

THE 22nd DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
FORE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY GREAT-MARTYR ANASTASIA, THE
DELIVERER FROM BONDAGE
AT VESPERS

On "Lord, I have cried ...", 6 Stichera: 3 for the forefeast, in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: "O all-praised martyrs ...":

Beholding the condescension of God, * all the earth is glad: * the magi bring Me gifts; * the sky proclaimeth it from on high with a star; * the angels render glory; * the shepherds, piping, * are amazed; * the manger holdeth Me * like a fiery throne. ** Seeing these things, O Mother, rejoice!

O my beginningless Son, * ineffable Offspring * of the beginningless Father, * clad in the likeness of mine aspect, * Thou hast come, the Light of revelation for the nations. * For Thou comest to make humanity rich * which became poor through the poverty in which Thou art clad. ** I hymn Thy tender compassion, O Lord!

Beholding Me as a Babe * resting in thine arms, O Mother, * be thou glad; * for I have come to take away all the pain of Adam, which he suffered * because of the evil counsel of the serpent, * tasting of the tree, * finding himself removed from the sweetness of paradise, ** and prey to corruption.

And 3 Stichera of the Great-martyr, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: "What shall we call you ...":

Disdaining the beautiful things of the world * and sparing not thy flesh for them, O honored one, * thou didst commit thyself wholly to minister to the saints in a godly manner, * patiently tending their sores * amid their sufferings, * and most wisely urging them with thy wise words * to be courageous. ** Pray thou, that our souls be saved.

Thou didst dispense thy transitory wealth to those in need, O honored one, * fervently seeking those things which are eternal, * and following the divine steps of Christ * with undaunted faith, * thou didst cry out: * "I have been wounded with desire for Thee, O Immortal One! * Show me to be a partaker * Of the divine glory of Thy sufferings, ** as Thou art compassionate and the Lover of mankind.

Having endured a blessed suffering, O Anastasia, * thou dost truly ever cleanse our sufferings * with the outpourings of thy healings. * Wherefore, we call thee blessed, as is meet; * and we lovingly celebrate * thy memory, * bowing down before thy relics, * and drawing forth sanctity therefrom. ** Pray thou, that our souls be saved.

Glory ..., of the Great-martyr, in Tone II:

Having suffered at the tribunal, thou didst receive the gift of resurrection, O all-praised Anastasia. For, routing a multitude of demons, thou didst commit them to the sea, O right-wondrous spiritual athlete and martyr.

Now & ever ..., of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Adorn thyself, O Bethlehem! Sing thou, O city of Sion! Rejoice, O wilderness, betrothing thyself beforehand unto joy! For the star shall come to Bethlehem, announcing Christ Who is to be born; the cave shall receive Him Whom nothing can contain; and the manger is ready to accept Life everlasting. To Him let us all chant and cry aloud: Save Thou our souls, O Jesus our God, Who hast become incarnate for our sake!

On the Aposticha, these Stichera, in Tone II:

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

Christ cometh * to crush the evil one, * to enlighten those in darkness, * and to loose those in bonds. ** Let us go forth to meet Him!

Verse: God shall come out of Theman, * and the Holy One out of a mountain overshadowed and densely wooded.

Dance, O Sion! * Adorn thyself well, O cave! * Make ready, O Bethlehem! * For, lo! the Virgin cometh ** to give birth unto the Christ!

Verse: O Lord, I have heard Thy report, and I was afraid; * O Lord, I considered Thy works, and I was amazed.

Sing praise and glory, * ye nations of the gentiles! * Ye magi, make haste in earnest, * bearing gifts, ** while the shepherds pipe.

Glory ..., of the Great-martyr, the composition of the Studite, in Tone IV:

As the namesake of the life-bearing resurrection of Christ, thou didst most excellently fulfill thy calling with an honorable life, strengthening thy nature. Acquiring courage through wisdom, thou didst weave for thyself a robe dyed purple in thy blood; and, bearing the Cross royally, like a scepter, thou dost reign with God the Savior, O all-blessed Anastasia. Him do thou entreat, that He illumine us with His divine glory.

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

Rejoice, O Isaiah, receiving the word of God; and prophesy unto the maiden Mary, that she is the bush which burned with fire yet was not consumed by the radiance of the Divinity. Adorn thyself well, O Bethlehem! Open wide thy gates, O Eden! Ye magi, come see Salvation wrapped and laid in the manger! The star of the life-giving Lord Who saveth our race hath shone upon the roof of the cave.

