

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

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

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

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

O mine unoriginate Son, * ineffable Offspring * of the all-unoriginate Father, * clad in the likeness of mine aspect, * Thou hast come, the Light of revelation for the nations. * For Thou comest to make rich humanity * which hath become poor through poverty, wherewith Thou art clad. * I hymn Thy loving-kindness, O Lord!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the Aposticha, these stichera, in Tone II:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Troparion of the Great-martyr, in Tone IV:

Thy martyr Anastasia, O Jesus, crieth out with a loud voice: "I love Thee, O my Bridegroom, and, seeking Thee, I suffer; I am crucified and buried in Thy baptism; I suffer for Thy sake, that I may reign with Thee; and I die for Thee, that I may live with Thee. Accept me as an unblemished sacrifice, who offer myself to Thee with love!" Through her supplications save our souls, in that Thou art merciful.

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

Make ready, O Bethlehem! Open unto all, O Eden! Adorn thyself, O Ephratha! For the Tree of life hath blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is shown to be a noetic paradise, wherein lieth a divine garden, eating from whence we live, not dying like Adam. Christ is born to raise up His image which before was fallen.

AT COMPLINE

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

ODE I

Irmos: **The Red Sea is parted by that which was cut down, and the wave-ridden deep is dried up, becoming both a path for the defenseless and a grave for the armed. And a hymn of beauty divine is chanted: Christ our God hath gloriously been glorified!**

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

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

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

ODE III

Irmos: **God, the Lord and Creator of all, the Dispassionate One, having beggared Himself, united to Himself that which He had fashioned; and as a Babe borne in the flesh He is worshiped in a poor manger, crying out: Eat ye My body, and make yourselves steadfast through faith!**

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

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

ODE IV

Irmos: **The prophet, foreseeing Thine ineffable mystery, O Christ, declared: Thou hast set forth the steadfast love of might, O compassionate Father; for Thou hast sent into the world the only-begotten Son, O Good One.**

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

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

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

ODE V

Irmos: The apostles, bound with a bond of love, offered themselves unto Christ the Master of all, and washed their beautiful feet, announcing the glad tidings of peace unto all.

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

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

ODE VI

Irmos: The uttermost abyss of sins hath engulfed me, whose billows none can withstand; and like Jonah I cry to Thee, O Master: Lead me up from corruption!

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

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

ODE VII

Irmos: The youths in Babylon did not fear the flame of the furnace, but, cast into the midst of the flame, bedewed, they chanted: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

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

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

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

ODE VIII

Irmos: **T**he blessed youths in Babylon, braving danger for the laws of their fathers, reviled the mindless command of the ruler and, united by the fire which burned them not, they chanted a fitting hymn unto the Almighty: Hymn the Lord, ye works, and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

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

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

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

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

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

And we chant again the Irmos: The blessed youths in Babylon ...

Irmos: **T**he blessed youths in Babylon, braving danger for the laws of their fathers, reviled the mindless command of the ruler and, united by the fire which burned them not, they chanted a fitting hymn unto the Almighty: Hymn the Lord, ye works, and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

ODE IX

Irmos: **C**ome, ye faithful, and with minds uplifted let us delight in the hospitality of the Master and the feast of immortality in the lowly cave, knowing the Word, Whom we magnify, and Who hath become incarnate ineffably.

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

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

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

Then, we repeat the *Irmos*: Come, ye faithful ..., and make a prostration.

Irmos: Come, ye faithful, and with minds uplifted let us delight in the hospitality of the Master and the feast of immortality in the lowly cave, knowing the Word, Whom we magnify, and Who hath become incarnate ineffably.

AT MATINS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ODE I

Canon of the forefeast, in Tone VI:

Irmos: **W**hen Israel traversed the deep on foot as on dry land, beholding the persecutor Pharaoh drown, they cried out: Let us chant unto God a song of victory!

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

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

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

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

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

Irmos: O ye people, let us send up a hymn unto our wondrous God Who freed Israel from bondage, singing and crying out a hymn of victory to Thee Who alone art Master.

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

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

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

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

ODE III

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: There is none as holy as Thee, O Lord my God, Who hast exalted the horn of thy faithful, O Good One, and hast established us upon the rock of Thy confession.

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: O Lord, Fashioner of the vault of heaven and Creator of the Church: establish me in Thy love, O Summit of desire, Confirmation of the faithful, Who alone lovest mankind.

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

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

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

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

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

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

Today the Virgin cometh to give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word in the cave, dance, O world, at the sound of this news, and with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God Who desireth to appear as a little Babe!

