

THE SERVICES OF CHRISTMAS

**The Nativity of our Lord,
God and Savior Jesus Christ**

Illustration: Icon of the Nativity of Christ

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INTRODUCTION

The Services of Christmas

By Rev. Alexander Schmemmann

The Nativity Cycle

As Orthodox Christians, we begin the celebration of the Nativity of Christ - on December 25 - with a time of preparation. Forty days before the feast of the birth of Our Lord we enter the period of the Christmas Fast: to purify both soul and body to enter properly into and partake of the great spiritual reality of Christ's Coming. This fasting season does not constitute the intense liturgical season that is characteristic of Great Lent; rather, Christmas Lent is more of an "ascetical" rather than "liturgical" nature. Nevertheless, the Christmas fasting season is reflected in the life of the Church in a number of liturgical notes that announce the coming feast.

Within the forty days preparation the theme of the approaching Nativity is introduced in the services and liturgical commemorations, little by little. If the beginning of the fast on November 15 is not liturgically marked by any hymn, five days later, on the eve of the *Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple*, we hear the first announcement from the nine "hirmoi" of the Christmas Kanon: "**Christ is born, glorify Him!**"

With these words something changes in our life, in the very air we breathe, in the entire mood of the Church's life. It is as if we perceive far, far away, the first light of the greatest possible joy -

the coming of God into His world! Thus the Church announces the coming of Christ, the Incarnation of God, His entrance into the world for its salvation.

Then, on the two Sundays preceding Christmas, the Church commemorates the *Forefathers and the Fathers*: the prophets and the saints of the Old Testament who prepared that coming, who made history itself into the expectation, the waiting for, the salvation and reconciliation of mankind with God.

Finally, on December 20th, the church begins the *Forefeast of the Nativity*, whose liturgical structure is similar to the Holy week preceding Pascha - for the birth of the Son of God as child is the beginning of the saving ministry which will lead Him, for the sake of our salvation, to the ultimate sacrifice of the Cross.

The Eve

The liturgical services of December 24th, the Eve of the Nativity, are:

1. **The Hours**
2. **Vespers**, and
3. **The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great.**

Coming at the end of the Forefeast, and indeed of the entire "*Advent*," the Hours summarize all the themes of the feast and make them into a last and solemn announcement. In the special psalms, hymns and biblical readings prescribed for each hour, the joy and power of Christ's Coming are proclaimed. It is one last meditation on the cosmical meaning of the Nativity, on the decisive and radical change it performed in the entire creation.

Vespers, which usually follows the Hours, inaugurates the celebration of the feast itself, for, as we know, the liturgical day begins in the evening. The tone of this celebration is given by the five stichera on "Lord, I call..." What they really are is an explosion of joy for the gift of Christ's Incarnation which is now fulfilled! Eight biblical readings show that Christ is the fulfillment of all prophecies, that His Kingdom is the Kingdom "of all ages," that all human history finds its meaning in it, and the entire cosmos its center.

The Liturgy of St. Basil which follows Vespers was in the past the baptismal liturgy at which catechumens were baptized, chrismated and integrated into the Church, the Body of Christ. The double joy of the feast, for the newly-baptized and other members of the Church, is reflected in the prokeimenon of the day:

**The Lord said to me:
Thou art my son, this day have I begotten Thee.
Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance,
and the ends of the earth as Thy possession.**

Then, at the end of the Liturgy, the celebrant, taking a lighted candle to the very center of the Church, and surrounded by the entire congregation, intones the troparion and kontakion of the feast:

**Thy nativity, O Christ our God,
Has shone to the world the light of wisdom.
For by it, those who worshipped the stars
Were taught by a star to adore Thee,
The Sun of Righteousness,**

**And to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee!**

The Vigil and the Liturgy

Since Vespers of the feast already have been celebrated, the Vigil begins with Great Compline and the joyful proclamation from Isaiah **"God is with us!"** The order of Matins is that of a great feast. Now, for the first time, the full Canon **"Christ is born. . .,"** one of the most beautiful canons in Orthodox worship, is sung while the faithful venerate the icon of Christ's Nativity. The verses of the *Praises* follow, summarizing the joy and themes of the entire feast:

**Make glad, O you righteous!
Greatly rejoice, O heavens!
Dance for joy, O mountains; for Christ is born!
The virgin has become like the cherubic throne.
She carries at her bosom God the Word, made flesh.
Shepherds glorify the newborn child.
Wise men offer the master gifts.
Angels praise Him and sing:
O Lord, past understanding, glory to Thee!**

Concluding the celebration of the Nativity of Christ is the Liturgy of the day itself with its festal antiphons proclaiming:

**...The Lord will send Thee the scepter of power from Zion:
"Rule in the midst of Thine enemies." With Thee is dominion on the day of
Thy birth, in the radiance of holiness.**

The Post-feast

On the second day of the feast, the *Synaxis of the Theotokos* is celebrated. Combining the hymns of the Nativity with those celebrating the Mother of God, the Church points to Mary as the one through whom the Incarnation was made possible. His humanity - concretely and historically - is the humanity He received from Mary. His Body is, first of all, her body, His life is her life. This feast, the assembly (*synaxis*) in honor of the Theotokos, is probably the most ancient feast of Mary in the Christian tradition, the very beginning of her veneration by the Church.

Six days of post-feast bring the Christmas season to a close on December 31. At the services of all these days, the Church repeats the hymns and songs glorifying Christ's Incarnation, reminding us that the source and the foundation of our salvation is only to be found in the One who, as God before the ages, came into this world and for our sake was "born as a little Child."

Rev. Alexander Schmemmann

The Royal Hours

First Hour

(The priest vested in epitrachelion and phelonion, opens the curtain and begins:)

PRIEST: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

READER: Amen. Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee!

O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth; who art everywhere and fillest all things; Treasury of blessings, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us! (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O most-holy Trinity: have mercy on us. O Lord: cleanse us from our sins. O Master: pardon our transgressions. O Holy One: visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy Name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

PRIEST: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

READER: Amen. Lord, have mercy. (12)...Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Come, let us worship God our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

(As the Psalms are chanted, the priest opens the royal doors, takes the Gospel and places it in the center of the Church, after which he makes a full censuring of the Church beginning by censuring around the Gospel, and concluding by censuring before it.)

Psalm 5

Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my groaning. Hearken to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to Thee do I pray. O Lord, in the morning Thou dost hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for Thee, and watch.

For Thou art not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not sojourn with Thee. The boastful may not stand before Thy eyes; Thou hatest all evildoers. Thou destroyest those who speak lies; the Lord abhors bloodthirsty and deceitful men.

But I through the abundance of Thy mercy will enter Thy house. I will worship toward Thy holy temple in the fear of Thee. Lead me, O Lord, in Thy righteousness because of my enemies; make Thy way straight before me.

For there is no truth in their mouth; their heart is destruction, their throat is an open sepulchre, they flatter with their tongue.

Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of their many transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against Thee.

But let all who take refuge in Thee rejoice, let them ever sing for joy; and do Thou dwell in them, that those who love Thy name may exult in Thee. For Thou dost bless the righteous, O Lord; Thou dost cover him with favor as with a shield.

Psalm 45

My heart overflows with good tidings as I sing my ode to the King; my tongue is like the pen of a skillful scribe. Thou art the fairest of the sons of men; grace is poured upon Thy lips; therefore God has blessed Thee forever.

Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O Mighty One, in Thy splendor and beauty. Draw Thy bow, ride forth in triumph and reign, for the sake of truth, and meekness, and righteousness. May Thy right hand teach Thee wondrous deeds!

Thy arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; the peoples fall under Thee. Thy throne, O God, endures forever and ever, the rod of justice is the scepter of Thy Kingdom.

Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; therefore God, Thy God has anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows. Thy robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.

From ivory palaces stringed instruments make Thee glad; daughters of kings are among Thy ladies of honor; at Thy right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Hear, O daughter, consider, and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house; then the King will desire your beauty for He is your Lord and you shall worship Him. And the people of Tyre come with gifts; all the rich among the people seek your favor.

All glorious, the King's daughter enters, her robes are of cloth of gold. Clad in many colors she is led to the King: after her, the virgins, her companions, are brought to Thee. They are led in with rejoicing and gladness; they enter the palace of the King.

Instead of your fathers, sons are born to you: you shall make them princes over all the earth. I will remember your name from generation to generation; therefore the peoples shall praise you forever and ever.

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength. a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should quake, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved: God will help her right early.

The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; He utters His voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, the wonders He has done on earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and shatters the spear, He burns the chariots with fire!

"Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth!" The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to Thee, O God.(3)

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Troparion (Tone 4)

**Mary was of David's seed,
So she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem.
She bore in her womb the fruit not sown by man.
The time for the birth was at hand.
Since there was no room at the inn,
The cave became a beautiful palace for the queen.
Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old!**

(When Christmas Day falls on Sunday or Monday, so that the Royal Hours are served on December 22 or 23, the Troparion at all the hours is as follows:)

Troparion (Tone 4)

**Prepare, O Bethlehem,
For Eden has been opened to all.
Adorn yourself, O Ephratha,
For the Tree of Life blossoms forth from the virgin in the cave.
Her womb is a spiritual paradise planted with the Fruit Divine;
If we eat of it, we shall live forever and not die like Adam.
Christ is coming to restore the image which He made in the beginning.**

READER: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

What shall we call you, O full of grace? Heaven, for from you shone forth the Sun of Righteousness; Paradise, for you have budded forth the flower of immortality; Virgin, for you have remained undefiled; Pure Mother, for you have held in your arms the Son, who is God of all. Beseech Him to save our souls.

(Tone 8)

**Make ready, O Bethlehem.
Let the manger be prepared.
Let the cave show its welcome.
The truth comes and the shadow flees.**

**God is born of a virgin and revealed to men.
He is clothed in our flesh, and makes it divine.
Therefore Adam is renewed, and cries out with Eve,
Thy favor has appeared on earth, O Lord,
For the salvation of the human race.**

VERSE: God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the dark and shady mountain.

(Tone 3)

**Now the prophecy approaches its fulfillment.
For it had mystically proclaimed:
"You, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
Are by no means the least among Judah's rulers!"
Prepare your cave!
From you the Ruler of the Nations comes to me in the Flesh:
Christ our God, born of a young virgin!
He will feed His flock, the new Israel.
Let us all give Him glory!**

VERSE: O Lord, I have heard what Thou hast done, and am filled with awe.

(repeat) **Now the prophecy...**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

(Tone 8)

**Joseph said to the virgin:
What has happened to you, O Mary?
I am troubled; what can I say to you?
Doubt clouds my mind; depart from me!
What has happened to you, O Mary?
Instead of honor, you bring me shame.
Instead of joy, you fill me with grief.
Men who praised me will blame me.
I cannot bear condemnation from every side.
I received you, a pure virgin in the sight of the Lord.
What is this that I now see?**

VERSE: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(repeat) **Joseph said...**

(And immediately the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy follows)

READER: The Prokeimenon of the Prophecy (Tone 4)

**The Lord said to me: Thou art my Son,/ this day have I begotten Thee. (Psalm 2)
Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the ends of
the earth as Thy possession.**

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: The reading from the Prophet Micah (**Micah 5:2-4**)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: Thus says the Lord: But you Bethlehem, house of Ephratha, are little among the thousands of Judah, yet from you shall come forth to me Him who is to be ruler in Israel, and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity. So the Lord will abandon His people to their enemies until the time when she who is in travail has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren will be converted to the children of Israel. And He shall stand, and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, and they shall abide in the glory of the Name of the Lord their God, and they shall magnify Him even to the ends of the earth.