Troparion of the Great-martyr, in Tone IV:

Thy ewe-lamb Anastasia O Jesus, crieth out with a loud voice: * "Thee do I love, O my Bridegroom, * and, seeking Thee, I endure suffering. * in Thy baptism I am crucified and buried with Thee. * I suffer for Thy sake, that I may reign with Thee; * I die for Thee, that I may live with Thee. * Accept me, who with love sacrifice myself for Thee, * as an unblemished offering!" ** By her supplications save Thou our souls, O most merciful One.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Troparion of the forefeast, in the same tone:

Make ready, O Bethlehem! * Be thou opened unto all, O Eden! * Adorn thyself, O Ephratha! * For in the cave the Tree of Life hath sprung forth from the Virgin. * Her womb is shown to be a noetic paradise, * in the midst of which is the divine Tree, * whereof eating, we shall live, and not die as did Adam. * Christ is born, that He might restore His image ** which of old fell!

AT COMPLINE

Canon of the forefeast, the acrostic whereof is: "I chant the hymn of great Thursday", in Tone VI; The Irmos is chanted twice, followed by 6 Troparia.

ODE I

Irmos: **T**he Red Sea was parted by a blow from the staff of Moses, * and the deep with its Waves became dry, * becoming a path to the unarmed people of Israel, * but to the fully armed ones it became a grave. * A hymn of Praise well-pleasing to God was sung: * gloriously hath Christ our God been glorified.

The all-accomplishing and omnipotent Life, the infinite Wisdom of God, hath made for Himself a habitation of the pure Mother who kneweth not a man; for, clad in a bodily dwelling, Christ our God hath gloriously glorified Himself.

Mystically leading forth the magi, the Wisdom of God calleth forth the first-fruits from among the nations; and to nurture mystically the irrational ones He layeth a mystical meal in the manger of dumb beasts. And with the star shining before them they make haste thereto, journeying with gifts.

Let us now listen to the words of the prophets which are fulfilled by the Spirit; for the Virgin, conceiving in her womb, cometh forth to give birth to Him Who transcendeth being. As a Babe borne in arms have the heavens shown Him forth to the magi, the angels to the shepherds.

ODE III

Irmos: **O** Lord Thou art the God and Creator of all, * becoming poor, Thou hast united Thyself * without passion to a creature, * and offered Thyself as a Passover * for those for whom Thou wast soon to die; * crying: 'Eat My Body, * and ye shall be firmly established in the faith.

Exhibiting beforehand the madness of Pilate, Herod is eager to quickly slay Christ Who is come now to shed His own blood as deliverance for the world. Wherefore, in his murderous savagery he slaughtered a multitude of infants.

The foolish man hath said: There is no God. And he who is filled with utter insanity is sick with lust for the murder of the Messiah. Having fallen low in his audacious intent, he armed himself fully for the murder of innocent babes and hath defiled the earth with their blood.

ODE IV

Irmos: **F**oreseeing Thine ineffable mystery, O Christ, * the Prophet cried aloud: * 'Thou hast manifested the power of Thy love, O merciful Father, * for in Thy goodness * Thou hast sent Thine only-begotten Son * to cleanse the world from sin.

Descending upon the fleece like rain, and upon her who gaveth birth to Thee like dew upon the ground, O Lord, in Thy mercy Thou comest to be born and to dwell with us; for the Father hath sent Thee, the Only-begotten, into the world for its cleansing.

Thou sharest in human flesh through the seed of Abraham, O Christ, and comest to bestow grace upon grace and to save Thine image and render it incorrupt; for the Father hath sent Thee, the Only-begotten, into the world for its cleansing.

The new Drink, which of old David desired to partake, thirsting after it, cometh forth to be poured out in the cave of Bethlehem, quenching the long-standing thirst of both Adam and David, from whom Christ is born in the flesh.

ODE V

Irmos: Bound with the bond of love, * the apostles, having offered themselves to Christ, the Master of all, * had their beautiful feet cleansed by Him, * proclaiming peace unto all.

The Wisdom of God, Who holdeth the unrestrainable waters in their chambers, Who bridleth the deep and restraineth the seas, descending like rain upon a fleece, made His abode within the Virgin's womb.

By a star Christ calleth to wisdom the magi, disciples of the magus Balaam; He Who clotheth heaven with clouds is wrapped in swaddling bands; He before Whom the cherubim tremble lieth in a manger; and He Who filleth all things is contained by a cave.

ODE VI

Irmos: The uttermost depths of sin have encompassed me; * and its stormy waves I can endure no more, * wherefore as Jonah I cry out to Thee, O Master: * Lead me up from corruption.

The heavens, knowing Thee to be the Lord, now declare Thy glory with a star, O Savior, calling forth the magi with gifts to come to acknowledge Thee and to accord Thee divine worship.

