

THE 26th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
SYNAXIS OF THE ALL-HOLY THEOTOKOS
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY HIEROMARTYR EUTHYMIUS, BISHOP OF
SARDIS
AT VESPERS

We do not chant any Kathisma, unless this feast fall on Sunday.
at "Lord I have cried ...", 6 stichera of the feast, in Tone II:

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord, telling of this present mystery: The middle wall of partition hath been demolished, the fiery sword is removed, the cherub withdraweth from the gate of life, and I partake of the food of paradise, from whence I was driven away because of disobedience; for the immutable Image of the Father, the Image of His eternity, doth assume the guise of a servant, issuing forth from the Mother who knew not wedlock, without undergoing change, yet He remained what He was before, our true God; and He hath received what He was not, becoming man in His love for mankind. To Him let us cry aloud: O God Who wast born of the Virgin, have mercy on us! **(Twice)**

The composition of Anatolius: When the Lord Jesus was born of the holy Virgin, all things were enlightened; for when the shepherds piped, the magi offered homage and the angels sang, Herod was troubled, for God appeared in the flesh, the Savior of our souls. **(Twice)**

Thy kingdom, O Christ God, is a kingdom of all the ages, and thy dominion is for all generations. O Christ God Who wast incarnate by the Holy Spirit and became man through the Ever-virgin Mary, Thou hast shone forth Thine advent upon us as light. O Light from Light, Effulgence of the Father, Thou hast illumined all creation. Every creature that hath breath praiseth Thee, the Image of the glory of the Father. O Thou Who art and ever shall be, O God Who hast shone forth from the Virgin: Have mercy upon us!

What shall we offer Thee, O Christ, in that Thou hast appeared on earth as a man for our sake? For every creature fashioned by Thee offereth Thee thanksgiving: the angels, hymnody; the heavens, a star; the magi, gifts; the shepherds, their wonder; the earth, a cave; the wilderness, a manger; and we, the Virgin Mother. O God Who hast existed from before time, have mercy upon us!

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

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace! Today Bethlehem receiveth Him Who is ever seated with the Father. Today the angels glorify as God the Babe Who was born. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!

Entrance, and Great Prokimenon, in Tone VII: What God is as great as our God? Thou art God Who worketh wonders.

Stichos 1: Thou hast made Thy power known among the peoples; with Thine arm hast Thou redeemed Thy people.

Stichos 2: And I said: Now have I made a beginning; this change hath been wrought by the right hand of the Most High.

Stichos 3: I remembered the works of the Lord; for I will remember Thy wonders from the beginning.

But if it be Saturday evening, we chant the usual Prokimenon, in Tone VI Prokimenon, in Tone VI: The Lord is King, He is clothed with majesty.

Stichos 1: The Lord is clothed with strength and He hath girt Himself.

Stichos 2: For He established the world which shall not be shaken.

Stichos 3: Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, unto length of days.

The Great Prokimenon "What God is as great as our God ..." and its Stichoi are thus chanted on the eve of the feast itself, while the daily Prokimenon is omitted. Then followeth the litany.

At the Aposticha, these stichera, the composition of John, in Tone VIII:

An all-glorious mystery is wrought today: nature is restored and God becometh man! He hath remained what He hath been, and what He hath not been, He hath taken upon Himself, without undergoing either confusion or division.

Stichos: From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord hath sworn and will not repent.

Arriving in Bethlehem, O Lord, Thou didst make Thine abode in the cave; Thou Who hast heaven for Thy throne wast laid in a manger; Thou Whom the armies of the angels surround didst descend unto shepherds, that Thou mayest save our race, in that Thou art compassionate. Glory be to Thee!

Stichos: The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit Thou at My right hand.

How can I recount this great mystery? He Who is incorporeal becometh incarnate, the Word becometh flesh; the Invisible becometh visible; the Intangible is touched; the Unoriginate beginneth to be. The Son of God becometh the Son of man: Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and for evermore!

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

The shepherds hastened to Bethlehem, proclaiming the true Shepherd Who sitteth on the cherubim and lieth in the manger, having taken on the guise of a babe for our sake. O Lord, glory be to Thee!

