

THE 23rd DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE 10 HOLY MARTYRS OF CRETE
AT VESPERS

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

Spec. Mel.: "As one valiant among the martyrs ...":

With uprightnes of mind * let us chant the hymns * of the forefeast of the nativity of Christ; * for, though equal in honor to the Father and the Spirit, * in His loving-kindness He hath clothed Himself in our substance * that He might be born * in the city of Bethlehem. * His ineffable nativity ** have the shepherds and angels hymned.

Let us shout to the sound of cymbals, * let us cry aloud in hymns: The advent of Christ hath come! * The predictions of the prophets have been fulfilled! * For Him of Whom they foretold * that He would appear to mankind in the flesh * is born in the holy cave * and lieth as a babe in the manger; ** and wrapped in swaddling-bands as a babe.

Prepare thyself, O Bethlehem! * O Eden, be thou now opened! * The all-holy one cometh to give birth! * Let the heavens be glad! * Let mortals leap for joy! * He Who is our rich Life * cometh in the magnitude of His mercy * to the manger and the cave, * assuming the poverty of Adam ** without change or commingling.

And 3 Stichera of the martyrs, in Tone IV & the same melody:

With sacred laudations * let us praise aloud today * the divinely called ten, * the lamps ten times radiant, * illumining the fullness of the Church with divine effulgence, * the unshakable pillars, * the luminous stars, * who have rendered the earth heavenly ** by the splendors of their magnificent struggles.

Let Theodulus be praised * with Zoticus and Pompey, * Basilides, Euporus, Agathopus and Saturninus, * Gelasius and the divine Evaristus, * and with them also * let Eunician be honored with hymns: * the right calm havens for the tempest-tossed, * who denounced falsehood ** and have received the crown of victory.

Let us render honor * to the ten holy passion-bearers, * the offspring of Crete, * the foundations of the Church, * the imperishable adornments of the faithful, * the precious and fragrant flowers of paradise, * the beauteous sacrifices * right-acceptable to Christ, ** the offerings of the temple of heaven.

Glory ..., in Tone III:

On this day of festal preparation, the feast of the martyrs hath dawned, preparing us for the day of the nativity of the Sun Who shineth forth from the Son, heralding God Who hath appeared from the Virgin in the flesh. The ten martyrs who suffered mightily in Crete have received crowns from heaven. To them let us cry aloud: O holy martyrs, ye choir elect in holiness, entreat Christ on behalf of those who with faith celebrate your all-honored memory!

Now & ever ..., in Tone III:

Adorn thyself well, O Bethlehem, for Eden hath been opened! Prepare thyself, O Ephratha, for Adam hath been restored, and Eve with him: for the curse hath been annulled, salvation hath blossomed forth, and the souls of the righteous are adorned, offering hymnody instead of myrrh as their gift, and receiving salvation of soul and incorruption. For, lo! He Who lieth in the manger doth order those who cry out to chant unceasingly in spirit: Glory be to Thee, O Lord!

At the Aposticha. these Stichera. In Tone VI:

Spec. Mel.: "On the third day ...":

In a manner past understanding the boundless wisdom of God hath made Himself a house from the Virgin, and incomprehensibly desireth to be born in the flesh in the cave, and laid in a manger of dumb beasts.

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

Thou didst reveal Thyself to the prophets as far as they were able to behold Thee, the Creator, O Christ; but in these latter times Thou didst show Thyself to all mankind, becoming a man in the city of Bethlehem.

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

The star made its transit, heralding Christ, the Sun of righteousness, to those who observed the stars, and in the city of Bethlehem the angels now announce glad tidings to the shepherds. With them let us also hasten. O ye divinely wise.

Glory ..., in Tone II:

Today Crete celebrates the forefeast of the nativity of Christ at the memorial of the passion-bearers. Wherefore, by their supplications, O Lord, save Thou our souls!

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

Behold! the time of our salvation hath drawn nigh! Make ready, O cave: the Virgin cometh to give birth! O Bethlehem, thou land of Judah, adorn thyself and be glad, for from thee hath our Lord shone forth! Harken, ye mountains and hills, and ye lands of Judea round about, for Christ cometh forth, that He might save those whom He created, in that He is the Lover of mankind.

