

SUNDAY ON OR AFTER THE 18th OF DECEMBER
THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY FATHERS
AT LITTLE VESPERS

At "Lord, I have cried ...," stichera to the Resurrection and the Theotokos, as usual.

AT GREAT VESPERS

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

N.B. If this Sunday fall on either the 18th or 19th of December, at "Lord, I have cried ...," we chant three stichera to the Resurrection, three by Anatolius, and four to the Fathers. But if it fall between the 20th and 23rd of December, we chant three stichera to the Resurrection, one sticheron by Anatolius, three stichera for the forefeast, and three to the Fathers.

The stichera for the forefeast, in Tone VI, the composition of Anatolius:

Spec. Mel.: "Having set all aside ...":

The never-setting Sun doth come to shine forth from the Virgin's womb and to enlighten all the world. Let us make haste to meet Him with pure eyes and deeds; and let us now make ready in spirit to receive Him that cometh into His own through a strange birth, as He hath been well pleased to do, that, as He is compassionate, He might lead us up that have estranged ourselves from the life of Eden, and might be born in Bethlehem.

God the Word, Who is borne up upon the shoulders of the cherubim, having united Himself hypostatically to the flesh, hath made His abode within the womb of the all-immaculate one and become a man; and He hath come to earth to be born of the tribe of Judah. The holy cave is beautifully adorned, like a most magnificent palace, for the King of all; and the manger, wherein the Virgin Mary layeth the Infinite One like a babe, is like a fiery throne, and serveth for the renewal of creation.

In a manger of dumb beasts doth the Virgin lay Thee, O unoriginate Word of God, Who, in manner which passeth understanding, hast received a beginning. For Thou comest to put an end to that foolishness which I assumed through the malice of the serpent, and to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, that Thou mightest rend asunder the rags and chains of my transgressions, O Thou that alone art good and the Lover of mankind. Wherefore, I glorify Thee and I hymn and most joyfully worship Thine advent in the flesh, whereby I have been set free.

The stichera to the holy Fathers, in the same tone and melody:

Unto the ends of the earth hath the memory of the forefathers been manifest as truly filled with light and shining with rays of grace; for Christ, the radiant Sun, shining from afar on high, doth lead forth an assembly of stars which shineth with Him, and in the midst of Bethlehem a nativity is shown to be that of God and man. Therefore, piously clapping our hands, with faith let us all join chorus to utter pre-festive praise unto His nativity. **(Twice, if the Sunday fall before December 20th)**

Rejoicing today, Adam is adorned with the glory of divine communion, as the foundation and confirmation of the wise forefathers; and with him Abel doth leap for joy and Enoch is glad, and Seth danceth together with Noah; the all-praised Abraham doth chant with the patriarchs, and from on high Melchizedek doth behold a birth wherein a father had no part. Wherefore, celebrating the divine memory of the forefathers of Christ, we beseech Him, that our souls be saved.

With gladness hath the assembly of the divinely wise children in the furnace shone forth, and it proclaimeth the nativity of Christ on earth; for the Lord, descending like a precious dew, doth preserve unconsumed her that gaveth Him birth, doth keep her undefiled and doth enrich her with divine gifts. Wherefore, the God-pleasing Daniel rejoiceth in gladness, for he hath clearly foreseen the Stone uncut from the mountain, and with boldness doth he now pray in behalf of our souls.

Glory ..., to the Fathers, in Tone VI:

Daniel, the man of divine desires, seeing Thee, the Stone uncut by human hands, O Lord, prophetically called Thee a babe born without seed, the Word incarnate of the Virgin, the immaculate God, the Savior of our souls.

Now and ever ..., of the forefeast, in the same tone, the composition of the Byzantine:

Splendidly adorn thyself, O cave, for the ewe-lamb cometh who doth bear Christ in her womb! O manger, receive thou Him that by a word doth release us mortals from irrational activity! Ye piping shepherds, bear witness to the awesome wonder! Ye Magi from Persia, bring forth gold, frankincense and myrrh, for the Lord hath appeared from the Virgin Mary. And the Mother, regarding Him as befitteth a handmaid, worshipped Him and cried out in greeting unto Him that was laid in her arms: How wast Thou sown within me? How didst Thou spring forth in me, O my Deliverer and God?

Or, if this Sunday fall on the 18th or 19th of December: Now and ever ..., the Dogmaticon of the Tone.

Entrance. Prokimenon of the Day. Three Lessons:

READING FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS [14:14-20]

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlomer and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said: Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.

READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY [4:8-20]

And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so, righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even Ten Commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air, the likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: and lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou

seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

READING FROM THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY [10:14-21]

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: he doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

At the Litia, the sticheron of the temple, and this sticheron to the Fathers, in Tone I:

The prophets of great renown, splendid in the rays of divine eloquence, are ever blessed, and, putting forth the sayings of the Spirit as fruit, they preached to all the ineffable nativity of Christ God; and having lived most wondrously, they ended their lives in accordance with the Law.

Glory ..., in Tone III, the composition of Germ anus:

Come, ye lovers of the feasts of the Church, and with psalms let us praise the assembly of the forefathers: Adam, the forefather of us all, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and, after the Law, Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel and David, and, with them, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the twelve prophets, together with Elijah, Elisha and all the rest, Zechariah and the Forerunner; who all preached Christ, the Life and Resurrection of our race.

