

THE 24th DAY OF THE MONTH OF JUNE
COMMEMORATION OF THE NATIVITY OF THE HONORABLE & GLORIOUS
PROPHET & FORERUNNER JOHN THE BAPTIST
AT LITTLE VESPERS

At "Lord, I have cried ...", 4 Stichera, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: "Called from on high ...":

Thou wast born of a barren womb, * O glorious forerunner of the coming of Christ, * who hast loosed the barrenness of our hearts, * giving utterance to our souls * and fruitfulness in faith and truth. * Thou art manifestly known to be * the far-famed voice of the Word, * the clarion-voiced herald of repentance, * the divine mediator * between the old and the new covenants. * His nativity do we in gladness ** celebrate with love. (Twice)

Now the fatted calf of abstinence * is born of the barren one, * pointing out to us * the Lamb Who was born * of the Virgin Maiden, * taking away the sins of the world. * He hath manifestly shone forth as a turtledove who loveth the wilderness. * heralding the divine springtime; * and at the sound of his voice the cruel winter of ungodliness hath ceased, * and John, the true friend of the Bridegroom, * hath splendidly arrived, ** praying that our souls be saved.

O thou who wast born in accordance with the promise of God, * when thy father was praying in the temple * and the most wondrous and great archangel * announced thy nativity, * then, as it is written, * Gabriel sentenced the priest, who would not believe and protested, * that he be mute and deaf * until thy birth. * But when thou, O blessed forerunner, * wast born of thy father, * thou didst free his tongue, ** and prayest on behalf of us all.

Glory ..., in Tone VIII, Idiomelon:

Sweet fragrance is meet for John; the beauty of hymns is fitting for the Baptist; for the warrior of the King, the forerunner of grace, proclaimed the beginning of our salvation, leaping up in his mother's womb and crying out in the wilderness, announcing the Lamb and entreating the Savior on behalf of our souls.

Now & ever ..., Theotokion:

O Sovereign Lady, accept the supplications of thy servants, and deliver us from all need and grief.

At the Aposticha, these Stichera, in Tone II:

Spec. Mel.: "O house of Ephratha ...":

Thou didst cause thy tongue, * to shine forth with splendor, * crying out, O Zacharias: * "This child will be a prophet of God ** and the forerunner of the divine Word!"

Verse: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, * for He hath visited and wrought deliverance for His people.

From thy mother's womb, O John, * thou wast shown to be * sanctified for God; * for no one greater than thee ** hath ever arisen among mortals.

Verse: And thou, O child, * shalt be called the prophet of the Most High.

Thou didst loose the muteness of thy father, * O most blessed one, * as thou didst likewise open * the lock of thy mother's barrenness, ** being born through divine grace.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., in Tone VIII:

Behold Elizabeth, who saith to the Virgin Mary: "Wherefore hast thou come to me, O Mother of my Lord? Thou bearest the King, I the servant; thou the Law-giver, I the upholder of the law; thou the Word, I the voice which announceth the kingdom of heaven!"

Troparion, in Tone IV:

O prophet and forerunner of the coming of Christ, * we who honor thee with love * are at a loss how to worthily praise thee; * for by thy glorious and honored nativity * thou didst loose the barrenness of her who gave birth to thee * and the muteness of thy father, ** and proclaimed to the world the incarnation of the Son of God.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Theotokion:

The mystery hidden from all ages * and unknown to the ranks of Angels, * hath been revealed to those on earth through thee, O Theotokos: * God incarnate in an uncommingled union, * Who willingly accepted the Cross for our sake, * and through it hath raised up the first-formed man, ** and thus saved our souls from death.

AT GREAT VESPERS

After the Introductory Psalm, we chant "Blessed is the man ...", the first antiphon.

At "Lord, I have cried ...", 8 Stichera, in Tone IV:

By John the Monk: When John was born, he loosed the muteness of Zacharias, for it was not fitting for the father to be silent when the voice of the Word arrived. But since, when the priest had not believed in the beginning, his tongue was bound, so, when John appeared, he set his father free. To him was announced and born the voice of the Word, the forerunner of the Light, praying for our souls. (Twice)

Today the voice of the Word looseth the voice of his father, which was restrained because of his unbelief, and showeth forth fruitfulness to the Church, loosing the bonds of his mother's barrenness. The lamp of the Light cometh forth; the splendor of the Sun of righteousness announceth His coming, for the edification of all and the salvation of our souls.

By Anatolius: When the Word of God wished to be born of the Virgin, His angel, the highest of the prophets and greatest born of women, issued forth from elderly loins; for it was meet that he be the most glorious beginning of things divine: an offspring produced past the age of fertility, a conception accomplished without seed. O Thou Who workest miracles for our salvation, glory be to Thee!

By Andrew of Crete: Today the great forerunner, the greatest of all the prophets, hath appeared, issuing forth from the barren womb of Elizabeth, and there is none like unto him, nor hath any other such arisen; for the most luminous Light followed the lamp of the forerunner, the Word followed the voice, the Bridegroom followed the bridal attendant, who maketh ready an excellent people for the Lord, cleansing them beforehand with water in the Spirit. He is the offspring of Zacharias, the good child of the wilderness, the preacher of repentance, the cleanser of sins, who announceth to those in Hades the resurrection of the dead, and prayeth for our souls.

