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Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. (Eph. 5:19)

By far the largest single element in the Church's Divine services is the Psalms of David. Of them St. John Chrysostom has said: "If we keep vigil in church, David comes first, last and central. If early in the morning we want songs and hymns, first, last and central is David again. If we are occupied with the funeral solemnities of those who have fallen asleep, or if virgins sit at home and spin, David is first, last and central. O amazing wonder! Many who have made little progress in literature know the Psalter by heart. Nor is it only in cities and churches that David is famous; in the village market, in the desert, and in uninhabitable land, he excites the praise of God. In monasteries, among those holy choirs of angelic armies, David is first, last and central. In the convents of virgins, where are the communities of those who imitate Mary; in the deserts where there are men crucified to the world, who live their life in heaven with God, David is first, last and central. All other men at night are overcome by sleep. David alone is active, and gathering the servants of God into seraphic bands, he turns earth into heaven, and converts men into angels."

The function of the Psalms in the Orthodox Christian spiritual life has been well set forth by St. Basil the Great: "When the Holy Spirit saw that the human race was guided only with difficulty toward virtue, and that, because of our inclination toward pleasure, we were neglectful of an upright life, what did He do? The delight of melody He mingled with the doctrines so that by the pleasantness and softness of the sound heard we might receive without perceiving it the benefit of the words, just as wise physicians who, when giving the fastidious rather bitter drugs to drink, frequently smear the cup with honey. Therefore, He devised for us these harmonious melodies of the Psalms, that they who are children in age, or even those who are youthful in disposition, might to all appearances chant but, in reality, become trained in soul. For never has any one of the many indifferent persons gone away easily holding in mind either an apostolic or prophetic message but they do chant the words of the Psalms, even in the home, and they spread them about in the market place, and if, perchance, someone becomes exceedingly wrathful, when he begins to be soothed by a Psalm, he departs with the wrath of his soul immediately lulled to sleep by means of the melody." (Homily X, 1; On Psalm I.)

In our own times of such feeble Christian life, alas, these words of the Holy Fathers have largely lost their force. Where, even among Orthodox Christians, is the Psalter still read and sung? And yet it is a central part of the Church's Typicon, of the standard against which we must measure our own Christian worship a central part of the normal Christian life towards which we must constantly strive. The Blessed Archbishop John Maximovitch, striving to awaken his flock to a more conscious participation in the Church's life, published the following appeal in his weekly diocesan bulletin (Shanghai, November 24, 1941, no. 503):


"Perhaps it will happen that you will die without having once in your life read in full the Psalter of David... You will die, and only then will good people read over your lifeless body this holy Psalter, which you had no time even, to open while you lived on earth! Only then, at your burial, will they sing over you the wondrously instructive, sweetly-wise-but alas, to you completely unknown-words of David: *B l e s s e d a r e t h e y w h o s e e K i n g .* Open it and read with attention at least this 118th Psalm, and you will involuntarily feel that you soft, that in the words of David are the words of the merit of God, and you will repeat involuntarily, many times, with sighing

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None for this article right now, though you may find links to other articles in the text itself.


I **c** **o**




Guardian Angel with Girl




Guardian Angel with Boy



Icon of Christ "Pantocrator"



St. Xenia of Petersburg



St. John of San Francisco

of heart, the verse of this Psalm: *I h a v e g o n e a s t r a y*

The Psalter, of course, may be read at any time, but it will be good here to give indication of the Church's Typicon concerning the reading and singing of the Psalms in church, especially now when there are few places remaining where the Psalter read at all in church, beyond a few Psalms at the Sunday Matins. Perhaps the discovery the Church's inspiring ideal in this regard will arouse some of the faithful even to restore in their own life of prayer something of the order which should prevail the holy churches of God!

First of all, the entire Psalter is appointed to be read through once every week in church (twice during the weeks of Great Lent). In order to do this, the entire 150 Psalms are divided up into 20 *k a t h i s m a t a* following the numeration of the Psalms in the Septuagint or Greek Psalter): [1]

<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	1: Psalms 1-3, 4-6, 7-8	<i>K a t</i>
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	2: 9 -10, 11 -13/ 14 -16	<i>a</i> 12: 85-87, 8
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	3: 17 , 18- 20 , 21 -23	<i>a</i> 13: 91-93, 9
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	4: 24-26, 27-29, 30-31	<i>K a t</i>
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	5: 32 -33, 34 -3 5 , 36	<i>a</i> 15: 106, 10
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	6: 37-39, 40-42, 43-45	<i>K a t</i>
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	7: 40-48, 49-50, 51-54	<i>K a t</i>
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	8: 55-57, 58-60, 61-63	<i>K a t</i>
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	9: 64 -66, 67 , 68 -69	<i>a</i> 19: 134-136
<i>K a t h i s m a</i>	10: 70-71, 72-73, 74-76	<i>K a t</i>

The weekly reading of the Psalter is begun with the Vespers of Saturday, when new weekly cycle of the Octoechos is begun. At Saturday Vespers the first kathisma sung (not read, as will be explained in a later chapter), and at Sunday Matins the second and third kathismata are read. For the rest of the week three kathismata are read daily, as follows:

Monday: Kathismata 4, 5, 6

Tuesday: Kathismata 7, 8, 9

Wednesday: Kathismata 10, 11, 12

Thursday: Kathismata 13, 14, 15

Friday: Kathismata 19, 20, 18

Saturday: Kathismata 16, 17, 1

Generally the first two kathismata appointed each day are read at Matins, and the third kathisma at Vespers. [2] At the Vespers of Sundays and great feasts no kathisma is read, as the Typicon says, "due to the labor of the vigil" which has preceded.

The Psalms are read, not in a normal reading tone, but in a kind of "recitative" or monotone, which may most easily be executed by beginning as if to sing on one note which is convenient for one's voice, and then continuing to read on this same note. No particular expression should be given to any words or phrases, and the voice should not drop at the end of any phrase, but should remain always at about the same level, yet without any attempt to pronounce every word in an artificially uniform or featureless manner. The reading should be slow enough that the words can be understood, but not so slow that an effect of "dragging" is created. This traditional church reading, which with practice comes to seem very natural, is immediately distinct from worldly reading (as of newspapers), and helps set the proper tone in which the sacred words can enter one's heart. At the end of every section of every kathisma, the following words are read in the same tone of voice, or actually sung on one note: *A l l e l u i a , a l l e l u i a , a l l e g l o r y t o T h e e , O G o d . L b o t h n o w a n d e v e r a n d*

Since most parish churches do not have daily services, it is obvious that most Orthodox Christians do not hear the Psalter every week in church. Indeed, the weekly reading of the Psalter entails considerable labor (even though it is much less than the labor of the early monks who read the Psalter *d a i l y*), and it is only in a few of the larger monasteries performed in its entirety. As a concession to the weakness of contemporary Orthodox Christians, the late Archbishop [Saint] John Maximovitch had as his rule to read in church the whole Psalter every two weeks, by reading the first kathisma of Matins on weeks when the Tone of the Octoechos was *o d d* (1, 3, 5, 7), and the second kathisma when the Tone of the *O e v e n* (2, 4, 6, 8). (The Tone for the week is indicated in Orthodox calendars on the Sunday which begins the week. The result might be obtained by dividing each kathisma in half and reading the first half of both when the Tone is odd, the second half when the Tone is even. And indeed, any arrangement by which one reads the Psalms regularly, even if only a single Psalm or section of Psalms daily at Morning or Evening Prayers, is a good, beginning. [3] Any Orthodox Christian can read the

