

Introduction

Eventually, everyone comes to dwell in darkness. Sooner or later, disaster strikes all the children of men, and we suffer heart-break, loss, bereavement and pain. It may come dramatically with a doctor's announcement, saying that he has some bad news from the test results, or it may come unexpectedly with a visit from a policeman, saying that a loved one was involved in a tragedy. Suffering may come with divorce, or trouble with erring children. It may come as chronic pain from a debilitating disease; it may come as a depression which will not lift. One may suffer a loving friend and support moving away, or one may move away oneself, finding isolation in a strange and bewildering new place. It may come from a broken romance, or loneliness from failure to find a life partner. But eventually, everyone comes to dwell in darkness.

It is just at that time that one needs to turn to Jesus, the one and only Light of the world, and the only rescue for those in the darkness of pain and despair. When one passes through those times of pain which wring the heart, one is called not to *break down* but to *break through*. Just as there is a sound barrier, so there is a kind of praise barrier, and one breaks through the darkness by offering praise to God. Praise at such times is not offered as the fruit of a contented and happy mood. Such praise is not the result of a feeling. It is offered in the teeth of feelings of pain, and in spite of emotional numbness which such feelings of pain can bring.

Such praise is offered to God as a pure act of obedience, as a naked act of the will. It comes from a place deep down, from the heart which lives beneath the daily swirl of feelings. Such acts of praise are acts of defiance, through which we defy the darkness, and confess our faith in God who lives above this vale of tears and who calls us to Himself.

That is why, perhaps, such praise breaks through. When one is able to praise God in such circumstances, one is acknowledging that one is not the Center of the universe, and that one's pain and loss, though personally difficult, have not displaced the cosmos, or changed the faithfulness of God. Like Job looking to God who appeared to him out of the whirlwind, we lift our eyes from ourselves to behold the Lord, and find a whole new perspective and peace. We acknowledge that although our life is temporarily in tatters, God remains on the throne, and He will make it all right—either in this age or the next.

The following Akathist, then, is offered and dedicated to all who sojourn in the darkness, with the prayer that they will use such praises as this to break through. When one is so troubled that one cannot speak (Ps. 77:4), here are some words to speak. For God *is* on the throne, judging righteously, and He makes all things work together for good for those whom He calls, even for those who, just for now, are called to dwell for a time in the dark. Jesus is the Light to those who sojourn there. By His Spirit, we can defy that darkness until He brings us into His glorious light.

--Archpriest Lawrence R. Farley

Akathist to Jesus, Light to those in Darkness

Kontakion 1 (Tone 7)

Out of the depths of darkness and despair I cry to You, O Lord, You that hung upon the Cross in darkness. From the pit of pain and confusion, I lift up this prayer, and with all my heart I sing aloud to You: Jesus, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Ikos 1 (see Ps. 77)

In the day of my trouble, I seek You, O Lord, and in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying. My eyes find no rest from weeping, and I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Yet as my spirit ponders in the night, I raise this song to You:

JESUS, rescuer of the abandoned!
JESUS, hope of those in despair!
JESUS, guiding star to the lost!
JESUS, joyful return of the exile!
JESUS, unforeseen victory!
JESUS, eternal triumph!
JESUS, radiant dawn after endless night!
JESUS, everlasting light of the Kingdom!
JESUS, wipe away my tears!
JESUS, calm the panic of my heart!
JESUS, exultation of those hemmed in by fear!
JESUS, joy of those crushed by sorrow!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 2 (see Ps. 88)

O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried out to You day and night. My soul is full of troubles and my life has drawn near to Sheol. I lie in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep; my friends and those who love me are removed far from me, and my companions are in darkness. But by Your grace, I defy the darkness, and I declare Your saving help in the land of forgetfulness, crying aloud, Alleluia!

Ikos 2

Sorrow has isolated me from all those around me, and I cannot feel Your love either, O Lord. I walk about in the light like one forsaken among the dead, like the slain who molder in the grave whom You remember no more. But You are the One who performs wonders for the dead, and whose steadfast love is declared in the grave. Trusting in You alone, I make known Your wonders:

JESUS, comforter of the bereaved!
JESUS, consoler of the dying!
JESUS, liberty of the imprisoned and forgotten!
JESUS, companion of the divorced and abandoned!