Let him who putteth away defilement open wide, and thus, pure, let him touch Christ, the pure Infant Who lieth in the manger and cleanseth the depths of men's hearts.

ODE VII

Irmos: In Babylon the Children feared not the fiery furnace; * but cast into the midst of the flames * they were bedewed and sang: * 'O Lord God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou.'

His mental faculties disturbed, Herod, foreseeing dire things, was shaken, and sought an opportunity to slay the God of life and death, Who is the Lord of all and the Master of creation.

As many of you as are friends of Christ, flee ye with Him Who is escaping to Egypt; and, worshiping Him as is meet, cry out in a godly manner and glorify Him together.

He who is not with Me worketh against Me, saith Christ; he who doth not gather with Me is like unto one who scattereth. Wherefore, let us stand in awe of His descent unto the flesh.

ODE VIII

Irmos: Suffering affliction for the sake of the laws of their fathers, * the blessed Children in Babylon * scorned the foolish decree of the King. * Standing together in midst of the flames, they remained unharmed, * and sang a song fitting for almighty God: * ‘O ye works of the Lord, praise ye the Lord * and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages.’

O ye divinely wise who have come to the Word in Bethlehem, let us gaze with wonder with the angels and shepherds, sending up glory to God in the highest, Who bestoweth His good will and peace upon mankind, and let us supremely exalt Him throughout all ages.

Holding fast to the law of love, let us embrace the intent of brotherly love, establishing peace one with another, and oneness of mind; for Christ, the Bestower of peace, cometh, bringing peace to all things and saving those who cry out: Hymn the Lord, ye works, and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Instead of Glory ..., the refrain: We bless Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Lord.

With false words the iniquitous Herod payeth homage to the new-born Christ, telling the magi to render homage on his behalf in his name; but he was not ashamed to persecute the coming Messiah, neither did he have pity on the infants; and he knew not how to cry out: Hymn the Lord, ye works, and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

Then both choirs chant together: We praise, we bless, and we worship the Lord: praising the Lord and exalting Him supremely unto the ages!

And we chant again the Irmos: Suffering affliction for the sake of the laws

ODE IX

Irmos: Having before, in the lowly cave, * delighted in the hospitality of the Master * and the feast of immortality, * let us now hasten to the Jordan, * and behold the strange mystery * which hath brought down the effulgence from on high.

"Come and seek out the Babe; and when ye shall find Him, tell me quickly of Him," Herod said to the chief among the magi, devising deceit in his heart; but the deceiver was foiled, plotting his iniquity in vain.

The Creator, Who is begotten of the Father from before all ages, is born of the Virgin, being the Wisdom, Word and Power of God. Wherefore, knowing Him to be the only Son, we magnify the God-man.

Thou didst reveal Thyself to be a man in essence, not in semblance, O Savior, and, through the nature which Thou didst take upon Thyself, Thou didst show Thyself to be God. Wherefore, honoring Thy divine advent through the Virgin, we magnify Thee.

And we chant again the *Irmos*: **Having before, in the lowly cave ...**

And a prostration.

AT MATINS

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

Spec. Mel.: "When the stone had been sealed ...":

Creation hath illumined itself, for, in His ineffable mercy, the Creator cometh forth to be born in the cave. Ye shepherds, come together with haste, beholding the awesome wonder. Come, ye magi bearing gifts in your arms, say: Glory to the new-born King! Glory to Him Who hath led us on our journey! We worship Him in the flesh as the King of all!

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

Spec. Mel.: "Go thou quickly before ...":

All creation rejoiceth today in a godly manner; for Christ the Lord, the Son of God, is born of the pure Virgin, rendering the whole race of mankind immortal, and annulling the curse of our first mother Eve. Wherefore, let us offer hymnody unto our Benefactor.

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

Spec. Mel.: "Hope of the world ...":

Of old, the kings brought gold, myrrh and frankincense from Persia to the new-born King and God; and now, celebrating with divine honor and wisdom the forefeast of His nativity with all our soul, we offer Him hope, faith and love, hymning the Virgin.

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

Spec. Mel.: "Today the Virgin ...":

Hymning the Virgin who giveth birth to the pre-eternal Word, the righteous Joseph cried out: "I perceive thee to be the temple of the Lord, who bearest Him Who is come to save all mankind and Who, in His loving-kindness, shall show forth as temples of God those who chant hymns unto Him!"

Two canons: that of the forefeast, with 8 Troparia, and that of the great-martyr, with 6, Troparia.