(The Epistle and Gospel follow immediately; the priest proclaims the Gospel from the center of the church. The Gospel is not preceded by censing.)

EPISTLE: **Hebrews 1:1-12**

GOSPEL: **Matthew 1:18-25**

READER: Order my steps in Thy word, and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me. Deliver me from the wrongful dealings of men, and so shall I keep Thy commandments. Show the light of Thy countenance upon Thy Servant, and teach me Thy statutes. Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, O Lord, that I may sing of Thy glory and honor all the day long.

(And the Trisagion prayers as above):

Holy God...Glory...now and ever...O most holy Trinity...

Lord, have mercy (3)...Glory...now and ever...Our Father...

PRIEST: For Thine is the Kingdom and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Kontakion (Tone 3)

**Today the virgin comes to the cave
Where she will give birth to the Eternal Word.
Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe!
With the angels and shepherds glorify Him who reveals Himself:
The eternal God, a little child!**

READER: Lord, have mercy. (12 times)

Thou who at every season and every hour, in heaven and on earth, art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all men to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications and direct our lives according to Thy commandments. Sanctify our souls, hallow our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulations, evil and distress. Surround us with Thy holy angels, that guided and guarded by their host, we may attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of Thine unapproachable glory, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy. (3)...

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify you.

In the name of the Lord, Father, bless.

PRIEST: God be bountiful unto us, and bless us and show us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us.

READER: Amen.

O Christ, the True Light who enlightenest and sanctifiest every man who comes into the world, let the light of Thy countenance shine upon us, that in it we may behold the unapproachable light, and guide our footsteps aright to the keeping of Thy commandments, through the prayers of Thy most pure Mother, and of all Thy saints. Amen.

Third Hour

READER: Come, let us worship God, our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

(As the Psalms are chanted, the priest censes around the Gospel, after which he censes the altar, the sanctuary, the iconostas, and the people, concluding by censing before the Gospel.)

Psalm 67

May God be merciful to us and bless us and make His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy salvation among all nations.

Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for Thou dost judge the peoples with justice and guide the nations upon earth.

Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; let all the peoples praise Thee.

The earth has yielded her fruit; God, our God, has blessed us. God has blessed us; let all the ends of the earth fear Him.

Psalm 87

His foundations are on the holy mountains. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, O city of God.

I will mention Rahab and Babylon to those who know me. Behold, Philistines and the people of Tyre and Ethiopia, these were born there. A man will say, "Zion is my mother," and "Such a man was born in her," and "The Most High Himself has founded her." The Lord will record in His register of the peoples the princes who were born in her. How joyful are all those whose home is in you!

Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight, so that Thou art justified in Thy sentence and blameless in Thy judgment.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners will return to Thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of Thy deliverance.

O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise. For Thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, Thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

Do good to Zion in Thy good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Then wilt Thou delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on Thine altar.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to Thee, O God! (3)

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Troparion (Tone 4)

**Mary was of David's seed,
So she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem.
She bore in her womb the fruit not sown by man.
The time for the birth was at hand.
Since there was no room at the inn,
The cave became a beautiful palace for the queen.
Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.**

*(When December 15 falls on Sunday or Monday, the Troparion may be found above: **Prepare O Bethlehem...**)*

READER: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Theotokos, you are the true vine laden with the fruit of life. We pray to you, O Lady: intercede together with the Apostles and all the saints, that mercy may be granted to our souls.

(Tone 6)

**He is our God:
There is no other to compare with Him.
Born of a virgin, He comes to live with men.
The only-begotten Son appears as a mortal man.
He rests in a lowly manger.
The Lord of Glory is wrapped in swaddling clothes.
A star leads the wise men to worship Him,
And with them we sing:
O Holy Trinity, save our souls!**

VERSE: God shall come from Teman and the Holy One from the dark and shady mountain.

(Tone 8)

**Before Thy birth, O Lord,
The hosts of angels already perceived the mystery.
They were struck with wonder and trembled,
For Thou who didst adorn the heavens with stars
Art now well-pleased to be born as a babe.
Thou boldest the ends of the earth in Thy hands,
But now Thou art laid in a manger of dumb beasts.
Yet all these things fulfilled Thy saving plan,
By which Thy compassion was revealed to us.
O Christ of great mercy, glory to Thee!**

VERSE: O Lord, I have heard what Thou hast done, and am filled with awe.

(repeat) **Before Thy birth...**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

(Tone 3)

**Tell us, O Joseph:
Why do you bring a maiden great with child to Bethlehem?
"I have searched the prophets," he said.
"I have been instructed by an angel.
"I am convinced that Mary will give birth to God,
"In a manner beyond understanding.
"Wise men from the East will come to worship Him,
"Offering precious gifts in adoration."
O Lord, incarnate for us, glory to Thee!**

VERSE: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(repeat) **Tell us, O Joseph...**

(And immediately the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy follows):

READER: The Prokeimenon of the Prophecy (Tone 4)

For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. (Isaiah 9:6)

And the government shall be upon His shoulder.

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: The Reading from the Prophet Baruch (**Baruch 3:35-4:4**)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: He is our God; there is no other to compare with Him. He discovered the entire path leading to understanding and gave wisdom to Jacob, His servant, and to Israel, His beloved. Afterwards, wisdom was seen on earth and He lived with men. Wisdom is the book of the commandments of God, the law that will endure forever. All who hold fast to it will live, but those who forsake it will die. Return, O Jacob, and take hold of it; walk in the presence of its brightness, that you may be illuminated. Do not surrender your honor to another people, or your dignity to a strange nation. How happy we are, O people of Israel; we have the advantage of knowing what is pleasing to God.

EPISTLE: **Galatians 3:23-29**

GOSPEL: **Luke 2:1-20**

(After the Gospel, the reader continues):

READER: Blessed be the Lord God, blessed be the Lord from day to day, and may the God of our salvation prosper us, for He is our God, the God of salvation.

(And the Trisagion Prayers as above):

Holy God...Glory...now and ever...O most holy Trinity...

Lord, have mercy (3)...Glory...now and ever...Our Father...

PRIEST: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Kontakion (Tone 3)

Today the virgin comes to the cave

Where she will give birth to the Eternal Word

Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe!

With the angels and shepherds glorify Him who reveals Himself:

The eternal God, a little child!

READER: Lord, have mercy. (12 times)

Thou, who at every season and every hour, in heaven and on earth, art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all men to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications and direct our lives according to Thy commandments. Sanctify our souls, hallow our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulations, evil and distress. Surround us with Thy holy angels, that guided and guarded by their host, we may attain to the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of Thine unapproachable glory, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy (3). .

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify you.

In the name of the Lord, Father, bless.

PRIEST: God be bountiful unto us, and bless us and show us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us.

READER: Amen.

O God the Master, Father Almighty, O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, and Thou, O Holy Spirit, one Godhead, one Power, have mercy upon me, a sinner, and according to Thy divine judgments save me, Thine unworthy servant, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Sixth Hour

READER: Come, let us worship God, our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

(As the Psalms are chanted, the priest censes around the Gospel, after which he censes the altar, the sanctuary, the iconostas, and the people, concluding by censing before the Gospel.)

Psalm 72

O God, give Thy judgment to the King and Thy righteousness to the King's son. May He judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with justice! The mountains shall bring peace to Thy people, and the hills, righteousness. He will do justice to the poor of Thy people, and save the children of the needy, and humble the oppressor.

He will continue as long as the sun, and beyond the moon, throughout all generations. He will come down like rain on the fleece, and like raindrops watering the earth. In His days righteousness will flourish and lasting peace, until the moon is no more.

He will rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. The dwellers in the wilderness will fall down before Him, and His enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and the isles will pay tribute; the kings of Arabia and Saba will bring gifts. All the kings of the earth will worship Him; all the nations will serve Him.

He will deliver the poor from the tyrant, and the needy, who had no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the poor. He will redeem their souls from oppression and violence, and precious is their name in His sight.

He will live and the gold of Arabia will be given to Him; men will pray for Him continually, and will bless Him all the day. There will be abundance of grain in the land; its fruit will rustle on the mountain-tops like Lebanon, and the city-dwellers will flourish like the grass of the fields.

May His Name be blessed throughout all ages! His Name will endure longer than the sun. All the tribes of the earth will be blessed in Him; all the nations will call Him blessed.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wonderful things, and blessed be His glorious Name forever. May the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen! Amen!

Psalm 132

O Lord, remember David, and all his patient care, how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, "I will not enter my house or get into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob."

Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah, we found it in the woodland fields. "Let us go to His dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool!"

Arise, O Lord, and go to Thy resting place, Thou and the ark of Thy holiness. Let Thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let Thy saints shout for joy. For Thy servant David's sake do not turn away the face of Thy anointed one.

The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which He will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies which I shall teach them, their sons also for ever shall sit upon your throne."

For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation: "This is my resting place for ever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread.

Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy. There I will raise up a horn for David; I have prepared a lamp for my anointed. His enemies I will clothe with shame, but in Him my holiness will blossom."

Psalm 91

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust." For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; He will overshadow you with His shoulders, and under His wings you will trust; His truth will cover you with a shield. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that prowls in darkness, nor destruction, nor the noon-day devil.

A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your habitation, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to Thee, O God! (3)

Lord, have mercy. (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Troparion (Tone 4)

**Mary was of David's seed,
So she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem.
She bore in her womb the fruit not sown by man.
Since there was no room at the inn,
The cave became a beautiful palace for the queen.
Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.**

*(When December 25 falls on Sunday or Monday, the Troparion may be found above, **Prepare, O Bethlehem...**)*

READER: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

We have no boldness because of the multitude of our sins, but entreat Him who was born of you, O Virgin Theotokos, for the prayer of a mother has great power to win the favor of the Master. Do not despise the supplications of sinners, O all-pure one, for merciful and strong to save is He who willed to suffer for us.

(Tone 1)

**Come, O God-inspired faithful,
Arise and behold the descent of God from on high!
He manifests Himself to us in Bethlehem!
Let us cleanse our minds, and offer Him a life of virtue instead of myrrh.
Let us prepare with faith to celebrate His nativity,
Storing up spiritual treasure and crying:
Glory in the highest to God in trinity!
His good pleasure is now revealed to men:
As the lover of man He sets Adam free from the ancestral curse.**

VERSE: God shall come from Teman and the Holy One from the dark and shady mountain.

(Tone 4)

**Listen, O heaven! Give ear, O earth!
Let the foundations of the earth be shaken!
Let trembling seize the regions beneath the earth,
For our God and Creator has clothed Himself in created flesh;
He fashioned all creation, yet reveals Himself in the womb of her that He formed.
O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How incomprehensible are His judgments;
And how unsearchable His ways!**

VERSE: O Lord, I have heard what Thou hast done, and am filled with awe.

(repeat) **Listen, O heaven...**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

(Tone 5)

**Come, O Christ-bearing people!
Let us behold wonders that will amaze every mind.**

**As we worship in faith, let us sing praises.
Today a maiden great with child goes up to Bethlehem.
There she will give birth to the Lord. Choirs of angels go before her.
Joseph, her husband, cried out when he saw these things,
"What is this strange mystery in you, O virgin?
How will you bear a child,
O calf who never bore the yoke of man?"**

VERSE: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(repeat) **Come, O Christ-bearing people...**

(And immediately the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy follows):

READER: The Prokeimenon of the Prophecy (Tone 4)

(Psalm 110) Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee./ The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind.

