

WEEK 23: HEAR - HYMNS & CHURCH MUSIC

PRE-K - KINDERGARTEN

GOALS

Who is St. Romanos the Melodist?

Why do we sing during the Divine Liturgy instead of just reading all of our prayers?

LESSON

Read to students: *Sweet Song: A Story of Saint Romanos the Melodist*
Kontakion for Nativity of Christ - <https://youtu.be/HEEZrCq6pog?t=71>

Singing & Music in the Church - Practice "Lord have mercy" and "Grant this O Lord"

SAINT ROMANOS:

Read *Sweet Song: A Story of Saint Romanos the Melodist* to your students.

St. Romanos loved helping at the church in whatever way needed. He especially loved singing during the services when the opportunity allowed. The bishop of Constantinople was very fond of Romanos because of his humility and dedication to God. Unfortunately, the other readers and singers became jealous of St. Romanos because they had been specially trained for singing and he was not.

Questions:

What happened when the readers pushed St. Romanos to sing during the Christmas Eve service? (He froze and nothing came out of his mouth)

What did St. Romanos do after this happened? (He prayed to the Mother of God, the Theotokos, and asked her for help. St. Romanos wanted to sing and glorify God but nothing would come out of his mouth.)

What did the Mother of God do after St. Romanos prayed to her? (She appeared to him in a dream. She asked him to open his mouth, placed a small scroll in his mouth, and

then asked him to swallow it. St. Romanos woke up and he could now compose and sing lots and lots of songs to God.)

St. Romanos composed many special songs about God called kontakia. Probably the most famous kontakion that he composed was the one for the Nativity of Christ, or Christmas Day, and we still sing it today!

You can play a clip of the kontakion for the Nativity of Christ for your students from here: <https://youtu.be/HEEZrCq6pog?t=71>

SINGING & MUSIC AT CHURCH:

I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Ps 146:2)

During the Divine Liturgy, almost all of the service is sung. We sing the Psalms from the Bible. We sing hymns written by the saints. We are constantly singing to God and thanking Him for all that He has done for us!

Our priest leads all of us in prayer and we respond and participate in this prayer by singing the hymns and responses. It is not just the priest who prays during the Divine Liturgy, but also each and every one of us. We all participate together in the Divine Liturgy with our prayers and singing!

Let's practice singing, "Lord have mercy" and "Grant this O Lord" together as a class. Next Sunday, remember to sing along with everyone else with these responses!

WEEK 23: HEAR - HYMNS & CHURCH MUSIC

1ST - 2ND GRADE

GOALS

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Questions:

What happened when the readers pushed St. Romanos to sing during the Christmas Eve service? (He froze and nothing came out of his mouth)

What did St. Romanos do after this happened? (He prayed to the Mother of God, the Theotokos, and asked her for help. St. Romanos wanted to sing and glorify God but nothing would come out of his mouth.)

What did the Mother of God do after St. Romanos prayed to her? (She appeared to him in a dream. She asked him to open his mouth, placed a small scroll in his mouth, and

then asked him to swallow it. St. Romanos woke up and he could now compose and sing lots and lots of songs to God.)

What is a kontakion (kōn-ta-kee-ōn)

The kontakia (plural for kontakion) are long songs that explained the meaning of the feast day. Today, the kontakia that are sung in church are much shorter in length than they were at the time of St. Romanos.

St. Romanos composed many special songs about God called kontakia. Probably the most famous kontakion that he composed was the one for the Nativity of Christ, or Christmas Day, and we still sing it today!

You can play a clip of the kontakion for the Nativity of Christ for your students from here: <https://youtu.be/HEEZrCq6pog?t=71>

SINGING & MUSIC AT CHURCH:

I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Ps 146:2)

During the Divine Liturgy, almost all of the service is sung.

For example, we sing the Psalms from the Bible. They are found in the Old Testament and have been called the hymnbook of the Church. You will hear psalms being sung all the time when you go to church.

We also sing hymns throughout our services as well. A hymn is a song in honor or praise of God, the Theotokos, the saints, or a feast day.

Our priest leads all of us in prayer and we respond and participate in this prayer by singing the hymns and responses. It is not just the priest who prays during the Divine Liturgy, but also each and every one of us. We all participate together in the Divine Liturgy with our prayers and singing!

Let's practice singing, "Lord have mercy" and "Grant this O Lord" together as a class. Next Sunday, remember to sing along with everyone else with these responses!

WEEK 23: HEAR - HYMNS & CHURCH MUSIC

3RD - 5TH GRADES

GOALS

Who is St. Romanos the Melodist?