Now and ever ..., of the Forefeast, in the same tone:

Adorn thyself splendidly, O Bethlehem, for Eden hath been opened! Make ready, O Ephratha, for Adam is restored, and Eve with him; for the curse is annulled, the salvation of the world hath blossomed forth, and the souls of the righteous are adorned. And bearing hymnody as a gift of offering instead of myrrh, they receive spiritual salvation and incorruption. For, lo! He that lieth in the manger doth command before, that a spiritual hymn be chanted by them that cry out unceasingly: O Lord, glory be to Thee!

But if this Sunday falls before the 20th of December: Now and ever ..., Theotokion:

Without seed, through the divine Spirit and by the will of the Father didst thou conceive the Son of God, Who is begotten of the Father without mother before the ages; to Him that, for our sake, was born of thee without father didst thou give birth in the flesh, and thou didst nourish Him as a babe with thy milk. Wherefore, cease thou never to pray that our souls be delivered from misfortunes.

At the Aposticha, the stichera of the Resurrection.

But if this Sunday fall on the 24th of December, these stichera, in Tone II:

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

O house of Ephratha, * thou holy city, * glory of the prophets: * adorn thou the house * wherein the Divine One is born.

Stichos: God shall come from Teman, and the Holy One from the mountain overshadowed and densely wooded.

O Bethlehem, land of Judah, splendid habitation of Him that is incarnate: prepare thou the divine cave wherein God is born in the flesh of the holy Virgin who hath not known man, that He might save the world!

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

Come ye all, let us faithfully celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, and noetically let us put forth like a star the hymn of the glorification of the Magi, and with the shepherds let us cry out: The salvation of men hath come from the Virgin's womb, summoning the faithful.

Glory ..., in the same tone, the composition of Cyprian:

Rejoice, ye honorable prophets who dedicated yourselves well to the Law of the Lord, and by faith revealed yourselves as unshaken and unbreakable pillars of Christ; and, having passed on to heaven, ye beseech Him to grant peace to the world and to save our souls.

Now and ever ..., of the forefeast, in the same tone, the composition of Cyprian:

Behold, the hour of our salvation draweth nigh! Make ready, O cave, for the Virgin approacheth to give birth! Rejoice and be glad, O Bethlehem, land of Judah, for from thee shall our Lord shine forth! Lo hearken, O ye mountains and hills, and ye surrounding lands of Judea, for Christ cometh to save man whom He created, in that He is the Lover of mankind!

N.B. But if this Sunday fall before the 20th of December:

Now and ever ..., Theotokion:

O new wonder, greater than all the wonders of old! For who hath known of a mother that gaveth birth without knowing man, and that hath borne upon her arm Him that fashioned all creation? It hath been the will of God to be born. O all-pure one, who hast borne Him as a babe in thine arms and hast maternal boldness before Him: cease thou not to pray in behalf of them that honor thee, that He take pity and save our souls.

After the Blessing of the Loaves, "Virgin Theotokos, rejoice ...," (Twice)

And the troparion to the Fathers, once, in Tone II:

Great are the accomplishments of faith! In the fountain of flame, as in refreshing water, the three holy children rejoiced; and the prophet Daniel was shown to be a shepherd of lions, as of sheep. By their prayers, O Christ God, save Thou our souls!

N.B. But if this Sunday fall on the 24th of December, the above troparion of the fathers twice, and the following troparion of the forefeast, once, in Tone IV:

Once Mary, pregnant with a seedless pregnancy, was registered in Bethlehem with the elder Joseph, as being of the seed of David. And while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, but there was no room for them in the inn. But the cave showed itself to be a beauteous palace for the Queen, and Christ is born to raise up the image that fell of old!

AT MATINS

At "God is the Lord ...," the troparion of the Resurrection, (Twice);
Glory ..., that of the Fathers in Tone II:

Great are the accomplishments of faith! In the fountain of flame, as in refreshing water, the three holy children rejoiced; and the prophet Daniel was shown to be a shepherd of lions, as of sheep. By their prayers, O Christ God, save Thou our souls!

Now and ever ..., either the Theotokion, or the troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Once, Mary pregnant with a seedless pregnancy, was registered in Bethlehem with the elder Joseph, as being of the seed of David. And while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, but there was no room for them in the inn. But the cave showed itself to be a beauteous palace for the Queen, and Christ is born to raise up the image that fell of old!

The usual Kathismata and the Sedalions of the Resurrection, with their Theotokia.

The Gospel Lesson of the Tone.

N.B. But if this Sunday falls on the 24th of December, we chant these Sedalions:

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

Spec. Mel.: "Joseph was amazed ...":

In the fathers, in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Judah and the other patriarchs, Jesse, David and the rest, didst Thou mystically prophesy the manifestation of God which would come to pass on earth, that of Thy pre-eternal Son from the Virgin, Christ, Who hath appeared in Bethlehem prophesying in the Spirit and Who calleth out to all that are in the world.

Glory ..., Now and ever ..., the above is repeated.

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

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

O ye faithful, let us joyously celebrate the feast of the divine fathers, and, honoring Adam and Abel, blessing Seth and Enos, let us hymn Enoch, Noah, Shem and Japheth. Let us praise Abraham, who shone forth in faith before the Law, and the divine Isaac, Jacob, Judah and Levi, and the chaste Joseph, and let us faithfully cry out: O God-bearing forefathers, entreat Christ God, that He grant remission of sins unto them that, with love, celebrate your holy memory.