The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: The Reading from the Prophet Isaiah. (**Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:1-4, 8-10**)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: In those days, the Lord spoke again unto Ahaz, king of Judah, saying: Ask a sign of the Lord your God: let it be deep as the nether world, or high as the heavens. But Ahaz answered: I will not ask; I will not tempt the Lord. And Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel, which means God is with us. He shall eat milk and honey even before He knows to refuse evil and to choose good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted." And the Lord said to me: "Take a large tablet and write on it in letters for everyone to see: `The spoil speeds; the plunder hastens.'" And I got reliable witnesses: Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Zeberechiah, to testify for me. And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, "Call his name `the spoil speeds; the plunder hastens,' for before the child knows how to cry `my father or my mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria." Understand this, O nations, and submit yourselves. Hear this, you very ends of the earth; submit yourselves, you mighty ones. Even if your strength returns, you shall be overthrown once more. Take counsel together if you wish, but it will come to nothing. Make your plans if you wish, but they will never stand, even among yourselves, for God is with us.

(The Epistle and Gospel follow immediately. The priest proclaims the Gospel from the center of the church. The Gospel is not preceded by censing.)

EPISTLE: **Hebrews 1:10 - 2:3**

GOSPEL: **Matthew 2:1-12**

(After the Gospel, the reader continues):

READER: Let Thy tender mercies, O Lord, speedily go before us, for we have become exceedingly poor. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy Name: O Lord, deliver us and purge away our sins, for Thy Name's sake.

(And the Trisagion Prayers as above):

Holy God...Glory...now and ever...O most holy Trinity...

Lord, have mercy (3)...Glory...now and ever...Our Father...

PRIEST: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Kontakion (Tone 3)

Today the virgin comes to the cave

Where she will give birth to the Eternal Word.

Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe!

With the angels and shepherds glorify Him who reveals Himself:

The eternal God, a little child!

READER: Lord, have mercy. (12 times)

Thou, who at every season and every hour, in heaven and on earth, art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all men to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications and direct our lives according to Thy commandments. Sanctify our souls, hallow our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulations, evil and distress. Surround us with Thy holy angels that guided and guarded by their host, we may attain to the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of Thine unapproachable glory, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy (3)...

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the Cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify you.

In the name of the Lord, Father, bless.

PRIEST: God be bountiful unto us, and bless us and show us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us.

READER: Amen.

O God, the Lord of hosts, and Author of all creation, who in Thy boundless tender mercy hast sent down Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, for the salvation of the human race, and through His holy cross hast torn up the handwriting of our sins and thereby triumphed over the princes and dominions of darkness: Do Thou, O Master, who lovest mankind, accept these prayers of thanksgiving and supplication even from us sinners, and deliver us from every deadly and dark transgression and from all the visible

and invisible enemies that seek to do us harm. Nail our flesh with the fear of Thee, and let not our hearts incline to evil words or thoughts, but wound our souls with Thy love, that ever gazing upon Thee, guided by Thy light and beholding Thee, the eternal light that no man can approach, we may send up unceasing praises and thanks unto Thee, the Father without beginning, together with Thine only-begotten Son, and Thy most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Ninth Hour

READER: Come, let us worship God, our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

(As the Psalms are chanted, the priest makes a full censuring of the Church, beginning by censuring around the Gospel, and concluding by censuring before it.)

Psalm 110

The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

The Lord will send Thee the scepter of power from Zion: "Rule in the midst of Thine enemies." With Thee is dominion on the day of Thy birth, in radiance of holiness: from the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord has sworn, and He will not change His mind: "Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

The Lord is at Thy right hand: He will crush kings on the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations; He will heap up corpses; He will crush the heads of many on the earth. He will drink from the stream by the wayside, and strengthened, He will stand victorious.

Psalm 111

I will give thanks to the Lord, with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord: they are sought out according to His will. Full of honor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever and ever.

He has caused His wonderful works to be remembered; the Lord is merciful and compassionate. He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever. He has shown His people the power of His works, by giving them possession of the nations.

The works of His hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy. They are established forever and ever; they are wrought in truth and justice.

He has sent redemption to His people; He has established His covenant forever; holy and terrible in His Name. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all that act accordingly have a good understanding; His praise endures forever and ever.

Psalm 86

Incline Thy ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul, for I am holy; save Thy servant who trusts in Thee. Thou art my God; have mercy on me, O Lord, for to Thee do I cry all the day.

Gladden the soul of Thy servant, for to Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For Thou, O Lord, art good and forgiving, and rich in mercy to all who call on Thee. Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer, and attend to the cry of my supplication. In the day of my trouble I call on Thee, for Thou dost answer me.

There is none like Thee among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like Thine. All the nations Thou hast made will come and worship Thee, O Lord, and will glorify Thy Name. For Thou art great and workest wonders; Thou alone art God.

Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in Thy truth; unite my heart to fear Thy name. I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify Thy Name forever. For great is Thy mercy toward me; Thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of hell.

O God, transgressors have risen up against me; a band of violent men seek my life; they do not set Thee before them. But Thou, O Lord my God, art full of compassion and pity; long-suffering, abounding in mercy and truth. Look upon me and have mercy on me; give Thy strength to Thy servant, and save the son of Thy handmaid.

Show me a sign of Thy favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame, because Thou, O Lord, hast helped me and comforted me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Glory to Thee, O God! (3)

Lord, have mercy (3)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Troparion (Tone 4)

**Mary was of David's seed,
So she went with Joseph to register in Bethlehem.
She bore in her womb the fruit not sown by man.
The time for the birth was at hand.
Since there was no room at the inn,
The cave became a beautiful palace for the queen.
Christ is born, raising up the image that fell of old.**

*(When December 25 falls on Sunday or Monday, the Troparion may be found above, **Prepare, O Bethlehem...**)*

READER: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Loving Lord, who for our sakes wast born of a virgin and hast endured crucifixion, trampling down death by death and as God revealing the Resurrection: Despise not the works of Thy hands, but show Thy love for mankind, O merciful one. Accept the prayers made on our behalf by her who gave Thee birth, and save Thy despairing people, O our Savior.

(Tone 7)

**Herod was filled with alarm
When he saw the righteous wise men.
Overcome by fury,
He determined precisely when the child was born.**

**Mothers were robbed of their infants:
Their tender lives were reaped as a bitter harvest.
Milk stopped flowing and breasts dried up.
Great was the suffering!
Therefore assemble in holy fear, O faithful,
To worship the birth of Christ!**

VERSE: God shall come from Teman and the Holy One from the dark and shady mountain.

(Tone 2)

**When Joseph went up to Bethlehem,
His heart was filled with sadness.
But you cried out to Him, O Virgin:
Why are you so troubled?
Why are you in misery seeing me with child?
Do you not understand at all?
I bear a fearful mystery!
Cast your fears away, and learn a strange wonder:
God in His mercy descends from heaven to earth.
Within my womb He has taken flesh!
When He is pleased to be born, you will see Him.
You will rejoice, and worship Him, your Creator.
The angels ceaselessly praise Him in song,
Glorifying Him with the Father and the Holy Spirit.**

VERSE: O Lord, I have heard what Thou hast done, and am filled with awe.

(repeat) **When Joseph went up to Bethlehem...**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

(Tone 6)

**Today He who holds the whole creation in His hand is born of a virgin.
He whose essence none can touch is bound in swaddling-clothes as a mortal man.
God, who in the beginning fashioned the heavens, lies in a manger.
He who rained manna on His people in the wilderness is fed on milk from His
mother's breast.
The Bridegroom of the Church summons the wise men;
The Son of the virgin accepts their gifts.
We worship Thy birth, O Christ.
We worship Thy birth, O Christ.
We worship Thy birth, O Christ.
Show us also Thy Holy Theophany!**

(And immediately the Prokeimenon of the Prophecy follows):

READER: The Prokeimenon of the Prophecy (Tone 4)

**(Psalm 87) "Zion is my mother," a man will say,/ "and such a man was born in her."
His foundations are on the holy mountains.**

The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: The reading from the Prophet Isaiah. **(Isaiah 9:6-7)**

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called the Angel of Great Counsel, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Ruler, Prince of Peace, the Father of the World to Come. I will bring peace to the princes and peace and health to Him. Great shall be His empire, and of His peace there shall be no end: He shall sit upon the throne of David and shall establish His Kingdom with righteousness, and shall strengthen it with justice, henceforth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.

(The Epistle and Gospel follow immediately. The priest proclaims the Gospel from the center of the church. The Gospel is not preceded by censing.)

EPISTLE: **Hebrews 2:11-18**

GOSPEL: **Matthew 2:13-23**

(After the Gospel, the reader continues):

READER: For Thy holy Name's sake, do not abandon us forever; do not annul Thy covenant; do not take away Thy mercy from us, for the sake of Abraham Thy beloved, and Isaac Thy servant, and Israel Thy holy one.

(And the Trisagion Prayers as above):

Holy God...Glory...now and ever...O most holy Trinity...

Lord, have mercy (3)...Glory...now and ever...Our Father...

PRIEST: For Thine is the Kingdom and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Kontakion (Tone 3)

Today the virgin comes to the cave

Where she will give birth to the Eternal Word.

Hear the glad tidings and rejoice, O universe!

With the angels and shepherds glorify Him who reveals Himself:

The eternal God, a little child!

READER: Lord, have mercy. (12)

Thou who at every season and every hour, in heaven and on earth, art worshipped and glorified, O Christ our God, long-suffering, merciful, and compassionate; who lovest the just and showest mercy upon the sinner; who callest all men to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications and direct our lives according to Thy commandments. Sanctify our souls, hallow our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds; deliver us from all tribulations, evil and distress.

Surround us with Thy holy angels, that guided and guarded by their host, we may attain to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of Thine unapproachable glory, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Lord, have mercy (3)...

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify you.

In the name of the Lord, Father, bless.

PRIEST: God be bountiful unto us, and bless us and show us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us.

READER: Amen.

O Master and Lord, Jesus Christ our God, who art long-suffering towards our sins and hast brought us even unto this present hour, in which, hanging upon the life-giving cross, Thou hast opened unto the good thief the way into paradise, and destroyed death by death: be merciful to us, Thy humble and sinful and unworthy servants. For we have sinned and transgressed, and we are not worthy to lift up our eyes and look at the height of heaven, since we have forsaken the path of Thy righteousness and have walked according to the desires of our own hearts. But we pray Thee of Thy boundless goodness, spare us, O Lord, according to the abundance of Thy mercy, and save us for Thy holy name's sake, for our days are consumed in vanity. Deliver us from the hand of the adversary, forgive us our sins, and kill the passions of the flesh, that putting off the old man, we may be clothed with the new, and may live for Thee, our Master and Protector; and that so, following Thine ordinances, we may attain to eternal rest, in the place where all the joyful dwell. For Thou, O Christ our God, art indeed the true joy and gladness of those that love Thee, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thy Father, who is without beginning, and Thy most holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(The service of the Typica, which according to the rubrics follows the Prayer of the Ninth Hour, has not been included here.)

PRIEST: Glory to Thee, O Christ, our God and our Hope, glory to Thee.

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen. Lord, have mercy. (3) Father, bless.

PRIEST: (Gives the dismissal proper for the day.)

CHOIR: Amen.

Vespers and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

(When December 25 falls on Sunday or Monday, Vespers on the eve is served alone, since the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom has already been celebrated in the morning of December 24.)

PRIEST: Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

(Or, when Vespers is being served alone):

Blessed is our God, always, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Come, let us worship God, our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ himself, our King and our God!

Lord, I Call

(Psalm 104 is then sung in the usual way, followed by the Great Litany. There is no Kathisma. The psalms of the "Lord, I Call" are sung in the second tone, with six verses.)