Why do we sing during the Divine Liturgy instead of just reading all of our prayers?

LESSON

Show Icon of Saint Romanos the Melodist along with Lesson
Kontakion for Nativity of Christ - <https://youtu.be/HEEZrCq6pog?t=71>
Singing & Music in Church

SAINT ROMANOS:

(Show icon of St. Romanos during story)

Saint Romanos was born in Syria in the 400's. He always loved God and wanted to do as much as he could at church. He first became an altar boy, then later a reader and singer. Eventually, he moved from Syria to Constantinople (in modern day Turkey) and served at the church of Agia Sophia, or the church of Holy Wisdom.

At that point in time, it was common for the singers to prepare a song for the upcoming service which helped to explain the feast day. These songs were called kontakia and were much longer in length than they are today.

The bishop of Constantinople was fond of St. Romanos for his deep devotion to God and his dedication to serving in any way he could around the church. The other readers and singers became jealous of Romanos though because he was not as highly trained as themselves and new to the church. On Christmas Eve one year, St. Romanos was tasked with singing the hymn for the day explaining the upcoming feast. When it came time to sing, Romanos froze and absolutely nothing came out of his mouth. He left devastated that he was not able to sing praises to God like he wished would flow from his mouth.

Later that evening, St. Romanos prayed to the Theotokos imploring her to help him. He wanted to be able to sing praises to God just like all the others.

After he fell asleep that night, the Theotokos appeared to him in a dream. She placed a small scroll in his mouth and asked him to swallow it. St. Romanos immediately woke up and henceforth he was gifted with the ability to compose and sing beautifully to God.

What is a kontakion (kōn-ta-kee-ōn)

The kontakia (plural for kontakion) are long songs that explained the meaning of the feast day. Today, the kontakia that are sung in church are much shorter in length than they were at the time of St. Romanos.

We know that St. Romanos composed a huge number of kontakia, but not all of them have survived. The most famous of the kontakia is the kontakion for the Nativity of Christ - that we still sing today.

You can play a clip of the kontakion for the Nativity of Christ for your students from here: <https://youtu.be/HEEZrCq6pog?t=71>

SINGING & MUSIC IN CHURCH:

I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Ps 146:2)

During the Divine Liturgy, almost all of the service is sung. Our priest leads all of us in prayer and we respond and participate in this prayer by singing the hymns and responses. It is not just the priest who prays during the Divine Liturgy, but also each and every one of us. We all participate together in the Divine Liturgy!

For example, we sing the Psalms from the Bible. They are found in the Old Testament and have been called the hymnbook of the Church. Oftentimes, you will hear psalms being sung when you go to any service.

We also sing hymns throughout our services as well. A hymn is a song in honor or praise of God, the Theotokos, the saints, or a feast day. There are many saints who have written hymns. Some of them are St. Kassiani, St. Ephrem the Syrian, St. Joseph the

Hymnographer, St. John of Damascus, St. Kosmas the Poet, St. Andrew of Crete, and many others.

The work of these great hymnographers led to the creation of the eight modes, the Octoechos, which allowed the music to be sung in a uniform manner corresponding to the Church calendar and cycles. Byzantine music, with its unique notation system, was developed within the Church and prevailed throughout the Greek Orthodox world and many of its sister Orthodox churches.

In the Orthodox world today, there are some noticeable musical differences between some parishes. The most prominent being the Orthodox Church of Russia. Originally, the Slavic lands adopted Byzantine chant, but later, with the changes made by Peter the Great, the musical form of Russian liturgical music changed more towards Western European music. Today, there is a unique ambience and feeling of Russian Orthodox music. In the United States, as well, due to its historical and cultural context, choral music was developed, especially for the hymns of the Divine Liturgy.

Orthodox churches do not use musical instruments as part of their worship because music is not just art but an enhanced form of prayer. Instruments cannot pray. Only human voices can create the cooperative action between the words of worship and the melody of the hymns.

The Orthodox Church has a variety of hymns that vary in purpose, length, rhythm, etc. Music is an art form, but an art dedicated to God. The chanters, the choir, the people and the priest, all together are the Praying Church, lifting up supplications to the All-merciful Lord!