Thou wast shown to be a prophet and forerunner from thy mother's womb, O John, baptizer of Christ, leaping up and rejoicing within her belly when thou didst behold the Queen, bearing the Timeless One Who was begotten of the Father without mother, coming to her handmaid and to thee, who shone forth from a barren woman and an elderly man according to God's promise.

O most glorious wonder! He who did not believe the word of the angel, who said that Elizabeth would conceive and bear a son, saying: "How can such a one give birth? For I am stricken with age, and her womb is withered up", and was condemned to muteness for his unbelief, today beholdeth the promise fulfilled. His silence is broken, and he entereth into gladness, crying: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of Israel, for Thou hast visited and wrought deliverance for Thy people, granting the world great mercy!"

O all-praised John, apostle to the whole world, glad tiding of Gabriel, offspring of the barren woman, good child of the wilderness and true friend of Christ the Bridegroom: beseech Him, that He have mercy upon our souls.

Glory ..., the composition of Byzantius, in Tone VI:

Today the lamp of the Light, like a radiant star, doth precede the coming of the Word of God. Today the tongue of Zacharias is loosed, which the angel had commanded to keep silent. For it was thus fitting for the father to hold his tongue in silence for him who issued forth from the barren womb and with great boldness proclaimed the deliverance of all the world.

Now & ever ..., in the same tone:

Elizabeth conceived the forerunner of grace, and the Virgin conceived the Lord of glory. Both mothers kissed each other, and the babe leapt up, for within her womb the servant praised the Master. And the mother of the forerunner marveled and cried aloud: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? May He Who hath great mercy save a despairing people!"

Entrance. Prokeimenon of the day. Three readings:

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

And God said to Abraham, Sarai thy wife-her name shall not be called Sarai; Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and give thee a son of her, and I will bless him, and he shall become nations, and kings of nations shall be of him. And Abraham fell upon his face, and spake in his mind, saying: "Shall there be a child to one who is a hundred years old, and shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, beareth" And God said to Abraham: "Yea, behold, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him, for an everlasting covenant." And Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in days. And Sarah laughed within herself, saying: "The thing hath not yet happened to me, even until now, and my lord is old." And the Lord God said to Abraham: "Why is it that Sarah hath laughed in herself, saying: 'Shall I then indeed bear? But I am grown old.' Shall anything be impossible with the Lord?" And the Lord God visited Sarah, as He said, and the Lord did to Sarah, as He spake. And Abraham circumcised his son on the eighth day, as the Lord God commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac his son was born to him. And Sarah said: "The Lord hath made laughter for me, for whosoever shall hear shall rejoice with me." And she said: "Who shall say to Abraham that Sarah suckles a child? For I have borne a child in mine old age." And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast the day his son Isaac was weaned.

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF JUDGES

In those days, there was a man of the tribe of Dan, and his name was Manoah, and his wife was barren and bore not. And an angel of the Lord appeared to the woman, and said to her: "Behold, thou art barren; yet thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bear a son. But now be very cautious, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat no unclean thing. For, lo thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bear a son. And there shall come no razor upon his head, and the child shall be consecrated to God from birth. And the woman went, and spake to her husband, saying: "A man of God came to me, and his appearance was as of an angel of God, exceeding bright. And he said: 'Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bear a son. And now, drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat no unclean thing; for the child shall be consecrated to God from his birth even unto the day of his death. "' And Manoah prayed to God, and said: "O Lord, let the man of God, whom Thou didst send to me, come to us again, and enlighten us as to what we should do when the child is born." And the angel of the Lord came to Manoah and said: "Of all things concerning which I spoke to the woman, she shall beware. She shall eat of nothing that cometh of the vine yielding wine, and let her not drink wine or strong liquor." And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord: "What is thy name, that when what thou hast said will come to pass, we may glorify thee?" And the angel of the Lord said to him: "Wherefore dost thou thus ask after my name, whereas it is awesome?" And the angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and to his wife.

A READING FROM THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH

Thus saith the Lord: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith God. Speak, ye priests, to the heart of Jerusalem; comfort her, for her humiliation is accomplished, her sin is put away: for she hath received from the Lord's hand double the amount of her sins. The voice of one is heard crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God. O thou who bringest good tidings to Sion, go thou up upon the high mountain; lift up thy voice with strength, O thou who bringest glad tidings to Jerusalem. Lift it up; fear not I, the Lord God, I will hearken to the poor of Israel, and will not forsake them. But I will open rivers on the mountains, and fountains in the midst of the plain; I will make the desert into a meadow, and a thirsty land springs of water. Let heaven rejoice from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth bring forth and blossom with mercy, and let righteousness shine forth likewise. Utter aloud a voice of joy, and it shall be heard; proclaim it even unto the ends of the earth. Say ye that the Lord hath delivered His servant Jacob. And if they shall thirst, He shall lead them through the desert; He shall bring forth water for them out of the rock. Be glad, thou barren woman who bearest not; break forth and cry, O thou who dost not travail: for more are the children of the desolate than of her who hath a husband.

At the Litiya, these Stichera, in Tone I:

Ye mountains, put forth sweetness! Ye hills, leap up like lambs! For the forerunner of the Lord, who loosed the muteness of his father at his birth, hath been born of Elizabeth, desiring to make his abode with us. Wherefore, we cry aloud to him: O thou who baptized Christ, entreat Him, that our souls be saved!

