I have rejected Your commandments. I have increased in sin and added to the wounds of my soul. But in Your compassion, be merciful to me, O God of our fathers.

I have confessed to You, my Judge, the secrets of my heart. See my humility, my distress - and give me now Your judgment, in Your compassion being merciful to me, O God of our fathers.

Saul lost his father's herd and found himself suddenly proclaimed King of Israel. But watch, O my soul, lest your animal instincts now keep you from the Kingdom of Christ.

David was a forefather of the Lord, O my soul, yet sinned doubly by committing both murder and adultery. Your sickness, however, is even worse than his deeds because of your impulsive will.

David, though once compounding his sins - by first murdering a man and then stealing his wife - was quick to repent of both. You, however, O my soul, have done worse things than he, yet never repented of them before the Lord.

David once showed us the image of true repentance in a psalm he wrote exposing all he had done. "Be merciful to me and cleanse me!" he wrote, "For against You only have I sinned - the God of our fathers."

Tuesday:

Merely for touching the Ark of the Covenant to prevent its falling to the ground, Uzzah was struck dead by God. Avoid His anger at such presumption, O my soul, by truly venerating holy things.

You have heard of Absalom and how he rebelled against his father David and know how he defiled his father's bed. So why do you still imitate his wild impulses and his love of pleasure?

By following Satan your freedom has become enslaved to your body, O my soul, as when on Ahitophel's advise Absalom revolted against his father. But Christ has scattered the Enemy's counsel that you might at all costs be saved.

Solomon was once mighty and full of wisdom, yet did wrong before the Lord when he turned to idols. And you, O my soul, resemble him in your evil life.

Solomon was carried away by gratification of his lust. Alas, he who loved Wisdom now makes love to prostitutes and finds himself estranged from God. But in your every thought you have imitated him, O my soul, through your shameful love of pleasures.

Your sin rivals Rehoboam's, who ignored the wise advisers of his father Solomon; and you have imitated Jeroboam who divided the Kingdom and turned Israel to idols. Flee such likeness and cry out to God: "I have sinned. Have mercy on me!"

Wednesday:

Manasseh sinned of his own choice, increasing the abomination of false gods in Israel. You, too, O my soul, have set up your passions as idols. But now fervently emulate his repentance and acquire compunction.

Ahab did more to arouse God's anger than all the kings of Israel before him, yet you are his rival in sin, O my soul. You have become a house of pollutions, a shameful vessel of passions. Cry out now with your whole heart, confessing your sins to God.

Heaven is shut to you, O my soul; a famine sent from God has laid hold of you as it once did Ahab for disobeying Elijah the Tishbite. But imitate how the woman of Sarepta who by feeding the prophet alone received food by a miracle.

Elijah once called down fire on Jezebel's troops and killed her shameful prophets as a proof and rebuke for Ahab's idolatry. Avoid all likeness to these two, O my soul, and discipline yourself.

Thursday:

My life is vanishing like a dream upon waking. Therefore, like Hezekiah I cry upon my bed, asking that years may be added to my life. But what Isaiah will help you, O my soul, except the God of all?

I fall down before You, O Lord, offering my words as if they were tears, for no less than the prostitute have I sinned; I have transgressed as no one else on earth. But have compassion on Your creature and restore Your mercy to me.

I have distorted Your image, O Savior, and broken Your commands. The beauty of my soul has been spoiled and its light extinguished by my sins. But have compassion on me and in David's words, "give me again the joy that comes from Your salvation."

Return! Repent! Uncover what is hidden! Say to God Who knows all things, "You are my only Savior and know my terrible secrets. Yet, in David's words, 'be merciful to me according to Your constant love.'"

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

You cried to the most-pure Theotokos and were freed from the deadly grip of sin, putting Satan your tempter to shame. Grant also to me, your servant, aid in times of trouble.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

God Whom you loved and for Whom you longed, Whose path you followed, O Mother, found you and granted you repentance in His compassion. Implore Him unceasingly to deliver us from passions and adversities.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

Simple and undivided, One in essence and nature, Light and Lights, One Holy and three Holies - God is praised as Trinity. So sing praises to Him, O my soul, and glorify the Life and Lives, the God of all.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

We praise you, we bless and venerate you, O Theotokos, for from the undivided Trinity you brought forth the only Son of God and restored to us on earth the heavenly realms.