CHOIR: **Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me. Hear me, O Lord. Lord, I call upon Thee, hear me.
Receive the voice of my prayer, when I call upon Thee.
Hear me, O Lord.**

**Let my prayer arise in Thy sight as incense, and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice.
Hear me, O Lord.**

(Tone 2)

VERSE: If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee.

CHOIR: **Come, let us greatly rejoice in the Lord, as we sing of this present mystery.
The wall which divided God from man has been destroyed.
The flaming sword withdraws from Eden's gate;
The cherubim withdraw from the Tree of Life,
and I, who had been cast out through my disobedience,
now feast on the delights of paradise:
For today the father's perfect image,
marked with the stamp of His eternity,
has taken the form of a servant.
Without undergoing change He is born from an unwedded mother;
He was true God, and He remains the same,
but through His love for mankind,
He has become what He never was: true man!
Come, O faithful, let us cry to Him:
O God, born of a virgin, have mercy on us!**

VERSE: For Thy Name's sake I wait for Thee, O Lord; my soul has waited for Thy word; my soul has hoped on the Lord.

CHOIR: (repeat) **Come, let us greatly rejoice...**

VERSE: From the morning watch until night, from the morning watch, let Israel hope on the Lord.

CHOIR: **When the Lord Jesus was born of the holy virgin,
the whole universe was filled with light.
The shepherds watched in the fields.
The wise men worshipped and the angels sang.
But Herod was troubled,
for God had appeared in the flesh.
He is the Savior of our souls!**

VERSE: For with the Lord there is mercy and with Him is plenteous redemption and He will deliver Israel from all His iniquities.

CHOIR: (repeat) **When the Lord Jesus...**

VERSE: Praise the Lord, all nations! Praise Him all peoples!

CHOIR: **Thy Kingdom endures forever, O Christ our God.
Thy rule is from age to age.
Made flesh by the Holy Spirit, made man of the ever-virgin Mary,
Thou hast filled all creation with joy.
The light of Thy coming has shone on us:
Every living creature praises Thee,
the image of the Father's glory.
Light of Light, the radiance of the Father,
The same yesterday, today, and forever,
Thou hast shone forth from the virgin.
O God, have mercy on us!**

VERSE: For His mercy is confirmed on us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever.

CHOIR: **What shall we offer Thee, O Christ,
who for our sakes hast appeared on earth as man?
Every creature made by Thee offers Thee thanks:
The angels offer a hymn; the heavens, a star;
the wise men, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder;
the earth, its cave; the wilderness, a manger.
and we offer Thee a virgin mother!
O Pre-eternal God, have mercy on us!**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

CHOIR: **When Augustus ruled alone upon the earth,
the many kingdoms of men came to an end,
and when Thou wast made man of the pure virgin,
the many gods of idolatry were destroyed.
The cities of the world passed under one single rule,
and the nations came to believe in one sovereign Godhead.
The peoples were enrolled by the decree of Caesar,
and we the faithful were enrolled in the name of the Godhead,
when Thou, our God, wast made man.
Great is Thy mercy, O Lord! Glory to Thee!**

(Entrance with the Gospel, O Gladsome Light, and the prokeimenon of the day. On Friday, however, the Great Prokeimenon, Who is so great a God as our God? is sung.)

The Readings from the Old Testament

Genesis 1:1-13; Numbers 24:2-3, 5-9, 17-18; Micah 4:6-7, 5:2-4; Isaiah 11:1-10; Baruch 3:35-4:4; Daniel 2:31-36, 44-45; Isaiah 9:2-7; Isaiah 7:10-16, 8:1-4, 8-10;

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: **The Reading from Genesis.** (1:1-13)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: **The Reading from Numbers.** (24:2-3, 5-9, 17-18)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: The Spirit of God came upon Balaam, and he took up his parable, and said: "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like valleys that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like tents which God has pitched, like cedar trees beside the waters. There shall come forth a man from his seed, and he shall rule all the nations, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God led him forth from Egypt; he has as it were the glory of the wild ox; he shall consume the nations of his enemies, and shall break their bones in pieces, and pierce them through with his arrows. He lay down, he couched as a lion, and as a young lion; who shall raise him up? Blessed be everyone who blesses you, and cursed be everyone who curses you. A star will rise out of Jacob, and a man shall rise up from Israel; he will crush the princes of Moab, and break down all the sons of Seth. And Edom will be his inheritance, and Esau his enemy shall be his inheritance, and Israel will do valiantly.

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: **The Reading from the Prophet Micah.** (Micah 4:6-7, 5:2-4)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: On that day, says the Lord, I will gather her who was afflicted, and I will take back her who had been cast out, and those whom I had rejected. And I will make her who was afflicted into a remnant, and her whom I had rejected into a mighty nation, and the Lord shall reign over them on Mount Sion from henceforth and forevermore. But you, Bethlehem, house of Ephratha, are little among the thousands of Judah, yet from you shall come forth to me Him who is to be ruler in Israel, and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity. So the Lord will abandon His people to their enemies until the time when she who is in travail has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren will be converted to the children of Israel. And He shall stand, and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, and they shall abide in the glory of the Name of the Lord their God, and they shall magnify Him even to the ends of the earth.

(Then we stand and sing):

(Tone 6)

**In the secrecy of a cave Thou wast born,
But heaven spoke openly through a star,
Revealing Thee to all, O Savior.
The star led wise men to worship Thee;
As on them, O Lord, have mercy on us!**

Psalm 87

Verse: His foundations are on the holy mountains. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

Refrain: The star led wise men to worship Thee; **As on them, O Lord, have mercy on us!**

Verse: Glorious things are said of you, O city of God. I will mention Rahab and Babylon to those who know me.

Refrain: The star led wise men to worship Thee; **As on them, O Lord, have mercy on us!**

Verse: Behold, Philistines and the people of Tyre and Ethiopia, these were born there.

Refrain: The star led wise men to worship Thee; **As on them, O Lord, have mercy on us!**

Verse: A man will say, "Zion is my mother," and "Such a man was born in her," and "The Most High Himself has founded her."

Refrain: The star led wise men to worship Thee; **As on them, O Lord, have mercy on us!**

Verse: The Lord will record in His register of the peoples the princes who were born in her. How joyful are all those whose home is in you!

Refrain: The star led wise men to worship Thee; **As on them, O Lord, have mercy on us!**

Verse: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

**In the secrecy of a cave Thou wast born,
But heaven spoke openly through a star,
Revealing Thee to all, O Savior.
The star led wise men to worship Thee;
As on them, O Lord, have mercy on us!**

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: **The Reading from the Prophet Isaiah.** (Isaiah 11:1-10)

PRIEST: Let us attend!

READER: Thus says the Lord: there shall come forth a shoot from the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up from his root, and the Spirit of God shall rest upon Him: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and godliness, and He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by appearances, nor reprove according to what His ears hear, but He shall judge the poor with righteousness, and decide with fairness for the lowly of the earth. He shall smite the earth with the word of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips. He shall slay the wicked. His loins will be girded with righteousness, and His sides will be clothed with truth. And the wolf shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the young calf, the bull, and the lion shall feed together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed together; their young shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the infant shall play over the serpent's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. And they shall not hurt, nor shall they kill on all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. In that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, and He shall rise to rule the nations, and in Him the Gentiles will trust, and His rest shall be glorious.

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: **The Reading from the Prophet Baruch** (Baruch 3:35 - 4:4)

PRIEST: Let us attend!

READER: He is our God; there is no other to compare with Him. He discovered the entire path leading to understanding, and gave Wisdom to Jacob His servant, and to Israel His beloved. Afterwards, Wisdom was seen on earth and He lived with men. Wisdom is the book of the commandments of God, the law that will endure forever. All who hold fast to it will live, but those who forsake it will die. Return, O Jacob, and take hold of it; walk in the presence of its brightness, that you may be illuminated. Do not surrender your honor to another people, or your dignity to a Strange nation. How happy we are, O people of Israel; we have the advantage of knowing what is pleasing to God.

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: **The Reading from the Prophet Daniel** (Daniel 2:31-36, 44-45)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: Behold, in your vision you saw an image, O king; it was a great image. Its face stood before your face; it was of exceeding brightness, and its appearance was terrifying. The head of this image was of fine gold, its hands and breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. This you saw, until a stone was cut, without human hands, from a mountain and it struck the image on the feet of iron and clay. Then the iron, the clay, the

brass, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces once for all, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away and no place could be found for them. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation: the God of heaven shall raise up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and His kingdom shall not be abandoned to another people. It shall break to pieces and grind to powder all other kingdoms, but it shall stand forever. Just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke to pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold. The great God has made known to the king what must happen hereafter. The dream is true, and the interpretation certain.

(Then we stand and sing):

(Tone 6)

**From a virgin Thou didst rise, O Christ,
Our spiritual Sun of Righteousness!
Though nothing can contain Thee,
A star revealed Thee as contained in a cave!
Thou hast led the wise men to worship Thee;
With them we magnify Thee:
O Giver of Life, glory to Thee!**

Psalm 93

Verse: The Lord reigns; He is robed in beauty! The Lord has clothed Himself with power, and has girded Himself with strength.

Refrain: Thou hast led the wise men to worship Thee; with them we magnify Thee:
O Giver of Life, glory to Thee!

Verse: He has set the earth so firmly in place that it cannot be moved. Thy throne is prepared from of old; Thou art from everlasting.

Refrain: Thou hast led the wise men to worship Thee; with them we magnify Thee:
O Giver of Life, glory to Thee!

Verse: The rivers lift up, O Lord, the rivers lift up their voices; the rivers lift up their waves at the sound of many waters.

Refrain: Thou hast led the wise men to worship Thee; with them we magnify Thee:
O Giver of Life, glory to Thee!

Verse: Wonderful are the waves of the sea; wonderful is the Lord on high. Thy testimonies are very sure.

Refrain: Thou hast led the wise men to worship Thee; with them we magnify Thee:
O Giver of Life, glory to Thee!

Verse: Holiness is due Thy house, O Lord, forever.

Refrain: Thou hast led the wise men to worship Thee; with them we magnify Thee:
O Giver of Life, glory to Thee!

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

From a virgin Thou didst rise, O Christ,

**Our spiritual Sun of Righteousness!
Though nothing can contain Thee,
A star revealed Thee as contained in a cave!
Thou hast led the wise men to worship Thee;
With them we magnify Thee:
O Giver of Life, glory to Thee!**

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: **The Reading from the Prophet Isaiah** (Isaiah 9:2-7)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; to those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, a light is risen. Thou hast multiplied the nation, Thou hast increased its joy; they rejoice before Thee as with joy at the harvest, as conquerors rejoice when they divide the spoil. For the yoke of their burden, the rod of their shoulder, and the sceptre of their oppressor Thou hast broken, as on the day of Midian. For every boot of the warrior trampling in the tumult of battle, and every garment rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for the fire. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called the Angel of Great Counsel, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Ruler, Prince of Peace, the Father of the World to Come. I will bring peace to the princes and peace and health to Him. Great shall be His empire, and of His peace there shall be no end: He shall sit upon the throne of David, and shall establish His kingdom with righteousness, and shall strengthen it with justice, henceforth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

PRIEST: Wisdom!

READER: **The Reading from the Prophet Isaiah** (Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:1-4, 8-10)

PRIEST: Let us attend.