O voice who art a sign from God, candle-stand of the Light, forerunner of the Lord, thou to whom witness is borne by Christ, thou foremost of the prophets: make supplication on behalf of the world, and be thou especially mindful of thy flock, that it be saved unharmed.

Thou wast a preacher of the Word and Lamb of God, O prophet and forerunner John, foretelling things to come, and prophesying unto the ends of the earth: Behold, the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world, and shall grant great mercy unto all!

Glory ..., the composition of Andrew of Crete, in Tone V:

Today Elizabeth giveth birth to the ultimate prophet, the first of the apostles, the earthly angel and heavenly man, the voice of the Word, the soldier and forerunner of Christ, who leapt up beforehand as a sign of the promise, and before his birth proclaimed the Sun of righteousness. And she rejoiceth. Zacharias is astonished in his old age, putting aside his silence like a bond imposed upon him; and as the father of the voice he doth manifestly prophesy: "For thou, O child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High and shalt go forth to prepare the way for Him." Wherefore, O angel, prophet, apostle, warrior, forerunner, baptizer, preacher and instructor of repentance: as the voice of the Light and Word, pray thou unceasingly for us who keep thy memory with faith.

Now & ever ..., Theotokion, in Tone V:

Thou art the temple and portal, the palace and throne of the King, * O most honored Virgin, * through whom Christ the Lord, my Redeemer, * Who is the Sun of righteousness, * hath revealed Himself unto those who sleep in darkness, * deigning to enlighten those whom He hath fashioned in His image by His own hand. * Wherefore, O all-hymned one, * as thou hast acquired a mother's boldness before Him, ** entreat Him without ceasing, that our souls be saved.

At the Aposticha, these Stichera, in Tone II:

With psalms, hymns and spiritual songs let us praise the glorious John, the prophet of prophets, offspring of Elizabeth, greatest of all born of women, citizen of the desert; and let us cry out to him: O baptizer and forerunner of the Savior, as thou hast boldness before Him because of thine honored nativity, entreat Christ, that He grant peace to the world and great mercy to our souls.

Verse: Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, * for He hath visited and wrought deliverance for His people.

John the forerunner hath come: the voice of the grace of the Word, the herald of the Sun, who was born on this day of a barren and childless woman, according to God's promise. Rejoice, O ye people! He is come to prepare for us the way of salvation. Leaping up, he paid homage, while yet in his mother's womb, to the Lamb Who taketh away the sins of the world and doth grant us great mercy.

Verse: And thou, O child, * shalt be called the prophet of the Most High.

He who was sanctified from his mother's womb and was the fulfillment of the prophecy, is born today of a barren woman, manifestly proclaiming the coming of the Lord, saying: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

Glory ..., the composition of the nun Cassia, in Tone VIII:

Today hath been fulfilled the saying of Isaiah the prophet concerning the birth of the greatest of the prophets; for he said: "Behold, I shall send mine angel before thy face, who shall make ready thy path before thee." This warrior of the King of heaven, running ahead, truly made the paths straight for our God, being a man by nature, but an angel in his life: for, having utterly preserved his purity and chastity, he possessed them by nature; and avoiding that which is unnatural, he struggled supra-naturally. Emulating him in his virtues, O ye faithful, let us all pray, that he make entreaty for our souls to be saved.

Now & ever ..., in the same tone:

Behold Elizabeth, who said to the Virgin Mary: "Whence is this to me, O Mother of my Lord? Thou bearest the King, I the warrior; thou the Law-giver, I the upholder of the law; thou the Word, I the voice which proclaimeth the kingdom of heaven!"

After the blessing of the loaves, the Troparion of the forerunner, in Tone IV:

O prophet and forerunner of the coming of Christ, * we who honor thee with love * are at a loss how to worthily praise thee; * for by thy glorious and honored nativity * thou didst loose the barrenness of her who gave birth to thee * and the muteness of thy father, ** and proclaimed to the world the incarnation of the Son of God. (Twice)

And "Virgin Theotokos, rejoice ...", (Once)

AT MATINS

At "God is the Lord ...", the Troparion of the forerunner, , in Tone IV:

O prophet and forerunner of the coming of Christ, * we who honor thee with love * are at a loss how to worthily praise thee; * for by thy glorious and honored nativity * thou didst loose the barrenness of her who gave birth to thee * and the muteness of thy father, ** and proclaimed to the world the incarnation of the Son of God. (Twice)

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., the Theotokion:

The mystery hidden from all ages * and unknown to the ranks of Angels, * hath been revealed to those on earth through thee, O Theotokos: * God incarnate in an uncommingled union, * Who willingly accepted the Cross for our sake, * and through it hath raised up the first-formed man, ** and thus saved our souls from death.

After the first chanting of the Psalter, this Sedalion, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: "Joseph marveled ...":

Now the fruit of Zacharias, the adornment of the desert, the foundation of the prophets, hath sprung forth, bringing gladness noetically to the thoughts of the faithful; wherefore, the forerunner of Christ hath appeared, the true witness of His coming. With spiritual songs let us together cry out to the Baptist: O prophet and preacher of the truth, pray thou that we be saved! (Twice)

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Theotokion in Tone IV:

As he contemplated that which was beyond nature * Joseph was struck with wonder O Theotokos, at thy conception without seed. * He contemplated the mysterious dew upon the fleece, * the bush un-burnt by fire, * Aaron's rod which budded. * Thus thy Betrothed and guardian bore witness and cried unto the priests saying: * A Virgin beareth a child, ** and after child-birth remaineth yet a virgin.