JESUS, grant peace to a heart in turmoil!
JESUS, work through me to touch others in pain!
JESUS, calmer of storms!
JESUS, haven of the voyager!
JESUS, resurrection for those whose children have died!
JESUS, serenity for those in chronic pain!
JESUS, promise of final triumph!
JESUS, possession of invincible peace!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 3: (*see Ps. 143*)

The enemy has pursued my soul, O Lord, he has crushed my life to the ground, and I am made to sit in darkness, like those who have been long dead. My spirit within me is overwhelmed by depression, and my heart within is appalled. But I am Your servant, O merciful God, and Your good Spirit will lead me on level paths with renewed strength. Looking to that day, even now I stretch out my hands, crying: Alleluia!

Ikos 3

Despite the attacks of my spiritual foes, I put my trust in You, O Saviour, knowing that You will teach me the way in which I should walk in safety. Though I dwell in parched land, I look to You for the water of life, offering to You such songs as these:

JESUS, shield and buckler!
JESUS, unfailing defense!
JESUS, well-spring in the desert!
JESUS, fountain of the Kingdom!
JESUS, drive away all depression!
JESUS, be my radiance of heart!
JESUS, security in the midst of enemies!
JESUS, hope when all other hope is lost!
JESUS, pledge of eternal gladness!
JESUS, banisher of life's shadows!
JESUS, vindicate my innocence!
JESUS, forgive all my sins!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 4 (*see Mt. 15:21:28, Ps. 54*)

The Syro-Phoenician woman whose daughter was cruelly demon-possessed shouted after You, O Son of David, only to learn that You were sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Despite Your silence, the faith of this Gentile found Your compassion, and she returned home singing: Alleluia!

Ikos 4

Despite my many and ceaseless supplications, I can find no answer, O Lord, and my heart is too tired to go on. I feel unworthy even to gather up the crumbs under Your table, and from all sides I find nothing but discouragement. But knowing that You save those who invoke Your Name, O Jesus, and trusting that You will give ear to the words of my mouth, I bow down before You, saying:

JESUS, welcomer of strangers!

JESUS, boast of the saints!

JESUS, save me as I chant Your Name with love!

JESUS, vindicate me as I cling to Your mercy with faith!

JESUS, pardoner of my many offences!

JESUS, healer of my sinful heart!

JESUS, feeder of children!

JESUS, feast of the poor!

JESUS, King who gives strength to the weary!

JESUS, Master who grants deliverance to the oppressed!

JESUS, destroyer of demons!

JESUS, song of the angels!

JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 5 (see Mk. 10:46-52, Ps. 57)

The blind beggar Bartimaeus thought that You would pass him by, O Saviour, and though many rebuked him, he did not cease to cry, “Have mercy on me, Son of David!” In Your customary lovingkindness, You called him to Yourself and granted him illumination, so that he followed You on the way, singing Alleluia!

Ikos 5

Like a child left alone in the dark, I cry out to You, Son of David, taking refuge in the shadow of Your wings until the storms of destruction pass by. Though my soul is among lions who roar out that there is no salvation for me, my heart is steadfast and I sing these praises:

JESUS, sight for the blind!

JESUS, wealth for the beggar!

JESUS, harbour for those who are bestormed!

JESUS, fortress for all who are besieged!

JESUS, Your glory is above the heavens!

JESUS, Your radiance fills the earth!

JESUS, exaltation of the transcendent Father!

JESUS, bestower of the life-giving Spirit!

JESUS, hear my cry when all others are deaf!

JESUS, call me to Your throne and save me!

JESUS, bottomless ocean of mercy!

JESUS, infinite firmament of truth!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 6 (see Ps. 42-43)

Like the deer who pants for flowing streams, like the parent who mourns the loss of a child, I am left breathless. Grief grips me, and my tears have been my food day and night. Although all the waves of panic have rolled over me, You remain the help of my countenance, O God, and my song to You in the night remains: Alleluia!

Ikos 6

The joy of Paschal processions around the House of God remains a distant memory, O Lord, and my soul is in despair. All my former faith has been disturbed, so that I say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me?" But the Lord will yet command His steadfast love to me, and hoping in His help I praise Him, saying:

JESUS, joy of homecoming for those on earth!
JESUS, long-awaited reunion with all in heaven!
JESUS, dry my bitter tears!
JESUS, restore my forgotten song!
JESUS, light sent out from the luminous Father!
JESUS, truth that leads us to the heavenly altar of God!
JESUS, celebration that lifts the heavy heart!
JESUS, tranquility that calms the troubled mind!
JESUS, return of celebration for the down-cast!
JESUS, restoration of festivity for the weary!
JESUS, You that make the woeful to dance!
JESUS, You that make the depressed to sing!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 7 (see Mk. 5:21-24, 35-43)

The man whose young daughter had just died was in anguish, O Lord, when it seemed that Your coming to save her was too late. But You told him to fear not, but to have faith, and with a simple command You raised the girl from death. Beside himself with joy, the bereaved parent exclaimed, Alleluia!