ODE I

Canon of the forefeast, in Tone VI:

Irmos: When Israel walked on foot in the sea as on dry land, * on seeing their pursuer Pharaoh drowned, * they cried: * Let us sing to God * a song of victory.

Jesus our enlightenment, the great Sun, hath shone forth upon us through the cloud of the Virgin; and we who are in darkness chant unto Him, brightly illumined with His splendors.

The King of peace, the expectation of the gentiles, cometh to slay the enemy. Let us make haste to meet Him Who is born in Bethlehem for our salvation.

The divine sayings of the prophets are fulfilled which foretold the awesome appearance of Christ; for the ewe-lamb draweth nigh to give birth unto the Lamb, the Redeemer and Lord of all

Theotokion: With faith we call thee blessed, O blessed of God, pure dove of the Master, honored and immaculate and most comely among women, in that thou hast given birth to the God of all.

Canon of the Great-martyr, the acrostic whereof is: "I hymn thee with love, O martyr Anastasia", the composition of Joseph, in Tone VIII:

Irmos: Let us, O ye people, send up a hymn * unto our wondrous God * Who hath freed Israel from bondage, * chanting a hymn of victory * and crying aloud: * We sing unto Thee, O only Master.

Let us send up hymnody unto God, Who desireth to be born in the flesh of the Virgin in the city of Bethlehem, and to be laid in an infant's manger as a babe, that He may save the human race.

Seeking the only desirable beauties, those of Christ, O glorious martyr Anastasia, with steadfast character thou didst pass by the beauties of the world and wast deemed worthy to inherit immortality.

Enlightened by the effulgence of the Spirit, thou didst pass intently through the night of the gloom of deception, O honored one, and hast now made thine abode where the divine splendor of the uncreated Trinity doth shine.

Theotokion: The invisible God hath appeared, born of thee supra-naturally in His great loving-kindness, O Virgin Mother. The Rich One hath beggared Himself, that He might enrich the race of mankind with immortality.

ODE III

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: There is none as holy as Thee, * O Lord my God, * who hast exalted the horn of The faithful O good One, * and strengthened us upon the rock * of Thy confession.

Christ Who stretched out the heavens by His word entereth the cave to recline in a manger of dumb beasts, desiring, in His tender compassion, to deliver us from folly.

The prophet manifestly crieth aloud: "This is our God, and there is none other who can take His place! Uniting Himself to mankind, He hath disclosed every way of knowledge."

The cherubim cannot bear to gaze upon Thee, O Lord Who lovest mankind. How then can the manger hold Thee Who art infinite in nature but born for our sake from the Virgin in Thy great loving-kindness?

Theotokion: Daniel the prophet once foresaw thee, O Theotokos, all-pure Bride of God, as the mountain from whence the Stone was cut which crushed and destroyed the temples of idolatry.

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: O Lord, Creator of the vault of Heaven * and Builder of the Church, * do Thou strengthen me in Thy love, O Summit of desire, * O Support of the faithful, * O only Lover of mankind.

The untouchable Lord desireth to be seen lying in the manger, an infant wrapped in swaddling-bands. Leap up, O ye mountains, and, filled with light, array yourselves in divine joy, O ye hills!

Enriched by the Savior's words, with the boldness of piety thou didst blunt the darts of the persecutors' burning words, O Anastasia, governing the movements of thy soul with divine love.

Thou didst simply cry out, O martyr: "I seek the Lord to Whose love alone I have bound my soul! With most desired simplicity, I go to be richly illumined by His all-pure splendors."

Theotokion: O Maiden who knewest not wedlock, thou didst bear within thy womb incarnate, Him Who holdeth all creation in His hand, the pre-eternal Babe Who, when He is born, Thou wilt lay in a manger.

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

Spec. Mel.: "Today the Virgin ...":

Today the Virgin cometh to the cave * to ineffably give birth unto the pre-eternal Word. * Having heard this, be glad, O thou ecumene, * and with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God, ** Who is to appear as a little babe.

Ikos: O wonder truly awesome and beyond all telling! He Who hath given existence unto all things hath, in His goodness, entered into the womb of the holy Virgin, and cometh to be born in a cave, and to be laid in a manger. From above the star heralds Him to the Magi who come to render Him homage with gifts, drawn from afar, following with care the prophecy of Balaam, who said: A star will announce beforehand the young Child, the pre-eternal God.

Sedalion of the Great-martyr, in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: "Thy tomb, O Savior ...":

We praise thee as a bride of Christ, O virgin, and we honor thee like the honored Thecla, as is meet. Wherefore, rivers of healings pour forth by the power of the Spirit on the day of thy commemoration; for thou hast received grace, in that thou didst keep the commandments of the Lord.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Sedalion of the forefeast, in Tone VIII:

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

Celebrating the days of the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, let us hold festival, O ye faithful; and bearing the virtues as the magi did gifts, let us all worthily go forth to chant the greeting and new hymn of the angels to our God Who hath been born in Bethlehem from the divine Maiden and Virgin without seed. Him do all things glorify.