After the second chanting of the Psalter, this Sedalion, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: "Of the Wisdom ...":

O all-praised John, thou wast truly and most gloriously born as the herald of the coming of Christ, the chief of the prophets; and, as the voice of the Word, thou didst cry out: "Repent! The kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Wherefore, having prepared the way of the Lord, thou wast shown to the ends of the earth as the forerunner of grace. O baptizer and apostle, entreat Christ God, that He grant forgiveness of transgressions unto those who celebrate thy holy memory with love. (Twice)

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Theotokion in Tone VIII:

O most holy Virgin, Mother of Christ, heal thou the cruel passions of my soul, I pray, and grant me forgiveness of my transgressions, which I have foolishly committed, defiling both soul and body, wretch that I am. Woe is me! What shall I do at that hour when the angels will separate my soul from my passion-plagued body? Then be thou my helper and most fervent intercessor, for I, thy servant, have thee as my hope.

After the Polyeleos, this magnification: We magnify thee, O John, forerunner of the Savior, and we honor thy most glorious birth from a barren woman.

Selected Psalm verse:

A: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and wrought deliverance for His people.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Alleluia ..., Glory to Thee, O God! (Thrice)

After the Polyeleos, this Sedalion, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: "That which was commanded ...":

Let the father rejoice. Be glad, O mother, for today thou hast given birth on earth unto a prophet, the forerunner summoned by God by the promise. The barren woman nurtureth the Baptist as a babe, and Zacharias rejoiceth, saying to the infant: "My tongue hath been loosed by thine advent on earth, O candle-stand of the Light! A miracle truly most glorious!" (Twice)

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Theotokion in Tone VIII:

We ever thank thee, O pure Theotokos who art full of grace, and we magnify and bow down before thee, hymning thy birthgiving and crying out without ceasing: Save us, O almighty Virgin, in that thou art good, and rescue us from the dread sentence of the demons at the hour of trial, that we, thy servants, may not be put to shame.

Then the Songs of Ascent, the first antiphon of Tone IV.

Prokeimenon, in Tone IV: And thou, O child, * shalt be called the prophet of the Most High.

Verse: Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and wrought deliverance for His people.

Let every breath praise the Lord

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE, § 3 [LK. 1: 24-25, 57-68, 76, 80]

And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zechariah, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her: There is none of thy kindred that are called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about

them; and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying: What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

After Psalm 50, this Sticheron, in Tone II:

He who was sanctified from his mother's womb and was the fulfillment of the prophecy, is born today of a barren woman, manifestly proclaiming the coming of the Lord, saying: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

ODE I

Canon I, of John the Monk, with 8 Troparia, including its Irmos, in Tone IV:

Irmos: O Thou who wast born of the Virgin, * drown I implore Thee, * in the depth of dispassion * the triune nature of my soul, * as Thou didst the mighty strongholds of the warriors, * that in the mortality of my flesh * as on a timbrel * I may chant a hymn of victory.

The offspring of the barren woman manifestly proclaimeth the birthgiving of the Virgin, preceding the Sun like a magnificent dawn. And he now shineth forth the light of piety and grace upon the whole universe.

"Truly art thou called the prophet of the Most High; for thou goest before the face of Christ, to prepare the way for the Creator!" Zacharias cried out to thee, his son, borne up by the most Holy Spirit, O most praised John.

Hearing the words of Gabriel's divine news, Zacharias showed himself to be intractable, and was stricken with muteness; but he is suddenly loosed therefrom, for John the Forerunner, the voice of the Word, hath been born.

Theotokion: O most immaculate Theotokos, thou godly city of the King of all, habitation well-pleasing unto God, precious treasure: preserve thine inheritance, which ever praiseth thee and honoreth thy birthgiving with faith.

Another Canon, of Andrew, with 6 Troparia, in Tone IV:

Irmos: Let us chant unto God our Redeemer, * Who of old guided Israel * fleeing from the slavery of Pharaoh, * and fed them in the wilderness, * for He hath been glorified.

The silence of the father is a symbol of the mysteries of the Scriptures of the law; for when grace arrived Moses fell silent. For it was fitting that all fall silent in the presence of the treasure of wisdom which had been revealed.

While the priest was censuring in the temple, an angel from on high stood before him and cried aloud: "I am come unto thee bearing news of a strange birthgiving, O elder! For thou shalt receive from the barren woman the baptizer of Christ as your offspring."

"Wherefore dost thou marvel, O elder? Why standest thou, refusing to believe the one who telleth thee these things? For he is an angel, even if he is in the semblance of a man, be thou therefore mute until the time of the birth of the voice of the Word!"

He who made the silence of Zacharias a symbol of the written law hath thereby shown me to be a preacher of repentance who cry out: He giveth unto the barren woman a son who is the voice who crieth.