Ikos: O wonder truly awesome and past speech! In His goodness, He Who causeth all things to exist hath entered into the womb of the holy Virgin and cometh to be born in a cave and laid in a manger. His star preacheth from on high to the magi who are coming to do Him homage with gifts, urging them to make haste from afar, following the prophecy of Balaam, who said: «A star will proclaim a little Babe, the pre-eternal God!"

Sedalion of the Great-martyr, in Tone I:

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

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

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

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

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

ODE IV

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: Christ is my power, my God and Lord, the holy Church doth sing in godly manner, crying out with a pure mind, keeping festival in the Lord.

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Great-martyr

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

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

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

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

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

ODE V

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: With Thy divine light, O Good One, do Thou illumine the souls of those who with love wake at dawn to Thee, I pray, that they may know Thee, O Word of God, to be the true God Who doth call them forth from the gloom of sin.

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: **Rising at dawn, we cry unto Thee: Save us, O Lord; for Thou art our God, and we know none other than Thee!**

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

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

By thy name thou showest forth the resurrection of God, cursing the invisible foe, O most lauded one.

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

ODE VI

Canon of the Forefeast

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

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: I pour forth my prayer unto the Lord, and to Him do I declare my grief, for my soul is full of evil and my life hath drawn nigh unto hell, and like Jonah I pray: Lead my life up from corruption, O God!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ikos: As thou art the namesake of the resurrection of Christ, O martyr, by thy supplications now raise me up who have fallen, letting drops of thy miracles fall upon my soul and quenching the burning of grievous sin; for thou ever savest the world from the multifarious sins whereby I also am tempted, for thou pourest forth healings upon the world, giving them all to everyone.

ODE VII

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: The Angel made the furnace to put forth dew for the venerable children, and the command of God, consuming the Chaldeans, compelled the tyrant to cry out: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

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

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

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

Theotokion: The King Who madeth His abode within thy womb chose thee as His undefiled palace out of all generations, O Maiden. To Him do we now piously chant: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: The Hebrew children boldly trampled down the flame in the furnace and transformed the fire into dew, crying aloud: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God, forever!

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

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

Thou pourest forth showers of healings, assuaging the fever of illness, and dost ever cause the people to chant: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God, forever!

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

ODE VIII

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: From the flame didst Thou pour forth dew upon the venerable ones, and didst consume the sacrifice of the righteous one with water; for Thou, O Christ, dost do all things whatsoever Thou willest. Thee do we exalt supremely for all ages!

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: **T**rampling down the fire and flame in the furnace, the divinely eloquent youths did chant: **Bless the Lord, O ye works of the Lord!**

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

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

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

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

ODE IX

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **I**t is not possible for men to see God upon Whom the ranks of angels dare not gaze; but through thee, O all-pure one, the Word appeared incarnate unto men; and magnifying Him with the armies of heaven, we call thee blessed.

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Great-martyr

Irmos: **S**aved by thee, O pure Virgin, we truly confess thee to be the Theotokos, magnifying thee with the incorporeal choirs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the Praises, 4 stichera, in Tone VI:

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

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

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

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

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

Glory ..., in the same melody:

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

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

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

At the Aposticha, these stichera, in Tone II:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AT LITURGY

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

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

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

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

Daniel the prophet once foresaw thee, O Theotokos, most honored Bride of God, as the mountain from whence the Stone was cut which crushed and destroyed the temples of idolatry.

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

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

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

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

Troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Make ready, O Bethlehem! Open unto all, O Eden! Adorn thyself, O Ephratha! For the Tree of life hath blossomed forth from the Virgin in the cave. Her womb is shown to be a noetic paradise, wherein lieth a divine garden, eating from whence we live, not dying like Adam. Christ is born to raise up His image which before was fallen.

Troparion of the Great-martyr, in Tone IV:

Thy martyr Anastasia, O Jesus, crieth out with a loud voice: "I love Thee, O my Bridegroom, and, seeking Thee, I suffer; I am crucified and buried in Thy baptism; I suffer for Thy sake, that I may reign with Thee; and I die for Thee, that I may live with Thee. Accept me as an unblemished sacrifice, who offer myself to Thee with love!" Through her supplications save our souls, in that Thou art merciful.

Kontakion, in Tone II:

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

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

Today the Virgin cometh to give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word in the cave, dance, O world, at the sound of this news, and with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God Who desireth to appear as a little Babe!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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