ODE IV

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: Christ is my power, * my God and my Lord, * the holy Church divinely singeth, * crying with a pure mind, * keeping festival in the Lord.

Behold! the star which wast proclaimed of old by Jacob, hath shone forth from afar. The infinite God, becoming a man, is seen wrapped in swaddling-bands.

The Lord, the deliverance of all, is seen as a Babe, sitting in the bosom of the Virgin: He Who, as the Son, resteth in the bosom of the Father.

Open wide, O Eden, which once wast closed to me because of the theft of the fruit! For now, in Bethlehem, He is born Who hath clad Himself in me and hath set me apart to share in thy painless delights.

Theotokion: **T**he prophet Habbakuk foresaw thee in the Spirit, O Virgin, as the mountain overshadowed with the virtues, from whence He Who illumineth our souls hath appeared unto us.

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: O Lord, I have heard the mystery of Thy dispensation; * I have considered Thy works, * and I have glorified Thy Divinity.

Already fulfilled are the sayings of those who prophesied in the divine Spirit; for the Virgin cometh to give birth in the cave to the all-perfect One.

Seeking after the glory of martyrdom with love, thou didst receive it, suffering steadfastly, with a fearless will, O thou who art patient of soul.

When thy body was stripped, O all-praised spiritual athlete and martyr, thou wast truly vested in a robe of grace woven from on high.

Theotokion: O most pure one, the King of heaven cometh forth from thy light-bearing womb as a mortal, laying in a manger as though on a royal throne.

ODE V

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: Illumine with Thy divine light, I pray, O Good One, * the souls of those who with love rise early to pray to Thee, * that they may know Thee, O Word of God, * as the true God, * Who recalleth us from the darkness of sin.

O Bethlehem, thou house of Ephratha, the Prince shall issue forth from thee unto Israel, summoning the rejected gentiles, as Micah foretold, illumined by the Spirit.

Jesus alone is born of the Virgin, to shepherd His flock with strength. Unto the end of the earth is He magnified, thus proclaimed the divinely eloquent prophet of old.

The spirit of wisdom, the spirit of God, the spirit of strength and counsel, of knowledge and understanding, the spirit of the fear of God filled the Son Who was incarnate from thy womb, O Virgin.

Theotokion: **O**f a truth, O most pure, all-immaculate one, thou didst cause all the weaponry of the enemy to utterly fail; for thou hast given birth unto the God of all, Who with a spear hath brought low his savagery.

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: **Rising early we cry to Thee, O Lord; * save us, for Thou art our God, * and we know none other besides Thee.**

The star of Judah hath shone forth from the land of Chaldea, moving the magi to worship, as it was written.

Lawfully didst thou contend, vanquishing the iniquitous with the power of the Spirit, O all-glorious martyr.

As is thy name, so didst thou show forth the resurrection of God, cursing the invisible foe, O all-praised one.

Theotokion: **C**hrist cometh to be born of the Virgin in a subterranean cave, that all things maybe glad.

ODE VI

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **Beholding the sea of life surging with the flood of temptations, * I run to Thy calm haven, and cry to Thee: * Raise up my life from corruption, * O Most Merciful One.**

Behold! Christ cometh to His own. We are made His by grace and godly virtues, O faithful; and, illumined in soul and heart, we receive Him.

The root of Jesse hath sprouted forth, and our God hath come forth from thence, the hope of the nations, their peace and honor, as Isaiah, divinely illumined, foretold of old.

Incarnate, O my Jesus, Thou didst make Thyself poor, enriching me who have become grievously impoverished through evil, and loosing the bonds of my many sins by Thy being wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Theotokion: **T**he winter of adverse thoughts doth beset my lowly heart with assaults of evil spirits, O right beloved Lady, tame it by thy mediations.

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: **I will pour out my prayer unto the Lord, * and to Him will I proclaim my grief; * for my soul is filled with evils, * and my life unto Hades hath drawn nigh, * and like Jonah I pray unto Thee: * Raise me up from corruption, O God.**

The Compassionate One, Who doth form babes in their mothers' wombs, took human nature from us and is seen as a babe; and wrapped in swaddling bands, He is laid in the manger, loosing the intricate bonds of my passions by grace.

Patiently following the struggles of the holy martyrs for Christ's sake, ministering to their needs, and cleansing their sores, O venerable one, thou wast most splendidly enriched, illumining them with glory.