O the most glorious pronouncements of the Forerunner of Christ! He who, even before he was wrapped in swaddling bands, recognized Him who hath loosed our bonds and sanctified the nations, is born today of Elizabeth and looseth the voice of his father.

Theotokion: **T**hou art the habitation of God and the noetic ladder by which God hath descended and, taking our form, hath led our nature up to the heavens. Thee do we all praise as the mediatrix of our salvation.

Katavasia: I shall open my mouth ...

ODE III

Canon I

Irmos: **N**ot in wisdom, nor in power do we glory, * but we glory in Thee O Christ, * the Hypostatic Wisdom of the Father, * for there is none more holy than Thee, O Lover of mankind.

The birthgiving of the Master is accomplished through the Virgin, while that of His beloved servant is through an elderly and barren mother; wherefore, splendidly hath he proceeded the Wonder of wonders.

The elderly and barren woman kisseth the Virgin Mother, truly recognizing her birthgiving, for the bond of her barrenness hath been loosed by the will of God.

Theotokion: **O** thou who hast given birth unto God incarnate without having known wedlock, make me steadfast who am beset by the assaults of the passions; for I have none other helper than thee, O most pure one.

Canon II

Irmos: **H**aving established the thunder * and fashioned the wind: * do Thou make me steadfast O Lord, * that I may hymn Thee in truth and do Thy will; * for none is as holy as Thou, O our God.

Elizabeth, who before was barren, prefigured Thy Church of the nations, O Christ, and, giving birth most gloriously, she hath revealed as most fertile that which once was seen to be barren.

Making straight the ways of the Lord and preparing His path, O prophet and herald of Christ, thou didst show mankind the fruits of repentance, teaching them the way of life.

Dancing today, Elizabeth holdeth thee in her elderly arms, O Forerunner, and crieth out, uttering the praise: None is as holy as Thou, O Lord our God!

Theotokion: **O** most holy Theotokos, thou didst loose the grief of our first parents, giving birth to the Creator of life and Redeemer for us. Him do thou earnestly entreat, that thy flock be saved.

Sedalion, in Tone VIII: Spec. Mel.: "That which was commanded ...":

The Forerunner, the voice of the Word, upon his birth splendidly loosed the voice of Zacharias, and he hath shown unto all the barrenness of the law, crying out: Repent, ye who are on earth, for, lo! Jesus cometh and hath appeared, desiring to deliver all from the primal curse, illumining them with baptism! Truly this is a most glorious wonder!

Glory, in Tone IV: Spec. Mel.: "Joseph marveled ...":

Like the radiant sun, the son of Zacharias hath shone forth upon us through the womb of Elizabeth, and loosed the muteness of his father, crying out to all men with great boldness: "Make straight the way of the Lord! For He freeth and saveth those who have recourse unto Him." Entreat Him Whom didst thou preach, O John, that our souls be saved.

Now & ever ..., Theotokion in Tone IV:

By thy divine birthgiving, O pure one, * thou hast renewed the mortal nature of those born on earth, * which had become corrupt through the passions, * raising up all from death to a life of incorruption. * Wherefore, as is meet we all bless thee, ** O exceedingly glorious Virgin, as thou didst foretell.

ODE IV

Canon I

Irmos: **S**eated in glory * upon the throne of the Godhead, * Jesus most divine is come on a swift cloud, * and with His incorrupt arm hath He saved those who cry aloud: * **G**lory to Thy power, O Christ!

A mystery hath preceded ineffable mysteries, proclaiming release from suffering by a renewed nature, through its correction and deification, O Christ.

Isaiah prophesied that when the Son would become flesh, the Father would say: "Behold, I send before Thy face an earthly angel, the equal of the angels, who crieth out: Glory to Thy power, O Christ!"

I have been born to serve the Master as a servant; for, lo! for this reason I have come, to announce His coming, that the barren and elderly woman, putting forth fruit, may believe beforehand the birthgiving of the Virgin.

Theotokion: **T**he womb of the holy Theotokos, in whom it was Thy good pleasure to make Thine abode as in a fragrant dwelling, O supremely divine Word of the Father, was neither corrupted, nor suffered pain; for she gaveth birth to Emmanuel: God and man.

Canon II

Irmos: **I** have heard of Thy glorious Dispensation, * O Christ our God: * how Thou wast born of the Virgin, * that so Thou mightest deliver from error * those who cry aloud to Thee: * Glory to Thy power, O Lord.

Repentance was made accessible through thy nativity, O Forerunner and herald; for thou alone didst preach, crying aloud: Repent ye! The kingdom of heaven is at hand!

Virginity is established and chastity doth triumph; the desert rejoiceth, and the world holdeth festival in thy nativity, O Forerunner!

Elizabeth rejoiceth and Zacharias speaketh once again. Both, therefore, become young in their old age and are rendered luminous through John the voice of the Word.

Theotokion: **O**f old, the lawgiver saw thee as the bush unconsumed by the fire, and Daniel envisioned thee as a holy mountain, O Sovereign Lady who alone art Mother and Virgin.

ODE V

Canon I

Irmos: **N**ow I shall arise said God prophetically, * now I shall be glorified, now I shall be exalted, * elevating fallen human nature, * which I received from the Virgin, * to the noetic light of My divinity.

The earth hath given rise to the true herald, the voice who preacheth to all, with the tongue of the Spirit, the Son of the Virgin, righteousness from heaven which hath come down to us in a bodily substance.

