

Newsletter

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Kiahk Sunday Midnight Praises

Praise is the work of angels - they stand before the Throne of Grace praising God without tire or boredom; it is their utmost pleasure, fullness and joy to praise their Creator! Praise in the church is the HIGHEST level of prayers and talking to God. It is participation with those angels and heavenly hosts.

During the blessed Coptic month of Kiahk, the Church comes together in PRAISE to prepare for the Nativity Feast and for the Advent of Christ, the Logos and only-begotten Son of God.

7 Theotokia & 4 Canticles

Sometimes, you will hear of Kiahk Praises being called “7 & 4.” This is an old name that references the praises of the Sunday Kiahk Vigil: 7 Theotokia and 4 Canticles (or Hos). Along with each of the Theotokia and Canticles, the Church arranges several associated Psalis, Lobsh, Melodies and Expositions.

Theotokia: Greek word that means glorification to the Theotokos (Mother of God).

Hos: Coptic word meaning “praise.” The English word “Ode” is sometimes used.

Canticle: English word that means a hymn whose words are taken from the Bible.

Psali: Greek word that means “chant.” These hymns are typically acrostic or alphabetic poems composed in Greek or Coptic.

Lobsh: Greek word that means “explanation.”

Melodies: These hymns are typically poems composed in English or Arabic.

Exposition: These are explanations that are chanted and then read.

During Kiahk, vigil is kept for the whole night in prayer, chanting, reading Scripture, and praising! Our flesh is weak; alone, who of us can do this without boredom, tire or sleepiness? But when we come together as a Church, through the Holy Spirit, we receive strength and encouragement and energy!

The Order of Praises

Examine the order of the Sunday Kiahk Vigil below - for each of the 4 Canticles and 7 Theotokia, it refers to all of the associated praises in order: first the Psali, then that Canticle or Theotokia, then the Lobsh, then the Melodies, and finally the Expositions.

1. Introduction to the Midnight Praise
 - (Arise O Children of the Light)
 - Great Kiahk Ode
 - Midnight Alleluia
 - “Amen Alleluia” Melody
2. 1st Canticle (Exodus 15)
3. Monday & Tuesday Theotokia
4. 2nd Canticle (Psalm 135)
5. Wednesday & Thursday Theotokia
6. 3rd Canticle (Daniel 3)
7. Friday & Saturday Theotokia
8. Conclusion of the Watos Theotokia
9. 4th Canticle (Psalm 148, 149, 150)
10. Sunday Theotokia
11. Conclusion of the Kiahk Sunday Vigil
 1. Exposition of the Laborers
 2. Antiphonary
 3. Conclusion of the Adam Theotokia
 4. Concluding Litany
 5. Conclusion of the Midnight Praise

Major Themes of the Praises

Praise is due to the Holy Trinity

“Worship befits the Holy Trinity • the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit • we worship, we praise, and glorify • One God, Creator of all souls. •

To Him is due all glory and praise. • Worthy of all honor and heaven. • Without beginning, existing before the ages. • Eternal, Omnipotent and Immortal.

Kiahk Praise on the Holy Trinity (see Article on this hymn!)

The Incarnation of the Son of God

“The Incorporeal was incarnate • resembling us in the flesh • for the Word became flesh • and dwelt within us. •

For the ever-existent Being • has appeared in the last days • and the One outside of time • came and was subject to time. •

The Incomprehensible was touched • and the Unseen has been seen • the invisible Son of God • became a perfect Man.”

Second Lobsh on the Wednesday Theotokia

The fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies

“Isaiah prophesied • about the birth • of Immanuel • the Almighty King • Ezekiel saw a door • through which the Lord entered • He sealed the door and claimed it • highly exalted. •

Highly exalted are you • and your Son Jesus • when He was born of you • the earth was adorned • and also Daniel • prophesied and said • I saw the high throne • highly exalted.”

The fulfillment of Old Testament types and symbols

"The burning bush seen by Moses, • the prophet, in the wilderness; • the fire inside it was aflame • but never consumed or injured it. • The same with the Theotokos, Mary, • who carried the fire of divinity; • nine months in her holy body • without blemishing her virginity."

Melody on the Thursday Theotokia

Glorification of the Virgin Mary

"Come all today • O orthodox people • that we may glorify • Mary the Virgin.
Everyone honors • the pure one • Who is full of glory • Mary the Virgin."

Psalm on the Monday Theotokia

St Mary's Acceptance of God's Will and Her Given Role in Salvation

"Virgin Mary, the wise Theotokos, saved Adam through her beloved Son" ... "You are the rational hook that catches Christians and raises them up to heaven."

Exposition on the Friday Theotokia

Melismatic Hymns of Kiahk

Melismatic refers to hymns that have many melisma (*hazzat*) - when a word or syllable or sound is musically extended for several seconds (or minutes). During the month of Kiahk, several melismatic hymns are offered to the Lord in praise, in addition to those of the standard Midnight Praise, enriching the Sunday Vigil.

Great Kiahk Ode

The Great Kiahk Ode is a collection of excerpts from the Psalms arranged in order about: Praising the Lord, St. Mary, the Heavenly Orders, the Apostles, the Martyrs, the Saints, the Patriarch and Bishops, Praising the Lord. The first verse is chanted in a melismatic tune of about 20 minutes.

Midnight Alleluia

The hymn of Midnight Alleluia is two words: "Alleluia. Alleluia." These two words are extended to almost 30 minutes of melisma arranged as a medley of the entire body of Coptic Hymns and Praises. It is a small taste of heaven and the work of angels who "praise Him and exalt Him above all, forever." (Daniel 3)

Third Cantic Hymns

The hymns ⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲃⲁⲛⲁⲓ (Bless the Lord...), ⲉⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲙⲁⲓ (Praise Him) and ⲡⲓⲛⲁ ⲉⲃⲁⲛⲁ ⲃⲁⲛⲁⲓ ⲙⲁⲓ (and exalt Him above all, forever), similarly, allow us to experience a glimpse of the heavenly praise to the Lord that "endures forever!" (Psalm 111)

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The hymn of □□□□ is the Praise of the Three Saintly Youth - the hymn continues the theme of offering a perpetual sacrifice of praise of the Lord: "They praise and glorify God at all times."

The Exposition of the Laborers

The Exposition of the Laborers is read, detailing the laborers of Matthew 20:8 ("Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first, a denarius for each.").

Who are the laborers? The patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, the cross-bearers, the virgins; the archbishops and bishops; the hegumens and priests; the archdeacons, deacons, subdeacons and readers; the archons and the sinners who repented; and finally, "the brothers who labored with us in this psalmody" — all of those who labored in offering the sacrifice of praise in the vigil.

The conclusion is chanted melismatically: "O Christ our Savior • grant them their rewards • for their labors • in the heavenly kingdom."