READER: In those days, the Lord spoke again unto Ahaz, king of Judah, saying: Ask a sign of the Lord your God: let it be deep as the nether world, or high as the heavens. But Ahaz answered: I will not ask; I will not tempt the Lord. And Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel, which means God is with us. He shall eat milk and honey, even before He knows to refuse evil, and to choose good. For before the child knows how to refuse evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted." And the Lord said to me: "Take a large tablet, and write on it in letters for everyone to see: `The spoil speeds; the plunder hastens.'" And I got reliable witnesses: Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to testify for me. And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, "Call his name `the spoil speeds; the plunder hastens,' for before the child knows how to cry `My father' or `My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria. God is with us. Understand this, O nations, and submit yourselves. Hear this you very ends of the earth; submit yourselves, you mighty ones. Even if your strength returns, you shall be overthrown once more. Take counsel together, if you wish, but it will come to nothing. Make your plans, if you wish, but they will never stand, even among yourselves, for God is with us.

(Then the Little Litany and the Trisagion. These are omitted, however, if December 25 falls on Sunday or Monday.)

THE PROKEIMENON (Tone 1)

The Lord said to me: Thou art my son,/ This day have I begotten Thee. (Psalm 2)
Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth as Thy possession.

EPISTLE: **Hebrews 1:1-12**

ALLELUIA (Tone 8, Psalm 110)

The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.

The Lord will send Thee the sceptre of power from Zion: "Rule in the midst of Thine enemies."

With Thee is dominion on the day of Thy birth, in the radiance of holiness: from the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee.

GOSPEL: **Luke 2:1-20**

*(And the rest of the order of the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. **All of creation rejoices in you...is sung. The Communion Hymn is the usual one for Sundays: Praise the Lord from the heavens... the Festal Dismissal is given: May He who was born in a cavern and lay in a manger for our salvation, Christ our true God...)***

*(When the feast falls on Sunday or Monday, however, Vespers is concluded as follows: **after the Gospel, the Augmented Litany, Vouchsafe, O Lord..., the Evening Litany, and the Prayer of Inclination, followed immediately by the Festal Dismissal, given in the usual manner for Great Vespers.)***

(At the conclusion of the service, a candle is lit and placed in the center of the church with the festal icon, and the Troparion and Kontakion are sung):

Troparion (Tone 4)

**Thy nativity, O Christ our God,
Has shone to the world the light of wisdom.
For by it, those who worshipped the stars
Were taught by a star to adore Thee,
The Sun of Righteousness,
And to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee!
Glory to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.**

Kontakion (Tone 3)

**Today the virgin gives birth to the transcendent one,
And the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable one.
Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him.
The wise men journey with the star,
Since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child!**

December 25
The Feast of the Nativity of
Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ

Great Compline

(Due to the great length of this service, and the many variations followed in parish practice when it is served, it is given here in outline form only.)

PRIEST: Blessed is our God, always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

READER: Amen. Glory to Thee, O God, glory to Thee!

*(And the **Trisagion Prayers** as above): **O Heavenly King . . . Holy God . . . Glory . . . now and ever . . . O most holy Trinity . . . Lord, have mercy (3) . . . Glory . . . now and ever . . . Our Father . . .***

For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

READER: Amen. Lord, have mercy. (12) Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Come, let us worship God, our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

Psalms 4, 6, and 13.

Glory...now and ever...

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, glory to Thee, O God. (3)

(Then the following verses from **Isaiah 8:8-10, 12-14, 17-18, 9:1, 6** are sung):

READER: **God is with us! Understand this, O nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us!**

CHOIR: **God is with us! Understand this, O nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us.** (2)

READER: Hear this, all you ends of the earth!

CHOIR: *(Refrain)* **For God is with us!** *(sung after each verse.)*

READER: Submit yourselves, you mighty ones!

(Refrain)

Even if your strength returns, you shall be overthrown once more.

(Refrain)

Take counsel together, if you wish, but it will come to nothing.

(Refrain)

Make your plans, if you wish, but they will never stand, even among yourselves.

(Refrain)

We do not fear your threats, nor are we troubled.

(Refrain)

For the Lord our God is holy, and Him we will fear.

(Refrain)

If I trust in Him, He will be my sanctification.

(Refrain)

I will wait for Him, He will save me.

(Refrain)

Behold, I and the children whom God has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of Hosts.

(Refrain)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

(Refrain)

To those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, a light is risen.

(Refrain)

For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given.

(Refrain)

And the government shall be upon His shoulder.

(Refrain)

And of His peace there shall be no end.

(Refrain)

And His Name shall be called the Angel of Great Counsel.

(Refrain)

Wonderful, Counselor.

(Refrain)

Mighty God, Eternal Ruler, Prince of Peace.

(Refrain)

The Father of the World to Come.

(Refrain)

CHOIR: God is with us! Understand this, O nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us!

READER: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

CHOIR: God is with us! Understand this, O nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us!

READER: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

CHOIR: God is with us! Understand this, O nations, and submit yourselves, for God is with us!

(And immediately we sing the following Troparia)

(Tone 8)

The day is over; I thank Thee, O Lord! Grant me to pass this evening and this night without sin, And save me, O Savior!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

The day is over; I glorify Thee, O Master! Grant me to pass this evening and this night without giving offence, and save me, O Savior!

Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The day is over; I sing to Thee, O Holy One! Grant me to pass this evening and this night free from temptation, and save me, O Savior!

(Tone 6)

The bodiless cherubim glorify Thee with never-ending hymns!
The six-winged seraphim exalt Thee with ceaseless voices!
All the hosts of angels triumphantly sing the thrice-holy hymn.
Thou art Father before eternity;
With Thy co-eternal Son and the Spirit of Life, equal in honor to Thee,
Thou hast revealed the undivided trinity:
O all-holy virgin mother of God,
And you eye-witnesses and servants of the Word,
You choirs of prophets and martyrs who enjoy immortal life,
Fervently pray for us,
For we are all in fearful distress,
That being delivered from the snares of the evil one,
We may sing the angels' hymn:
Holy, holy, holy, thrice-holy Lord, have mercy on us and save us! Amen.

The Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-Begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages. Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; whose Kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. In one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

(The following invocations are sung antiphonally between priest and choir, or between two choirs. The first is sung three times, and the remainder twice.)

All-holy lady Theotokos, pray for us sinners!

All you heavenly hosts of holy angels and archangels, pray for us sinners!

O holy John, prophet, forerunner, and baptist of our Lord Jesus Christ, pray for us sinners!

O holy and glorious apostles, prophets, martyrs, and all saints, pray for us sinners.

All you righteous and god-bearing fathers, pastors, and teachers of the universal Church, pray for us sinners!

O holy (here we invoke the patron of the church), pray for us sinners!

O invincible, unconquerable, and divine power of the honorable and life-giving cross, forsake not us sinners!

O God, cleanse us sinners!

O God, cleanse us sinners and have mercy on us.

(And the Trisagion Prayers as above):

READER: Holy God...Glory...now and ever...O most holy Trinity...
Lord, have mercy (3)...Glory...now and ever...Our Father...

PRIEST: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Troparion (Tone 4)

**Thy nativity, O Christ our God,
Has shone to the world the light of wisdom.
For by it, those who worshipped the stars
Were taught by a star to adore Thee,
The Sun of Righteousness,
And to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee!**

READER: Lord, have mercy. (12)...Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify you.

In the name of the Lord, Father, bless.

PRIEST: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

READER: Amen.

O Lord, Lord; who deliverest us from all the arrows that fly by day, deliver us also from every evil thing lurking in the darkness. Accept the lifting up of our hands as an evening sacrifice. Grant that we may pass through the course of this night without reproach, untempted by evil, and free us from the anxiety and cowardice brought by the devil. Grant contrition to our souls, and make us mindful of the scrutiny to come on the dread and just day of Thy judgment. Nail our flesh to the fear of Thee, and let our earthly passions die, that in the quietness of sleep, we may be enlightened by the vision of Thy decrees. Remove from us also every indecent fantasy and harmful desire. Raise us up again at the time for prayer, strengthened in the faith, and advancing in obedience to Thy commandments, through the favor and goodness of Thine only-begotten Son, with whom Thou art blessed, together with Thine all-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Come, let us worship God, our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

(Then follow Psalms 51 and 102, after which the Prayer of Manasseh is read.)

The Prayer of Manasseh

O Lord Almighty, God of our fathers, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and of their righteous posterity;

Thou who hast made heaven and earth with all their order, who hast shackled the sea by Thy word of command,
who hast confined the deep and sealed it with Thy terrible and glorious Name;
at whom all things shudder, and tremble before Thy power, for Thy glorious splendor cannot be borne,
and the wrath of Thy threat to sinners cannot be withstood, yet immeasurable and unsearchable is Thy promised mercy,
for Thou art the Lord Most High, of great compassion, long-suffering, and very merciful, and repentest over the evils of men.
Thou, O Lord, according to Thy great goodness hast promised repentance and forgiveness to those who have sinned against Thee;
and in the multitude of Thy mercies Thou hast appointed repentance for sinners, that they may be saved.
Therefore Thou, O Lord, God of the righteous, hast not appointed repentance for the righteous,
for Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, who did not sin against Thee, but Thou hast appointed repentance for me, who am a sinner.
For the sins I have committed are more in number than the sand of the sea; my transgressions are multiplied, O Lord, they are multiplied!
I am unworthy to look up and see the height of heaven because of the multitude of my iniquities.
I am weighted down with many an iron fetter, so that I am rejected because of my sins, and I have no relief;
for I have provoked Thy wrath and have done what is evil in Thy sight, ignoring Thy will and disobeying Thy commandments.
And now I bend the knee of my heart, beseeching Thee for Thy kindness.
I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I know my transgressions.
I earnestly beseech Thee, to forgive me, O Lord, forgive me! Do not destroy me with my transgressions.
Do not be angry with me forever or lay up evil for me; do not condemn me to the depths of the earth.
For Thou, O Lord, art the God of those who repent, and in me Thou wilt manifest Thy goodness;
for, unworthy as I am, Thou wilt save me in Thy great mercy, and I will praise Thee continually all the days of my life.
For all the host of heaven sings Thy praise, and Thine is the glory forever. Amen.

(And the Trisagion Prayers as above).

READER: Holy God...Glory...now and ever...O most holy Trinity...
Lord, have mercy (3)...Glory...now and ever...Our Father...

PRIEST: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Kontakion (Tone 3)

**Today the virgin gives birth to the transcendent one,
And the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable one.
Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him!
The wise men journey with the star,
Since for our sake the eternal God was born as a little child!**

READER: Lord, have mercy. (12)...Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: true Theotokos, we magnify you.

In the name of the Lord, Father, bless.

PRIEST: Through the prayers of our holy fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us.

READER: Amen.

O God the Master, Father Almighty, O Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son, and Thou, O Holy Spirit, one Godhead, one Power, have mercy upon me, a sinner, and according to Thy divine judgments save me, Thine unworthy servant, for Thou art blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

Come, let us worship God, our King!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ, our King and our God!

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ Himself, our King and our God!

(Psalms 70 and 143 are read, then the Lesser Doxology.)

The Lesser Doxology

Glory to Thee who hast shown us the light!

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory: O Lord, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty; O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit.

O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, accept our prayer. Thou that sittest on the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For Thou alone art holy, Thou alone art Lord, Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every day will I give thanks unto Thee and praise Thy Name forever and ever.

Lord, Thou has been our refuge from generation to generation. I said: Lord, have mercy on me. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.

Lord, I have fled unto Thee. Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God. For with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light. Continue Thy mercy unto those who know Thee.

Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name forever. Amen.

Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Lord, even as we have set our hope on Thee.
Blessed art Thou, O Lord, teach me Thy statutes.
Blessed art Thou, O Master, make me to understand Thy commandments.
Blessed art Thou, O Holy One; enlighten me with Thy precepts.