The Lord hath appointed thee the true luminary of Christ, enlightening all, clothing only those who are His enemies in shame, as in a garment, and forthrightly proclaiming the Word and Son of God.

All creation rejoiceth in thy nativity in a godly manner; for thou wast shown to be an earthly angel and a heavenly man, O Forerunner, proclaiming the God of heaven Who assumed flesh for our sake.

Theotokion: **H**e Who is begotten of the Father hath been born of thee and is ever with thee: the ever-existing and indivisible Word, the only-begotten Son, Who, in the latter days, became incarnate of the Virgin and the Holy Spirit.

Canon II

Irmos: Shine upon me, O Lord, * the light of Thy commandments, * for my soul riseth early to Thee and hymneth Thee: * For Thou art our God, * and unto Thee do I flee, O King of peace.

O Sun of righteousness, Thou hast prepared a star, Thy baptizer John, who today is born according to Thy promise and hath loosed the voice of his father.

Utter thou no words of protest, O sacred elder; for Gabriel, the foremost among the archangels, telleth thee the mysteries of God, telling all of His descent unto us.

Be not unbelieving, O elder; for God hath promised that thou shalt beget a son in thine old age, in whose birth many shall rejoice, for he shall come with the power of Elijah.

O prophet, herald and forerunner, offspring of the barren woman, preacher of repentance, lamb of the wilderness, and lampstand of the Light: pray thou for all with faith who honor thee.

Theotokion: We hymn thee, O Sovereign Lady, Mother of the Creator of all, as the impassable portal, the bush unconsumed, and the unquarried mountain from whom was cut the Stone Who is He Who assumed flesh from thee.

ODE VI

Canon I

Irmos: I have reached the depths of the sea * and the tempest of my many sins hath engulfed me; * but do Thou raise up my life from the abyss * O Greatly-merciful One.

While yet in thy mother's womb, as a prophet thou didst recognize the Word of God, and, deified by the unapproachable light, thou didst utter theology in that dark chamber, employing her tongue.

As the voice of one crying unceasingly, O Baptist, cease thou never to entreat the Redeemer of the world, that He loose the spiritual barrenness of those who hymn thy nativity.

Theotokion: Thy womb, O pure Theotokos, was revealed to be the dwelling-place of the unapproachable Godhead, upon Whom the heavenly ranks cannot gaze without fear.

Canon II

Irmos: The tempest of evil thoughts, * hath overwhelmed me, * dragging me down into the abyss * of my numberless sins; * but, going before me, O good Helmsman, * govern me as Thou didst the Prophet, * and save me.

Today John is born: the citizen of the desert, the preacher of repentance, the true witness of grace, the forerunner of the Word, the star which shineth before the Light.

Today, the axe which hath been forged, hath portended the hewing of barren souls, and planting the fruits of the virtues, hath surely come forth in thy nativity, O forerunner.

Jordan hath rejoiced most gloriously and leapeth up, learning that John is born of the barren one's womb; wherefore the sea danceth with leaping waters.

Coming forth, the candle-stand of the Light preached the coming of the Savior, the Lamb of God, Who hath shone forth light upon the earth, offered spiritually for all nature.

Theotokion: O all-immaculate Theotokos, who hast given birth to the Abyss of mercy: drowning the abyss of my passions in the depths of thy compassions, grant me a torrent of tears from my soul.

Kontakion, in Tone III: Spec. Mel.: "Today the Virgin ...":

Today she who before was barren * giveth birth unto the forerunner of Christ, * he is the fulfillment of all prophecy; * for, laying his hand in the Jordan upon Him * Whom the prophets foretold, * he hath been shown to be the prophet, * herald and forerunner ** of the Word of God.

Ikos: Let us now praise the forerunner of the Lord, to whom Elizabeth gaveth birth for the priest, by means of her barren womb, though not seedlessly; for Christ alone passed through an inviolate dwelling without seed. The barren woman gaveth birth unto John, but did not beget him without the aid of her husband; but the pure virgin gaveth birth to Jesus through the overshadowing of the Father and the Spirit of God. The prophet, herald and forerunner was revealed through the barren woman to the Seedless One.

ODE VII

Canon I

Irmos: The three youths in Babylon, * regarded the tyrant's command as foolishness, * and cried aloud in the midst of the flame: * **Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!**

Before, all of human nature was in darkness, O forerunner; but thou wast shown to be the dawn, crying out: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Thy nativity through the barren woman hath healed all afflicted nature, O forerunner, teaching it to chant: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Thou wast born of a barren woman, O forerunner, for, since the law is barren, grace hath truly come, chanting unto Christ: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Theotokion: O blessed Virgin, pray for us who beseech thee; for on thee do we set our hope, and to thee do we cry aloud: O Sovereign Lady, disdain not thy servants!

Canon II

Irmos: In the Persian furnace the youths and descendants of Abraham, * burning with a love of piety * rather than by the flame of a fire, * cried out aloud saying: * Blessed art Thou in the temple of Thy glory, O Lord.

Falling mute for a time, Zacharias made plain his silence by writing; and, provided again with speech through thy nativity, O forerunner, he most gloriously announced the grace of the Spirit.