Glory ..., Now and ever ..., the above is repeated.

After the chanting of Psalm 118, and the usual Evlogitaria;

This Sedalion to the fathers, in Tone VIII:

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

With hymns let us all praise Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the meek David, Joshua, and the twelve patriarchs, together with the three youths that quenched the fiery flame with the power of the Spirit. And let us cry out to them: Rejoice, ye that bravely denounced the deception of the mad king! Pray ye to Christ, that He grant remission of offenses unto them that celebrate your holy memory with love.

Glory ..., Now and ever ..., another Sedalion, in the same tone and melody:

From the bosom of the Father didst Thou come down, and in Thine ineffable condescension didst Thou take upon Thyself poverty like unto ours, in manner surpassing nature, O Lover of mankind. It was Thy good pleasure to make Thine abode in a cave, O Lord, and like as a babe art Thou suckled at Thy Mother's breast, Who art Creator and Lord. Wherefore, the Magi, guided by the star, bring gifts unto Thee and cry out: Glory in the highest to God, Who cometh to earth to be born as a man!

N.B. But if this Sunday falls on either the 18th or the 19th of December, this Theotokion:

Like the widow who gave two mites as an offering, I offer thee the praise of thanksgiving which is thy due, O Mistress, for all thy gifts; for thou art shown to be a shelter and aid, ever rescuing me from temptations and tribulations. Wherefore, delivered from that which causeth me grief, as from the midst of a burning furnace, I cry out to thee with all my heart: O Theotokos, help me by entreating Christ God to grant me remission of transgressions, for I, thy servant, have thee as my hope.

The Song of Ascents. Prokimenon of the Tone.

The Canons:

N.B. If this Sunday fall on either the 18th or the 19th of December: The canon to the Resurrection from the Oktoechos, with four troparia, including its Irmos; the canon to the Cross and the Resurrection, with two troparia; the canon to the Theotokos, with two troparia; and the canon to the fathers, with six troparia.

But if this Sunday falls between the 20th and the 23rd of December: The canon to the Resurrection from the Oktoechos, with four troparia, including the Irmos; the canon for the forefeast, with four troparia; and the canon to the fathers, with six troparia (excluding the initial two troparia of that canon, which are to the Resurrection).

If, however, this Sunday fall on the 24th of December, then the canon to the fathers, with eight troparia, including the Irmos, and that of the forefeast, with six troparia.

ODE I

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers, in Tone VI:

Irmos: The children of them that were saved have hidden beneath the earth Him that of old covered the pursuing tyrant with the waves of the sea; but let us chant unto the Lord like the maidens: Gloriously hath He been glorified!

Through fear are the gates of death thrown open unto Thee and the everlasting portals are cast down, for through Thine honorable descent have the dead of old arisen, hymning Thy Resurrection with gladness, O Christ.

God, before Whom those of heaven and earth tremble, wisheth to stand before the tribunal of Pilate, as One condemned by the judge of an iniquitous trial, and is struck in the face by the hands of the unrighteous.

Troparia to the Fathers: Today the assembly of the divine fathers doth radiantly celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ, and most glorious grace doth prefigure it, for Abraham and the children of the Law are an image thereof.

Of old the sacred Abraham received One of the tri-hypostatic Godhead, and now the Word of the Father, Who is equally enthroned with Him, doth, through the divine Spirit, come to the children, He that is gloriously praised.

The children that cast down godlessness in the furnace are in number and faith images of the divine Trinity, and they have revealed to the world the hidden mysteries of God.

Abraham was delivered from the hands of the unrighteous, and the divine youths and Daniel the prophet were once saved from the flame of the furnace and from the den of wild beasts. Wherefore, we now celebrate the forefeast of the nativity of Christ.

Theotokion: O joyous and unwedded Mother, incorrupt Virgin, we bless thee, for thou didst blossom forth from the generation of Abraham and the tribe of David, and gavest birth unto Christ, Who of old was foretold by the prophets.

Canon of the Forefeast, in Tone I:

Irmos: Christ is born, give ye glory! Christ cometh from heaven, meet ye Him! Christ is on earth, be ye exalted! O all the earth, sing ye unto the Lord, and chant with gladness, ye people, for He hath been glorified!

The Virgin doth now come to Bethlehem to give birth to Christ, Who becometh a babe in the flesh, to Christ, Who of His own will hath beggared Himself, to Christ, Who becometh visible. Let heaven and earth rejoice!

Leap up, ye mountains and hills! Join chorus, ye divinely eloquent prophets! Ye people and nations, clap your hands! Our salvation and Enlightenment, Who is born in the city of Bethlehem, hath nearly come.

Theotokion: God is known as man through the Virgin who hath not known wedlock; He that is rich becometh poor, enriching them that, through malice, have been reduced to poverty. Let us all hymn Him with praises, for He hath been glorified.

Katavasia "Christ is born ..."

ODE III

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: Creation, beholding Thee Who suspended the whole earth without support upon the waters, Thyself hanging upon Golgotha, was seized with great awe, crying out: None is holy save Thee, O Lord!

Having spent three days in the tomb, by Thy life-creating Resurrection Thou didst raise up the dead of past ages, and, loosed from condemnation, they rejoiced with gladness, crying out: Behold, Thou hast come as our Deliverance, O Lord!