Troparion of the feast, in Tone IV:

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, * hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; * for thereby, they that worshipped the stars * were instructed by a star * to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, * and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. * O Lord, glory be to Thee.

AT COMPLINE

On some other day, the canon of the hieromartyr Euthymius is chanted, the acrostic whereof is: "Christ Who hath been born crowneth thee with swaddling bands, O father", the composition of Theophanes, in Tone IV:

ODE I

Irmos: Israel of old, having traversed the depths of the Red Sea with dryshod feet, vanquished the power of Amalek in the wilderness by Moses' arms outstretched in the form of the Cross.

Wrapped in the wounds of stripes, thou didst piously worship the everlasting Lord Who was born and wrapped in swaddling bands.

The Lord Who was laid in a manger received as a natal gift the drops of thy blood and the sores of thy wounds, as better than gold, frankincense and myrrh, O father.

The Lord Who hath been born and received gold from the magi, O holy hierarch, receiveth from thee thine ardent love for Him, and the constancy and might of thy true patience.

Emulating the death of the Master by thine own death, O most honored one manifest in sanctity, thou didst utter the words of the Master, praying radiantly for those who slew thee.

Theotokion: Today the Creator of all is born of thee for us, O blessed one, and He Who hath wrapped the sea in mist is wrapped in swaddling bands, O Ever-virgin Mother.

ODE III

Irmos: Thy Church rejoiceth in Thee, O Christ, crying aloud: Thou art my strength, O Lord, my refuge and confirmation!

As a hierarch thou didst offer the wounds of martyrdom to Christ Who was born in Bethlehem, instead of frankincense, gold and myrrh.

Thou didst emulate Stephen, the protomartyr of Christ, O Euthymius, praying for the salvation of those who slew thee.

With constancy of mind and valor of soul thou didst denounce the impious Leo who was raging against the Savior.

Thou didst carefully keep the commandment of the Savior, O venerable Euthymius, and didst lay down thy life for thy friends.

Theotokion: Thou wast a field holding the uncontainable Creator, containing Him in the flesh, O joyous and most immaculate one.

ODE IV

Irmos: Beholding Thee, the Sun of righteousness, lifted up upon the Cross, the Church stood rooted in place, crying out as is meet: Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Smitted upon thy face, thou wast enlightened by divine grace and wisdom of discourse, O most blessed one, and becamest a companion of Christ Who was buffeted in the flesh for our sake.

The honors of thy priesthood were not shamed, nor were thy grey hairs disgraced, when the mindless ones, who did not honor thine old age, wounded thee without pity.

As a priceless gift thou didst offer thy precious blood to the Deliverer, Who was wrapped in swaddling bands and lay in a manger, O father Euthymius, for it was shed for Him.

Theotokion: **H**e Who created the immaterial essences is born today as a man, taking flesh from thee, O Mother of God. To Him do we chant: glory to Christ God in the highest!

ODE V

Irmos: **T**hou hast come, O my Lord, as a light into the world, a holy light turning from the darkness of ignorance those who hymn Thee with faith.

To Thee, O Savior, is brought the animate image who honored the image of Thy precious body and the depiction of Thy body.

To Thee, O Master, is brought a pastor, the namesake of courage, who beareth on his own body the wounds of Thy body.

With the outpouring of thine unjustly shed blood thou didst quench the fire of the rage of the iniquitous, O most sacred and all-blessed Euthymius.

Theotokion: **T**he onslaught of corruption hath ceased, for the Virgin hath given birth incorruptibly to Him Who hath freed corrupted human nature from corruption.

ODE VI

Irmos: **I** will sacrifice to Thee with a voice of praise, O Lord, the Church crieth out to Thee, having been cleansed of the blood of demons by the blood which, for mercy's sake, flowed from Thy side.

Emulating the nakedness of the Savior of all by thy nakedness, and enduring wounds and pain, O father, thou didst shed thy blood with His blood.

Made rich in the virtues, O most blessed Euthymius, thou offerest to Him Who was born of the Virgin gifts of love, hope and divinely wise faith which abideth forever.

Having served. Christ lawfully, O divinely eloquent father, when thou didst reach thine end in blood thou didst receive divine and sanctifying discourse as reward from Him.

