

Theological and liturgical significance of troparia of the Beatitudes (Makarismoï) of the Holy Friday Matins

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Abstract: On Good Friday matins, after singing the antiphons and before reading the canon, the verses of the Gospel blessings are read, which in liturgical practice begin with the words of the good thief: "Remember me, o Lord, in Your Kingdom". The phrase of the thief hanging on the Cross sounds special on Good Friday – it is the day on which these words were spoken originally. Special troparions are added to the verses of the blessings, which talk about various aspects of Christ's passion, mainly through the prism of the thief's repentance. In the paper, the texts are analyzed taking into account the Greek original and selected translations.

Streszczenie: Na jutrzni Wielkiego Piątku po śpiewie antyfon, a przed czytaniem kanonu, rozbrzmiewają wersety ewangelicznych błogosławieństw, które w praktyce liturgicznej rozpoczynają się słowami rozsądnego łotra „Remember me, o Lord, in Your Kingdom”. Zwrot łotra wiszącego na krzyżu brzmi w Wielki Piątek wyjątkowo – to dzień, w którym te słowa zostały wypowiedziane oryginalnie. Do wersetów błogosławieństw dodaje się specjalne tropariony mówiące o różnych aspektach męki Chrystusa, głównie przez pryzmat skruchy łotra. W artykule dokonano analizy tekstów z uwzględnieniem greckiego oryginału i wybranych tłumaczeń.

Key-words: Holy Week, Holy Friday, Matins, hymnography, makarismoï

Słowa-klucze: Wielki Tydzień, Wielki Piątek, jutrznia, hymnografia, makarismoï



Holy Friday Matins is an extensive service of a vigilant character, during which all elements of Christ's Passion are recreated, from the Mystical Supper to the laying in the tomb. This service is usually held on Thursday evening or on Thursday to Friday night. The extraordinary celebration has its historic beginning in Jerusalem, where it was held as part of the Way of the Cross through the various places associated with the Savior's Passion. The description of all events is read from the Gospel. In total, twelve passages are read during the service. They are interwoven with various constant and changeable elements of Matins.

Among these elements, before the canon, between the reading of the sixth and seventh Gospel fragments, the verses of the Gospel blessings (Matthew 5:3-12) are read: „Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted...”, and between them special troparions (Makarismoï). Recitation of the blessings sounds special on Holy Friday matins. It begins with the prayer of the thief – “Remember us, Lord, in your Kingdom” – with the words originally uttered on Holy Friday by a thief hanging on the cross next to the Savior's cross.

The good thief occupies a special place in the Holy Friday service. His conversion (Luke 23:40-43) is praised in many ways throughout the service. An example of the 14th antiphone can be used here: „The thief on the cross uttered a small cry, but he found great faith. In a moment he was saved and became the first to enter Paradise. when its

gates were opened. O Lord, Who didst accept his repentance, glory to Thee!” (*Matins*, 74-75). Showing the attitude of the thief is intended to inspire the faithful to repentance and to ask God for forgiveness.

Blessings usually occur at Divine Liturgy – on the third antiphon. Apart from the liturgy, they appear only at a few services – the Matins of the Great Canon (Thursday of the fifth week of Lent), the now analyzed Holy Friday Matins and the funeral rite (Skaballanovič, 2008, 749). On the Holy Friday Matins makarismoï are read but before the canon. On the Matins of the Great Canon, recitation occurs after the sixth ode of the canon. In the case of a funeral, makarismoï are read after the canon. Blessings are read (or sung) also on a typica – the short service following hours when the Liturgy is celebrated with vespers or there is not Liturgy on that day. However verses are read without any troparia.

There are ten troparions in the Greek original (although the Church Slavonic version omits one of them – the eighth one). Eight troparions are recited after the successive verses of the blessings, the last two are read on “Glory” (Δόξα) and “And now” (Καὶ νῦν) and refer to the Holy Trinity and the Mother of God. The difference in the number of troparions means that, in Greek and Slavic practice, different verses of the Gospel blessings are read before each troparion. The presence of troparia on the Holy Friday Matins is mentioned in the Tipikon Hieros. S. Crucis. 43 in the Canonar of Sinai from 10th-11th century. (A. A. Lukaševič, 2002)

1st Troparion

Διὰ ξύλου ὁ Ἀδάμ, Παραδείσου γέγονεν ἄποικος, διὰ ξύλου δὲ σταυροῦ, ὁ Ληστής Παράδεισον ὤκησεν. Ὁ μὲν γὰρ γευσάμενος ἐντολήν ἠθέτησε τοῦ ποιήσαντος. Ὁ δὲ συσταυρούμενος, Θεὸν ὠμολόγησε τὸν κρυπτόμενον. Μνήσθητι καὶ ἡμῶν Σωτήρ, ἐν τῇ Βασιλείᾳ σου. (*Triódion Katanyktikón*, 498)

