

A New Akathist for St. Herman



by Fr. Lawrence Farley

Introduction

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Once upon a time I had the privilege of being at a lecture given by the very wonderful Father Michael Oleksa, well-known author of the book *Orthodox Alaska*. Fr. Michael was giving a lecture to a group of us Canadian Orthodox clergy, and saying that, despite the “standard” akathist which lauds St. Herman almost exclusively for his prowess as a monk, he was famous among those who first knew him and loved him mostly as their protector, patron and advocate. What mattered to them and convinced them of his sanctity was not so much his monastic podvigs, as his loving protection and his ceaseless advocacy on their behalf.

The newly-converted Alaskan natives found themselves oppressed and defenseless, exploited by the Russian fur-traders who came among them solely to enrich themselves. In Father Herman, they found their advocate, one who would stand up for them against the powerful of this world, even at great personal cost to himself. The standard akathist to St. Herman, while lauding his monastic accomplishments, seemed to Fr. Michael somewhat deficient in its appreciation of this aspect of Father Herman’s life.

As I sat listening to Fr. Michael, a desire was kindled in my heart to try to remedy this deficiency. And as he spoke, my bishop of that time, who was also among those listening to Fr. Michael, sidled up to me quietly and asked me to write a new akathist, giving expression to this aspect of St. Herman’s life which first so impressed his Alaskan spiritual children. Of course I complied, and promptly wrote a new akathist for the patron saint of my parish, securing my bishop’s blessing for its local use.

In writing this akathist I searched St. Herman’s *Prima Vita*, including his extant letters, to provide material for the liturgical poetry. The akathist is found below. Anyone wanting a printed bound paperback edition of (with a colour cover icon of St. Herman and footnotes) please email me at: fatherlawrencefarley@gmail.com. It is available for approximate cost of printing at \$5.00, plus postage for a total of \$7.00.

A NEW AKATHIST TO ST. HERMAN

Kontakion 1 (Tone 4)

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska, advocate of the oppressed, and protector of defenseless orphans: cool the heat of sorrow which melts our hearts, wipe away our tears and grant us to know the meaning of consolation. Pray for us your children that with new strength we may glorify God and sing to you:

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Ikos 1

The Lord of Hosts chose you, O blessed Father Herman, to be His warrior in the far north, fighting your way through the regiments of the unseen enemy and leading us, your fellow soldiers, to our heavenly homeland. Now that Christ has crowned you with the laurels of victory, we offer you these songs of praise:

Rejoice, struggler against world rulers of this present darkness!

Rejoice, victor over the spiritual hosts of wickedness under heaven!

Rejoice, warrior triumphant over the forces of evil!

Rejoice, athlete who vanquishes the demonic adversary!

Rejoice, valiant pilgrim journeying through this life to life eternal!

Rejoice, unerring guide to our homeland in heaven!

Rejoice, standard-bearer of the army of Christ!

Rejoice, sign of God's great mercy to sinners!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 2

Aflame with love for the souls of the lost, O blessed Father Herman, you left Valaam monastery with nine others of the angelic life, traversing all the Russian lands to bring the Gospel to those at the ends of the earth. Zeal for the salvation of America hastened your steps as you travelled and sang to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 2

Arriving at Kodiak Island, with your fellow missionaries you built the Church of the Resurrection for the worship of the Saviour of all, and worked in humility in the bakery, caring for the needs of your brothers. Glorifying God for your perseverance and humility, we cry aloud to you:

Rejoice, you whose prayers fill the hungry with food!

Rejoice, you whose words bring us the Bread of Heaven!

Rejoice, lowly Herman, for your lowliness has brought you to the heights!

Rejoice, humble monk, for your humility has exalted you to heaven!

Rejoice, worshipper of the risen Christ, for your prayers sustain us all!

Rejoice, friend of the heavenly saints, for your love brings us home to God!

Rejoice, teacher of piety and fervent prayer!