Glory to Thine arising, O our Savior, for as Almighty, Thou hast delivered us from hell, corruption and death, and, crying aloud, we say: There is none holy save Thee, O Lord, Lover of mankind!

Troparia to the Fathers: Faithfully preserving the glory of the image and likeness of God, with the fire of the Spirit the children, as champions, extinguished the fire of the golden image, chanting: We know but one Lord!

The captive children, clothed with the wisdom and power of the Spirit, put to shame the wise men of Babylon and boldly cried out: None is holy save Thee, O Lord, Lover of mankind!

The Law doth rejoice and joineth chorus with the children and the prophets and doth exult today before the divine advent of the Lord. And Abraham doth rejoice, for from his seed hath the incarnate Lord appeared.

Theotokion: A conception without pain, an acceptance of thy birthgiving hath transpired in manner beyond recounting, O Theotokos, for the Word of God, Who is God and was proclaimed by the prophets, hath shown Himself to be a mystery beyond nature.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: To Christ, the Son Who was begotten of the Father incorruptibly before the ages, and in latter times without seed became incarnate of the Virgin, let us cry aloud: O Lord, Who liftest up our horn, holy art Thou!

He, that in manner beyond understanding was born of the Father before the ages, hath become incarnate of the Virgin in latter times, as He Himself knew, wishing to renew humanity which had become corrupt through the counsel of the evil serpent.

The unoriginate Son of God, Who is enthroned with the Father and the Spirit in the highest, beholding human nature which had been humbled, doth accept a beginning and wisheth to be born in the flesh as man.

Theotokion: **S**he that is more holy than the angels and all creation doth now give birth without seed to the Angel of Great Counsel in the flesh, for the restoration of all that unceasingly chant unto Him: Holy art Thou, O Lord!

Hypacoi, in Tone VIII:

An Angel bedewed the children in the furnace, and hath now put an end to the lamentation of the myrrh-bearing women, saying: Why bring ye myrrh? Whom seek ye in the tomb? Christ God is arisen, for He is the life and salvation of the human race!

ODE IV

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: **F**oreseeing Thy divine condescension upon the Cross, Habbakuk cried out in awe: Thou hast cut down the dominion of the mighty, O Good One, entering into fellowship with them that are in Hades, as Thou art Almighty.

Thy divine descent into hell, O Christ God, was shown to be life for the dead; for Thou didst restrict the dominion of the enemy below, O Good One, and didst open a path for men to heaven.

The all-pure body of the Deliverer, which lay in the tomb, did not decay, but, as mighty, Thou didst break down the gates of Hades and didst rise again in glory on the third day, O Christ!

Troparia to the Fathers: **L**et us honor Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the first-fruits of the fathers, for from their seed hath Christ shown forth incarnate of the Virgin, in that He is almighty.

Indicating the coming events of the descent of Christ unto all, Daniel clearly showed forth lions as sheep, for, as a prophet of God, he foresaw the future.

Not attracted by the poison of sin, O children, ye were delivered from the flame; for, being of wisdom more pure than gold, ye were not melted in the furnace of deception.

Theotokion: **O** honored and all-pure one, thine Offspring, Who surpasseth nature, is proclaimed aloud to be the expectation of the nations and the salvation of the world. And today the multitude of the fathers doth hymn Him.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **A** rod from the root of Jesse and blossom therefrom, O Christ, Thou didst spring forth from the Virgin; from the mountain overshadowed and densely wooded hast Thou come, incarnate of her that kneweth not man, O Thou praised and immaterial God. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Thou hast given rise unto a staff from the root of Jesse, O Virgin, putting forth the unfading Blossom of the Creator of all, Who as God doth adorn with flowers all the earth, which crieth aloud to Him: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

O Word of God, Thou hast come to edify me, who have been despoiled through evil food and dragged down in mind and made like unto dumb beasts; and, becoming a Babe, Thou didst lie down in a manger of dumb beasts. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Theotokion: **O** Jesus, Habbakuk foresaw Thee incarnate of the Virgin, the mountain overshadowed, breaking down the mountains and hills of evil, and giving over to utter destruction the arrogance of the evil one and the uprisings of the demons.

ODE V

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: **Isaiah, rising at dawn out of the night and beholding the unwaning Light of Thy Theophany, O Christ, which hath mercifully come to pass for us, cried out: The dead shall rise up and they that are in the tombs shall arise, and all born on earth shall rejoice!**

The angel, manifestly symbolizing that which radiates joy, is shown forth as a light-bearer in the tomb, proclaiming the Resurrection to the women; and, setting aside their lamentation, they rejoiced in the risen Christ, from Whom they received unending joy.

O Good One, Who in Thy lovingkindness assumed a form like ours, Thou wast willingly nailed to the Cross for the sake of me, who, of old in paradise, rejected Thy holy commandment for the sake of food; and Thou hast died as a man, granting me life.

Troparia to the Fathers: **L**et us honor today the divine Daniel, of the race of Abraham, the first-fruit of the fathers, as a leader of the Law and of grace; for, as a prophet of God, he foretold the advent of Christ from the Virgin and goeth forth to meet His divine nativity.

Clearly prefiguring through the Angel's descent the coming of the Lord unto us, the children of Abraham extinguished the furnace; and, rendering the flame dewy with their faith, they consumed the splendor of the golden image therein.