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever: O despise not the works of Thy hands.
To Thee belongeth worship, to Thee belongeth praise, to Thee belongeth glory,
to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(As the priest proceeds to the place where the Litya is to be held, the choir sings the following verses):

(Tone 1)

**Make merry, O heaven and earth, as the prophets foretold!
Celebrate in the spirit, O angels and men!
God is born from a woman and appears in the flesh
To those who sit in darkness and shadow.
A cave and a manger welcome Him.
Shepherds announce the wonder.
Wise men from the East offer gifts in Bethlehem.
Let us from our unworthy lips, offer praise like the angels:
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!
The expectation of the nations has come.
He has come and saved us from bondage to the enemy.**

**Today heaven and earth are united, for Christ is born.
Today God has come to earth, and man ascends to heaven.
Today God, who by nature cannot be seen,
Is seen in the flesh for our sake.
Let us glorify Him, crying:
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!
Thy coming has brought peace to us:
Glory to Thee, our Savior!**

**"Glory to God in the highest,"
I hear the angels sing today in Bethlehem.
Glory to Him whose good pleasure it was
That peace should come on earth!
The virgin is now more spacious than the heavens.
Light has shone on those in darkness,
It has exalted the lowly, who sing like the angels:
Glory to God in the highest!**

**Man was created in God's image and likeness,
But when Jesus saw him fallen through transgression,
He bowed the heavens and came down, dwelling in a virgin's womb,
Without forsaking His divinity.
Adam, once corrupted, was refashioned.**

**He cried out, "Glory to Thine appearing,
O my Redeemer and my God!"**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

(Tone 5)

**The wise men, kings from Persia,
Perceived without any doubt
That Thou wast born on earth, O Heavenly King.
Drawn by the light of a star, they hurried to Bethlehem.
They offered Thee acceptable gifts:
Gold, myrrh, and frankincense.
They fell down before Thee and worshipped Thee,
Seeing Thee, the Timeless One,
Lying in the cave as an infant!**

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(Tone 6)

**All the angels in heaven make merry and dance today.
All creation leaps for joy.
The Lord and Savior is born in Bethlehem.
Every deception of idols is swept away,
And Christ reigns unto all ages!**

(The prayers of Litiya are then said by the priest. When they are finished, the Aposticha follow immediately):

(Tone 2)

**A great and wondrous mystery unfolds today.
A virgin gives birth and remains a virgin!
The Word is made flesh without leaving His Father!
Angels and shepherds glorify Him!
Let us join in their song:
"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace!"**

VERSE: The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

(Tone 3)

**Today the virgin gives birth to the maker of all!
Eden offers a cave.
To those in darkness, a star reveals Christ, the Sun!
Wise men are enlightened by faith and worship with gifts.
Shepherds behold the wonder, and the angels sing:
"Glory to God in the highest!"**

VERSE: From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee.

**When Jesus the Lord was born in Bethlehem of Judah,
Wise men came from the East to worship God made man.
Eagerly opening their treasures,**

**They offered precious gifts to Him.
Purest gold, for the King of the ages;
Frankincense, for the God of all;
Myrrh, for the immortal one,
As though He were dead three days.
Come, all you nations, let us worship Him!
He is born to save our souls.**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

(Tone 4)

**Sing, O Jerusalem!
Make merry, all who love Zion!
Today Adam's ancient bonds are broken.
Paradise is opened to us.
The serpent is cast down.
Long ago our first mother was deceived by him!
Now he sees a woman become mother of the Creator.
O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
Through Eve, woman became the tool of sin,
Bringing death to all flesh,
But through Mary, she becomes the first-fruits of salvation for all the world,
For God, the All-perfect, is born of her.
By His birth He seals her virginity.
He is bound in swaddling clothes to loose the bonds of sin!
Through His birth, the pains of Eve are healed.
Let all creation sing and dance for joy,
For Christ has come to restore it and to save our souls.**

VERSE: Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

**Thou hast dwelt in a cave, O Christ our God;
A manger welcomed Thee;
Shepherds and wise men worshipped Thee.
Then were the words of the prophets fulfilled,
And the hosts of angels marveled and cried:
Glory to Thy condescension, O only Lover of Man!**

(And immediately the **Prayer of St. Simeon**):

**Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,
According to Thy word, For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation,
Which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples:
A light to enlighten the Gentiles,
And to be the glory of Thy people Israel.**

(And the Trisagion prayers as above):

READER: Holy God...Glory...now and ever...O most holy Trinity...
Lord, have mercy (3)...Glory...now and ever...Our Father...

PRIEST: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

(As the Troparion is sung, the priest censes three times around the table which holds the loaves, wheat, wine, and oil to be blessed.)

Troparion (Tone 4)

**Thy nativity, O Christ our God,
Has shone to the world the light of wisdom.
For by it, those who worshipped the stars
Were taught by a star to adore Thee,
The Sun of Righteousness,
And to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee!**

(The priest then blesses the loaves with the usual prayer.)

CHOIR: Blessed be the Name of the Lord, henceforth and forevermore. (3)

PRIEST: The blessing of the Lord be upon you, through His grace and love for mankind, always,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Matins

of the Nativity of Our Lord

(When Matins is served immediately following Great Compline, it begins as below, with the choir singing "Glory to God in the highest . . ." If Matins is to be served separately, however, it begins with the blessing by the priest, the usual beginning with the Trisagion prayers, and the blessing, "Glory to the holy, consubstantial, life-giving and undivided Trinity . . .")

CHOIR: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men. (3)
O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise. (2)

*(The **Six Psalms** are read by the reader, and are followed by **The Great Litany**.)*

PRIEST: God is the Lord, and has revealed Himself to us. Blessed is he that comes in the Name of the Lord!

(Tone 4)

CHOIR: **God is the Lord, and has revealed Himself to us. Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord!**

PRIEST: O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.

CHOIR: **God is the Lord...**

PRIEST: All nations surrounded me; in the Name of the Lord I cut them off.

CHOIR: **God is the Lord...**

PRIEST: I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.

CHOIR: **God is the Lord...**

PRIEST: The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is wonderful in our eyes.

CHOIR: **God is the Lord...**

The Troparion (Tone 4)

**Thy nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the light of wisdom.
For by it, those who worshipped the stars
were taught by a star to adore Thee,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee. (3)**

(In places where Matins is being served in full, ordinarily in monastic communities, two Kathismata from the psalter are prescribed with the following Kathisma Hymns:)

First Kathisma Hymn (Tone 4)

**Come, O faithful!
Let us go to see where Christ was born.
We shall follow the wise men, kings from the East,**

**and be led by the guiding star
to the place where angels sing unceasing praise.
Shepherds in the fields offer fitting hymns:
"Glory in the highest to Him who today was born
"of the Virgin Theotokos
"in a cave in Bethlehem of Judah!"**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.
Amen.

(repeat)

CHOIR: **Come, O faithful...**

Second Kathisma Hymn (Tone 4)

**Why do you marvel, O Mary?
Why are you amazed at what has come to pass?
"I have given birth in time to a timeless son;
"I cannot explain how He was conceived in me.
"I have known no man; how then shall I bear a child?
"Who has ever seen a birth without seed?"
When God so wills, as it is written,
The order of nature is overcome.
Christ is born of the virgin in Bethlehem of Judah.**

The Polyeleion*

**Psalms 135 and 136 are called the "Polyeleion" or psalms of "many mercies" because of the frequency of the refrain "for His mercy endures forever," used to glorify God for His saving deeds. Although these psalms are intended to be sung in full, in practice they are often abbreviated and include only selected verses.*

As the psalms, or the selected verses as presented below, of the Polyeleion are sung, the priest, carrying a lighted candle, proceeds to the middle of the church, where he stands before the festal icon.

**Praise the Name of the Lord, O you servants of the Lord! Alleluia!
Praised be the Lord from Zion, He who dwells in Jerusalem! Alleluia!
O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever! Alleluia!
O give thanks to the God of Heaven, for His mercy endures forever! Alleluia!**

The Magnification

(As the priest and choir sing the Magnification, the priest tenses the icon of the feast, and then the entire church.)

PRIEST: We magnify Thee, O Christ the Giver of Life, who for our sake now is born in the flesh of the Virgin Mary, unwedded and most pure.

CHOIR: **We magnify Thee, O Christ the Giver of Life, who for our sake now is born in the flesh of the Virgin Mary, unwedded and most pure.**

VERSE: Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; sing the glory of His name; proclaim His glorious praise.

REFRAIN: **We magnify...**

VERSE: Our God is in heaven and on earth; He does whatever He pleases.

REFRAIN: **We magnify...**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

REFRAIN: **We magnify...**

Kathisma Hymn (Tone 8)

**How can a womb contain Him whom nothing can contain?
How can He remain in His father's bosom, yet rest in his mother's arms?
It is His good pleasure to accomplish this.
Having no flesh, He purposely assumes it for our sake.
He who is becomes what He never was.
He shares our substance without forsaking His own nature.
Desiring to make us citizens of the world on high,
Christ, the Only-begotten of the Father, is born on earth as a man.**

The Little Litany

PRIEST: Again and again in peace let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

PRIEST: Help us, save us, have mercy on us, and keep us, O God, by Thy grace.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

PRIEST: Commemorating our most holy, most pure, most blessed and glorious Lady and ever, and unto Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary with all the saints, let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life unto Christ our God.

CHOIR: To Thee, O Lord.

(Exclamation)

PRIEST: For Blessed is Thy Name and glorified is Thy Kingdom, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

Song of Ascent (Tone 4)

CHOIR: **From my youth, many passions have fought against me, but do Thou help me, and save me, O my Savior.**

You that hate Zion shall be put to shame by the Lord: you shall be withered up like grass by the fire.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Every soul is enlivened by the Holy Spirit, and is exalted in purity, illumined by the Holy Trinity in a sacred mystery.

(During the Song of Ascent the priest goes to the altar to bring the Gospel book to the center of the church.)

(The Prokeimenon in the Fourth Tone)

PRIEST: Wisdom! Let us attend! The Prokeimenon in the Fourth Tone.

Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee; the Lord has sworn, and will not change his mind. (Psalm 110)

CHOIR: **Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee; the Lord has sworn, and will not change his mind.** (Psalm 110)

PRIEST: The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

CHOIR: **Out of the womb...**

PRIEST: **Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee;**

CHOIR: **The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind.**

PRIEST: Let us pray to the Lord.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy.

PRIEST: For holy art Thou, O God, who rests in the sanctuary, and to Thee we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

PRIEST: **Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!**

CHOIR: **(Tone 4) Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!**

PRIEST: Praise God in His sanctuary! Praise Him in His mighty firmament!

CHOIR: **Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!**

PRIEST: **Let everything that breathes.**

CHOIR: **Praise the Lord.**

PRIEST: That we may be accounted worthy of listening to the Holy Gospel, let us pray to the Lord God.

CHOIR: Lord, have mercy. (3)

PRIEST: Wisdom! Let us attend! Let us listen to the Holy Gospel. Peace be unto all.

CHOIR: And to your spirit.

PRIEST: The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew.

CHOIR: Glory to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee!

PRIEST: Let us attend!

(Matthew 1:18-15)

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

Psalm 51

READER: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy steadfast love; according to Thine abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!

For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight, so that Thou art justified in Thy sentence and blameless in Thy judgment.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward being: therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners will return to Thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of Thy deliverance.

O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise. For Thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, Thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

Do good to Zion in Thy good pleasure; rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, then wilt Thou delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on Thine altar.

CHOIR: **(Tone 2)**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Today all things are filled with joy, for Christ is born of the Virgin!

Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Today all things are filled with joy, for Christ is born of the Virgin!