Ode 8

Irmos: Him Whom the Hosts of Heaven glorify, Whom the Cherubim and Seraphim dread, let every breath and creature praise, bless and magnify unto all the ages.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

O Savior, I have sinned! Now convert my soul and receive me in repentance as I cry: “Against You only have I sinned and lived lawlessly. Have mercy on me!”

Consider, O my soul, how Elijah once drove the fiery chariot into heaven, abandoning all earthly cares by perfection in every virtue.

Elisha received a double portion of grace from the Lord when Elijah’s mantle fell from heaven upon him. With the mantle, he caused the Jordan River to stand still on either side. But you, O my soul, have not shared in such graces, not yet having learned to control your love of worldly pleasures.

The wealthy woman of Shunem showed her good will by entertaining the righteous Elisha, but you, O my soul, receive neither strangers nor travelers. Therefore you deserve to be cast out of the bridal-chamber of Christ.

When Elisha cured Naaman of a dread disease he asked no price in return. But you, my soul, have imitated his wicked servant Gehazi, who sought money in his master’s name. Abandon such greed before the end, lest you be cast into the eternal fire.

Tuesday:

King Uzziah, though mighty in battle and faithful in his own observance of the Law, tolerated idolatry among the people, and for this was he struck with a dread disease. Now you, O my soul, are twice as sick as he, for your life is polluted with evil thoughts and wicked deeds. Flee to repentance.

Have you not heard how the Ninevites, moved by Jonah's preaching, repented in sackcloth and ashes? Why, then, have you not followed their example? For in its pride your heart is harder than all who have sinned both before and after the Law.

You have heard of Jeremiah thrown into a well, O my soul, how he lamented bitterly the fall of Zion. Only by such a life of mourning and weeping, O my soul, will you find the way to salvation.

Jonah the prophet fled to Tarshish, for he was well-aware of how merciful our God is. And foreseeing the conversion of the Ninevites he feared their repentance would prove his threat of destruction to be false.

You have heard, O my soul, how by faith Daniel shut the mouths of the roaring lions in the den, and the three Holy Children extinguished the flames in the furnace by faith.

I have reviewed as examples for you, O my soul, all the figures of the Old Covenant. Learn to imitate the deeds of those who in righteousness loved their God - and flee from the sins of the wicked!

Wednesday:

O my righteous Judge and Savior, have mercy on me! Deliver me from eternal fire and the sentence of condemnation which I so justly deserve. Grant that by repentance and increase of virtue, I may obtain forgiveness before it is too late.

With the thief I cry to You, "Remember me!" Like Peter I weep bitterly, "Forgive me, O Lord!" Receive my broken spirit as once You accepted the tax-collector's prayer and the prostitute's tears. The ceaseless entreaty of the Canaanite woman moved You to compassion. Likewise, hear my cry for mercy, O Lord.

Heal my corrupt soul, O my only Savior and Physician. Pour out Your grace on my heart like the good Samaritan's ointments - works of repentance, compunction and tears. Then all my wounds of sin shall be healed.

Like the Canaanite woman I cry to You, “Have mercy on me, O Son of David!”
Like the woman with severe bleeding I touch the hem of Your robe, and like Mary and Martha over Lazarus, I weep before You.

Thursday:

As the prostitute broke her priceless jar of myrrh to anoint Your head, O Savior, so do I weep before You with a broken and contrite heart. Hear my prayer; forgive and have mercy on me.

I am the first and greatest of sinners, O patient Savior, but I cry to You in fear and love: “Though I have sinned against You alone, and done evil in Your sight, nevertheless have mercy on me!”