Through the Spirit, Daniel closed the mouths of the wild beasts in the pit; and, through grace, the children of Abraham quenched the strength of the fire. And, saved from corruption, they proclaim Christ Who is born of the Virgin, entreating Him as the Deliverer of our salvation.

Theotokion: **R**evealing through the divine Spirit Thy painless assumption of our nature, and keeping vigil in the Law of grace, O Lord, Isaiah cried out: From the race of Abraham and the tribe of Judah doth a Virgin come, giving birth in the flesh without seed.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **A**s God of peace and Father of compassion, Thou didst send Thine Angel of Great Counsel, Who granteth us peace. Therefore, guided to the light of knowledge divine, and waking at dawn out of the night, we glorify Thee, O Lover of mankind.

The most perfect Son of God, the Master by nature, in His lovingkindness was well pleased to be called the Son of man and reckoned among slaves, O most Compassionate One. Wherefore, willingly begging Thyself, Thou comest to be born in a cave, O All-good One.

O Christ our King, Who art uncontainable by nature, how can a little cave receive Thee? How can a manger contain Thee, Who comest in the flesh to Thine own for our sake, from a Mother that knewest not wedlock, that Thou mightest save them that have been estranged from Thee, O Lord?

Theotokion: **T**he Shepherd's ewe-lamb hath come to give birth. Make ready, O holy cave! Make haste, ye shepherds, to see the newborn · Shepherd and Lamb! Ye Magi, prepare yourselves with gifts to worship Him as King in the · flesh.

ODE VI

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: **B**eholding the sea of life surging with the storm of temptations, fleeing to Thy calm haven I cry unto Thee: Lead up my life from corruption, O most Merciful One!

By Thy three-day burial, O Good One, Thou didst bring about the mortification of death and the destruction of hell; and, having risen, O good Jesus, in godly manner Thou hast poured forth life upon them that are in the world. (Twice)

Troparia to the Fathers: **H**ospitable was the nature and exalted was the faith of Abraham the forefather. Wherefore, receiving in image the divine mystery, he rejoiced, and, running before Christ, he now maketh merry.

The faith of the youths now holdeth creation subject by the gift of the Creator, for the all-devouring and shameless fire stood in awe of them that honor Jesus Christ, the Creator of fire.

Daniel the prophet, once closing the mouths of the lions in the pit, showed in godly manner that through the coming of Christ the savagery of the world is in harmony with divine peace.

Theotokion: **O** Mary, Mother who knewest not man, from a virgin womb didst thou give birth unto Christ, Whom the prophets beheld in the Spirit; and the fathers who begot Him now join chorus before His nativity.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **T**he sea monster thrust forth, like a babe from the womb, Jonah, whom it had swallowed; and the Word, Who dwelt within the Virgin and took flesh of her, came forth, preserving her incorrupt. He kept her that gave Him birth unharmed, for He Himself was not subject to corruption.

O Mistress, as thou art a new heaven thou dost come, that Christ, the Sun of glory, might shine forth in the flesh from thy womb, as through a cloud, in the cave; for, in His boundless lovingkindness, He wisheth splendidly to illumine all that are of this earth with rays of His own light.

Thou didst perceive our infirmity and misery, O compassionate Christ, and didst not disdain us; but, without leaving the Father, Thou didst empty Thyself and make Thine abode in the womb of her that kneweth not wedlock, who now cometh forth to give birth unto Thee, without pain, in the cave.

Theotokion: **Y**e mountains and hills, fields and vales, people and generations, nations and every creature: exult, filled with divine gladness, for the deliverance of all, the Word of God, the Timeless One, Who, in His lovingkindness, hath come under time, doth come with haste.

N.B. If this Sunday falls on the 18th or 19th of December, we chant this Kontakion to the fathers, in Tone VI:

O thrice-blessed ones, who did not honor an image wrought by hands, but were defended by the indescribable Essence, ye were glorified in your ordeal by fire; and, standing in the midst of unbearable flame, ye called upon God, saying: Make speed and haste Thou to help us, O Compassionate One, in that Thou art merciful; for what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

Ikos: **S**tretch forth Thy hand whereby of old the warring Egyptians and the embattled Hebrews were tested. Forsake us not, that death, which thirsteth after us, not swallow us up; and spare our souls, as Thou once didst spare Thy three children in Babylon, who glorified Thee unceasingly and were cast for Thy sake into a furnace, from whence they cried out to Thee: Make speed and haste Thou to help us, O Compassionate One, in that Thou art merciful; for what Thou wiliest, Thou canst do!

**But if this Sunday falls within the pre-festal period;
We chant this Kontakion in Tone I:**

Spec. Mel.: "The choir of Angels ...":

Be glad, O Bethlehem! Make ready, O Ephratha! For, lo! she that beareth the Lamb and great Shepherd in her womb doth make haste to give birth. Beholding this, the God-bearing fathers are glad, with the shepherds hymning the lactescent Virgin.

Ikos: **B**eholding the splendid radiance of thy birthgiving, O Virgin, the God-loving Abraham, the ever-memorable Isaac, Jacob and all the divinely assembled choir of saints rejoice, and, with joyous utterances, they lead creation forth to meet thee; for thou art shown to be the mediatrix of joy for all, having conceived in thy womb Him that once was seen in Babylon, Who preserved unconsumed the youths that had been cast unjustly into the furnace, and Who showed thee forth in manner past all comprehension. Wherefore, the young maidens chant unto Him that is borne in thine arms, hymning thee as the lactescent Virgin.