Troparion of the martyrs, in Tone IV:

In their sufferings, Thy martyrs O Lord, * received imperishable crowns from Thee, our God; * for, possessed of Thy might, * they set at naught the tyrants and crushed the feeble audacity of the demons. ** By their supplications save Thou our souls.

GloryNow & ever ..., 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

We chant a Triodion, the Irmos of each ode of which we chant twice, the Troparia repeated to make up six in number. After each ode both choirs together chant the Irmos of the ode.

Triodion, in Tone VI:

ODE V

Irmos: I seek Thee early in the morning, * Who for our sake didst mercifully empty Thyself * and willingly submit to be baptized by the hand of a servant, * O Word of God, * Grant Thy peace unto me the fallen one, * O Lover of mankind.

Having cleansed our thoughts and purified ourselves beforehand by partaking of the mysteries of Thine awesome dispensation, let us go up to the city of Bethlehem in body and soul, to behold the Master Who is born.

Behold, and fear not, O friends, for Herod the insane one rageth in vain, seeking to slay the new-born Creator. Yet as He Who hath dominion over life and death, He liveth and saveth the world, in that He is the Lover of mankind.

Lord, have mercy! (Thrice), Glory ..., Now & ever ...,

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.

ODE VIII

Irmos: The divine Children rebuked the wicked god-hating idol; * and the lawless Sanhedrin raged against Christ, * vainly taking council to kill Him * who doth hold life in the hollow of His hand, * wherefore the whole of creation doth bless and glorify Him throughout all ages.

O ye faithful, let us all shake the sleep of slothfulness from our eyelids, and, fending off the temptations of the evil one, let us keep vigil in prayer: with the shepherds let us show ourselves to be beholders of the glory of the newborn Christ, Whom all of creation doth bless, glorifying Him throughout all ages.

Who among men can plumb the depths of the wisdom and understanding of the Creator? What wise man can fathom the abyss of the judgments of God, whereby, having bowed down the heavens, He hath dwelt as a mortal with mankind? Him doth all of creation bless, glorifying Him throughout all ages.

O ye faithful, let us arrest every vile word from leaving our lips; and having learned the words of God, let us now offer them unto Christ Who hath released us from wordlessness as He lieth in a manger of dumb beasts. Him doth all of creation bless, glorifying Him throughout all ages.

Let us make haste to renounce the carnal passions and the beauties of this world,

and let us confine ourselves to spiritual Concerns, all ye divinely wise: presenting ourselves as worthy through our works, to the Master Whom all of creation doth bless, glorifying Him throughout all ages.

ODE IX

Irmos: More honorable than the cherubim, * and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim, * who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word: * the very Theotokos, thee do we magnify.

The pernicious command of the malicious one who troubled the nativity of Jesus wrought the slaughter of the innocent babes; but with faith we honor Him Who hath been born.

The cruel Herod, flouting the laws of nature and casting aside the divine commandments, iniquitously deprived mothers of their infants, and slaughtered the innocent babes in place of the Life of all.

The gates of Eden were opened to the nations when the Redeemer was born in the cave; and the Lord of glory poureth forth a wellspring of immortality upon those who thirst. Him do we magnify.

The angels surrounded the manger as though it were the throne of the cherubim, for they perceived the cave to be heaven when the Master lay therein; and they cried out: Glory to God in the highest!

The Irmos is repeated, followed by a prostration.

AT MATINS

On "God is the Lord ...", the 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! (Twice)

Glory ..., that of the martyrs, in Tone IV:

In their sufferings, Thy martyrs O Lord, * received imperishable crowns from Thee, our God; * for, possessed of Thy might, * they set at naught the tyrants and crushed the feeble audacity of the demons. ** By their supplications save Thou our souls.

Now & ever ..., that of the forefeast.

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

Spec. Mel.: "Of the divine Faith ...":

Today the Church rejoiceth, singeth and adorneth herself, celebrating the forefeast of the nativity; for it is truly an all-holy solemnity, and she doth therefore array herself for the Lord of glory, and we all cry out to Christ God: O Lover of mankind, have mercy upon us who hymn Thee!

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., The foregoing is repeated.

