

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church
Willimantic, Connecticut
January 24, 2021

Blessing of Hexapterygon, Ripidias (or Ripidas)

History, Meaning, Usage

The hexapterygon, ripidion, or seraphic fan, is an ornate ceremonial fan used in Eastern Christian worship, including in the Orthodox Church. In the Byzantine Rite, the hexapteryga (ripidion) are carried during the Great Entrance and at all processions; including the movement of the Holy Gifts from the Table of Oblation to the Altar during the Great Entrance.

In the Eastern Churches, the sacred hexapterygon, literally, "*six-winged*", have been used from the first centuries to the present day. It is generally made of metal, round, having the iconographic likeness of an angel with six wings, and is set on the end of a pole. Hexapteryga of carved, gilded, or painted wood are also found, as ours at Holy Trinity are. They are usually made in pairs. In the west, the liturgical fan goes by the name *flabellum*, which is simply the Latin word for *fan*. In the Russian church, it is called the *ripidi*, from the Greek word *ripidion*, again meaning *fan*. However, in the Greek church, the fans are generally no longer known as ripidia but rather *hexapteryga*, meaning *six-winged*, reflective of the ancient six-winged seraphim that are often depicted on them. In the Russian Orthodox tradition they are often also used to honor a particularly sacred icon or relic.

When not in use, the hexapteryga are usually kept in stands behind the Holy Table in the Greek Orthodox traditions; in the Slavic traditions, they may be kept either there or out of sight elsewhere in the altar. The ripidias at Holy Trinity will be placed outside the altar so the females who comprise our Saint Olympia Handmaiden Ministry can remain an active part of our worship service.

About Our Iconographer; Dennis Kowaleski (Thomaston, Connecticut)

The journey to create the ripidias for Holy Trinity started by importing custom made boards from Bulgaria. The boards are made from linden wood, covered with linen canvas and many layers of gesso. Father Marc and I met to select a design that we both liked. Once the sketch was created, it was transferred to the board and scribed into the gesso. Several layers of gold leaf were applied over a layer of red clay and burnished with an agate stone to get a brilliant shine. Then the painting began using the 'egg tempera' technique that is traditionally used for Iconography. It is a mixture of egg yolk and white wine and mixed with ground pigments to make the paint. After many hours of work they were allowed to dry for several weeks and then covered with archival varnish to protect them. I thank God for working through my hand to create these ripidias for His Glorification and the beautification of your temple. – dk

Assist From ...

The poles of the ripida were crafted in Jon Matcheson's workshop. They are made of tulip wood, a.k.a., poplar wood, with a rich mahogany stain. Thank you, Jon.

Prayer for Dennis

O Divine Lord of all that exists, You have illumined the Apostle and Evangelist Luke with Your Most Holy Spirit, thereby enabling him to represent the Most Holy Mother, the one who held You in her arms and said: The Grace of Him Who has been born of me is spread throughout the world. Enlighten and direct thy servant, Dennis, his soul, his heart, and his spirit. We humbly beg you to guide the hands of Dennis so that he may worthily and perfectly portray Your Icons, though there stand by Thee thousands of angels and host of angels, the Cherubim and the Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, who soar aloft singing Thy triumphant hymn: Holy, Holy, Holy, art

Thou, O God, through the prayers of Your Holy Mother, and of all the saints, for the glory, joy, and adornment of Your Holy Church. Amen.

Blessing of Ripidias

Priest: O Lord our God, Who created us after Your own Image and Likeness; Who redeems us from our former corruption of the ancient curse through Your befriending Christ, Who took upon Himself the form of a servant and became man; Who having taken upon Himself our likeness remade Your Saints of the first dispensation, and through Whom also we are refashioned in the Image of Your pure blessedness;

We venerate Your Saints as being in Your image and likeness, and we adore and glorify You as our Creator; Therefore we pray to You, send forth Your blessing upon the icons on these ripidias Icons, and with the sprinkling of hallowed water:

Bless and make holy this Icon unto Your glory, in honor and remembrance of the Cherubim & Seraphim; And grant that this sanctification will be to all who process with these ripidas, and send up their prayer unto You standing before it; Through the grace and bounties and love of Your Only-Begotten Son, with Whom You are blessed together with Your All-Holy, Good and Life-creating Spirit; both now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Chanter: Amen.

Sprinkling cross fashion the Ripidas with Holy Water the priest says:

Blessed and sanctified are the ripidias, these liturgical fans, which are adorned with images of the Cherubim and Seraphim, and by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, through the sprinkling of this Holy Water: in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen (3x).

Rubrics for Altar Servers Carrying Ripidias

I. Lesser Entrance (with Gospel)

- Altar server should pick up ripidia from designated spot and stand in front of the Deacon's doors.
- During the entrance, server should do down to the bottom step, stand in front of the ambo for a brief moment, then ascend to the second step and hold the ripidia over the Gospel.
- Once the priest has entered the altar, the servers holding ripidas should descend to the bottom of the ambo, go to the entrance of the Deacon's Doors, make a small bow to the High Place, then return ripidia to designated spot.

II. During the Reading of the Holy Gospel

- Altar server should pick up ripidia from designated spot and stand in front of the Deacon's doors.
- During the entrance, server should do down to the bottom step, stand in front of the ambo for a brief moment, then ascend to the top of the ambo and stand besides the priest while reading the Gospel. Fans should be turned in at an angle, so as to hover over the Gospel.
- Once the priest has returned the Gospel to the Holy Altar, both ripidia holder should go down the step, then ascend them once again to Deacon's doors, make a small bow to the High Place, then return ripidia to designated spot.

III. Great Entrance With Holy Gifts

- Both ripidia holders should gather in the same spot as usual (South Deacon's doors)
- One will lead the procession; the other will be the last in line. Process as usual.
- When both ripidia servers reach the bottom of the ambo, they should take a step up to the second step and form an arch over the Holy Gifts.
- Once the Holy Gifts are placed on the altar, servers should descend steps and put back ripidias in their two designated spots.