Theotokion: **H**e Who fashioned man according to His image doth restore him in His great lovingkindness, having perfectly clad Himself in him through thee, O Virgin Mother of God.

Sedalion, in Tone I: Spec. Mel.: "Thy tomb, O Savior ...":

Having suffered most patiently, O holy hierarch, wise Euthymius, as the magi offered gifts so didst thou offer thy blood to Christ, Who was born of the Virgin. Wherefore, thou hast received a twofold crown of victory, and standest before the most Holy Trinity, praying that we be saved.

ODE VII

Irmos: The children of Abraham in the Persian furnace, afire with love of piety more than with the flame, cried out: Blessed art Thou in the temple of Thy glory, O Lord!

Having mingled the most sacred and divinely given anointing of the priesthood with thy blood, thou didst show thyself to be yet more sanctified, crying: Blessed art Thou in the temple of Thy glory, O Lord my God!

Having set thy feet upon the rock of faith, O most blessed one, thou didst remain unmoved by all the assaults of temptations, crying out: Blessed art Thou in the temple of Thy glory, O Lord my God!

Thou didst draw down upon thee the grace of the divine protomartyr, whose most excellent emulator thou didst show thyself to be, bestowing blessings as rewards upon those who pitilessly slew thee, O most blessed Euthymius.

Theotokion: Rejoice, O sanctified and divine habitation of the Most High! For through thee, O Theotokos, hath joy been given to those who cry: Blessed art thou among women, O most immaculate Mistress!

ODE VIII

Irmos: Stretching forth his hands, Daniel closed the mouths of the lions in the pit, and the young lovers of piety, girded about with virtue, quenched the power of the fire, crying out: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Contending mightily, O father Euthymius, thou didst stand before the tribunal; for thou hadst learned the most perfect boundary of love, in that thou didst consent to die for thy friends, who cry out: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Splendid in speech and mind, thou didst acquire a splendid soul and a radiant countenance; and now thou hast become yet more splendid, O Euthymius, opposing the God-hating emperors even to the shedding of thy blood, and crying out: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

The mighty of the land, committing most iniquitous deeds, fell upon thee, O blessed one, to slay thee; but, stretching forth thy hands to the Deliverer Who was born of the pure Virgin, thou didst cry out: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Theotokion: Behold, now a ruler and prince hath manifestly failed from the tribe of Judah, for thou, O most immaculate one, hast given birth to Christ, the expectation of the nations, for Whom things were stored up of old. To Him do we chant: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

ODE IX

Irmos: Christ, the Chief Cornerstone uncut by human hands, Who hath united two disparate natures, was cut from thee, the unquarried mountain, O Virgin. Wherefore, in gladness we magnify thee, O Theotokos.

From things here thou hast passed over to the haven most calm, O father; for like a sparrow thou hast been delivered from the snare of those who hunted thee, O most courageous hieromartyr, blessing Him Who delivered thee.

Shining supernaturally, thou didst depart unto the Master, the Light Who appeared from the heights of the East, illumined with the radiance of the star which hath now shone forth from Judah.

Thou hast been vouchsafed to join chorus now in the broad expanse of paradise, where the radiance of the blessed and the joy of the saints are, O Euthymius, for they have received thee as a victorious athlete.

Possessing boldness before God as a holy hierarch and martyr, O most blessed one, amid this present winter ask thou peace for the Church and remission of offenses for those who hymn thee.

Theotokion: O all-pure Theotokos, thou hast caused a Rod to spring forth from the root of Jesse, giving birth for us today to Christ, the Flower of the Godhead, the uncontainable God Who hath now been swaddled as a babe.

Stichera of the hieromartyr, in Tone VIII:

Spec. Mel.: "O all-glorious wonder ...":

Still dripping with blood, * swathed in its warmth * and emitting the vapor thereof, * thou didst stand before Christ, O divinely eloquent father Euthymius, * stretching forth now the sores of thy wounds * instead of supplications; * and thou didst pray for those who hymn thee earnestly. * O blessed one, * pray thou for thy flock.

Thou didst offer a gift unto Christ * Who hath been born * and hath become a babe in the flesh, O venerable one: * thine honorable gray hairs, * adorned with the gifts of the priesthood, O father, * and stained with the blood of thy suffering, * the Orthodox Faith, * hope fervent and truly inviolable, * and love unshaken, O venerable one.