Ikos 7

Like those whose houses are made desolate by death, my own home is filled with mourning, and I look to the dawning of each new day with fear. But keeping my faith in You, I trample down my fear, and open my mouth with defiance to offer these hymns to You, O Life-giving Lord:

JESUS, vanquisher of hell!
JESUS, giver of resurrection!
JESUS, banish my fear of the future!

JESUS, heal the sorrows of my past!
JESUS, redeem my soul in peace from the battle with my foes!
JESUS, conquer my many spiritual enemies!
JESUS, You that put despair to flight!
JESUS, You that fill the heart with hope!
JESUS, light that no darkness can extinguish!
JESUS, joy that no sorrow can quench!
JESUS, glorious liberty of the children of God!
JESUS, endless song of those raised to new life!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 8 (*see Mk. 5:25-34, Ps. 38*)

The woman with a hemorrhage suffered for many years, growing only worse for all the money she had spent on physicians. In her uncleanness, she was afraid to approach You, O Lord, and so she secretly touched the hem of Your garment to find healing. But when You found her in the crowd, You took away her fears as well as her disease and dismissed her in peace. When she experienced Your unexpected compassion, her heart leaped up and cried, Alleluia!

Ikos 8

O Lord, there is no soundness in my flesh and my pain is ever with me. My wounds grow foul and fester, and I go about mourning all the day. Though many try to comfort me, I am benumbed, and find only groaning because of the tumult of my heart. But You are not far from me, O my God, and You will make haste to help me. Therefore I open my mouth in praise to the Lord my salvation, saying:

JESUS, health of my bones!
JESUS, promise of my resurrection!
JESUS, unfailing strength!
JESUS, forgiveness of my folly!
JESUS, healing for all who just touch the hem of Your robe!
JESUS, restoration for all who but trust in Your mercy!
JESUS, sudden joy!
JESUS, eternal exultation!
JESUS, hold me up when I am ready to fall!
JESUS, forgive me when my iniquities go over my head!
JESUS, power of my youth!
JESUS, wisdom of my old age!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 9 (*see Mk. 5:1-20, Ps. 56*)

The Gadarene demoniac was overwhelmed by a legion of demons within, O saving Master, and he dwelt in the deserts of despair, for no human chains were strong enough to restrain his fury. Seeing his Saviour come near, he ran up to Him and bowed down

before Him, imploring deliverance. When You drove out his enemies and drowned his sins in the depths of the sea, he breathed forth a sigh of peace, saying Alleluia!

Ikos 9

My spiritual foes have trampled me to the ground, O Lord my God, for they are many who fight against me. A legion of internal sins fights proudly against me, lurking to trip up my every step. Yet You have seen all my tears, O Christ, and noted all my grief in Your book, and You will deliver my feet from falling so that I may walk before You in the light of life, praising Your word and saying:

JESUS, absolution of the condemned!

JESUS, song of the forgiven!

JESUS, drive away my countless foes!

JESUS, forgive the multitude of my sins!

JESUS, robe of the naked!

JESUS, sanity for the distracted!

JESUS, terror of demons who fly from Your Name!

JESUS, hymn of the angels who draw near to Your love!

JESUS, You that wipe away my tears!

JESUS, You that calm my agitation!

JESUS, You that bring joy to those in the desert!

JESUS, You that restore the exile to his home!

JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 10 (see Lk. 7:11-17)

The widow whose only son had died was left all alone in the world, abandoned by those who had loved her. When her son was being carried out to burial, the Lord met her and bade her dry her tears. With a word he raised the young man to new life, teaching all there to change their funeral dirge to the song Alleluia!

Ikos 10

O Lord, I am separated from the one who once loved me, and sorrow has estranged me from my friends. I am weary with crying, and my eyes fail while I wait for my God. Emptiness and loneliness crush me every night, and meaninglessness haunts me by day. From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint, lifting up to You these praises:

JESUS, unfailing friend for the abandoned!

JESUS, lover of my soul!

JESUS, serenity for those in the midst of storms!

JESUS, renewed strength for the burdened!

JESUS, fill the emptiness of my heart!

JESUS, use me as the instrument of Your peace!

JESUS, strength for the day of battle!

JESUS, banner of glorious victory!