Thou pourest forth drops of healing with showers of divine gifts, and dost hold in-check the rivers of the passions, helping those who are in cruel misfortune, O all-glorious martyr of Christ, thou namesake of the divine resurrection.

Theotokion: **H**ealing human nature which had become corrupt through the ancient transgression, a new Babe is born without corruption; and He sitteth in thy womb, as upon a throne, O unwedded one, without leaving the throne that He shares with the Father in His divinity.

Kontakion, in Tone II: Spec. Mel.: "Seeking the highest ...":

When those who have recourse to thy temple, * find themselves in temptations and sorrows, * they receive precious gifts through the divine grace which dwelleth within thee, * O Anastasia. ** For thou ever pourest forth healings upon the world.

Ikos: **A**s thou art the namesake of the resurrection of Christ, O martyr, by thy supplications, raise me up who have now fallen, letting the drops of thy miracles fall upon my soul, quenching the burning of grievous sin; for thou dost ever save the world from a multitude of sins, of which I am also tempted, for pouring forth healings upon the world, thou dost grant them abundantly to all.

ODE VII

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **An Angel made the furnace sprinkle dew on the holy Children. * But the command of God consumed the Chaldeans * and prevailed upon the tyrant to cry: * O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou.**

The most Perfect One is born as a babe, and wrapped in swaddling bands; and the Beginningless One receiveth a beginning in time from the Virgin, seeking to deify that which He had taken upon Himself. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad!

Clad in the flesh as in a robe of royal purple, The King of peace cometh forth from thy womb, O Maiden, destroying His enemies, in that He is almighty, and bringing peace to our stormy life.

God Who is with us is revealed to be incarnate! Understand, O ye hostile nations, and submit, withdrawing from our life! lo! our Restoration desireth to lay in the manger of Bethlehem as a babe!

Theotokion: **T**he King Who made His abode within thy womb chose thee out of all generations to be His undefiled palace, O Maiden. To Him we now piously chant: O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: **The Hebrew children in the furnace * boldly trampled upon the flames, * changing the fire into dew, they cried aloud: * 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, throughout the ages'.**

The choirs of the incorporeal ones give glory on high, and we on earth render homage, beholding Thee Who hast made Thyself like unto us mortals and liest in a manger, O Christ, Thou God of all.

Thou didst reduce the fire of deception to ashes, partaking of the flame as did the children. And thou didst show forth thy fervent love, O divinely wise one, which thou didst have for thy Master and Bridegroom.

Thou pourest forth showers of healings, assuaging the fever of illness, ever causing the people to chant: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God, throughout the ages!

Theotokion: **A** wonder which amazeth the mind hath been wrought in thee, O Virgin Mother: thou shalt give birth to God and lay in a manger Him Who is unapproachable even to the cherubim and is infinite in His being.

ODE VIII

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **Thou didst make flame sprinkle the Saints with dew, * and didst burn the sacrifice of a righteous man with water. * For Thou alone, O Christ, dost do all as Thou willest, * and Thee do we supremely exalt throughout all ages.**

The sayings of the divinely eloquent prophets are now fulfilled: the Virgin draweth nigh to give birth to the Lord. Let all the earth joining chorus, be glad, and let it rejoice throughout all ages!

Shining with beams of divine grace and abolishing the shadow of the law, Christ the Bestower of light hath shone forth. O ye who are in darkness, behold the great Light!

O Lord Who wast born in the cave, show me to be a temple of Thee and of the Father and Thy divine Spirit, even though I have become a lair of brigands, that I may glorify Thee throughout all ages.

Theotokion: **A** heavenly Star hath shone forth from thy womb; and the astrologers have been moved to look upon it, illumined by the Spirit through the knowledge thereof, O most pure Virgin who art ever blessed.

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: **Treading down the fiery flame in the furnace, * the divinely eloquent children sang: * 'Bless the Lord, ye works of the Lord'.**

The cave holdeth the New-born, before Whom thousands and myriads of angels stand on high. O ye works Hymn Him unceasingly as Lord!

Thou wast shown to be a temple of the Trinity when in the temples of God thou didst exercise thyself in fasting and supplication, O Anastasia, crying aloud: Bless the Lord, ye works of the Lord!

Strengthening Chrysogonus with thy fortifying words, O passion-bearer, thou didst trample upon the feeble cruelty of the idols, suffering valiantly.

Theotokion: O Maiden who held God within thyself: thou hast given birth unto the Babe Who created time, the immutable Lord Who, in His ineffable mercy, is born in the city of Bethlehem.