O venerable one, thou hast been shown to be * a tongue moved by the Spirit, * manifestly declaring true doctrines, * divinely exuding God-given grace, * a harp of piety played by God, * the immovable foundation of Orthodoxy, * a mouth flowing with honey, * a treasury of wisdom, * the clarion-voiced trumpet of the Churches.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Theotokion:

The pre-eternal God, receiving flesh through thy blood, * hath shown thee to be an intercessor for men, O pure one; * wherefore, deliver thou thy servants * from all want and every evil circumstance, * and from the snares of the most evil enemy, * and vouchsafe that all who glorify and do thee homage * may partake of the splendor of the elect.

Be it known that on the Afterfeast of the Nativity of Christ and Theophany, Little Compline is chanted without the canon of the Theotokos. At Compline on December 26th, after "It is truly meet" and the Trisagion through "Our Father", we say the Kontakion for the synaxis of the Theotokos: "He Who was begotten of the Father without mother before the morning star ...".

At Nocturnes we read the usual Kathisma. After the first Trisagion, instead of "Behold, the Bridegroom ...", we say the troparion of the feast: "Thy nativity, O Christ our God ..."; after the second Trisagion, we say the Kontakion of the synaxis: "He Who was begotten of the Father ..."; then, "Lord, have mercy!", 12 times, and the dismissal. We do not say the prayers: "Remember, O Lord ...".

AT MATINS

At "God is the Lord ...", the Troparion of the nativity:

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, * hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; * for thereby, they that worshipped the stars * were instructed by a star * to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, * and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. * O Lord, glory be to Thee. (Thrice)

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

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

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, creation was enlightened, recognizing its Creator; and the choirs of the angels were amazed, beholding the Master, Who is inseparable from the Father, assuming the guise of a servant on earth. Glory to God Who hath become incarnate! Glory to Him Who hath been born on earth! Glory to Him Whose good pleasure it was to save our race!

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

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

Spec. Mel.: "Joseph marveled..."

Why dost thou marvel, O Mary? Wherefore art thou in awe of what hath taken place within thee? "Because I have given birth within time to the timeless Son," said she; "and unaccustomed to conceiving a babe, since I have not known man, how is it I give birth to a Son? Who hath ever seen a seedless birthgiving? For where God desireth, the order of nature is overturned, as is it written." Christ is born, that He might restore His image which before had fallen!

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

Both canons of the feast, the Irmos of each being chanted twice, with 12 troparia.

ODE I

Canon I, the acrostic whereof is: "Having become man, Christ remaineth God as He was before", the composition of Cosmas of Maiuma, in Tone I:

Irmos: Christ is born, give ye glory! Christ cometh from the heavens, meet ye Him! Christ is on earth, be ye exalted! Hymn the Lord, all the earth, and chant to Him with gladness, ye people, for He is glorified!

That which, though fashioned in the image of God, is become wholly corrupt through transgression, having fallen away from the higher divine life, hath the wise Creator restored, for He is glorified.

The Creator, seeing man, whom He had fashioned with His own hands, perishing, descendeth, bowing down the heavens; and, truly incarnate, He taketh upon Himself all man's essence through the pure and divine Virgin, for He is glorified.

Christ God, being the wisdom, Word, Power, Effulgence and Son of the Father, hiding Himself as much from the powers of heaven as from those on earth, hath restored us, becoming man, for He is glorified.

Canon II, the composition of John of Damascus, in the same tone:

Irmos: Working a wonder of old, the Master saved His people, making solid the watery waves of the sea; and having been born of the Virgin of His own will, He setteth for us a path leading to heaven. Let us glorify Him Who is by nature equal to the Father and to men.

Thy sacred womb, which was depicted by the bush which burned without being consumed, manifestly bore the Word and mingled God with a human image, loosing the wretched womb of Eve from the bitter curse of old. Let us glorify Him, O ye mortals!

To the magi the star manifestly showed Thee forth, the Word Who hath existed before the sun and came to bring an end to sin, and Who in Thy mercy wast wrapped in swaddling bands in the wretched cave. And, rejoicing, they beheld the Lord Himself, a man.