ODE VII

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: **O ineffable wonder! He, that in the furnace delivered the venerable children from the flame, is laid in the grave, dead and devoid of breath, for the salvation of us that chant: O God, our Deliverer, blessed art Thou!**

O strange wonder! The Lord, Who sitteth upon a throne in the highest, in assuming flesh hath endured death; but He hath arisen through the might of the Godhead, raising with Himself the dead of past ages.

Thou didst shake the might of death and didst rise again, granting the resurrection unto them that truly glorify Thee, the Lord, and that chant unto Thee with Orthodox faith: O God, our Deliverer, blessed art Thou!

Troparia to the Fathers: **O** father Abraham, founder of thy race, having begotten Christ in the flesh, thou art clearly revealed by the Spirit as the father of nations, unto the salvation of us that chant: O God, our Deliverer, blessed art Thou!

Thy hymn of the inspired ones hath put to shame them that utter soulless noises, for the youths, bodily trampling down unharmed the furnace which burned with fire, chant: O God, our Deliverer, blessed art Thou!

Of old, the prophet Daniel, gazing with spiritual vision, revealed the second coming of Christ, and he foretellethe the dreadful things which shall come to pass therein, crying out: O God, our Deliverer, blessed art Thou!

Theotokion: **O** strange wonder, known among the prophets and revealed of old to the fathers: a pure Virgin is come, wishing to give birth unto the salvation of us that chant: O God, our Deliverer, blessed art Thou!

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **The children, raised together in piety, scorning the impious decree, feared not the threat of the fire, but, standing in the midst of the flame, they sang: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!**

The divine vine whereupon the incorrupt Cluster did ripen, draweth nigh, coming to give birth unto Him that poureth forth the wine of gladness and watereth us that cry out to Him: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

The divine phial which beareth within herself the fragrant Myrrh cometh to pour it out in the cave of Bethlehem, filling with mystic fragrance them that chant: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

Theotokion: **The tongs which Isaiah the prophet beheld of old cometh, holding in her womb Christ, the divine Ember, which burneth up all the fuel of sin and enlighteneth the souls of the faithful.**

ODE VIII

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: **Fall back in awe and fear, O heaven; and let the foundations of the earth be shaken! For, lo! He that dwelleth in the highest is numbered among the dead and lodgeth as a stranger in a small tomb. Ye children, bless; ye priests, hymn; ye people, exalt Him supremely for all ages!**

O Thine ineffable condescension toward us sinners, O Christ! For, lo! having tasted death, though Thou art immortal God, Thou wast laid in the tomb as a man. But Thou didst arise again, O Word, raising with Thyself those who were below and that exalt Thee supremely for all ages.

Every ear is struck with awe at how the Most High willingly came to earth to destroy the power of hell with His Cross and burial, and how He hath raised all with Himself to cry: Ye children, bless; ye priests, hymn; ye people, exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Troparia to the Fathers: **P**refiguring Thy sacrifice, O Christ, Abraham, obedient to Thee, O Master, went forth with faith, wishing to sacrifice on the mountain the son whom he had begotten; but he returned with him, rejoicing and glorifying and exalting above all Thee, the Deliverer of the world.

When Thou didst robe Thyself in ever-blazing flame as in a divine robe, O Christ, thou didst utterly extinguish the fire for the three holy children, and by Thy descent the dew hath cried out unto them that chant: Ye priests, hymn and exalt Him supremely forever!

The prophet Daniel is given to the lions as an unjust trial, but, through the precept of abstinence, in his piety he had the wild beasts as fellow fasters in the depths of the pit. Through his prayers and those of Abraham and the children, save them that hymn Thee in the world, O Christ!

Theotokion: The voices of the prophets faithfully proclaimed Him as Jesus Immanuel, Who cometh in human form, God and man; and the Virgin Mary, without having known man, giveth birth in the city of Bethlehem unto a Son, the co-unoriginate Word, through the Holy Spirit.

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: The dew-bearing furnace presented an image of a supernatural wonder, for it did not consume the young men whom it had received, as the fire of the Godhead consumed not the Virgin's womb wherein It had entered. Wherefore, chanting, let us sing: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

In gladness let us cry out with the angels: Glory to God in the highest! The Savior is born! The Master cometh, Whom the star doth indicate! The Magi hasten to behold Him, a Babe in a manger! Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Amongst slaves wast Thou enrolled of Thine own will, O Master, subjecting Thyself to the law of Caesar, that Thou mightest free mankind from slavery to the evil one, O most merciful God. Wherefore, rejoicing, we chant: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Theotokion: O unoriginate Word, I bear Thee as a newborn Babe, although I have in no wise known man, said the Virgin, marveling. Whom on earth can I name Thy father? I know not. Wherefore, with all I chant to Thee: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

ODE IX

Canon to the Resurrection and the Fathers

Irmos: Lament Me not, O Mother, beholding in the tomb the Son Whom thou didst conceive in thy womb without seed; for I shall arise and be glorified, and as God everlasting shall I exalt with glory them that magnify thee with faith and love.