ODE IX

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: It is impossible for mankind to see God * upon Whom the orders of Angels dare not gaze; * but through thee, O all-pure one, * did the Word Incarnate become a man * and with the Heavenly Hosts * Him we magnify and thee we call blessed.

Behold! Christ, the restoration, cleansing, salvation and power of all, is come! the priceless Treasure is hidden within the cave! And the magi, enriched thereby, offer Him gold, as to a king.

Keepe watch, O shepherds of Christ, and come ye noetically to the city of Bethlehem; and cry out to God in the highest: Glory and majesty be unto Him Whose good pleasure it hath been to reveal Himself as a babe for our sake, in His goodness! .

Wrapped in swaddling clothes in the flesh, O Thou Who dost shroud the earth in darkness and settest bounds for the sea with sand, thou hast broken the bonds of mine evil deeds and with righteousness hast girded those who have become weak through the assaults of the enemy.

Theotokion: O chamber and throne of the Ruler, mountain of God, chosen city, garden of paradise, most radiant cloud of the Sun: illumine my soul, dispelling the cloud of my manifold iniquities, O divinely joyous one.

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: Saved by thee, O pure Virgin, * we confess thee to be truly the Theotokos, * and together with the choirs of the bodiless hosts * thee do we magnify.

Leap up in gladness, ye mountains, and gird yourselves about with joy, O ye hills! The Virgin now draweth nigh to give birth unto the Lord.

Today, creation offereth thee gladness, O Anastasia, glorifying the memory of the Word Whom thou didst glorify with thy blood.

Illumined now with a most pure light, O right noble martyr, by thy supplications ask that we all receive illumination from on high.

Theotokion: Let all creation now rejoice in splendor! The Theotokos cometh to give birth to God the Word Who hath become a man through the will of God.

Exapostilarion: Spec. Mel.: "By the Spirit in the holy place ...":

Thou didst minister unto Chrysogonus when he was imprisoned in the dungeon, O Anastasia, and, submitting to his words, thou didst finish the course of martyrdom in God. And receiving the grace of healing from Him, thou dost heal the infirmities of all.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Exapostilarion of the forefeast, in the same melody:

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad! Be enlightened, O cave! O manger, receive Him Who created us with His own hand and is born as a babe from the Virgin! Ye multitude of angels, cry out clearly: Glory to God in the highest!

On the Praises, 4 Stichera, in Tone VI:

Spec. Mel.: "Come forth, ye angelic hosts ...":

Now have the ancient manifestations been resolved: * for a Virgin hath conceived in her womb; * the Stone hath been cut from the mountain, * the rod of Jesse hath sprouted forth, * and the dew of Gideon * hath now been poured forth upon the earth. * O ye people, let us cry aloud: * Christ, the King of Israel, ** cometh forth!

Now are the strange aspects of a strange birthgiving seen. * How doth He Who sitteth with the Father in the highest * desire to be laid in a manger of dumb beasts? * How is He Whom no one can touch * wrapped in swaddling-clothes? * How is He Who is everywhere present * contained in a cave? * Ye people, let us cry aloud: * Christ, the King of Israel, ** cometh forth!

He Who worketh miracles, * smiting Egypt with plagues * and raining manna down upon His foolish people, * is incarnate and nurtured with milk. * And, seen as a babe, He fleeth the tyrant Herod, * borne by His Virgin Mother, * as upon a cloud, ** as Isaiah of most godly sight foresaw.

The Child Who hath been King from before all ages * is born of His own will! * A Son hath been given us! * Hearken, ye nations! * Pay heed, O Israel! * Understand and submit yourselves! * For He is with us Who will grind down and wipe from the earth * every kingdom and principality ** which doth not obey Him!

Glory ..., in Tone VI & the same melody:

With a staff of iron wilt thou be shepherded, O Judea, * for thou hast not submitted * and hast not believed the prophets; * for when the Son is born * the Father will give to the gentiles the inheritance * and dominion over all the world, * and will drive thee out, O vile murderer, * for thou wilt not submit to cry out: ** Christ, the King of Israel, cometh forth!

Now & ever ..., in Tone VI & the same melody:

Leap up, O David, * for Christ is sprung forth from within thee! * Rejoice, O Jesse, * of thy root He hath blossomed forth! * From thy loins, O Judah, shall the Lord come forth, * according to the prophecy of Balaam! * Behold, ye nations, following the great Isaiah: * Lo! the all-pure Virgin * giveth birth to the Babe Emmanuel!

At the Aposticha, these Stichera, in Tone II:

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

Christ draweth nigh, * the star shineth before Him, * the heavenly multitude * of the army of the noetic hosts ** bendeth low to see.