**Have mercy on me, O God,
according to Thy great mercy,
according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies
blot out my transgressions.**

(Tone 6)

**Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!
Today Bethlehem receives Him who reigns forever with the Father.
Today angels glorify the newborn babe in hymns worthy of God:
Glory to God in the highest!
And on earth, peace, good will to men!**

(The Prayer of Intercession, O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance... with its response and exclamation, follows.)

The Kanon (Tone 1)

Ode 1

**IRMOS: Christ is born; glorify Him!
Christ comes from heaven; go to meet Him!
Christ is on earth; be exalted!
Sing to the Lord, all the earth!
And praise Him in gladness, O people,
for He has been glorified!**

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God; glory to Thee!

Man was made in the image of God, but he sinned, and lost immortality. He fell from the divine and better life, enslaved completely by corruption. Now the wise Creator fashions him again, for He has been glorified!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God; glory to Thee!

The Creator shaped man with His own hands, but when He saw us perishing eternally, He bowed the heavens and came down to earth, and clothed Himself completely in our nature, truly incarnate from a pure and holy Virgin, for He has been glorified!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God; glory to Thee!

Wisdom, and Word, and Power, Christ our God is the Father's Son, His Radiance. He was made man, a mystery concealed from every spirit above or on the earth. He has won us for Himself, for He has been glorified!

REFRAIN: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KATAVASIA: Christ is born, glorify Him...

Ode 3

**IRMOS: To the Son, begotten of the Father, before all ages
and incarnate of the virgin without seed in these latter days
To Christ our God, let us cry out:
Thou hast raised up our horn.
Holy art Thou, O Lord!**

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Adam was made from dust, yet he shared God's life-giving breath. He was deceived by woman and fell, but from the dead, he saw Christ born of woman. He shouted, "For my sake Thou hast become like me. Holy art Thou, O Lord!"

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Thou hast assumed a body of lowly clay, O Christ. By sharing our humble flesh, Thou hast made our race partakers of divinity. By becoming mortal man yet remaining God, Thou hast raised us from death to life. Holy art Thou, O Lord!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Make merry, O Bethlehem! You are the King of Judah's princes. Christ, the Shepherd of Israel, who rides on the shoulders of the cherubim, has come forth from you for all to see. He has raised us from death to life, and reigns over all.

REFRAIN: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KATAVASIA: **To the Son...**

(The Little Litany, with the exclamation:)

PRIEST: For Thou art our God, and to Thee we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Hypakoe (Tone 8)

**Heaven brought the first-fruits of the Gentiles as a gift for Thee;
A star summoned the wise men to the babe in the manger.
They were amazed to see neither throne nor scepter,
But only abject poverty.
What is more humble than a cave?
What is more lowly than swaddling clothes?
Yet the riches of Thy divinity shone through all these.
O Lord, glory to Thee!**

Kathisma Hymn (Tone 8)

**Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad!
The Lamb of God has been born on earth,
Granting redemption to the world.
The Word, who rests in the bosom of the Father,
Has come forth without seed from the virgin.
The wise men were struck with amazement,
Seeing Him born as an infant in Bethlehem.
Let all creation glorify Him!**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(repeat) **Let the heavens rejoice...**

Ode 4

IRMOS: **Stem and flower of the root of Jesse,
Thou hast blossomed from the virgin, O Christ.
From the mountain overshadowed by the forest Thou art come,
made flesh from her that knew no man.
O God, not formed from matter,
glory to Thy power, O Lord!**

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

O Lord! Thou art the Expectation of the nations, O Christ, foretold by Jacob in days of old. Thou hast sprung from Judah's tribe, to plunder the might of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria, replacing error with faith acceptable to God. Glory to Thy power,

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Thou hast filled the stargazers with joy, O Lord. They knew the hidden meaning of the prophet Balaam's words. Thou hast made the star of Jacob to rise. As the first-fruits of the Gentiles it led them unto Thee. Thou didst openly receive their precious gifts. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Thou hast descended into the Virgin's womb, O Christ, like rain on the fleece and as raindrops watering the earth. All earth's rulers fall down before Thee: Ethiopia and the islands of Arabia, the kings of Tarshish, of Sheba, and the Medes. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

REFRAIN: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KATAVASIA: **Stem and flower . . .**

Ode 5

IRMOS: **O God of Peace, Father of Mercies,**

**Thou hast sent Thine angel of great counsel to grant us peace.
We are guided to the light of the knowledge of God,
and keeping watch by night,
we glorify Thee, O Lover of Man!**

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Thou wast registered as Caesar's subject, O Christ, in obedience to his decree. We were slaves of sin, and subject to the hateful enemy; by Thy poverty Thou hast set us free! Thou wast united to our nature in every way. Though we were formed from dust, by this communion we are made divine!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Behold, the virgin, as foretold of old, has conceived and given birth to God made man. She remains a virgin still. Through her we are reconciled to God. Let us sinners faithfully sing her praise. She is truly Theotokos!

REFRAIN: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KATAVASIA: **O God of Peace...**

Ode 6

IRMOS: **The sea monster cast forth Jonah as it had received him, like a babe from the womb.**

**And when the Word came to dwell in the virgin and was made flesh,
He came forth preserving her uncorrupt,
for as He Himself was not subject to decay,
He kept his mother free from harm.**

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Christ our God has come in the flesh. The Father begot Him from the womb before the morning star. He rules the heavenly hosts, yet now He lies in a manger of dumb beasts. He who looses the tangled knots of sin now is wrapped in swaddling clothes.

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

A Son is born and given to the faithful, a newborn child of Adam's race, yet He is Father and Ruler of the world to come. He is called the Angel of Great Counsel. He is the Mighty God, He rules all creation by His might.

REFRAIN: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KATAVASIA: **The sea monster...**

(The Little Litany, with the exclamation:)

PRIEST: For Thou art the King of Peace and the Savior of our souls, and to Thee we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Kontakion (Tone 3)

**Today the virgin gives birth to the transcendent one,
and the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable one.
Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him!
The wise men journey with the star,
since for our sake the Eternal God was born as a little child!**

Ikos

**Bethlehem has opened Eden. Come, let us see!
We have found joy in a secret place. Come, let us seize Paradise hidden in the cave!
There the unwatered Root has appeared, blossoming with forgiveness.
There is found the undug Well, from which David longed to drink of old.
There the virgin has borne a child, quenching Adam's and David's thirst.
Let us hurry to this place,
Where the Eternal God was born as a little child!**

Ode 7

IRMOS: **The children brought up together in godliness
scorned the impious degree of the tyrant.
They were not afraid of the threat of fire,
but standing in the midst of the flames, they sang:
Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!**

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

The shepherds abiding in the fields were terrified by a dazzling sight. Around them shone the glory of the Lord. An angel shouted unto them, "Sing praises. The Messiah is born!" Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

After the angel spoke, the hosts of heaven suddenly cried out: "Glory to God in the highest. Peace on earth, good will to men. Christ has shone forth." Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

"What news is this?" asked the shepherds. "Has God's Messiah truly come? Let us go to Bethlehem." They saw Thee there, and worshipped Thee. With Thy mother, they sang: "Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!"

REFRAIN: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

KATAVASIA: **The children...**

(During the eighth ode the priest censes the altar and the sanctuary, and then stands in front of the icon of the Mother of God until the beginning of the ninth ode.)

Ode 8

IRMOS: **The furnace moist with dew
was an image prefiguring a wonder beyond nature,
for it did not burn the children whom it had received,
nor did the Fire of Divinity consume the virgin's womb when it entered it.
So let us raise the song:
Let all creation bless the Lord
and exalt Him throughout all ages!**

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

The daughter of Babylon drove David's children from Zion with sword and spear. Now she sends her sons, the wise men, bearing gifts, to worship in David's city, where God has come to dwell. So let us raise the song: Let all creation bless the Lord, and exalt Him throughout all ages!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Grief had silenced the harps. Zion's children would not sing in a foreign land. But now Christ has shone forth in Bethlehem destroying the din of Babylon's idolatries. So let us raise the song: Let all creation bless the Lord, and exalt Him throughout all ages!

REFRAIN: Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee!

Babylon plundered Zion, and captured all her royal wealth. But now, with a guiding star, Christ lures her treasure-laden wise men back to Zion. So let us raise the song: Let all creation bless the Lord, and exalt Him throughout all ages!

REFRAIN: Let us bless the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

We praise, bless and worship the Lord, singing and exalting Him throughout all ages.

KATAVASIA: **The furnace moist with dew...**

(During the ninth ode the priest censes the iconostas, and then completes the censuring of the church).

Ode 9

REFRAIN 1: **Magnify, O my soul, the most pure virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts!**

IRMOS: **I behold a strange, most glorious mystery!
Heaven - the cave!
The cherubic throne - the virgin!
The manger - the place where Christ lay,
The uncontainable God, whom we magnify in song!**

REFRAIN 2: **Magnify, O my soul, God born in the flesh, from the virgin.**

READER: The wise men saw a new, uncharted star, following an unexpected course. Its brightness surpassed every star in heaven. It foretold the Messiah's birth: Christ, the King, born on earth in Bethlehem, for our salvation.

REFRAIN 3: **Magnify O my soul, the King born in the cave!**

(repeat) The wise men...

REFRAIN 4: **Magnify, O my soul, God, worshipped by the wise men!**

(repeat) The wise men...

READER: "Where is the newborn Infant-King? We have seen His star," the wise men said. "We have come to worship Him." Godless Herod trembled with fury. In his raging madness he plotted to kill Christ.

REFRAIN 5: **Magnify, O my soul, the Lord who revealed Himself to the wise men by a star!**

READER: (repeat) Where is the newborn...

REFRAIN 6: **Magnify, O my soul, the pure virgin who gave birth to Christ the King!**

READER: Herod inquired when, the star appeared which had led the wise men to Bethlehem, but after they worshipped Christ with gifts, that same star led them back to their own land, confounding their pursuer: that godless murderer of children.

REFRAIN 7: **Wise men and shepherds came to worship Christ, born in the City of Bethlehem.**

READER: (repeat) Herod inquired...

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

REFRAIN 1: **Magnify, O my soul, the most pure virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts!**

KATAVASIA: **I behold a strange...**

(The Little Litany, with the exclamation:)

PRIEST: For all the powers of heaven praise Thee, and unto Thee we ascribe glory: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Exapostelion

**Our Savior, the dayspring from the East,
has visited us from on high,
and we, who were in darkness and shadow,
have found the truth,
for the Lord is born of the virgin! (3 times)**

The Praises (Tone 4)

CHOIR: **Let everything that breathes praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord from the heavens.
Praise Him in the highest.**

**To Thee, O God, is due a song.
Praise Him, all you angels of His!
Praise Him, all His hosts!
To Thee, O God is due a song!**

VERSE: Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His exceeding greatness.

CHOIR: **Make glad, O you righteous!
Greatly rejoice, O heavens!
Dance for joy, O mountains; for Christ is born!
The virgin has become like the cherubic throne.
She carries at her bosom God the Word, made flesh.
Shepherds glorify the newborn child.
Wise men offer the master gifts.
Angels praise Him and sing:
O Lord, past understanding, glory to Thee!**

VERSE: Praise Him with trumpet sound; praise Him with lute and harp.

CHOIR: **It was the good pleasure of the Father:
The Word is made flesh.
The virgin gives birth to God made man.
A star announces the glad tidings.
Shepherds are amazed, and wise men worship,
and creation is filled with mighty joy.**

VERSE: Praise Him with timbrel and dance; praise Him with strings and pipe.