Rejoice, bringer of the joy of the Resurrection!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 3

Driven from Kodiak by those who would exploit the newly-converted children of God, O blessed Father Herman, you retired to Spruce Island, digging a cave for your dwelling with your own hands and establishing your hermitage of New Valaam. United in bonds of love to your abbot Nazarius and his monks in far-away Russia, you nursed the souls of your converts in Alaska, teaching them to sing to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 3

Working with your spiritual daughter Sophia, and upheld by the divine wisdom, O blessed Father Herman, you taught the children at your school, and sustained with love all who came to you, inspiring them with your holy joy. For forty years you lived among them as their advocate and protector, a sign of God's compassion for all men. Trusting in your constant love, we lift up our voices and say:

Rejoice, Grandfather to little children!

Rejoice, Father to all who seek your aid!

Rejoice, gentle embrace of the Good Shepherd!

Rejoice, healing touch of the mighty Saviour!

Rejoice, shield to those attacked by the foe!

Rejoice, shelter for those who take refuge in Christ!

Rejoice, wisdom of the Father, hidden in the far northern wilderness!

Rejoice, light of Christ, shining forth to all the world!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 4

O blessed Elder of the north, you saved from disaster those who trusted in you, for when they were menaced by a flood, you put an icon of the Theotokos on the beach, declaring that the waters would go no further than that place; and so it came to pass. Marvelling at your faith and your miracles, we glorify God, singing to you:

Alleluia!

Ikos 4

When a forest fire threatened your beloved children, O blessed Father Herman, you dug a trench, and said, “Be at peace; the fire will not cross this line”, and your words were fulfilled. Seeing how God is wonderful in His saints, we bring to you these praises:

Rejoice, you whose faith is stronger than raging forest fire!

Rejoice, you whose prayers save us from the eternal fire to come!

Rejoice, bringer of peace to the anguished and anxious!

Rejoice, giver of joy to the hopeless and despairing!

Rejoice, our bulwark against disaster and ruin!

Rejoice, our intercessor and friend to those in need!

Rejoice, tireless worker for those whose strength is gone!

Rejoice, ceaseless intercessor for those in need!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 5

Like a desert-dweller of old, O venerable Elder, you subdued your flesh by wearing heavy chains, having only a rough board for your blanket, and none could imitate your deeds. Your hard life brought you the grace of the Spirit, and overflowing with divine grace, you sang to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 5

Through the grace given to you, O blessed Father Herman, you made the wilderness a Paradise, for you tamed the wild animals, feeding both the ermine and the bear with your hands. Through you the monastic desert flowers again in the New World, adorning the Church here with divine beauty, and causing us to sing:

Rejoice, you who taught us to seek the joys above!

Rejoice, you whose prayers now help us toiling here below!

Rejoice, for you warred mightily against the demons who assailed you!

Rejoice, for your intercessions rescue us from every attack of the foe!

Rejoice, example for monastics striving in solitude!

Rejoice, help of all Christians struggling in the world!

Rejoice, for by your help we subdue our savage passions!

Rejoice, for by your aid we rise up to God!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 6

Though living in solitude in the forest of Spruce Island, O blessed Father Herman, you were never alone, for you had God and His holy angels as your companions. Hidden from the eyes of men, you poured out your soul to the God of heaven in prayers and psalms and freely conversed with the angels, who joined you in your praises, crying: Alleluia!

Ikos 6

Like a treasure hidden in a field, O blessed Father Herman, you remained hidden in the forest of Spruce Island, singing aloud to the Holy Trinity and turning the unkept woodland into a temple of God. All the trees of the forest sing for joy with you, as from the ends of the earth you cry, "Glory to the Righteous One!" Inspired by your praises, we also cry out:

Rejoice, converser with angels and benefactor of men!

Rejoice, faithful intercessor and devotee of Christ!

Rejoice, God's treasure, hidden in the far north!

Rejoice, citizen of the Kingdom, dwelling in the heavenly Zion!

Rejoice, joy of all the earth, adornment of the Church!

Rejoice, stronghold of the weak, protection of all who seek your intercession!

Rejoice, unending song of praise, rising from the silent snows!

Rejoice, unquenchable flame of faith, burning in the darkness of this age!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 7

Although those who exploited and hurt your poor American children persecuted you as well, O blessed Father Herman, you never abandoned those who took refuge in your love. Rather, you remonstrated with the ones who were glorious on the earth, and ceaselessly cried to the God of heaven. Now that God has heard your prayers and vindicated you, you hear from all your Church the song: Alleluia!