The first troparion alludes to Adam's sin, seeing in it a contrast between an Old Testament event and a New Testament event. There are two sentences juxtaposing Adam and the thief in the hymn. First introductory: „Through a tree Adam lost his home in Paradise, and through the Tree of the Cross the thief made Paradise his home” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589) and the second explanatory: „For the one, by eating, transgressed the commandment of his Maker; but the other, crucified at Thy side, confessed Thee as the hidden God” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589). The text ends with an apostrophe quoting the thief's words: „Remember us also, Savior, in Thy Kingdom” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589).

It is worth paying attention to the term „Θεὸν (...) τὸν κρυπτόμενον” (the hidden God). This epithet also appears in the hymnography in other texts. Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky writes about its importance: „According to the holy Fathers, the Lord hid His Divinity up to His Resurrection not only from men, but also from the devil, who only for this reason led the Jews to judge Him, that He did not know the God of Christ and His power to destroy the kingdom of hell” (Hrapovickij). In the French translation of the Triodion we read: „l'autre, partageant ta crucifixion, confessa ta divinité” (*Triod de Carême*, 2014, 539). The words about the hidden God were therefore omitted and we read that the other (thief) “confessed Your Deity.”

The text of the hymn corresponds with the text of the exapostylarion of Matins, sung after the canon. Both songs are dedicated to the thief. The exapostylarion expresses the thought that God would enlighten and save the lyrical subject, which is the praying faithful. In the first part of the text we read: “O Lord, this very day hast Thou vouchsafed the Good Thief Paradise” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 595). The second part already refers to the faithful: “By the Wood of the Cross do Thou enlighten me also and save me” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 595).

The first troparion was taken from the cycle of troparia (makarismoï) from the Sunday Liturgy of the fourth tone (from the Oktoechos).

2nd Troparion

Τὸν τοῦ νόμου Ποιητὴν, ἐκ μαθητοῦ ὠνήσαντο ἄνομοι, καὶ ὡς παράνομον αὐτόν, τῷ Πιλάτου βήματι ἔστησαν, κραυγάζοντες, Σταύρωσον, τὸν ἐν ἐρήμῳ τούτους μανναδοτήσαντα. Ἡμεῖς δὲ τὸν δίκαιον, Ληστήν μιμησάμενοι, πίστει κρίζομεν, Μνήσθητι καὶ ἡμῶν Σωτήρ, ἐν τῇ Βασιλείᾳ σου. (*Triódion Katanyktikón*, 498)

The second troparion alludes to Judas' betrayal and uses a pun related to the word „law”: „The lawless people bought the Maker of the Law from His disciple, and they led Him as a transgressor before the judgment-seat of Pilate” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589). The Greek original uses words from the same word family related to the law three times (τοῦ νόμου Ποιητὴν, ἄνομοι, παράνομον). The creator of the law is sold to an unlawful person as that who violates the law. The wordplay used in the text was rendered in the Church Slavonic version („закону творца”, „беззаконни”, „законопреступника”) and Romanian („Făcătorul legii”, „fără de lege”, „călcător de lege”) (*Slujbele*, 20). It is different in English translation („Maker of the Law”, „Lawless men”, „transgressor”) or French („l'Auteur de la loi”, „Les impies”, „criminel”) (*Triod de Carême*, 2014, 539).

We read in the next part of the troparion: „crying ‘Crucify Him’, though it was He who gave them manna in the wilderness” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589). In the Greek original and the Church Slavonic translation, one word is used for the term “Manna giver” – „μανναδοτήσαντα” (cs. маннодаващо). The French triodion interprets here by adding a phrase „à nos pères” (*Triod de Carême*, 2014, 539) (to our fathers) – „He who gave manna to our fathers in the wilderness”. The troparion ends with words referring to the thief: „But, following the example of the righteous thief, we cry with faith” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589) and identical to the previous troparion: „Remember...”.