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

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

Thou hast descended from the bosom of the Father, and in an ineffable abasement hast taken upon Thyself our poverty, O Lover of mankind; in a manner transcending nature Thou hast been well-pleased to make Thine abode in a cave, O Lord, and Thou, the Creator and Lord, art nourished as a babe from Thy Mother's breasts. Wherefore, the magi, guided by the star, bring gifts unto Thee as the Master of creation, and the shepherds and angels marvel, crying: Glory in the highest to God Who cometh to be born as a man on earth!

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., The foregoing is repeated.

Canon of the forefeast, with 8 Troparia, including the Irmos; and that of the martyrs, with 6 Troparia.

ODE I

Canon of the forefeast, the acrostic whereof is the [Greek] alphabet, the composition of Joseph, in Tone VI:

Irmos: He Who in ancient times * hid the pursuing tyrant beneath the waves of the sea, * is now concealed in a manger * for Herod seeketh to slay Him * But let us sing with the magi; chanting unto the Lord, * for gloriously hath He been glorified.

Judah shall not lack for a prince, for to him was a promise made, as hath been written before: Jesus Christ, the Expectation of the nations, hath come, and is born in a cave in His surpassing goodness.

Be glad with great joy, O Bethlehem; for in thee is Christ the Lord born! Let the whole world leap up, receiving deliverance, and let all creation dance, keeping festival!

Desiring to save the human race, the Supremely good One made His abode in the womb of the Virgin who knew not wedlock; and, lo! He cometh to be born. Let us worship Him, for gloriously hath He been glorified!

Canon of the martyrs, the acrostic whereof is contained in the Theotokia, the composition of George, in Tone II:

Irmos: Come, O ye people, * let us sing a song to Christ our God, * Who divided the sea, * and made a way for the nation * which He had brought up out of the bondage of Egypt; * for He hath been glorified.

Today the most radiant beams of the noetic Sun have shone forth, proclaiming to all His effulgence and advent in the flesh.

Today the passion-bearers have set before all a spiritual banquet of the forefeast which mystically nourisheth us with the radiance of the new-born Christ.

Shining forth like radiant stars, the saints followed the noetic Sun of glory during their struggles, and, having now reached Him, they have been illumined.

United in soul, the martyrs cut down hordes of the enemy, and have ineffably received crowns of victory from Christ Who was born in the cave.

Theotokion: The race of mankind offereth thee the adulation of the forefeast, O Bride of God; and they glorify the Lover of mankind Who was born from thee, as the Mediator and Cause of universal joy.

ODE III

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: When creation beheld Thee, * Who founded the whole earth upon the waters, * born in the cave, * it was seized with awe, crying aloud: * None is holy save Thee, O Lord!

Thou didst desire to clothe Thyself in the guise of a servant, that Thou mightest deliver me from slavery to the evil one. I hymn Thy loving-kindness, O Word Who art co-beginningless and consubstantial with the Father: Glory to Thy dispensation!

The Virgin cometh to give birth to the Lord in the cave! Come forth, O ye magi! Ye shepherds, come forth! Ye angels, cry out hymns from on high: The Deliverance of mankind hath come!

Seeking me who have become lost and by my barren acts have been shown to be a den of thieves O Lover of mankind, Thou hast now arrived at the cave to be born today from the Virgin, O Master. Glory to Thy Nativity, O Word!

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: O Lord, who didst slay sin upon the tree, * firmly establish us in Thee, * and in the hearts of us who hymn Thee * plant the fear of Thee.

Wrapped in swaddling-bands, the Word Who hath been born in the flesh hath rent asunder the garments of our ancient condemnation, and hath clothed us in incorruption.

You destroyed the legion of ungodliness, O most wise ones, by the power of Christ God Who hath appeared in the flesh, and ye bound yourselves together with His love.

Theotokion: We were released from the bonds of condemnation when the Creator was wrapped in swaddling-bands, and we have been re-clothed in the vesture of our primal beauty, O Theotokos.

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 truly awesome wonder past all telling! He Who giveth existence to all, in His goodness hath entered the womb of the holy Virgin, and cometh to be born in the cave and to be laid in a manger. And His star is a herald from on high to the magi who come to do Him homage with gifts, drawing from afar those who zealously follow the prophecy of Balaam who said: "A star will proclaim beforehand the little babe, the pre-eternal God!"