Katavasia: The Irmoi of both festal canons.

ODE III

Canon I

Irmos: To Christ God, the Son Who, before time began, was begotten incorruptibly from the Father and in latter days without seed became incarnate of the Virgin, let us cry aloud: O Lord Who hath lifted up our horn, holy art Thou!

Adam who, though fashioned of dust, partook of higher inspiration, yet was led to stumble into corruption through a woman's deceit, seeing Christ born of a woman, crieth out: O Lord Who for my sake hast become like me, holy art Thou!

○ Lord Christ, Who, mingling with clay, madest Thyself conformable thereto, imparting Thy divine essence by participating in vile flesh, becoming earthly, yet remaining God, and Who hast lifted up our horn: holy art Thou!

○ Bethlehem, thou king of the princes of Judah, be glad! For Christ Who shepherdeth Israel, seated on the shoulders of the cherubim, hath manifestly come forth from thee, and, having lifted up our horn, hath established His reign over all.

Canon II

Irmos: Look upon the hymns of Thy servants, O Benefactor, bringing low the vaunted pride of the enemy; and bear far above sin those who hymn Thee and have been made unshakably firm by the foundation of faith, O Good One Who seest all.

Having been vouchsafed to behold the all-rich Offspring of the all-pure Bride, which passeth understanding, the chorus of pipers bowed down in awe-filled homage; and the ranks of incorporeal beings hymn Christ the King, Who became incarnate without seed.

In His loving-kindness, He Who reigneth over the heights of heaven becometh like us through the unwedded Maiden; the Word Who before was immaterial later took upon Himself the matter of the flesh, that He might draw to Himself the first-created man, who had fallen.

Kontakion of the feast, in Tone III:

Today the Virgin giveth birth to Him Who is transcendent in essence; * and the earth offereth a cave to Him Who is unapproachable. * Angels with shepherds give glory; * with a star the Magi do journey; * for our sake a young Child is born, Who is pre-eternal God.

Ikos: **B**ethlehem hath thrown Eden open! Come, let us see! We have found food in a secret place! Come, let us receive things of paradise within the cave! There the unwatered root hath appeared, putting forth remission as fruit! There is found the un-dug well from whence David of old thirsted to drink! There the Virgin, giving birth to a Babe. Hath straightway caused the thirst of Adam and David to cease! Wherefore, let us go to Him where He is born, a little Babe, the pre-eternal God.

Sedalion, in Tone VIII:

The first-fruits of the nations hath heaven brought to Thee Who liest in as a babe in the manger, summoning the magi by the star; and they were in awe to see, not scepters or thrones, but utter poverty. For what is more lowly than a cave? What is more humble than the swaddling bands, wherein the richness of Thy divinity hath shone forth? O Lord, glory be to Thee!

ODE IV

Canon I

Irmos: **O** Christ, Thou Rod of the root of Jesse and Flower thereof, Thou hast sprung forth from the Virgin, from the mountain overshadowed and densely wooded, and art come forth, incarnate, of her who kneweth not man. O immaterial Lord and God, glory to Thy power!

From the tribe of Judah Thou hast shone forth, O Christ, the expectation of the nations Whom Jacob foretold of old, and hast come to overthrow the power of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria, transforming falsehood into godly faith. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Shining forth, a Star out of Jacob, O Master, Thou hast filled with joy the wise watchers of the stars, the followers of the words of Balaam, the soothsayer of old; and Thou hast manifestly received the first-fruits of the nations who have entered in to worship Thee. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Thou hast descended on the womb of the Virgin like rain upon the fleece, O Christ, and like drops of rain falling upon the earth. Ethiopia and Tharsis, the islands of Arabia and Saba, and they who rule all the land of the Medes, have fallen down before Thee, O Savior. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Canon II

Irmos: Chanting of old, the Prophet Habbakuk proclaimed beforehand the renewal of the human race, having been ineffably vouchsafed to behold an image; for the Word hath come forth from the Virgin, the mountain, as a little babe, for the restoration of the people.

Receiving flesh from the Virgin of His own will, the Most High hath issued forth, equal to men, to purge away the venom of the serpent's head, leading all from the sunless gates of Hades to life-bearing light, in that He is God.

