Akathist to Saint John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria

November 12

Kontakion 1. Chosen by God to be an image of His mercy on earth, O holy John, you opened your hands to the poor and your heart to all who suffered. Accept our song of praise, and pray to Christ, the Lover of mankind, that we too may become merciful, crying to you:

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Ikos 1. You were born in Cyprus, in the city of Amathus, to a noble family, and your father Epiphanius was governor of the island. You grew up in wealth, yet you learned early that riches are given to us to be shared, and so we sing:

Rejoice, child of the island of Cyprus;
Rejoice, son of the governor Epiphanius;
Rejoice, for you grew up in wealth without pride;
Rejoice, for you learned that riches are for sharing;
Rejoice, for God planted mercy in your heart;
Rejoice, for Cyprus rejoices in your memory;
Rejoice, for you were born for the service of the poor;
Rejoice, flower of Amathus;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 2. At fifteen, you saw in a vision a radiant maiden crowned with olive, who said, “I am Compassion, the eldest daughter of the King. If you make me your friend, I will bring you before Him.” From that day, you devoted your life to mercy, singing: Alleluia!

Ikos 2. You married at the wish of your parents, and you lived in peace with your wife, but the Lord took her and your children to Himself. Bearing this sorrow with faith, you gave yourself wholly to God, and so we cry out:

Rejoice, for you saw Compassion in a vision;
Rejoice, for you made mercy your friend;
Rejoice, for mercy brought you before the King;
Rejoice, husband and father in your youth;
Rejoice, for you bore the loss of your family with faith;
Rejoice, for sorrow did not harden your heart;
Rejoice, for you gave yourself wholly to God;
Rejoice, friend of Compassion;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 3. In 610, the emperor Heraclius and the people of Alexandria chose you as patriarch, though you were a layman, because of your great mercy. You accepted this burden with fear, singing to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 3. Upon entering Alexandria, you asked your stewards to go through the city and write down the names of all your masters. When they asked who these were, you answered, “Those whom you call the poor and beggars, I call my masters and helpers.” Marveling at your words, we sing:

Rejoice, patriarch of Alexandria;
Rejoice, for the people chose you for your mercy;
Rejoice, for you called the poor your masters;

Rejoice, for you counted seven thousand five hundred poor;
Rejoice, for you fed them every day;
Rejoice, for you saw Christ in the beggar;
Rejoice, for your first act was an act of mercy;
Rejoice, servant of the poor;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 4. You set fair weights and measures in the city, forbade your officials to take bribes, and sat twice a week at the door of the church to hear the complaints of the poor. Justice and mercy dwelt together in you, and the people sang: Alleluia!

Ikos 4. You built hospitals, homes for the aged and shelters for travelers, and you gave alms with such abundance that the stewards feared the treasury would fail. Yet the Lord always provided, and so we cry out:

Rejoice, for you set fair weights and measures;
Rejoice, for you forbade bribes and injustice;
Rejoice, for you heard the poor at the church door;
Rejoice, for you built hospitals and shelters;
Rejoice, for you cared for the aged and for travelers;
Rejoice, for you gave without counting;
Rejoice, for the Lord always filled your hands;
Rejoice, steward of God's mercy;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 5. When the Persians captured Jerusalem in 614 and burned the holy places, refugees poured into Alexandria. You received them all as your own children, and you sent money, food and workers to rebuild the churches of the Holy City, singing: Alleluia!

Ikos 5. You sent the monk Modestus great help for the restoration of the Holy Sepulcher, and you ransomed many captives from the Persians. Seeing your love for the Holy City and its people, we sing:

Rejoice, for you received the refugees of Jerusalem;
Rejoice, for you treated them as your children;
Rejoice, for you helped rebuild the holy places;
Rejoice, for you supported Modestus in his labors;
Rejoice, for you ransomed the captives;
Rejoice, for you loved the Holy City;
Rejoice, for you shared the sorrow of the persecuted;
Rejoice, protector of the homeless;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 6. Once a nobleman, Nicetas, quarreled with you over a matter of the city, and he left in anger. As the sun was setting, you sent to him, saying, "Brother, the sun is about to set." He came to you in tears, and you embraced in peace, singing: Alleluia!

Ikos 6. You taught that we must never let the sun go down on our anger, and you were always the first to seek reconciliation, even when you were in the right. Learning from your humility, we cry out:

Rejoice, for you sought peace before sunset;
Rejoice, for you were the first to reconcile;
Rejoice, for you humbled yourself for the sake of peace;
Rejoice, for you won your brother back in love;
Rejoice, for you taught us not to nurse anger;

Rejoice, for you made enemies into friends;
Rejoice, for you loved peace above being right;
Rejoice, peacemaker of Alexandria;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 7. You ordered your tomb to be built but left unfinished, and on feast days you had a servant say to you, "Master, your tomb is not finished; order it completed, for you do not know the hour of your death." Remembering death, you sang to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 7. You lived in great simplicity, sleeping on a poor bed and wearing plain clothes, and when someone gave you a costly blanket, you sold it at once and gave the money to the poor. Marveling at your poverty, we sing:

Rejoice, for you kept the memory of death;
Rejoice, for your unfinished tomb taught you humility;
Rejoice, for you lived in great simplicity;
Rejoice, for you slept on a poor bed;
Rejoice, for you sold the costly blanket for the poor;
Rejoice, for you were rich toward God;
Rejoice, for you despised the vanity of the world;
Rejoice, lover of poverty;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 8. You honored the monks and the clergy, but you rebuked those who loved gossip, and you forbade idle talk in church, saying that the house of God is a house of prayer. Seeing your zeal for holiness, the faithful sang: Alleluia!