Why dost thou lament, O creation, beholding the Bestower of life as a mortal upon the Cross and in the tomb? For He shall rise again, renewing thee with light; with His resurrection on the third day hath He cast down Hades and raised up with Himself the dead that praise Him.

Even though Thou didst go down in the grave as one dead, O Christ, Bestower of life, yet didst Thou destroy the might of Hades. And raising up with Thyself the dead which it had swallowed up in the past, as God Thou didst give resurrection unto them that magnify Thee with faith and love.

Troparia to the Fathers: Celebrating the feast of the fathers that were before the Law, let us honor Christ, Who, in godly manner, is begotten of them in the flesh; for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who, through faith, are proclaimers of the Spirit and grace, are shown to be the foundation of the prophets and the Law.

God, Who by the fire in the bush showed to Moses the godly mystery in manner past understanding, having descended into the fire for the children, showed the flame of the furnace to be dew through the fire of the Essence of His divinity.

The all-holy children, assembling with Abraham, and Daniel, the wondrous prophet of God, Isaac and Jacob, with Moses and Aaron, faithfully join chorus before the nativity of Christ, praying unceasingly that we be saved.

Theotokion: All of creation doth rejoice in thy birth giving, O Virgin, for Bethlehem hath opened Eden unto us. And, lo! delighting in the Tree of Life, we all earnestly cry out in faith: Thou hast fulfilled our prayers, O Mistress!

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: A strange and most glorious mystery do I behold: the cave is heaven; the Virgin, the throne of the cherubim; the manger, the place wherein lay Christ God, Whom naught can contain, and Whom praising, we magnify.

O mysteries strange, awesome and most glorious: the Lord of glory hath come to earth and, having beggared Himself, He hath entered a cave in the flesh, seeking to restore Adam and to deliver Eve from her pangs.

By Thy swaddling clothes Thou dost loose the bonds of our sinful falls; by Thy great poverty Thou dost enrich us all, O Compassionate One; and having been laid in a manger of dumb beasts Thou dost release men from irrational malice, O all-unoriginate Word of God.

Theotokion: The preaching of the prophets hath reached the ends of the earth, for they foretold Him that was to come in the fullness of time; and He came and appeared incarnate of the pure Virgin; Him let us receive with a pure mind!

Exapostilarion of the Resurrection; Glory , of the Fathers:

Spec. Mel.: "To the disciples ...":

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the elect of the patriarchs, the fathers before the Law, have shone forth like beacons, for all the prophets and the righteous shone forth from them like radiant lamps. With rays of honorable prophecy have they illumined all creation; and they earnestly pray to God in behalf of the world.

Now and ever ..., Theotokion:

Wondrous hath this been! The unblemished ewe-lamb, the granddaughter of Adam and David, giveth birth unto the Lamb, the all-unoriginate Word, in the latter days, as is meet. The forefeast of her ineffable birthgiving doth the multitude of the fathers celebrate fittingly.

N.B. But if this Sunday falls on the 24th day of December, the Exapostilarion of the Resurrection is not chanted, but is replaced by this one to the Fathers:

From the seed of Abraham and the divine forefather David is the all-unoriginate Word brought forth, Who of old wondrously saved the youths equal in number to the Trinity by the descent of the Angel into the flame, and Who transformed the lamentation of the myrrh-bearing women into joy.

Glory ..., "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ..." (see above)

Now and ever ..., Theotokion:

Be glad, O Bethlehem! And thou, O Ephratha, make ready, for the Theotokos cometh to the cave and the manger to give birth ineffably unto God. O dread mystery! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the patriarchs and prophets, angels and men, now radiantly celebrate the forefeast of His divine advent.

At the Praises, four stichera to the Resurrection, and four to the Fathers, in Tone V:

Spec. Mel.: "Rejoice ...":

Lift up thy voice, O Zion, Thou truly divine city, and proclaim the divine memory of the fathers, honoring Abraham, Isaac and the ever-memorable Jacob; for, lo! we all magnify Judah and Levi, the great Moses and the wondrous Aaron, and we honor David, Joshua and Samuel. And weaving divine hymns into godly praise on the forefeast of Christ's nativity, we ask that we receive grace from Him, and that He grant the world great mercy. **(Twice)**

Stichos: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name unto the ages!

O Elijah, who once rode upon a divine chariot of fire, come thou forth, and thou, O divinely wise Elisha; and joining with Ezekiel and Hosea, rejoice! O ye honored and divinely inspired twelve prophets, join chorus, and all ye righteous, chant in hymns unto the nativity of Christ; ye most blessed youths that quenched the flame of the furnace with the dew of the Spirit, entreat Christ in our behalf, that He send down upon our souls great mercy.

Stichos: For righteous art Thou in all which Thou hast done for us.

The Virgin Theotokos, she who through the ages hath been preached on earth by the prophets in their utterances, she whom the wise patriarchs and the assemblies of the righteous proclaim, with whom the comeliness of women joineth chorus: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Hannah, together with the glorious Miriam, the sister of Moses. With them all the ends of the world rejoice and all creation rendereth honor, for the Creator and God of all cometh to be born in the flesh and to grant us great mercy.

Glory ..., in Tone VIII:

The compilation of the teachings of the Law doth reveal the divine birth of Christ in the flesh as being from them that, before the Law, proclaimed the glad tidings of grace to them that lived beyond the Law. Wherefore, in that this birth is the means of deliverance from corruption, for the sake of the resurrection they declared to the souls held fast in Hades: O Lord, glory be to Thee!

