

HOW TO PRONOUNCE THE GREEK ALPHABET

The Greek language has 7 vowels (**α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω**) but only 5 basic vowel sounds. Thus **η, ι, υ** are all pronounced as the **i** in **inner**. In comparison the English language has 5 vowels which can be pronounced in 20 basic vowel sounds.

Of the 8 basic Greek diphthongs, 4 make the same vowel sounds as the basic vowels, **ου** is pronounced as the English **ou** in **You** and the remaining 3 - **αυ, ευ, ηυ** - make the sound of the first vowel with the sound of the consonant **v** at the end. In the transliteration, all the diphthongs with the exception of **ou** are written as single vowels so in places where there are consecutive vowels, they must be pronounced separately e.g. **ελέison** = e-lé-i-son, **Ιισού** = I-i-soú, **zoobió** = zo-o-bi-ó.

Many of the consonants are pronounced as they are in English, but some need special attention. For example, let's take the first 4 letters of the Greek Alphabet. Traditionally they are known in English as Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta, but apart from Alpha, they are not pronounced as they are read in English. A more proper phonetic translation would be – Alpha, Vida, Yamma and Thelda. Thus the Greek **B** has an English **V** sound, the **Γ** has a **Y** sound and the **Δ** has a **Th** sound as in the words **The**, **They** or **Thee**.

Five more consonants need careful pronunciation.

Θ as **Δ** is also pronounced as a **Th**, but as in **Third** or **Thesis**. To distinguish between the two **Th** sounds I has used **Th** for **Θ** and **Dh** for **Δ**.

Κ is usually translated as **K** but has the sound of the English **G** as in **Go** or **Give**. When 2 **κκ** are used then the sound can be either like a double **gg** or like the English **C** or **K** in **Cat**, **Kite**.

Π is usually translated as **P**, but has the sound of the English **B**. When 2 **ππ** are used they produce the English sound **P**.

Ρ is the Greek **R** but is pronounced stronger than the English **R** and with a roll of the tongue.

Τ is usually translated as the English **T** but has the sound of the English **D**. When 2 **ττ** are used they produce the sound of the English **T** as in **Taxi**, **Attic**, etc. A single **τ** can also produce a soft **t** sound after some consonants or diphthongs as in **αυτό**.

Some combined consonants have no English equivalent sound e.g. **αγνοία** **Αγνή**, **Γραφάς**. **Γν, γν** and **Γρ, γρ** are traditionally translated as **Gn, gn** and **Gr, gr** as in words like **Gnostic**, **Agnes** and **graphic**, but in Greek there is no **g** sound in these words, thus I have kept to the Greek **Γ** as **Y** – **Γραφάς** – **Yrafás**, **αγνοία** – **aynía**. . Someone wishing to use the phonetic transliteration for the Divine Liturgy must audibly hear these sounds to produce them correctly.

The Greek Alphabet

- A α** - as in **A**pple
B β - as the English **V**
Γ γ - as the English **Y** as in **Y**es
Δ δ - as the English **Th** as in **Th**ey, **Th**ee. **Dh** in translation
E ε - as in **E**mpy, **E**mperor
Z ζ - as the English **Z** as in **Z**ebra
H η - as the English **I** as in **I**nn
Θ θ - as the English **Th** as in **Th**ird or **Th**esis
I ι - as the English **I** as in **I**nn
K κ - the English **G** as in **G**o or **G**ive. Two **kk** are pronounced as the English **C** in **C**at
Λ λ - as the English **L**
M μ - as the English **M**
N ν - as the English **N**
Ξ ξ - as the English **X** in **E**xtr
O ο - as the English **O** in **G**od
Π π - as the English **B**. Two **ππ** are pronounced as the English **P**
P ρ - as the English **R** but with a stronger roll of the **r**
Σ σ ς - as the English **S**
T τ - as the English **D**. Two **ττ** are pronounced as the English **tt** in **attic**
Υ υ - the English **I** as in **I**nn
Φ φ - as the English **F** or **Ph**
X χ - as the English **H** in **H**at
Ψ ψ - as the English **Ps** pronouncing both the **P** and **S** together as in **Psalter**
Ω ω - as the English **O** in **G**od

The Diphthongs

- Aι αι** - as in **E**mpy, **E**mperor
Αυ αυ - as the English **Av** as in **A**varice
Eι ει - as the English **I** as in **I**nn
Eυ ευ - as the English **Ev** in **E**very, **E**ver
Hυ ηυ - as the English **iv** as in **g**ive
Oυ ου - as the English **ou** in **Y**ou
Oι οι - as the English **I** as in **I**nn
Yι υι - as the English **I** as in **I**nn

Source: http://www.christopherklitou.com/a_note_on_the_phonetic_transliteration.htm