The nations who of old were overwhelmed by corruption, having escaped the greatest enemy, lift up their hands with hymns of praise, honoring the one Christ as Benefactor, Who hath come to us in His mercy.

Having grown forth from the root of Jesse, O Virgin, thou didst transcend the laws of human nature, giving birth to the pre-eternal Word of the Father, in that He Himself was well pleased to pass through thy sealed womb in His strange abasement.

ODE V

Canon I

Irmos: As God of the world and Father of compassions, Thou hast sent to us Thine Angel of great Counsel, Who granteth us peace. Wherefore, guided to the light of knowledge divine, and rising at dawn out of the night, we glorify Thee, Who lovest mankind.

Submitting to be recorded among Thy servants at the command of Caesar, Thou hast freed us slaves from the enemy and sin, O Christ; and having abased Thyself for us, Thou hast made our clay divine through Thy union and sharing therein.

Behold, the Virgin hath conceived in her womb, as was foretold of old, and hath given birth to God made man, yet remaineth virgin. O sinners who for her sake have been reconciled with God, let us as faithful hymn her as the true Theotokos.

Canon II

Irmos: O Christ our cleansing, come Thou unto us who out of the night of deeds of dark falsehood do vigilantly hymn thee as Benefactor, granting us an easy path, ascending which we find glory.

By His coming in the flesh the Master hath again cut down the cruel enmity directed against us, that He might destroy the soul-destroying ruler, uniting the world with the immaterial beings, making the Begetter accessible to creation.

The people who of old were benighted have finally seen the light of the radiance of the Most High; and the Son bringeth the nations to the Father as an inheritance, bestowing ineffable grace where sin once flourished exceedingly.

ODE VI

Canon I

Irmos: The sea monster spewed forth Jonah, like a babe from the womb, as it had received him; but the Word Who made His abode within the Virgin and took on flesh passed through her, preserving her intact. For, as He did not suffer corruption, He preserved her who bore Him unharmed.

Christ our God, Whom the Father begat before the morning star, is come forth, incarnate, from the womb. He Who ruleth over the all-pure powers lieth in a manger of dumb beasts and is wrapped in swaddling-bands; and he looseth the knotted bonds of transgressions.

A young Child, a Son, is born of the clay of Adam and given to the faithful: He is the Father and Prince of the age to come, and is called the Angel of great Counsel. He is the mighty God Who exerciseth dominion over all creation.

Canon II

Irmos: Dwelling in the uttermost depths of the sea, Jonah besought Thee to come and still the tempest; and I, pierced by the arrow of the tyrant, do chant unto Thee, Christ the Destroyer of evil, that Thou come quickly unto my slothfulness!

God the Word, Who from the beginning was with God, intending to preserve the nature which He Himself shareth with us, now strengtheneth it, which from of old was weak, by another fellowship with it, straightway showing it to be free from the passions.

He Who dwelleth in light, and, contrary to His dignity, hath now been well pleased to dwell in a manger, cometh forth for our sake from the loins of Abraham for us who have benightedly fallen into the darkness of transgressions, that, for the salvation of men, He might raise up His children who have fallen low.

Kontakion of the synaxis, in Tone VI:

He Who was born of the Father without mother before the morning star hath today become incarnate of thee on earth without father; wherefore, the star announceth glad tidings to the magi, and the angels and shepherds hymn thine ineffable birthgiving, O thou who art full of grace.

Ikos: O mystic vine, thou hast given rise to the uncultivated Grapes, for thou didst bear Him in thine arms as on branches, and didst say: "Thou art my Fruit, Thou art my Life! Wherefore, I have known that I yet am what I was. Thou art my God; for, beholding the seal of my virginity inviolate, I proclaim Thee the true Word Who hast become flesh. I have not known seed, and I acknowledge Thee to be the Destroyer of corruption; for I am pure, since Thou hast issued forth from me, and hast left my womb as Thou found it. Yea, I see that it is pure! Therefore, all creation joineth chorus, crying out to me: Rejoice, O thou who art full of grace!"