N.B. But if this Sunday falls on the 24th day of December, the following stichera are chanted, in Tone IV:

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

The proclamation of Isaiah is fulfilled! For, lo! the Virgin beareth in her womb the Incomprehensible and Indescribable One in the flesh, and she cometh most gloriously to receive God. Make ready, O Bethlehem! For it is the King's pleasure that thou becamest His abode. O manger, receive Christ wrapped as a babe, Who in His goodness wisheth to loose the bonds of man's offenses.

Enrolled with slaves, the Master wished to thoroughly erase the handwriting of our transgressions and to enter in the Book of the Living all that have been slain by the thievery of the serpent. And the Virgin beareth Thee, Who bearest all things, Who art wrapped in mortal flesh and hast been well-pleased to dwell in a little cave. Marveling at Thy might, the heavenly choirs of angels and the godly shepherds praised Thee Who art born.

The radiant and animate cloud laden with the heavenly Rain now approacheth to pour It forth upon the earth, that It might water the face of the earth. The spring of grace, the noetic swallow, who is pregnant, giveth birth by the ineffable Word, putting an end to the winter of godlessness. The pure and undefiled palace doth bring forth the incarnate King in the cave.

Glory ..., "The compilation of the teachings of the Law (see above)"

Now and ever ..., "Most blessed art thou ..."

Great Doxology. After the Trisagion, the troparion of the Resurrection.

Litanies and the Dismissal.

We chant the Evangelical Sticheron in the narthex.

First Hour and final Dismissal.

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, ten troparia: six from the Oktoechos, and four from Ode III of the canon to the Fathers.

Troparia to the Fathers: Faithfully preserving the glory of the image and likeness of God, with the fire of the Spirit the children, as champions, extinguished the fire of the golden image, chanting: We know but one Lord!

The captive children, clothed with the wisdom and power of the Spirit, put to shame the wise men of Babylon and boldly cried out: None is holy save Thee, O Lord, Lover of mankind!

The Law doth rejoice and joineth chorus with the children and the prophets and doth exult today before the divine advent of the Lord. And Abraham doth rejoice, for from his seed hath the incarnate Lord appeared.

Theotokion: A conception without pain, an acceptance of thy birthgiving hath transpired in manner beyond recounting, O Theotokos, for the Word of God, Who is God and was proclaimed by the prophets, hath shown Himself to be a mystery beyond nature.

After the Entrance, the Troparia to the Resurrection and to the Fathers in Tone II:

Great are the accomplishments of faith! In the fountain of flame, as in refreshing water, the three holy children rejoiced; and the prophet Daniel was shown to be a shepherd of lions, as of sheep. By their prayers, O Christ God, save Thou our souls!

N.B. But if this Sunday fall on the 24th of December, the above troparion of the fathers, and then the following troparion of the forefeast, Tone IV:

Once Mary, pregnant with a seedless pregnancy, was registered in Bethlehem with the elder Joseph, as being of the seed of David. And while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, but there was no room for them in the inn. But the cave showed itself to be a beauteous palace for the Queen, and Christ is born to raise up the image that fell of old!

Glory ..., Now and ever ..., the Kontakion to the Fathers:

N.B. If this Sunday falls on the 24th of December, we chant "Glory ..." this Kontakion to the fathers, in Tone VI:

O thrice-blessed ones, who did not honor an image wrought by hands, but were defended by the indescribable Essence, ye were glorified in your ordeal by fire; and, standing in the midst of unbearable flame, ye called upon God, saying: Make speed and haste Thou to help us, O Compassionate One, in that Thou art merciful; for what Thou willest, Thou canst do!

Then "Now & Ever ...," and the Kontakion of the Forefeast in Tone I:

Be glad, O Bethlehem! Make ready, O Ephratha! For, lo! she that beareth the Lamb and great Shepherd in her womb doth make haste to give birth. Beholding this, the God-bearing fathers are glad, with the shepherds hymning the lactescent Virgin.

Prokimenon, in Tone IV, the Hymn of the Fathers: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, God of our fathers, and praised and glorified is Thy name unto the ages!

Stichos: For righteous art Thou in all which Thou hast done for us.

READING FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS [11:9-11, 17-23,32-40]

By faith [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child: and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. And what more shall I say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Alleluia, in Tone IV: O God, with our ears have we heard, for our fathers have told us.

Stichos: For Thou hast saved us from them that afflict us, and them that hate us hast Thou put to shame.

READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW [1 :1-25]

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judah and his brethren; and Judah begat Pharez and Zerah of Tamar; and Pharez begat Hezron; and Hezron begat Ram; and Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon; and Nahshon begat Salmon; and Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz begat abed of Ruth; and Gbed begat Jesse; and Jesse begat David the king. And David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah; and Solomon begat Rehoboam; and Rehoboam begat Abijah; and Abijah begat Asa; and Asa begat Jehoshaphat; and Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram; and Jehoram begat Uzziah; and Uzziah begat Jotham; and Jotham begat Ahaz; and Ahaz begat Hezekiah; and Hezekiah begat Manasseh; and Manasseh begat Amon; and Amon begat Josiah; and Josiah begat Jeconiah and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begat Shealtiel; and Shealtiel begat Zerubbabel; and Zerubbabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Zadok; and Zadok begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

Communion Verse I: Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the highest.

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