

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

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

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

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

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

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

And 3 stichera of the martyrs, in the same tone & melody:

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

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

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

Glory ..., in Tone III:

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

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

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

At the Aposticha. these stichera. in Tone VI:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Glory ..., in Tone II:

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

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

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

Troparion of the martyrs, in Tone IV:

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

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

Make ready, O Bethlehem! 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

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

Triodion, in Tone VI:

ODE V

Irmos: I rise early unto Thee, O Word of God, Who, in Thy compassion, didst immutably debase Thyself and didst assume the guise of a servant from the Virgin. Grant peace unto me who have fallen, O Thou Who lovest mankind.

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

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

Lord, have mercy! (Thrice)

Glory ..., Now & ever ...,

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III: Spec. Mel.: "Today the Virgin ...":

Today the Virgin cometh to give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word in the cave, dance, O world! And having heard this, with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God, Who is to appear as a little babe.

ODE VIII

Irmos: The godly children denounced the pillar of evil opposed to God; and Herod, raging savagely against Christ, deviseth empty plots, intending to slay Him Who holdeth life in the palm of His hand. Him doth all creation bless, glorifying Him forever.

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

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

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

Let us make haste to renounce the carnal passions and the beauties of this world, and let us confine ourselves to spiritual Concerns, all ye divinely wise: presenting ourselves as worthy through our works, to the Master Whom all creation doth bless, glorifying Him forever.

ODE IX

Irmos: We magnify thee, the Theotokos, who art more honorable than the cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim, who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word.

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

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

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

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

The Irmos is repeated, followed by a prostration.

AT MATINS

On "God is the Lord ...", the troparion of the forefeast, in Tone IV:

Make ready, O Bethlehem! 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. (Twice)

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

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

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

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

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

Today the Church rejoiceth, singeth and adorneth herself; she truly celebrateth the forefeast of the nativity: for a most holy solemnity is held, and she arrayeth herself for the Lord of glory. We all cry out to Christ God: O Thou Who lovest mankind, have mercy upon us who hymn Thee!

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

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

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

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

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

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

ODE I

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

Irmos: Herod seeketh to slay Him Who of old covered the tyrannical persecutor with the waves of the sea, and is now concealed in a manger; but we sing with the magi: Let us chant unto the Lord, for gloriously hath He been glorified!

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

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

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

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

Irmos: **C**ome, ye people, let us chant a hymn to Christ God, Who divided the sea and guided the people whom He had led forth from the bondage of Egypt, for He hath been glorified.

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

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

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

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

Theotokion: **T**he human race offereth thee adulation of the forefeast, O Bride of God; and they glorify the lover of mankind Who was born of thee, as the Mediator and Cause of universal joy.

ODE III

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: **C**reation, beholding Thee, Who suspended the whole earth without support upon the waters, born in the cave, was seized with great awe, crying out: **N**one is holy save Thee, O Lord!

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

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

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

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: Establish us within Thee, O Lord Who hast slain sin by the Tree, and plant Thou the fear of Thee in the hearts of us who hymn Thee.

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

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

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

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

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

Today the Virgin cometh to give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word in the cave, dance, O world! And having heard this, with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God, Who is to appear as a little babe.

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

Sedalion of the martyrs, in Tone I:

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

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

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

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

ODE IV

Canon of the Forefeast

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Martyrs

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

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

The ten athletes, heralding the nativity of the Creator, dance and rejoice with us.

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

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

ODE V

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: I rise early unto Thee, O Word of God, Who, in Thy loving-kindness, didst immutably debase Thyself and didst assume through the Virgin the guise of a servant. Grant peace unto me who have fallen, O Thou Who lovest mankind.

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

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

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

Canon of the Martyrs

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

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

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

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

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

ODE VI

Canon of the Forefeast

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!

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

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

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

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: Whirled about in the abyss of sin, I call upon the unfathomable abyss of Thy lovingkindness: Lead me up from corruption, O God!

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

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

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

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

Kontakion of the martyrs, in Tone IV:

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

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

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

ODE VII

Canon of the Forefeast

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: When the golden image was worshiped on the plain of Dura, Thy three youths spurned the ungodly command, and, cast into the midst of the fire, bedewed, they sang: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

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

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

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

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

ODE VIII

Canon of the Forefeast

Irmos: The 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!

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

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

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

How canst thou lay in a manger of dumb beasts the Master Who delivereth men from irrationality in His boundless mercy? Him doth all creation worship with fear, hymning Him for all ages.

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: God, Who descended into the fiery furnace for the Hebrew children and transformed the flame into dew, hymn ye as Lord, O ye works, and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

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

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

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

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

ODE IX

Canon of the Forefeast

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

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

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

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

Canon of the Martyrs

Irmos: O ye faithful, with hymns let us magnify in oneness of mind the Word of God, Who from God came in His ineffable wisdom to renew Adam who had grievously fallen into corruption, and Who became ineffably incarnate of the holy Virgin for our sake.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

On the Praises, 4 stichera, in Tone VI:

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

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

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

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

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

Glory ..., in the same tone & melody:

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

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

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

At the Aposticha, these stichera, in Tone II:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AT LITURGY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 martyrs, in Tone IV:

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

Kontakion of the martyrs, in Tone IV:

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

Kontakion of the forefeast, in Tone III:

Today the Virgin cometh to give birth ineffably to the pre-eternal Word in the cave, dance, O world! And having heard this, with the angels and shepherds glorify the pre-eternal God, Who is to appear as a little babe.

Prokimenon, in Tone IV: In the saints that are in His earth hath the Lord been wondrous; He hath wrought all His desires in them

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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