3rd Troparion

Τῶν θεοκτόνων ὁ ἔσμός, Ἰουδαίων ἔθνος τὸ ἄνομον, πρὸς Πιλάτον ἐμμανῶς, ἀνακράζων ἔλεγε. Σταύρωσον, Χριστὸν τὸν ἀνεύθυνον. Βαραββᾶν δὲ μᾶλλον οὗτοι ἠτήσαντο. Ἡμεῖς δὲ φθεγγόμεθα, Ληστοῦ τοῦ εὐγνώμονος, τὴν φωνὴν πρὸς αὐτόν. Μνήσθητι καὶ ἡμῶν Σωτήρ, ἐν τῇ Βασιλείᾳ σου. (*Triódion Katanyktikón*, 498)

The third troparion tells about a Jewish gathering that called for the crucifixion of the Savior: „The murderers of God, the lawless nation of the Jews, cried to Pilate in their madness, saying, ‘Crucify the innocent Christ’; and they asked rather for Barabbas” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589). The hymn begins with a term „θεοκτόνων” (cs. Богоубийц), appearing in the hymnography of Holy Week also in the canon of Holy Saturday. It has been translated into English as: „The murderers of God”.

The second part of the troparion is to put the lyrical subject in opposition to the gathering of Jews: „But with the words of the good thief we cry to Him” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589), and then again as in the previous troparions: „Remember...”.

4th Troparion

Ἡ ζωηφόρος σου Πλευρά, ὡς ἐξ Ἐδέμ πηγὴ ἀναβλύζουσα, τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν σου Χριστέ, ὡς λογικὸν

ποτίζει Παράδεισον, ἐντεῦθεν μερίζουσα, ὡς εἰς ἀρχὰς εἰς τέσσαρα Εὐαγγέλια, τὸν Κόσμον ἀρδεύουσα, τὴν κτίσιν εὐφραίνουσα, καὶ τὰ ἔθνη πιστῶς, διδάσκουσα, προσκυνεῖν τὴν Βασιλειαν σου. (*Triōdion Katanyktikón*, 498)

The fourth troparion juxtaposes the Old Testament Paradise spring with the wound of Christ that infuses the Church like rivers of paradise: „Thy life-giving side, O Christ, flowing as a fountain from Eden, waters Thy Church as a living Paradise. Then, dividing into the four branches of the Gospels, with its streams it refreshes the world, making glad the creation and teaching the nations to venerate Thy Kingdom with faith” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589).

It is interesting to compare the four rivers of Paradise watering all of Eden with the four Gospels (τέσσαρα Εὐαγγέλια) watering the Church and the whole world. In one of the English translations the term “four rivers of the Gospels” appears - “From there it devided to become the four rivers of the Gospels”. The theme of the rivers of heaven as the four Gospels appears, for example, in St. Cyprian of Carthage, who writes - “The Church, which presents the image of paradise, inside its walls has fig trees ... It sprinkles these trees with four rivers, or four Gospels, through which it brings the grace of baptism with salvific and heavenly irrigation” (*Tolkovaniâ*).

The fourth troparion does not end with an apostrophe of the thief, but continues the narration of the troparion, ending with the information that the four Gospels teach nations to venerate the God’s kingdom. This is an allusion to the first troparion, in which it was thought that a thief hanging on the cross was one of the few who recognized “the hidden God”. Thanks to the Gospel, a message about God becomes open and explicit.

5th Troparion

Ἐσταυρώθης δι’ ἐμέ, ἵνα ἐμοὶ πηγάσης τὴν ἄφεσιν, ἐκεντήθης τὴν πλευράν, ἵνα κρουνοὺς ζωῆς ἀναβλύσης μοί, τοῖς ἡλοῖς προσήλωσαι, ἵνα ἐγὼ τῷ βάθει τῶν παθημάτων σου, τὸ ὕψος τοῦ κράτους σου, πιστούμενος κράζω σοὶ ζωοδότα Χριστέ. Δόξα καὶ τῷ Σταυρῷ Σῶτηρ, καὶ τῷ Πάθει σου. (*Triōdion Katanyktikón*, 498)

The fifth troparion is an individual prayer. The lyrical subject is not plural, but singular. The text in three sentences shows the effect of Christ’s sacrifice on the individual believer. The first part: „For my sake Thou wast crucified, to become for me a fountain of forgiveness” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589). The word πηγάσης (to become for me a fountain) can be referred literally to the blood and water that flowed from the Savior’s rib. Forgiveness of sins has been shed like blood. The second sentence is constructed similarly: „Thy side was pierced, that Thou mightiest pour upon me streams of life” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 589-590). The Greek original uses a different verb here (πηγάσης, ἀναβλύσης), the Church Slavonic text translates them equally – „источииши”. The third sentence is directly linked to the epilogue: „Thou wast transfixed with nails, that through the depth of Thy sufferings I might know

with certainty the height of Thy power, and cry to Thee, O Christ the Giver of Life” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590).