Sedalion of the martyrs, in Tone I:

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

The splendid and honorable guardians of the cities of Crete, having suffered mightily vanquished the serpent, the author of evil with faith, and have been lawfully crowned. Let us celebrate their right praiseworthy memorial today, glorifying the Lord of all with loud voices. (Twice)

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Sedalion of the forefeast, in Tone I & the same melody:

Rejoice, O Sion! Adorn thyself, O Bethlehem! For the Sustainer of all, having sent forth a star, hath announced His infinite condescension, before Whom the hosts of heaven tremble: truly He Who alone is the Lover of mankind is immutably born from the Virgin!

ODE IV

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: Foreseeing Thine advent from the Virgin, * Habbakuk cried out in awe: * Thou hast come from Theman incarnate, O Redeemer * to restore Adam who had been expelled!

The radiant cloud cometh forth to shine from her maternal womb Christ, the Sun of righteousness, Who illumineth the whole earth with the rays of divinity.

God hath revealed Himself to be like unto men: He abaseth Himself by assuming flesh, that He might deify us, and is born in a cave. O ye faithful, let us receive Him with a pure heart.

Behold! Christ is born in the city of Bethlehem, that He might open Eden unto us, which of old was closed through the disobedience initiated by the serpent: Let us celebrate a divine festival!

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: I heard report of Thee, O Lord, * and I was afraid; * I understood Thy works, * and marveling cried aloud: * Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be filled with mystic gladness; for Christ hath come to restore all things!

The ten spiritual athletes, heralding the nativity of the Creator, make glad and rejoice with us.

The condescension of Christ hath divinely elevated the valiant martyrs to heaven by their suffering.

Theotokion: O Theotokos, all creation doth honor thee with hymns, as the joy of all, celebrating the forefeast.

ODE V

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: I seek Thee early in the morning, * Who for our sake didst mercifully empty Thyself * and willingly submit to be baptized by the hand of a servant, * O Word of God, * Grant Thy peace unto me the fallen one, * O Lover of mankind.

Let the hearts of all mortals leap up, and let creation be glad! The Lord is born from the pure Maiden in the cave of Bethlehem, and the magi offer Him fitting gifts.

O ye people, who of old sat in the shadow of death, behold the Light which hath shone forth upon us from the Virgin, and be filled with great sweetness of soul, ever magnifying the Word Who lowered Himself.

Thou comest to be contained in a little cave, O Thou Who art infinite by nature, that, in Thy boundless mercy, Thou mightest magnify me who have made myself insignificant through disobedience.

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: O Lord, Bestower of light and Creator of the ages: * guide us in the light of Thy commandments, * for we know none other God than Thee.

O ye faithful, let us offer faith, like gold, hymnody, like pleasing incense, and pure love, like myrrh, to Christ Whose good pleasure it is to be born in the flesh for our sake.

The defending spiritual athletes, having gathered today into the one company of Christ, have set at naught the many and varied wiles of the enemy and have worthily received the honors of victory.

The most wise martyrs, having manifestly come to know of the Nativity of Christ in the flesh, spurned carnal love. Wherefore, they suffered for love of Him.

Theotokion: Delivered from the delusion of idolatry, O pure one, through thee we have come to know the one Creator and Savior. Wherefore, at His nativity we honor thee with love, O most pure one.

ODE VI

Canon of the Forefeast

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.

Transcending the laws of the flesh, O Lord, the Virgin cometh to give birth to Thee in the cave and to lay Thee in a manger as a babe in the flesh.

In His mercy, the Supremely divine One, Who was born of the Maiden who knew not wedlock, showeth me to be a citizen of heaven, though I had become a stranger to God through disobedience.

Ye mountains, hills and valleys, be glad; for the Lord is born in the flesh, restoring creation which had become corrupt through wicked disobedience.

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: Whirled about in the abyss of sin, * I appeal to the unfathomable abyss of Thy compassion: * Raise me up from corruption, O God.

The star of the East, which shone forth from on high upon us in God's ineffable loving-kindness, proclaimed a greeting, announcing effulgence to those in the world.

Illumining those who walk in the night of life, in the depths of delusion, O all-glorious ones, by the light of Christ ye guided men to Him.