Verse: **G**od shall come out of Theman, * and the Holy One out of a mountain overshadowed and densely wooded.

Rejoice, O Bethlehem! * The Shepherd hath arisen, * Who saveth Israel! * No longer shalt thou be the least ** among the princes of Judah!

Verse: **O** Lord, I have heard Thy report, and I was afraid; * O Lord, I considered Thy works, and I was amazed.

Come, ye mortals, * and let us form a choir * with the angels! * Let us cry out to God: ** Glory in the highest!

Glory ..., of the great-martyr, the composition of Byzantium, in Tone V:

The day of the forefeast of the nativity of Christ God, the feast of the all-praised martyr Anastasia, hath shone forth today. Lo! the Virgin draweth nigh to Bethlehem to lay her Babe, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, in a manger of dumb beasts: Him Who hath freed us from the ancient curse and saveth our souls.

Now & ever ..., of the forefeast, in Tone V:

"Be not dour at the sight of my womb, O Joseph; for thou shalt see the One born from me, and shalt rejoice and worship Him as God!" said the Theotokos to her betrothed when she was about to give birth unto Christ. Let us cry out to her, saying: Rejoice, O divinely joyous one! The Lord is with thee; and, because of thee, He is with us as well!

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 8 Troparia: 4 from Ode III of the canon of the forefeast, and 4 from Ode VI of the canon of the great-martyr.

Christ Who stretched out the heavens by His word entereth the cave to recline in a manger of dumb beasts, desiring, in His tender compassion, to deliver us from folly. (Twice)

The prophet manifestly crieth aloud: "This is our God, and there is none other who can take His place! Uniting Himself to mankind, He hath disclosed every way of knowledge."

The cherubim cannot bear to gaze upon Thee, O Lord Who lovest mankind. How then can the manger hold Thee Who art infinite in nature but born for our sake from the Virgin in Thy great loving-kindness?

The Compassionate One, Who doth form babes in their mothers' wombs, took human nature from us and is seen as a babe; and wrapped in swaddling bands, He is laid in the manger, loosing the intricate bonds of my passions by grace.

Patiently following the struggles of the holy martyrs for Christ's sake, ministering to their needs, and cleansing their sores, O venerable one, thou wast most splendidly enriched, illumining them with glory.

Thou pourest forth drops of healing with showers of divine gifts, and dost hold in-check the rivers of the passions, helping those who are in cruel misfortune, O all-glorious martyr of Christ, thou namesake of the divine resurrection.

Theotokion: **H**ealing human nature which had become corrupt through the ancient transgression, a new Babe is born without corruption; and He sitteth in thy womb, as upon a throne, O unwedded one, without leaving the throne that He shares with the Father in His divinity.

Troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Make ready, O Bethlehem! * Be thou opened unto all, O Eden! * Adorn thyself, O Ephratha! * For in the cave the Tree of Life hath sprung forth from the Virgin. * Her womb is shown to be a noetic paradise, * in the midst of which is the divine Tree, * whereof eating, we shall live, and not die as did Adam. * Christ is born, that He might restore His image ** which of old fell!

Troparion of the Great-martyr, in Tone IV:

Thy ewe-lamb Anastasia O Jesus, crieth out with a loud voice: * "Thee do I love, O my Bridegroom, * and, seeking Thee, I endure suffering. * in Thy baptism I am crucified and buried with Thee. * I suffer for Thy sake, that I may reign with Thee; * I die for Thee, that I may live with Thee. * Accept me, who with love sacrifice myself for Thee, * as an unblemished offering!" ** By her supplications save Thou our souls, O most merciful One.

Kontakion, in Tone II:

When those who have recourse to thy temple, * find themselves in temptations and sorrows, * they receive precious gifts through the divine grace which dwelleth within thee, * O Anastasia. ** For thou ever pourest forth healings upon the world.

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

Today the Virgin cometh to the cave * to ineffably give birth unto the pre-eternal Word. * Having heard this, be glad, O thou ecumene, * and with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God, ** Who is to appear as a little babe.

Prokeimenon, in Tone IV: Wondrous is God in His saints, * the God of Israel.

Verse: In congregations bless ye God, the Lord from the well-springs of Israel.

EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, §208 [GAL 3:23-29]

Brethren: But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster, for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Alleluia, in Tone I: With patience I waited patiently for the Lord, and He was attentive unto me, and He hearkened unto my supplication.

Verse: And He brought me up out of the pit of misery, and from the mire of clay.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE, §33 [LK 7:36-50]

At that time: One of the Pharisees desired Jesus that he would eat with him. And he went down into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor

which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

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