Ikos 7

Although those who persecuted you deprived you even of paper for keeping Church records, O blessed Father Herman, your many accomplishments and great deeds are written in heaven. Those you baptized acclaim you in the Kingdom; the many whose tears you wiped away give thanks to God for you before His throne. Joining with these multitudes in heaven, we on earth offer these praises:

Rejoice, gentle shepherd of the lambs of Christ!

Rejoice, mighty champion of the children of God!

Rejoice, for you spoke truth to the powerful of the land!

Rejoice, for your courage gave new hope to the oppressed!

Rejoice, comforter of orphans and teacher of the truth!

Rejoice, light to those who seek the pathway to heaven!

Rejoice, you that endured persecution for the sake of righteousness!

Rejoice, you that now have your great reward in the Kingdom of heaven!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 8

You walked among the worldly-wise as a spiritual man, O blessed Father Herman, for God gave you a mouth and a wisdom which none of them could refute or resist. In the midst of Russian sailors, you spoke the Gospel with such power that all were at a loss before your wisdom, and you taught them to love God above all else.

Glorifying God who makes foolish the wisdom of the world, we sing aloud: Alleluia!

Ikos 8

God gave you His little ones, the humble of the earth, O blessed Father Herman, that you might teach them His ways and guide them to heaven. You were a blazing light to those in darkness, a patient instructor in righteousness, a rescuing hand for those sinking in error. We who love the Orthodox Way you brought to Alaska turn to you and say:

Rejoice, you who love the Law of God!

Rejoice, you who proclaim the Gospel of the Lord!

Rejoice, for your testimony makes wise the simple!

Rejoice, for your teaching restores our souls!

Rejoice, delight of little orphans!

Rejoice, boast of aged elders!

Rejoice, beacon to those lost in darkness!

Rejoice, refuge for those weary of their sins!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 9

The feet which carried you across the Russian continent were beautiful, O blessed Father Herman, for you came bearing Good News of Christ's salvation. Over seven thousand received baptism when your Mission came to Alaska, and still you reached out to bring more lost sheep into the Lord's saving fold. This mighty throng now stands before the throne of God, praising His grace and singing: Alleluia!

Ikos 9

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and we who have witnessed your life also proclaim your wonders, O blessed Father Herman. As God's handiwork, you revealed to all His power to sanctify those who seek Him, and like the apostolic fishermen of old,

you caught many souls in your Alaskan net. We who have inherited your apostolic mission now cry to you:

Rejoice, you whose words gather the scattered children of God into the one fold of Christ!

Rejoice, you who pastor with skillful hands the flock of the Lord!

Rejoice, trumpet of the far north, sounding abroad the glory of the Father!

Rejoice, proclaimer of divine pardon, calling all to the embrace of Jesus!

Rejoice, for you brought to Alaska the eternal and saving Gospel!

Rejoice, for you revealed the universal Kingdom at the ends of the earth!

Rejoice, skilled workman, accurately handling the Word of truth!

Rejoice, powerful evangelist, bringing many to the mercy of God!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 10

When the time for your death drew near, O wonder-working Father Herman, you foreknew that day and hour, and told your disciple Gerasim. For after lighting the candles and reading the Acts of the Apostles, you commanded that the reading be stopped, saying that God had granted you another week of life. Then, after that week, you commanded the candles to be re-lit and the Acts of the Apostles read again, and so you reposed in the Lord as you had said. Seeing

your radiant face and smelling the sweet fragrance of your departure, Gerasim sang to God: Alleluia!

Ikos 10

When giving orders regarding your burial, O blessed Father Herman, you commanded that your holy face be covered with your mantle, in your humility not wishing that anyone should see your face. Even in death you preached the Cross of Christ, for you ordered that the Cross be placed in your hands for the mourners to kiss at your funeral. Now that you stand as our intercessor in heaven, your face is always turned to us, and we your suppliants lift high the Cross you proclaimed, saying:

Rejoice, prophet and foreseer of the things to come!

Rejoice, messenger and herald of the blessings of God!

Rejoice, sweet fragrance of the Kingdom of Christ!

Rejoice, radiant light of the uncreated Trinity!

Rejoice, for you walked in humility to the end!

Rejoice, for you preached the Cross without ceasing!

Rejoice, sign of God's blessing in the new world!