He Who in His ineffable mercy was born in the cave, in that He is the Lover of mankind, drew the martyrs up from the depths of ungodliness to the heights of the knowledge of God.

Theotokion: We mortals have been deemed worthy of the honor of the divine regeneration of Christ God, Who in a manner past understanding was born from thee in the flesh, O Bride of God.

Kontakion of the martyrs, in Tone IV:

Spec. Mel.: "Thou hast appeared today ...":

A morning-star hath shone forth, * the honorable contest of the martyrs, * illumining for us beforehand * Him Who is born in the cave, ** to Whom the Virgin gave birth without seed.

Ikos: Loving Christ, the Bestower of life, Who for our sake was born of the Virgin in the cave, the warriors raised a splendid legion to do battle against Belial; and having manifestly vanquished him on earth, they cast down him who of old had boasted without measure. Wherefore, they shine upon those in darkness as luminaries of the noetic Sun; for as the star stood before the magi, guiding them to Bethlehem, the city of Judah, so do they, through their torments, proclaim to us Him to Whom the Virgin gave birth without seed.

ODE VII

Canon of the Forefeast

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.'

How can the least of caves hold Thee, O Word, Who in Thine exceeding abasement assumed the poverty of Adam, enriching mankind with the wealth of divine grace?

Hearing strange words, the shepherds hastened to Bethlehem to behold Him Who lieth in a manger of dumb beasts and releaseth all mankind from irrationality.

With mouth and heart let us hasten to hymn and worship with faith Christ Who cometh to be born in the flesh from the Virgin Maiden, in the cave.

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: When the golden image was worshipped on the plain of Dura, * Thy three children spurned the impious command, * and, cast into the midst of the flame, * they were bedewed, and sang: * O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!

By abasing Himself in the flesh, Christ hath shown the richness of His ineffable love for mankind; for having become man, He hath disclosed an abundance of good things to those who cry out unceasingly: O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!

Noetically delighting in the divine fragrance of Christ, the passion-bearers spurned all sweet things, and by their suffering followed Him, crying aloud: O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!

Showing yourselves to be a pre-festal sacrifice to Christ, O wise ones, ye offered Him your fragrant suffering as it were myrrh. Wherefore, with the perfume of miracles He hath glorified you who cry out: O God of our fathers, Blessed art Thou!

Theotokion: O all-pure one, by thy supplications grant that we who hymn thee with faith may with pure noetic sight behold the spiritual glory and divine radiance of our God, Who was born in the flesh from thee in the cave.

ODE VIII

Canon of the Forefeast

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.'

Holding in thine arms, bowing down before, and kissing maternally the one Lord Who had become incarnate in a manner beyond all telling, and was clad in human likeness, O Maiden, thou didst say: "O my most sweet Child, how is it that I hold Thee Who holdest all creation in thy hand, while freeing it from the hand of bondage?"

Make ready to chant to Him Who hath been born on earth, O divine angels! Guided by the star, bring ye gifts, O magi! Ye shepherds, hasten ye to behold Him sitting as a babe in His Mother's arms, crying out: Hymn the Lord, ye works, and supremely exalt Him throughout all ages!

O cloud of the Light, thou who knewest not wedlock, how canst thou wrap in swaddling-bands Him Who clothes the heavens with clouds by His ineffable will?

How canst thou lay in a manger of dumb beasts the Master Who in His boundless mercy doth deliver mankind from irrationality? Him Whom all creation worships with fear, hymning Him throughout all ages.

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: God Who descended into the fiery furnace * with the Hebrew children, * and transformed the flame into dew, * do ye works hymn, * and supremely exalt as Lord throughout all ages.

All creation prepareth first-fruits for Thee Who art to be born of the pure Virgin in the cave, O Christ; and it chanteth the praise of the forefeast, glorifying Thee, the only Benefactor.

Following Christ Who was born on earth, and having faith as a guide, like a radiant star, the passion-bearers beheld Him, and in their martyrdom offered Him divine gifts.

Strengthened by the power of Christ, O all-wise passion-bearers, ye triumphed over the oppression of the enemy, and showed him to be weak, hymning Christ throughout all ages.