Ikos 8. You defended the Orthodox faith in Alexandria and brought many back to the Church, not by force but by mercy and patient teaching. Rejoicing in your pastoral wisdom, we cry out:

Rejoice, for you honored monks and clergy;
Rejoice, for you rebuked gossip and idle talk;
Rejoice, for you made the church a house of prayer;
Rejoice, defender of the Orthodox faith;
Rejoice, for you won souls by mercy;
Rejoice, for you taught with patience;
Rejoice, for you loved those who were in error;
Rejoice, wise shepherd;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 9. When the Persians threatened Egypt in 619, you set out for Constantinople, but the Lord revealed that your end was near, and you returned to your native Cyprus. There, in Amathus, you gave your soul to God, singing: Alleluia!

Ikos 9. In your testament, you wrote, "I thank Thee, O God, that I have nothing left but one third of a coin, and this too I give to the poor." Marveling at your perfect poverty, we cry out:

Rejoice, for you returned to Cyprus at the end;
Rejoice, for you died in your native Amathus;
Rejoice, for you gave away everything before your death;
Rejoice, for you left only a third of a coin;
Rejoice, for you thanked God for your poverty;
Rejoice, for you entered heaven with empty hands;
Rejoice, for your hands were full of mercy;

Rejoice, blessed end of a merciful life;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 10. Your holy relics were later brought to Constantinople, and from there they came to Buda, and at last to Bratislava, where they rest to this day. The faithful of many lands venerate you, singing: Alleluia!

Ikos 10. Your life was written by Leontius of Neapolis, and it has inspired countless Christians to works of mercy, and many hospitals and almshouses bear your name. Thanking God for your example, we sing:

Rejoice, for your relics were honored in Constantinople;
Rejoice, for they rest today in Bratislava;
Rejoice, for many lands venerate your memory;
Rejoice, for Leontius wrote your life;
Rejoice, for your life inspires works of mercy;
Rejoice, for hospitals bear your name;
Rejoice, for the merciful in every age follow you;
Rejoice, patron of the merciful;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 11. Every hymn is too weak to praise your mercy, O holy John, for your alms were as many as the sands of the sea. Receive our song with love, as we sing to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 11. You are a light for all who serve the poor, the sick and the homeless, for you showed that the Gospel is lived in works of love. Calling on your prayers, we sing:

Rejoice, light for those who serve the poor;
Rejoice, model of Christian charity;
Rejoice, for you show that faith works through love;
Rejoice, for you teach us to see Christ in the needy;
Rejoice, for you call us to justice and mercy;
Rejoice, for you encourage the generous;
Rejoice, for you rebuke the greedy;
Rejoice, image of the merciful Christ;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 12. The grace of God works through your prayers, and those who imitate your mercy find mercy from God. Glorifying the Lord who says, “Blessed are the merciful,” we sing: Alleluia!

Ikos 12. Singing of your mercy, we praise Christ, who made you His steward and a father to the poor. We honor your memory and cry to you:

Rejoice, patriarch of Alexandria;
Rejoice, friend of Compassion;
Rejoice, servant of the poor;
Rejoice, protector of refugees;
Rejoice, peacemaker before sunset;
Rejoice, lover of poverty;
Rejoice, glory of Cyprus;
Rejoice, mirror of God’s mercy;

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Kontakion 13. O holy hierarch John, merciful father of the poor, receive this our hymn of praise. Pray to Christ our God that He may soften our hearts, open our hands to the needy, and grant us mercy on the day of judgment, so that we may sing with you forever: Alleluia!

This kontakion is said three times.

Ikos 1 (repeated). You were born in Cyprus, in the city of Amathus, to a noble family, and your father Epiphanius was governor of the island. You grew up in wealth, yet you learned early that riches are given to us to be shared, and so we sing:

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Kontakion 1 (repeated). Chosen by God to be an image of His mercy on earth, O holy John, you opened your hands to the poor and your heart to all who suffered. Accept our song of praise, and pray to Christ, the Lover of mankind, that we too may become merciful, crying to you:

Rejoice, holy Hierarch John, merciful father of the poor!

Prayer

O holy hierarch John, you who called the poor your masters, who received the refugees of Jerusalem as your children, and who left this world with nothing but mercy, we come to you with faith and ask your prayers.

Pray to Christ our God for the poor, the homeless, the refugees and all who are in need, that He may provide for them through the hands of the generous. Pray for all who serve in hospitals, shelters and works of charity, that He may strengthen them in their labors. Help us, by your example, to give without counting, to seek reconciliation before the sun sets on our anger, and to remember the hour of our death.

Through your prayers, may the Lord grant us to find mercy on the day of judgment, as we have shown mercy to others, so that with you we may glorify the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.