Rejoice, promise of Christ's presence among His holy Church!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 11

At the time of your death, O venerable Father Herman, a light was seen over Spruce Island that reached to heaven, and those who knew your holy life perceived that you had left them. Having illumined us through your teachings and shining example, you illumined us also through your death, lighting up the sky as you ascended to heaven. Glorifying God who has glorified you, we lift up the song: Alleluia!

Ikos 11

O wonderworker of the north, your holy relics remained incorrupt in the warm chapel for many days where you lay, witnessing to the truth of your Gospel and of your enduring love for us. From your burial place on Spruce Island your relics and your prayers continued to be a source of miracles, and we praise God for your intercession, bringing our songs:

Rejoice, you who stand before the throne of God in glory!

Rejoice, you who never forsake your people on earth!

Rejoice, unfailing physician of our souls and bodies!

Rejoice, faithful intercessor of the Orthodox Church!

Rejoice, for you remain with those who love you!

Rejoice, for you lead us all to heaven above!

Rejoice, spiritual haven for all who seek God's mercy!

Rejoice, well-spring of holiness for all who love His Presence!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 12

A few years after your repose, O blessed Father Herman, you saved the missionary St. Innocent from a storm at sea. For as he neared Kodiak, his ship was caught in a tempest, and he feared that he would perish in the stormy waters, just as his predecessor Bishop Joasaph did before him. Looking toward Spruce Island, he invoked your prayers, asking that the wind might change, and it did within a quarter of an hour. We who are caught in the storms of life also call out to you, crying: Alleluia!

Ikos 12

We who follow the Orthodox Way you planted in North America praise God for the gift of your holy relics and your ceaseless prayer. Having transferred your sacred body to Kodiak, the Church now celebrates your memory with joy and splendour, exulting that God still works wonders through you. Grateful to the Lord for your presence among us, we offer you these hymns:

Rejoice, confirmation of the truth of God!

Rejoice, image of the beauty of holiness!

Rejoice, for you laid the foundation of Orthodoxy in the new world!

Rejoice, for you challenge and inspire us to continue your holy work!

Rejoice, boast and crown of all Orthodox Christians!

Rejoice, first saint of our land!

Rejoice, abiding fragrance of holiness!

Rejoice, never-fading light of truth!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Kontakion 13

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska, joy of our hearts and blessing of God to us, accept these humble prayers and pray for us before the throne of God. Grant that through your intercessions we also might stand before His throne, and with you exult in endless joy before Him, singing forever and ever: Alleluia! (*thrice; then.:*)

Ikos 1

The Lord of Hosts chose you, O blessed Father Herman, to be His warrior in the far north, fighting your way through the regiments of the unseen enemy and leading us, your fellow soldiers, to our heavenly homeland. Now that Christ has crowned you with the laurels of victory, we offer you these songs of praise:

Rejoice, struggler against world rulers of this present darkness!

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Rejoice, warrior triumphant over the forces of evil!

Rejoice, athlete who vanquishes the demonic adversary!

Rejoice, valiant pilgrim journeying through this life to life eternal!

Rejoice, unerring guide to our homeland in heaven!

Rejoice, standard-bearer of the army of Christ!

Rejoice, sign of God's great mercy to sinners!

Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

And again:

Kontakion 1

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska, advocate of the oppressed, and protector of defenseless orphans: cool the heat of sorrow which melts our hearts, wipe away our tears and grant us to know the meaning of consolation. Pray for us your children that with new strength we may glorify God and sing to you: Rejoice, O Father Herman of Alaska, joyful defender of your Church in North America!

Prayer:

O blessed Father Herman of Alaska, north star of Christ's holy Church and advocate for all who trust in your intercession: hear us who call on you in faith and love. Protect your Church from the spiritual adversaries which beset her, and grant her victory over all attacks of the devil. Save us from heresy, hard-heartedness, and pride, that we may serve the Lord in purity of faith, fervent love, and humility. Grant healing to the sick, consolation to the suffering and sorrowful, hope and joy to the depressed and despairing. Through your holy prayers may we find our way home to the Kingdom of God and receive the reward of faithful servants on the awesome day of the final judgment. Then with you and with all the saints we will glorify our merciful and gracious God: the eternal Father who has no beginning, His co-equal Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and His all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.