REVIEW:

- Who is St. Romanos? (He was a saint who wrote music called kontakia)
 - Who appeared to St. Romanos in a dream and what happened? (The Theotokos appeared to him in a dream, placed a small scroll to his lips, and told him to swallow it. When he woke up, he was gifted with singing and composing songs that we still sing today.)
 - Why do we sing during the Divine Liturgy instead of just reading everything? (Because music is an enhanced form of prayer)
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SAINT ROMANOS THE MELODIST

WEEK 23: HEAR - HYMNS & CHURCH MUSIC

MIDDLE SCHOOL

GOALS

Who is St. Romanos the Melodist?

Why do we sing during the Divine Liturgy instead of just reading all of our prayers?

LESSON

Life of St. Romanos the Melodist
Singing & Music in Church

SAINT ROMANOS:

Read the life of St. Romanos the Melodist -

https://orthodoxwiki.org/Roman_the_Melodist

You can play a clip of the kontakion for the Nativity of Christ for your students from here:

<https://youtu.be/HEEZrCq6pog?t=71>

SINGING & MUSIC IN CHURCH:

Musical examples for your students -

Cherubic Hymn:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xj8zjPnZb44>

Tropation of Pascha:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3_FQ_bIPYY

I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Ps 146:2)

Like with any of the other arts employed by the Orthodox Church in its worship, the music does not serve a purpose in itself. Once used in Church, the music drops its role as simply embellishing the services and it is elevated to convey, on a deeper level, the

meaning of the prayers contained in the hymns of the church and to make them resonate with our souls through its melodies.

Great saints of the Church, like John of Damascus, Ephraim the Syrian, Roman the Melodios, Andrew of Crete, Joseph the Hymnographer, Kosmas the Poet, John Koukouzelis and many others, have carefully matched the meter of their poetry with the music so they could complement each other, creating a unique experience of worship.

The efforts of these great hymnographers led to the creation of the eight modes, the Octoechos, which allowed the music to convey in a uniform manner the specific atmosphere corresponding to the periods of the Church liturgical cycles. Organically developed within the body of the Church, Byzantine music, with its unique notation system, prevailed throughout the Greek Orthodox world and many of its sister Orthodox Churches.

In the Orthodox world today, however, there exists some notable musical differences, the most prominent being the Orthodox Church of Russia. Initially the Slavic lands adopted Byzantine chant, but later, with the reforms of Peter the Great, the musical form of Russian liturgical music changed more towards Western European music. The result today is the unique ambience and feeling of Russian Orthodox music. In the United States as well, due to its historical and cultural context, choral music was developed, especially for the hymns of the Divine Liturgy.

Beyond the notation or type of chant, music still has to fulfill its role as companion and facilitator of prayer. Musical instruments are not allowed into church because church music is not just art but an enhanced form of prayer. Instruments cannot pray, only human voices can create the synergy between the words of worship and the melody of the hymns.

This synergy is best expressed in the liturgical services of the church. During the services the priest is the one that, through the grace he received at ordination, leads the congregation in prayer. The congregation responds and participates in this prayer by singing the hymns and the responses. Through joining in music, it is not just the priest who prays to God, while the others watch as spectators, it is the entire community that plays an integral role in the services. The priest cannot serve without the community giving the answers, and vice-versa the people cannot accomplish the full services without the priest leading. It is a relationship of codependence in which everyone knows their

assigned role and function together like a unit. The chanters, the choir, the people and the priest, all together are the Praying Church, lifting up supplications to the All-merciful Lord!

The Orthodox Church has a variety of hymns that vary in purpose, length, rhythm, etc. In the Divine Liturgy, for example, there is a divinely inspired tension between the fast tempo of some of the hymns like the antiphons (“Through the prayers of the Theotokos; Savior, save us...”), which suggests the burst of our efforts designed to reach into the Kingdom and the slow tempo of the Cherubic hymn for example, which suggests the peace and mystery of the Kingdom. It is the tension between “not yet” and “already there.” We have hymns specifically designated to praise the Resurrection of the Lord (The Anastasimatarion) and Hymns dedicated to the Theotokos and the Saints (The Menaion). We have troparia and canons, cherubic hymns, communion hymns, concluding hymns, funeral hymns, resurrectional hymns, hymns of repentance and of joy. All unite in the one voice of the praying Church!

Music is a form of art, but an art dedicated to God. It has to be interpreted as accurate and as beautifully as possible, in order to fulfill its role as enhancer of Prayer. We have to pray for all our Church musicians and join them in prayer as often as we can.

REVIEW:

- Who is St. Romanos? (He was a saint who wrote music called kontakia)
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- Why do we sing during the Divine Liturgy instead of just reading everything? (Because music is an enhanced form of prayer)

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HIGH SCHOOL

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LESSON

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Singing & Music in Church

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