The most honored Elizabeth, that barren and childless woman, is like unto the Church: which before was bedimmed with sacrifices and ordure now boasteth in beauty and birthgiving.

Today the spiritual axe, whereby all the uprisings of the passions are hewn down, is honed by the nativity of the forerunner; and the fruits of repentance mystically flourish.

We honor thee, O John, as the mediator between the old and the new testaments, the one who maketh straight the paths of Christ Who cleanseth the threshing-floor of transgression with the winnowing-fan of the Spirit.

We all hymn the glorious John who issued forth from the barren woman, the forerunner and preacher of repentance, who hastened like a star before the Sun, Christ our God.

Theotokion: O Virgin Theotokos, cease thou never to pray on behalf of all unto Him Who, without seed, made His abode within thy womb, Who, in His ineffable and utter humility, was born and beggared Himself for our sake.

ODE VIII

Canon I

Irmos: O almighty Redeemer of all, * having descended and bedewed the children in the midst of the flame, * Thou didst teach them to sing: * All ye works bless and hymn the Lord,.

Moses the lawgiver was a servant, but Jesus is the God of the new covenant; and now the forerunner hymneth both, as mediator between them, saying: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

A turtle-dove hath issued forth from the womb of the barren one! Like a divinely planted grove she hath offered the forerunner of Christ unto the Church, chanting: All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord!

O God-bearing people, holy nation, liken yourselves unto the turtle-dove of Christ and, abiding in chastity, chant ye with voices flowing with honey: All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord!

Triadicon: Illumined with the threefold Light, let us worship the one uncreated Godhead, ceaselessly crying aloud in an Orthodox manner: All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord!

Canon II

Irmos: In wisdom hast Thou fashioned all things, O Master, * Thou didst establish the earth firmly upon the fathomless depths of the waters, * in accordance with Thy knowledge, * wherefore we hymn Thee chanting: * Unceasingly bless ye the Lord all ye works of the Lord.

Before thy birth, before thine own swaddling-clothes, O forerunner, thou didst recognize Christ, the Bestower of life, Whom thou didst worship, pointing Him out by leaping, and naming Him thy Lord, by borrowing thy mother's tongue, and singing unto Christ our God.

The ends of the earth celebrate the forefeast today; the angels and the souls of the righteous rejoice; the quick and the dead are gladdened by the birth of John, receiving through him the preaching of the Savior and Lord of all.

Today the Jordan, likening itself to John, hath leapt up most gloriously in its fluid torrents, listening to him whose life is like unto that of the angels, who was born of a barren and elderly woman, who maketh straight the ways and paths of the Lord and hath baptized the world.

Today Zacharias noted on a slate the name of the prophet and forerunner which was designated by God, and in his silence he declared: Let him be called John who is born to me in mine old age! This marvelous designation befitteth one who was begotten according to God's promise.

Theotokion: Thy people, O Virgin, have thee as a mighty consolation, a hope unashamed, an unassailable rampart and divine intercession, and, saved, they glorify and cry out to thee earnestly: Bless the Lord unceasingly, all ye works of the Lord!

ODE IX

Canon I

Irmos: The ineffable hidden mystery of God hath been revealed in thee, * O most pure Virgin; * for in His tender compassion * God become incarnate of thee. * Wherefore, we magnify thee as the Theotokos.

Lo! the voice of the forerunner falleth upon barren and empty hearts, crying: Prepare ye now the way of Christ, for He shall come in glory, and, submitting ourselves, we magnify Him!

As of old, O forerunner, thou didst through the Holy Spirit manifestly preach the Son, Who is the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world, ask thou forgiveness of sins for thy flock.

Triadicon: Chanting in an Orthodox manner, O ye faithful, let us glorify the threefold Unity, the consubstantial Trinity, Who illumineth us divinely and filleth our souls with the splendors of the never-waning light.

Theotokion: **O** thou who hast dominion over all creatures, grant the trophy of victory to thy people and set the feet of Orthodox hierarchs upon all heresies and schisms, that we may magnify thee as the Theotokos.

Canon II

Irmos: **F**or the Mighty One hath done great things to me, * and holy is His name; * and His mercy is upon them that fear Him * unto generation and generation

Behold, in thee, O priest, hath God wrought a great and most glorious sign; for thou hast begotten a son, the forerunner, in thine old age and in the mortality of thy flesh.

Let barren women hearken and chant unto God! For, lo! Elizabeth crieth out: I give birth unto a son of mine old age and in the mortality of my flesh!

Be glad and rejoice now in God, O Zacharias! For, lo! Elizabeth nourisheth the son of her old age at her breast and in the mortality of her flesh giveth birth to the forerunner.

Glory to Him Who hath giveth fruit to the barren woman in her old age and hath bestowed upon the aged prophet a son, the divine forerunner, who prepareth for Him a perfected people.

Theotokion: **H**e Who was begotten in the bosom of the Father without passion and corruption, having made His abode within thee, in His loving-kindness hath led us to the Father and the divine Spirit.

Exapostilarion: Spec. Mel.: "Hearken, ye women ...":

Today the joyous birth of the forerunner looseth the grief of his father's muteness and the barrenness of her who bore him. And he declareth the present joy and gladness. Wherefore, all creation doth celebrate it with splendor. **(Twice)**

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., in the same melody:

The prophets preached, the apostles taught, and with godly wisdom the martyrs openly confessed thy Son to be the God of all, O most pure one. With them we glorify thee, delivered by thee from the ancient sentence.