Spare me, O my Savior, for I am the work of Your own hands. Seek me, Your lost sheep, O Good Shepherd, and deliver me from the jaws of the wolf, including me as a lamb in Your royal fold.

O most-merciful Christ, when You ascend Your dread tribunal as Judge, all of creation will be overcome with fear and tremble, for on that day Your glory will be revealed as a blazing fire.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

The Mother of the never-setting Sun enlightened you and freed you from the darkness of your passions. Since now you rejoice in the grace of the Spirit, O Mary, illumine all who faithfully praise you.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

Zosimas the Elder marveled meeting you, O Mother, for in you he saw an earthly angel. Filled with awe he praises Christ forever.

Let us bless Father and Son, and Holy Spirit, the Lord.

O Eternal Father, co-eternal Son, and gracious Comforter, the Spirit of Truth: O Father of the Divine Word, Word of the eternal Father, and life-creating Spirit - Trinity in unity - have mercy on us.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Pure Virgin, the flesh of Emmanuel was formed within your womb as a robe of royal crimson is spun from scarlet silk. We proclaim you to be the Theotokos.

Ode 9

Irmos: Inexplicable is the Nativity of conception without seed: Incorruptible is the fruit of the spouseless Mother; for the birth of God renews nature: Wherefore do all generations right-gloriously magnify you, as Bride and Mother of our God.

Refrain: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me.

Monday:

The inward being is wounded, my body is weak; my spirit is ill, and the word is powerless. Life is giving way to death and the end is near. What then will you do, wretched soul, when the Judge comes and you must stand before Him?

I have reminded you, O my soul, from the Books of Moses how the world was created, and from accounts throughout the Old Covenant, have shown examples of both the righteous and the unrighteous. But of these you have imitated the latter rather than the former, and have sinned against your God.

The Law has no power over you, O my soul. You have made the Gospel fruitless, scorned the Scriptures and reaped yourself no value from the Prophets or the writings of the Just. Your wounds have increased and you have no physician to heal you.

Therefore, O my soul, I will remind you of examples from the New Covenant to lead you to contrition. Imitate the righteous and shun the ways of sinners that through prayer, fasting, purity, and reverence you may obtain the mercy of Christ.

Christ became a man and called both robbers and prostitutes to repentance. Repent, O my soul! For the doors of the Kingdom now stand open and the Pharisees, tax-collectors, and the adulterers who have changed their ways are entering ahead of you!

Christ became a man, taking our flesh and of His own free will experiencing everything which pertains to our human nature (except sin). He has shown you an example - the image of His own condescension.

Christ granted salvation to the Magi who worshipped Him; He summoned shepherds to His crib; He manifested as martyrs the infants whom Herod slew, glorified Simeon the Elder and the widow Anna - but you, my soul, have not imitated the lives and works of any such as these. Therefore, how terrible it will be for you when you are judged!

After He had fasted forty days in the wilderness, hunger revealed the Lord's human nature. Therefore, O my soul, do not despair if the Enemy attacks you, for it is only through prayer and fasting that he shall be defeated.

Tuesday:

The Devil showed stones to Christ, tempting Him to turn them into bread, then led Him to the top of a mountain to show Him at a glance all the kingdoms of this world. O my soul, fear the Devil's craftiness: watch and pray to God at every hour!

John the Baptist, that "Dove who loved the desert," the "Light which went before Christ," the "Voice crying in the wilderness" - heralded the preaching of repentance. But Herod, unwilling to listen to him, sinned with Herodias. By embracing repentance, O my soul, beware yourself of falling into the snares of the Wicked One.

When John the Forerunner of grace was living in the wilderness, all the people of Judea and Samaria came out to hear him. O my soul, why have you not imitated them by confessing your sins and receiving the washing of repentance?

Marriage is honorable and the marriage bed undefiled, for Christ blessed both by His presence at the marriage in Cana. He ate and changed water into wine, thus performing His first miracle, that you, my soul, might be changed.

Christ strengthened a paralytic, enabling him to rise and walk; He raised from death a widow's son, and healed the servant of a Roman officer. By revealing Himself to the woman in Samaria, He made clear to you, O my soul, how to worship God in Spirit.