CHOIR: **You have borne the Savior, O Virgin Theotokos.
You have overthrown Eve's ancient curse.
You became the mother of the Son of God.
The Father is well-pleased in Him.
You carry at your bosom God, the Word, made flesh.
We cannot fathom this mystery.
We can only believe, and give glory with you:
O Lord, beyond all explanation, glory to Thee!**

VERSE: Praise Him with sounding cymbals; praise Him with loud clashing cymbals. Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!

CHOIR: **Come, let us sing to the mother of the Savior!
After childbearing she remained a virgin.
Hail, O spiritual city of God the King!
Christ came to dwell in you.
He has accomplished salvation.
With Gabriel, we sing your praise.
With the shepherds, we glorify you.
O Theotokos, pray to Him who took flesh from you to save us!**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

(Tone 6)

CHOIR: **When it was time for Thy coming on earth,
the first imperial taxation was held,
but Thou also didst take a census, O Lord,**

**recording the names of all men who believed in Thy birth.
Thou didst use the decree of Caesar for Thine own end:
To make manifest Thy timeless and eternal Kingdom!
Therefore we pay Thee our taxes, not with golden coins,
but with the riches of Orthodox theology,
O God and Savior of our souls.**

VERSE: Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(Tone 2)

**CHOIR: Today Christ is born of the virgin in Bethlehem!
Today He who knows no beginning, begins.
Today the Word is made flesh.
The powers of heaven greatly rejoice.
The earth makes merry with men.
The wise men offer gifts; the shepherds announce the wonder,
and without ceasing we cry aloud:
Glory to God in the highest,
peace on earth, good will to men.**

The Great Doxology

PRIEST: Glory to Thee, who hast shone us the light!

CHOIR: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory: O Lord, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty; O Lord, the Only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit.

O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest on the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For Thou alone art holy, Thou alone art Lord, Jesus Christ, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Every day will I bless Thee, and praise Thy name forever and ever. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin. Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy Name forever. Amen.

Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have set our hope in Thee.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord; teach me Thy statutes. (3)

O Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation.
I said: Lord, have mercy on me! Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee!

O Lord, I flee unto Thee! Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.
For with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light shall we see light.
Continue Thy mercy unto those who know Thee.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us! (3)
Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!

The Troparion (Tone 4)

**Thy nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the light of wisdom.
For by it, those who worshipped the stars
were taught by a star to adore Thee,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee!**

(Then the Augmented Litany, the Litany of Fervent Supplication, the Prayer of Inclination, and the Great Dismissal, as follows):

PRIEST: Wisdom.

CHOIR: Father, bless.

PRIEST: Christ our God, the Existing One, is blessed, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

CHOIR: Amen. Preserve, O God, the Holy Orthodox faith and Orthodox Christians, unto ages of ages.

PRIEST: Most holy Theotokos, save us!

CHOIR: More honorable than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim: without defilement you gave birth to God the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify you!

PRIEST: Glory to Thee, O Christ, our God and our hope, glory to Thee!

CHOIR: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.
Lord, have mercy. (3)
Father, Bless.

PRIEST: May He who was born in a cavern and lay in a manger for our salvation, Christ our true God, through the prayers of His most pure Mother, of the holy, glorious and all-laudable apostles, of our venerable and God-bearing fathers, and of all the saints, have mercy on us and save us, for He is good and loves mankind.

CHOIR: Amen.

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

(If the feast falls on Sunday or Monday, the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is served.)

The First Antiphon (Ps. 111)

VERSE: I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will make all Thy wonders known.

REFRAIN: **Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!**

VERSE: In the company of the upright, in the congregation, great are the works of the Lord!

REFRAIN: **Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!**

VERSE: They are sought out according to His will.

REFRAIN: **Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!**

VERSE: Full of honor and majesty is His work, and His righteousness endures forever.

REFRAIN: **Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

REFRAIN: **Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us!**

The Second Antiphon (Ps. 111)

VERSE: Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments.

REFRAIN: **O Son of God, born of the Virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia!**

VERSE: His descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.

REFRAIN: **O Son of God, born of the virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia!**

VERSE: Glory and wealth are in His house and His righteousness endures forever.

REFRAIN: **O Son of God, born of the Virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia!**

VERSE: Light rises in the darkness for the upright; the Lord is merciful, compassionate and righteous.

REFRAIN: **O Son of God, born of the virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia!**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

CJOIR: **Only-begotten Son and Immortal Word of God...**

The Third Antiphon (Ps. 110)

READER: The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand."

CHOIR: **(Troparion, Tone 4:)**

**Thy nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone to the world the light of wisdom.
For by it, those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee,
the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know Thee, the Orient from on high.
O Lord, glory to Thee!**

READER: "Until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

CHOIR: **Thy nativity, O Christ our God . . .**

READER: The Lord will send Thee the scepter of power from Zion: "Rule in the midst of Thine enemies."

CHOIR: **Thy nativity, O Christ our God . . .**

READER: With Thee is dominion on the day of Thy birth, in the radiance of holiness.

CHOIR: **Thy nativity, O Christ our God . . .** (The Introit):

PRIEST: Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord has sworn, and will not change His mind: "Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

At Pontifical services only, the clergy and people sing:

Come, let us worship and fall down before Christ! O Son of God, born of the virgin, save us who sing to Thee: Alleluia!

CHOIR: **Thy nativity, O Christ our God . . .**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Kontakion (Tone 6)

**Today the virgin gives birth to the transcendent one,
And the earth offers a cave to the unapproachable one!
Angels, with shepherds, glorify Him!
The wise men journey with the star,
since for our sake the Eternal God was born as a little child!**

(Instead of the Trisagion):

As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!

The Prokeimenon (Tone 8, Psalm 66)

**Let all the earth worship Thee and praise Thee./
Let it praise Thy Name, O Most High!**

Verse: Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth! Sing of His Name! Give glory to His praise!

Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7

Alleluia: (Tone I, Psalm 19)

Verses: The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge!

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

*(Instead of "It is truly meet. . ." we sing the **Hymn to the Theotokos**):*

**Magnify, O my soul, the most pure virgin Theotokos,
more honorable and more glorious than the heavenly hosts!
I behold a strange, most glorious mystery!
Heaven - the cave!
The cherubic throne - the virgin!
The manger - the place where Christ lay,
the uncontainable God, whom we magnify in song!**

Ninth irmos of the first canon

(as prescribed in some service books; for the first irmos of the second canon, as prescribed in others, see above.)

COMMUNION HYMN: (Psalm 112) The Lord has sent redemption to His people!
Alleluia!

Vespers

December 26

Second Day of the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord *Synaxis of the Most Holy Theotokos*

(Vespers begins as usual: the blessing by the priest, the Trisagion prayers, Psalm 104, and the Great Litany. There is no kathisma. On Lord, I Call, we sing the same six verses as on the eve. See above.)

Come. let us greatly rejoice . . .(2)

When the Lord Jesus was born . . .(2)

Thy kingdom endures forever . . .

What shall we offer Thee . . .

(Tone 6)

Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!

Today Bethlehem receives Him who reigns forever with the Father.

Today angels glorify the newborn babe in hymns worthy of God:

Glory to God in the highest!

And on earth, peace, good will to men!

(Entrance with the censer, O Gladsome Light . . .)

THE GREAT PROKEIMENON (Tone 7, Psalm 77)*

Who is so great a God as our God?/ Thou art the God who doest wonders.

VERSE: Thou hast made known Thy power among the peoples.

VERSE: And I said: Now have I begun to understand: This is the change accomplished by the right hand of the Most High.

VERSE: I remembered the works of the Lord, for from the beginning will I remember Thy wonders.

**(On Saturday evening, the usual prokeimenon, The Lord is King . . . is sung.)*

(Then the Augmented Litany, Vouchsafe, O Lord..., the Litany of Fervent Supplication, and the Prayer of Inclination. The Aposticha are as follows):

(Tone 8)

CHOIR: **Today, a strange mystery has come to pass:
Creation is renewed, for God is made man!
He has remained what He always was;
He has become what He never was,
undergoing neither division nor confusion.**

VERSE: The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

CHOIR: **O Lord, Thou hast come to Bethlehem and made Thy home in a cave.
Heaven is Thy throne, yet Thou art laid in a manger.
The hosts of angels surround Thee, yet Thou hast come down among
shepherds, to save mankind through compassion. Glory to Thee, O Lord!**

VERSE: Out of the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee.

CHOIR: **How can I describe this great mystery?
He who has no flesh becomes incarnate.
The bodiless Word is clothed in matter.
The invisible is seen; the untouchable is felt.
He who has no beginning, begins.
The Son of God becomes the Son of man:
Jesus Christ: the same yesterday, today and forever!**

VERSE: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

CHOIR: **The shepherds hasten to Bethlehem,
where the true Shepherd is revealed:
His throne is the cherubim, yet He lies in a manger.
For our sake, He has taken the form of a child.
O Lord, glory to Thee!**

*(Then the Prayer of St. Simeon, the Trisagion prayers, the Troparion of the feast sung once,
and the Festal Dismissal.)*

The Divine Liturgy

The Typical Antiphons*

**(In many places it is the custom to sing the Festal Antiphons on December 26 and 27, cf. above.)*

TROPARION: **Thy nativity, O Christ our God...**

KONTAKION

(Tone 6)

**He who was begotten before the morning star,
without mother of the Father,
today is made flesh from you without a father:
A star announces the glad tidings to the wise men.
Angels and shepherds sing the praises of your most pure childbearing,
O lady full of grace!**

(Instead of the Trisagion)

As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!

PROKEIMENON: (Tone 3, the Magnificat)

**My soul magnifies the Lord,/ and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.
For He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden, for behold, from henceforth
all generations will call me blessed.**

EPISTLE: **Hebrews 2:11-18**

ALLELUIA: (Tone 8, Psalm 132)

**Arise, O Lord and go to Thy resting place, Thou and the ark of Thy might.
The Lord swore to David a sure oath, from which He will not turn back.**

GOSPEL: **Matthew 2:13-23**

(Instead of "It is truly meet...", we sing the Hymn to the Theotokos; cf. above.)

**Today the virgin gives birth to the Master in the cave.
Speech is our natural gift, O virgin,
but it would be safer and easier for us to keep silence in fear,
So difficult it is to compose songs of love for you!
But give us strength, O mother, equal to our purpose!**

COMMUNION HYMN: (Psalm 112)

The Lord has sent redemption to His people! Alleluia!

The Divine Liturgy

December 27

Third Day of the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord
The Holy Protomartyr, Archdeacon Stephen

TROPARION: (Tone 4)

**O Protomartyr and mighty warrior of Christ our God,
you were victorious in battle and crowned with glory, O Holy Stephen!
You confounded the council of those who persecuted you,
beholding your Savior enthroned at the Father's right hand.
Never cease to pray that our souls may be saved!**

TROPARION OF THE FEAST:

Thy nativity, O Christ our God . . .

KONTAKION: (Tone 3):

**Yesterday the Master assumed our flesh and became our guest;
Today His servant is stoned to death and departs in the flesh:
The glorious first martyr Stephen!**

KONTAKION OF THE FEAST:

Today the virgin gives birth . . .

(The Trisagion is sung.)

PROKEIMENON (Tone 8, Psalm 19)

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth,/ and their words to the ends of the universe!

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork.

EPISTLE: Acts 6:8 - 7:5, 47-60.

ALLELUIA (Tone 1, Psalm 89)

**The heavens confess Thy wonders, O Lord; Thy truth in the assembly of the saints.
God is glorified in the council of the saints.**

GOSPEL: Matthew 21:33-42.

HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS: *(As on December 25)*

COMMUNION HYMN:

Their proclamation has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the universe!

The Lord has sent redemption to His people! Alleluia.