Like the previous troparion, this one also does not end with words of the thief, but with the epilogue: „O Savior, glory to Thy Cross and Passion” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590).

6th Troparion

Σταυρουμένου σου Χριστέ, πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις βλέπουσα ἔτρεμε, τὰ θεμέλια τῆς γῆς, διεδονεῖτο φόβῳ τοῦ κράτους σου, φωστῆρες ἐκρύπτοντο, καὶ τοῦ Ναοῦ ἐρράγη τὸ καταπέτασμα τὰ ὄρη ἐτρόμαξαν, καὶ πέτραι ἐσχίσθησαν, καὶ Ληστής ὁ πιστός, κραυγάζει σοὶ σὺν ἡμῖν, Σωτήρ τὸ Μνήσθητι. (*Triōdion Katanyktikón*, 498)

The sixth troparion describes the influence of Christ’s crucifixion on the surrounding world at the moment of the event – the reaction of all creation. The hymn begins with the words: „When Thou wast crucified, O Christ...” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590), then the lyrical subject lists the accompanying events: „(1) all the creation saw and trembled. (2) The foundations of the earth quaked in fear of Thy power. (3) The lights of heaven hid themselves (4) and the veil of the temple was rent in twain, (5) the mountains trembled (6) and the rocks were split” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590). At the end of the troparion, the plot of the thief appears, who „cries with us” (gr. κραυγάζει σοὶ σὺν ἡμῖν). Some of the proposed translations translate the sentence as: „With the faithful thief we cry” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590). Troparion ends with words: „Remember us, O Savior” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590).

It is worth mentioning that in many translations the ending of the text looks different, which makes the troparion similar to the others. The Church Slavonic version in the epilogue quotes literally the words of the thief – „еже помяни во Царствии Твоем”, just like English („Remember me in Your kingdom”), French („Sauver, souviens-toi de nous dans ton royaume” (*Triod de Carême*, 2014, 540) or Romanian („Pomeneste-ne intru Împărăția Ta”) (*Slujbele*, 20).

The theme of fear covering the whole world at the moment of crucifixion appears many times in the Good Friday hymnography, for example in the first Apostichos: „The whole of creation was transformed by fear, when it saw Thee, O Christ, hanging upon the Cross. The sun was darkened and the foundations of the earth were shaken; all things suffered with the Creator of all” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 598). This sticherion is repeated also on Vespers, during which the Epitaphio is carried to the center of the church to the adoration of the faithful

7th Troparion

Τὸ χειρόγραφον ἡμῶν, ἐν τῷ Σταυρῷ διέρρηξας Κύριε, καὶ λογισθεῖς ἐν τοῖς νεκροῖς, τὸν ἐκέῖσε τύραννον ἔδησας, ῥυσάμενος ἅπαντας ἐκ δεσμῶν θανάτου τὴν ἀναστάσει σου, δι’ ἧς ἐφωτίσθημεν, φιλόνηρωπε Κύριε, καὶ βοῶμέν σοί.

Μνήσθητι καὶ ἡμῶν Σωτήρ, ἐν τῇ Βασιλείᾳ σου. (*Triōdion Katanyktikón*, 498)

The seventh troparion begins with words: „O Lord, on the Cross Thou hast torn up the record of our sins” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590). The term „the record of our sins”, in the Greek original „χειρόγραφον” (cs. рукописание) literally meaning “hand writing”, “manuscript”, by which is meant „the list of our sins”, also appears in the troparion of the sixth hour: „O Thou who, on the sixth day and at the sixth hour, didst nail to the cross Adam’s daring sin in Paradise, tear asunder also the handwriting of our sins, O Christ God, and save us” (*The Office of the Sixth Hour*, 3). The word comes from the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians (Col 2:14). Other translations of the Triodion show different variants – English „legal bond”, French „cédule écrite” (*Triod de Carême*, 2014, 540), Romanian „zapisul” (*Slujbele*, 21).

The hymn then refers to the very descent of Christ into the abyss of hell and the Resurrection, drawing the image known from iconography: „numbered among the departed, Thou hast bound fast the ruler of hell, delivering all men from the chains of death by Thy Resurrection” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590). This is another of the joyful predictions of the upcoming Resurrection present at Good Friday Matins.