JESUS, healer of the past!
JESUS, guide for the future!
JESUS, triumphant forgiveness!
JESUS, eternal vindication!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 11 (see Jn. 11:1-44, Ps. 6)

Jesus allowed His beloved friend Lazarus to face the bitterness of death, so that he lay in the tomb for four days, his flesh experiencing corruption. But Christ came into the world to trample down death, and with a mighty cry He summoned Lazarus from the depths, so that the man doomed to death emerged from the tomb to cry: Alleluia!

Ikos 11

That which I greatly feared has come upon me, and death looms before me. My faith in which I trusted is no defense against the cold fear that grips my heart, and every night I flood my bed with tears. But You, O Jesus, are the resurrection and the life, and even in Sheol I will not cease to give You praise:
JESUS, hope of those sentenced to death!
JESUS, resurrection of those who believe in Your word!
JESUS, song that no fear can silence!
JESUS, tranquility that no horror can shake!
JESUS, raise my eyes from death to see Your unfading Kingdom!
JESUS, fill my heart with the promise of Your unending life!
JESUS, radiant glory of those facing death!
JESUS, timeless boast of the martyrs!
JESUS, courage in the face of mortal danger!
JESUS, constancy before continual trial!
JESUS, divine glory, transfiguring the wounded hearts!
JESUS, victory of God, bringing the embattled home!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 12 (see Lk. 22:41-44, Heb. 5:7-9)

With loud cries and tears, O Jesus, You asked that the cup of grief might be removed from You, and sweat from Your holy body fell like drops of blood. Though all Your disciples forsook You and fled, O Christ, You never faltered, but fulfilled the will of the Father until the end. Marveling at Your faithfulness, we who are weak exclaim, Alleluia!

Ikos 12

For the sake of us men and for our salvation, O Son of God, You hung upon the Cross. Though You cried out that God had forsaken You, in obedience You drained the cup of suffering to its very dregs. Though all those around You jeered at You and blasphemed, You committed Your spirit into the Father's hands and died in the darkness. Struck with awe at this mystery, we sinners cry from the depths of our souls:

JESUS, Lamb whose meekness is stronger than the world!
JESUS, Sacrifice whose Blood washes clean the whole earth!
JESUS, rejected by men, obedient to the death of the Cross!
JESUS, King of the ages, ruling from the heavenly throne!
JESUS, keep me from failing in the hour of trial!
JESUS, strengthen me for the impending battle!
JESUS, whose death on the Tree tramples down my mortality!
JESUS, whose lifting up on the Cross casts down the ruler of this age!
JESUS, everlasting Pascha and power of God!
JESUS, universal Kingdom given to us sinners!
JESUS, light of the despairing children of the earth!
JESUS, light of the triumphant saints in glory!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Kontakion 13 (said thrice)

O Jesus our Lord, God and Saviour, in Your word alone we put our trust. Though suffering and agitation fill our minds, we reach up through the darkness to seize Your hand and receive Your mercy. Be our joy and peace as we pass through this terrible valley, and carry us through when our strength fails that we may sing to You through the ages, Alleluia!

And again,

Ikos 1

In the day of my trouble, I seek You, O Lord, and in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying. My eyes find no rest from weeping, and I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Yet as my spirit ponders in the night, I raise this song to You:

JESUS, rescuer of the abandoned!
JESUS, hope of those in despair!
JESUS, guiding star to the lost!
JESUS, joyful return of the exile!
JESUS, unforeseen victory!
JESUS, eternal triumph!
JESUS, radiant dawn after endless night!
JESUS, everlasting light of the Kingdom!
JESUS, wipe away my tears!
JESUS, calm the panic of my heart!
JESUS, exultation of those hemmed in by fear!
JESUS, joy of those crushed by sorrow!
JESUS, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Then:

Kontakion 1 (Tone 7):

Out of the depths of darkness and despair I cry to You, O Lord, You that hung upon the Cross in darkness. From the pit of pain and confusion, I lift up this prayer, and with all my heart I sing aloud to You: Jesus, light to those in darkness, glory to You!

Prayer:

O Jesus our King, have mercy on us as we struggle, and receive our songs as a fragrant offering and a sweet-smelling sacrifice. In all our turmoil, emptiness and suffering, we turn to You, praising You for Your great glory. Lift us up as a father lifts up his little child, and bring us through this season of darkness and pain into Your marvelous light. Resolve our distresses as You will, according to Your great wisdom and love. We accept all that comes from Your merciful hand, and ask that You grant us to do Your will. Thus strengthened to walk in a way that is pleasing to You, to our last breath we never cease to praise Your most holy Name, together with that of Your Father who has no beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Amen.