On the Praises, 4 Stichera, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: "O most glorious wonder ...":

O most glorious wonder! * From a mother advanced in age * hath John, the proclaimer of God the Word * hastened to issue forth today, * and by his nativity * he most clearly reveleth the bound tongue to speak. * O Thine ineffable dispensation, O Master, * whereby, O Christ, ** save Thou our souls, in that Thou alone art merciful.

O most glorious wonder! * The prophet who is the greatest * among those born of women * looseth the condemnation of his mother's barrenness, * coming with the spirit and power of Elijah * to make straight the way of the Lord. * O Thine ineffable tender compassion, O Master, * whereby, O Christ, ** save Thou our souls, in that Thou alone art merciful.

O most glorious wonder! * He Who preached to men the condescension of Christ * with his voice doth indicate Him Who transcendeth all, * and with power divine * looseth the barrenness of her who gave him birth * and the tongue of Zacharias. * O Thy great wonders, O Master! * Thereby, O Christ, ** do Thou save those who honor Thy great forerunner.

O most glorious wonder! * the prophet and forerunner * is shown to be the greatest born of women, * and the most sublime prophet * and herald of the coming of Christ, * leaping up in his mother's womb. * O Thine exceeding great gifts, O Lover of mankind! * Thereby, O Christ, ** save Thou our souls, in that Thou art almighty.

Glory ..., the composition of Anatolius, in Tone VI:

The forerunner, the star of stars, John who longeth for God, is born on earth today from a barren womb, and he revealeth the radiance of Christ, the Orient from on high, for the straight passage of the faithful.

Now & ever ..., Theotokion in Tone VI:

O Theotokos, thou art the true vine * that hast budded forth for us the Fruit of life. * Thee do we entreat: * Pray thou, O Lady, with the holy apostles, ** that He have mercy upon our souls.

Great Doxology, litanies and dismissal.

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 8 Troparia: 4 from Ode III of the first canon of the forerunner and 4 from Ode VI of the second canon.

The birthgiving of the Master is accomplished through the Virgin, while that of His beloved servant is through an elderly and barren mother; wherefore, splendidly hath he proceeded the Wonder of wonders. (Twice)

The elderly and barren woman kisseth the Virgin Mother, truly recognizing her birthgiving, for the bond of her barrenness hath been loosed by the will of God. (Twice)

Today John is born: the citizen of the desert, the preacher of repentance, the true witness of grace, the forerunner of the Word, the star which shineth before the Light.

Today, the axe which hath been forged, hath portended the hewing of barren souls, and planting the fruits of the virtues, hath surely come forth in thy nativity, O forerunner.

Coming forth, the candle-stand of the Light preached the coming of the Savior, the Lamb of God, Who hath shone forth light upon the earth, offered spiritually for all nature.

Theotokion: **O** all-immaculate Theotokos, who hast given birth to the Abyss of mercy: drowning the abyss of my passions in the depths of thy compassions, grant me a torrent of tears from my soul.

Troparion of the forerunner, in Tone IV:

O prophet and forerunner of the coming of Christ, * we who honor thee with love * are at a loss how to worthily praise thee; * for by thy glorious and honored nativity * thou didst loose the barrenness of her who gave birth to thee * and the muteness of thy father, ** and proclaimed to the world the incarnation of the Son of God.

Kontakion, in Tone III:

Today she who before was barren * giveth birth unto the forerunner of Christ, * he is the fulfillment of all prophecy; * for, laying his hand in the Jordan upon Him * Whom the prophets foretold, * he hath been shown to be the prophet, * herald and forerunner ** of the Word of God.

NOTE: After the Little Entrance, the Troparion of the temple of Christ, or of the Theotokos, if the temple is so dedicated; then the Troparion of the forerunner. Then the Kontakion of the temple of Christ; Glory ..., that of the forerunner; Now & ever ..., that of the temple of the Theotokos. If the temple is not dedicated to the Theotokos: Now & ever ..., Kontakion of the temple of Christ. But if the temple is not dedicated to Christ, we begin with the Troparion of the forerunner; Glory: the Kontakion of the forerunner; Now & ever: O protection of Christians. We chant the Prokeimenon, epistle, alleluia, Gospel and communion verse of the forerunner alone.

Prokeimenon, in Tone VII: The righteous man shall be glad in the Lord, * and shall hope in Him.

Verse: Hearken, O God, unto my prayer, when I make supplication unto Thee.

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, § 112 [ROM. 13:11-14: 4]

Brethren: And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. Him that is weak in faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Alleluia, in Tone I: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and wrought redemption for His people.

Verse: And thou, O child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE, § 1 [LK. 1 :5-25,57-68, 76, 80]

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abijah: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren; and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass that, while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zechariah: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to

make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And Zechariah said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be Performed, because thou believest not in my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zechariah, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. And it came to pass; that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zechariah, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them; and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

Communion Verse: In everlasting remembrance shall the righteous be; he shall not be afraid of evil tidings.

We transfer the epistle and Gospel of the daily cycle to the previous day.

NOTE: When the feast of the nativity of the forerunner coincides with a Sunday, the hymns of the resurrection precede those of the saint.