When a woman suffering from severe bleeding touched the hem of the Lord's robe she received healing from Him; just as by His word, He healed lepers, gave sight to the blind, strength to the lame, hearing to the deaf and dumb, and straightened a crippled woman - all in order that you, my miserable soul, might believe and find salvation!

Wednesday:

Christ the Word healed diseases, preached the Good News to the poor and cured the lame. He ate with tax-collectors, spoke with outcasts, and by just the touch of His hand recalled Jairus' daughter from death.

By repenting the tax-collector was saved and the prostitute purified, but the outwardly-righteous Pharisee was condemned for his pride. For the first cried, "O God be merciful to me!" The second, "Have mercy on me." But the last, in his foolish vanity, simply sought to justify himself.

Zacchaeus was a tax-collector yet obtained salvation, while Simon the Pharisee was saddened by the kindness Christ showed a prostitute, for she received complete forgiveness of her sins from Him Who has power to grant this. Now, my soul, imitate her and receive His forgiveness yourself.

O my soul, you have not imitated the prostitute who washed the Savior's feet with her tears and anointed them with perfumed ointment from a priceless jar. For this the Lord proclaimed to her, "Go in peace. Your sins are forgiven, for your faith has saved you."

O my soul, you know the curse upon the towns which, hearing Christ's preaching of the Good News, refused to accept it. Fear lest the same happen to you, for comparing them to Sodom, the Master condemned them to Hades.

O my soul, do not despair, for have you not heard how the daughter of the Canaanite woman was healed by a word from God? Therefore, imitate her faith and cry out to Christ from the depths of your heart: "O Son of David, save me!"

Thursday:

Have compassion on me, O Son of David, Who by Your word cured a man possessed by a demon. Let me also hear Your compassionate promise to the thief: “You will be with Me in paradise when I rise in My glory!”

Two thieves were crucified beside You, O Christ. The one abused You, while the other confessed You to be God. O most merciful Lord, open to me the doors of Your glorious Kingdom as You did to the believing thief.

Creation shook beholding Your crucifixion, O Jesus. The mountains and rocks split in fear; the earth quaked and Hades surrendered its prisoners. The sky grew dark at mid-day - seeing You nailed in the flesh to a Cross.

Only Savior, do not require of me in my weakness fruits which will show that I have changed my ways. Grant rather that finding contrition of heart and poverty in spirit, I may offer these to You as a pleasing sacrifice.

Since You know me, O my Judge, look on me in compassion when You come to judge the whole world. Spare and have mercy on me, though I have sinned more than any other.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

O Mary, you overcame the flesh and lived as though bodiless, crossing the River Jordan unhampered by your body. Your wondrous life is an amazement to the ranks both of angels and men.

Refrain: O venerable Mother Mary, pray unto God for us.

O venerable Mother, intercede with the Creator that we who sing your praises may be delivered from the afflictions and sorrows which surround us. That being delivered from temptations we may unceasingly glorify the Lord Who has glorified you.

Refrain: O venerable Father Andrew, pray unto God for us.

O venerable Andrew, thrice-blessed Father and pastor of Crete, never cease praying to God for those who sing your praises, that He may deliver from anger, sorrow, corruption, and countless sins all of us who faithfully honor your memory.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...

We glorify the Father, we exalt the Son, and we worship the Holy Spirit - the indivisible Trinity Who exists as One - the Light and Lights, the Life and Lives Who grants light and life to the ends of the world.

...now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Purest Theotokos, preserve your people, for through you are we kept faithful, strengthened, and made able to overcome every temptation, trial, and tribulation.

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday:

Refrain: O venerable Father Andrew, pray unto God for us.

Venerable Andrew, thrice-blessed Father and pastor of Crete, never cease praying to God for those who sing your praises, that He may deliver from anger, sorrow, corruption, and countless sins all of us who faithfully honor your memory.

After repeating the Irmos of the Ninth Ode, we complete the remainder of Great Compline.