Theotokion: He Who rested in the bosom of the Father and was born in the cave, found rest in thy maternal arms, O Theotokos, opening the kingdom in the heavens unto all who hymn thee with faith.

ODE IX

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: Be not now amazed, O Mother, * beholding as an infant Him Whom the Father begat from within Himself * before the morning star; * for I have manifestly come to restore and glorify with Me * the nature of fallen mankind, * who with faith and love magnifies thee.

Rejoice, O most pure one, thou receptacle of ineffable joy! For, lo! thou comest to give birth ineffably in the cave to the Master Who truly desires to restore all creation, which of old became corrupt through disobedience. Hymning Him with faith, we magnify thee.

O all ye souls of the righteous, and those beneath the earth, rejoice! For, lo! the Deliverance of all hath appeared, born in the city of Bethlehem! And the star proclaimeth Him to the magi, who seek Him with piety; and, beholding Him in the cave, they are filled with joy.

O Virgin, we hymn thee as another heaven, who in the morning shall shine forth the Sun of righteousness upon us from thy most pure womb, illumining those in the darkness of death and corruption. Wherefore, we magnify thee with praises, as is meet.

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: God the Word, God of God, * Who by ineffable wisdom came to create Adam anew * after his grievous fall to corruption through eating * and Who took flesh beyond all telling from the Holy Virgin for our sake, * Him we faithful with one accord magnify in song.

The army of spiritual athletes, hastening before the divine coming of the King of all, announce to all creation the banquet of gladness, receiving all the faithful, and setting forth their valiant deeds as food.

O wise passion-bearers of the Lord, beholding the Faith as it were a star, and cleaving steadfastly to the never-setting Sun, ye were thereby guided to Christ without stumbling; and have offered your blood to Him as a gift.

Gathered like flowers from the incorrupt fields of the understanding of Christ, O passion-bearers, suffering, ye were filled with His fragrance; and in your martyrdom offered yourselves to Him as most fragrant myrrh.

Theotokion: **G**race hath been poured forth among all the generations of mankind, O Virgin Theotokos, and the wealth of thy miracles floweth forth abundantly in the radiant joy of thy birth-giving, enriching those who glorify thee with faith and love.

Exapostilarion of the martyrs: Spec. Mel.: "With the disciples ...":

With hymns let us joyously crown Theodulus and Zoticus, Agathadorus and Saturninus, Pompey and Eunician, the glorious Basilides and the godly Euporus, the glorious Gelasius and Evaristus, that by their supplications we may be delivered from transgressions and may receive crowns from Christ the Savior.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Exapostilarion of the forefeast:

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

A mystery hidden and untold even to the angels is soon to be wrought through the good pleasure of the Father and by the cooperation of the Spirit. Let us make haste, for the beginningless Word, receiving a beginning in time as a man, is born from the Virgin for the salvation of the world.

On the Praises, 4 Stichera, in Tone VI:

Spec. Mel.: "Go forth, ye angels ...":

Thy mystery appointed beforehand by the Father * before all ages, * and proclaimed of old by the prophets, * hath been revealed in the latter days: * God hath become a man, * receiving flesh from the Virgin, * the Uncreated One of His own will taketh on our form, * He Who Is entereth temporal existence: * Christ cometh forth, ** the King of Israel.

I hymn Thee, O King * Who art wrapped in swaddling-bands, * for thou loosest the bonds of my falls into sin, * and, honoring me with immortal and incorruptible glory, * Thou hast made me wholly the Father's own, * refashioning and restoring me. * Wherefore, I cry to Thee: * Christ cometh forth, ** the King of Israel.

The magi, observers of the stars, * beholding through the star * the light which proceedeth from the Light * and shone forth from the Virgin upon those on earth, * cast off the darkness of Persia * and all the deception of astrology, * and chanted in joy to God Who is born: * "Blessed is our God Who hath come! ** Glory be to Thee!"

Mocked by the wise magi, * Herod furiously cut down the infants as though they were grass, * intending to raise up against Thee * his hand befouled with murder; * but Thou didst go to the Egyptians, * dispelling their most profound darkness. * With them we chant: * Blessed is our God Who hath come! ** Glory be to Thee!