8th Troparion

Ὁ ὑψωθείς ἐν τῷ Σταυρῷ, καὶ τοῦ θανάτου λύσας τὴν δύναμιν, καὶ ἐξαλείψας ὡς Θεός, τὸ καθ’ ἡμῶν χειρόγραφον Κύριε, Ληστοῦ τὴν μετάνοιαν, καὶ ἡμῶν παράσχου μόνε φιλόανθρωπε, τοῖς πιστεῖ λατρεύουσι, Χριστέ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, καὶ βοῴσί σοί. Μνήσθητι καὶ ἡμῶν Σωτήρ, ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου. (*Triōdion Katanyktikón*, 499)

The eighth troparion does not appear in the Church Slavonic version. It is characteristic only for the Greek tradition. It thematically returns to both the list of sins from the seventh troparion and the thief: „Thou wast lifted up, O Lord, upon the Cross and hast destroyed the power of death; and as God Thou hast blotted out the record of our sins that was against us. Grant to us also the repentance of the thief, O Christ our God who alone lovest mankind, for we worship Thee with faith and cry to Thee: Remember us...” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590).

9th Troparion (Doxa)

The last two troparions are not directly related to the Passion of Christ. As in the case of the canons, when the last two stanzas (read after the verses “Doxa” and “Kai nun”) are dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the Mother of God, the makarismoi troparions end in the same way.

The penultimate one, read on “Glory ...” (Doxa), has the character of a triadicon praising the mystery of the Holy Trinity:

Τὸν Πατέρα καὶ Υἱόν, καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα πάντες τὸ ἅγιον, ὁμοφρόνως οἱ πιστοί, δοξολογεῖν ἀξίως εὐξώμεθα,

Μονάδα θεότητος, ἐν τρισὶν ὑπάρχουσιν ὑποστάσεις, ἀσύγχυτον μένουσαν, ἀπλήν, ἀδιαίρετον καὶ ἀπρόσιτον, δι’ ἧς ἐκλυτρούμεθα, τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς κολάσεως. (*Triōdion Katanyktikón*, 499)

The faithful are called to worship the individual persons of the Holy Trinity („Father, Son and Holy Spirit”) “ὁμοφρόνως”, so all together in the same way. The English translation here uses the adverb “rightly”.

There are many dogmatic terms in the text that may cause difficulties in translation. The Greek original says about the monad of Godhead (Divinity), which exist in three persons (hypostasis), while the English translation used the term „o Godhead in three Persons” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590). Further on, Holy Trinity is defined with epithets with negation (in the tradition of apophatic theology): unconfused, undivided, inaccessible (“whom no man can approach” *The Lenten Triodion*, 590), and also the epithet “simple”.

At the end of the troparion, there are not the words of the thief. There is a thought expressed, that The Holy Trinity saves the lyrical subject (expressed in the plural, meaning praying believers) “from the fire of punishment” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590), from the torments of hell.

10th Troparion (Kai nun)

The last troparion is dedicated to the Mother of God:

Τὴν Μητέρα σου Χριστέ, τὴν ἐν σαρκὶ ἀσπύρως τεκούσαν σε, καὶ Παρθένον ἀληθῶς, καὶ μετὰ τόκον μείναςαν ἄφθορον, αὐτὴν σοὶ προσάγομεν, εἰς πρεσβείαν Δέσποτα πολυέλεε, πταισμάτων συγχώρησιν, δωρήσασθαι πάντοτε, τοῖς κραυγάζουσι. Μνήσθητι καὶ ἡμῶν Σωτήρ, ἐν τῇ Βασιλείᾳ σου. (*Triōdion Katanyktikón*, 499)

The Mother of God is presented in the text as an intercessor between the faithful and God (“we offer The as intercessor Thy Mother”) (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590), who prays for forgiveness of sins to those who cry out the words of the thief “Remember us ...”. The text also expresses the teaching about the eternal virginity of the Mother of God, who gave birth “without seed” and remained a Virgin “inviolable after childbirth” (*The Lenten Triodion*, 590).

The last troparion of makarismoi has a character of theotokion, not a staurotheotokion. The presence of the cross-Marian theme would be fully justified due to the nature of the day. However, the stanza is devoid of the motif of The Mother of God mourning Christ, similar to the theotokions ending the series of antiphons at the same service.

Conclusion

The troparions of blessings discussed in this article occupy a rather inconspicuous place on Holy Friday matins. They seem to perish between the twelve Gospel readings

and the sung antiphons, canons and sticherions. However, they can be considered as a certain anchor point between the faithful's everyday life and the reality of Holy Week. The words "Remember us (me), Lord, in Your Kingdom" are recited or sung by the faithful quite often – at church services and in private prayer. Their presence on Holy

Friday Matins, that is the day on which they were spoken originally, updates the drama on Golgotha.

Moreover, each of the troparions presents in a succinct way an appropriate message related to the meaning of Christ's Passions, presenting suffering and the cross as a sacrifice made for each of the faithful.

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