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

Sing thou a new song, O new Israel! * Chant thou the hymnody of heaven! * Be glad and adorn thyself with joy; * dance thou and in splendor * bring forth the hymns of the forefeast! * God hath appeared in the flesh out of Theman, * and He desireth * to be washed in the streams of the Jordan ** as a man.

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

Thou hast appeared on earth, * hast dwelt among men, * and been registered with servants at the command of Caesar; * Thou hast taken on our form without undergoing change, * remaining immutable, * being wholly God, even though Thou didst become Incarnate. * Glory, honor, praise and majesty be to Thy dispensation, * now and unto the ages. Amen.

At the Aposticha, these Stichera, in Tone II:

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

Make fragrant, O Sion, * the holy manger; * for in thee the Master * will put forth ** the rays of His divinity.

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

Faith instead of gold, * love instead of myrrh, * and good works instead of frankincense * let us bring these to the Creator ** Who cometh unto His own.

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

Christ approacheth, * the star shineth beforehand, * and the heavenly multitude * of the armies of the noetic hosts ** boweth down.

Glory ..., the composition of the Studite, in Tone III:

O ye valiant martyrs of the Truth, neither the violence of the tyrants, nor their false allurements, neither the severing of your limbs, nor the threat of death were able to separate you from divine love. Wherefore, as ye have boldness before Christ, Who is the God over all, ask ye of Him as reward for your painful sufferings, that He grant us great mercy.

Now & ever ..., the composition of Anatolius, in Tone VIII:

The Creator of all is born in Bethlehem; the pre-eternal King openeth Eden. He turneth back the flaming sword, and the middle wall of enmity is broken down. The hosts of heaven unite with mortals, angels and men form a mighty solemnity, the pure offer hymnody to the Pure One. We behold the Virgin as the cherubim's throne of glory, who contained God Whom naught can contain, and beareth Him Whom the seraphim glorify with fear, that He may grant the world great mercy.

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 martyrs.

Thou didst desire to clothe Thyself in the guise of a servant, that Thou mightest deliver me from slavery to the evil one. I hymn Thy loving-kindness, O Word Who art co-beginningless and consubstantial with the Father: Glory to Thy dispensation! (Twice)

The Virgin cometh to give birth to the Lord in the cave! Come forth, O ye magi! Ye shepherds, come forth! Ye angels, cry out hymns from on high: The Deliverance of mankind hath come!

Seeking me who have become lost and by my barren acts have been shown to be a den of thieves O Lover of mankind, Thou hast now arrived at the cave to be born today from the Virgin, O Master. Glory to Thy Nativity, O Word!

The star of the East, which shone forth from on high upon us in God's ineffable loving-kindness, proclaimed a greeting, announcing effulgence to those in the world.

Illumining those who walk in the night of life, in the depths of delusion, O all-glorious ones, by the light of Christ ye guided men to Him.

He Who in His ineffable mercy was born in the cave, in that He is the Lover of mankind, drew the martyrs up from the depths of ungodliness to the heights of the knowledge of God.

Theotokion: **W**e mortals have been deemed worthy of the honor of the divine regeneration of Christ God, Who in a manner past understanding was born from thee in the flesh, O Bride of God.

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 martyrs, in Tone IV:

In their sufferings, Thy martyrs O Lord, * received imperishable crowns from Thee, our God; * for, possessed of Thy might, * they set at naught the tyrants and crushed the feeble audacity of the demons. ** By their supplications save Thou our souls.

Kontakion of the martyrs, in Tone IV:

A morning-star hath shone forth, * the honorable contest of the martyrs, * illumining for us beforehand * Him Who is born in the cave, ** to Whom the Virgin gave birth without seed.

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: In the saints that are in His earth hath the Lord been wondrous; * He hath wrought all His desires in them

Verse: I beheld the Lord ever before me, for He is at my right hand, that I might not be shaken.

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS, §233 [6: 10-17]

Brethren: Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Alleluia, in Tone IV: The righteous cried, and the Lord heard them, and He delivered them out of all their tribulations.

Verse: Many are the tribulations of the righteous, and the Lord shall deliver them out of them all.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE, §106 [LK. 21:12-19]

The Lord said to His disciples: Beware of men. They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.

Communion Verse: Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; praise is meet for the upright.