ODE VII

Canon I

Irmos: The youths raised together in piety, rejecting the command of the impious one, feared not the threat of the fire, but, standing in the midst of the flame, chanted: **O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!**

The piping shepherds received an awesome vision of light; for the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and an angel cried out: Sing ye, for Christ, the blessed God of your fathers, is born!

Suddenly, at the voice of the angel, the armies of heaven cried out: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will among men! Christ hath shone forth: the blessed God of your fathers!"

"What words are these?" said the shepherds; "Let us go and see what hath taken place, the blessed Christ!" And hastening to Bethlehem, they bowed down in worship with the Theotokos, chanting: "O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!"

Canon II

Irmos: Caught by the love of the King of all, the children reviled the ungodly blasphemy of the tyrant who raged uncontrollably, and the great fire submitted to them as they said to the Master: **Blessed art Thou forever!**

The furnace which had been raised to a sevenfold heat savagely burneth the minions, but spareth the youths who were wholly consumed with the fear of God; and the flame crowned them when the Lord freely granted them dew for their piety's sake.

O Christ our Helper, using Thine ineffable incarnation as a bulwark of defense, having taken human form, Thou hast put to shame the adversary of men, bearing the richness of Thy deification, in hope of which we had fallen from the heights down into the darkness of the uttermost depths.

Omnipotently Thou hast cast down sin, which is exalted in evil without restraint and is incited to a vile frenzy by the perversion of the world; and those whom it formerly attracted Thou savest from its snares today, having become incarnate of Thine own will, O Benefactor.

ODE VIII

Canon I

Irmos: **T**he dew-bearing furnace showed forth an image of a supernatural wonder, for it burned not the youths whom it had received; neither did the fire of the Godhead consume the Virgin when it descended into her womb. Wherefore, chanting, we sing: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

The daughter of Babylon carrieth off the captive children of David from Sion to herself; but now she sendeth her own children, the magi bearing gifts, to the God-pleasing daughter of David, who prayeth. Wherefore, chanting, let us sing: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

The harps refused to play their sad songs, for the children of Sion would not sing in a strange land; but Christ, shining forth in Bethlehem, destroyeth all the falsehood of Babylon and her musical instruments. Wherefore, chanting, let us sing: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Babylon received the plunder of the kingdom of Sion and its captive riches; but Christ draweth its treasures to His Sion, guiding the star-watching kings by a star. Wherefore, chanting, let us sing: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Canon II

Irmos: **T**he children who in the time of the Old Covenant were cast into the fire prefigure the unconsumed womb of the Maiden which supernaturally giveth birth, yet remaineth sealed; and the grace which worketh both as a single miracle, moveth the people to hymnody.

Having escaped the destruction resulting from man's being deceived into becoming divine, like the youths all creation with trembling unceasingly hymneth the Word Who hath abased Himself, and with fear it offereth meager praise, in that it is corrupt, even though it hath endured such with wisdom.

Thou comest, O Restoration of the nations, to bring lost human nature back from the hills of the wilderness to the pasture rife with flowers, that Thou mightest put down the violent power of the slayer of men, having, in Thy forethought, become God as well as man.

At Ode IX we do not chant the Magnificat, but sing instead the refrains, as on the feast itself

ODE IX

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the all-pure Virgin Theotokos, who is more honorable and more glorious than the armies on high.

Irmos: A strange and all-glorious mystery do I behold: the cave is heaven; the Virgin, the throne of the cherubim; the manger, the place wherein Christ God, the Infinite One, lay, Whom, chanting, we magnify.

Then the second choir chanteth the same refrain and Irmos. We chant the six remaining refrains, one to each troparion.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, God Who of the Virgin was born in the flesh.

The magi beheld the excellent course of the strange star which was newly appeared, illumining the heavens and marking the birth of Christ the King in Bethlehem, for our salvation.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the King Who was born in the cave.

The magi beheld the excellent course of the strange star which was newly appeared, illumining the heavens and marking the birth of Christ the King in Bethlehem, for our salvation.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, God Who is worshiped by the magi.

The star revealed the newborn infant King to the magi who said: "Where is He, for we have come to worship Him?" But Herod who fought against God, enraged, was troubled, seeking to slay the Christ.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, Him Who was proclaimed to the magi by the star.

The star revealed the newborn infant King to the magi who said: "Where is He, for we have come to worship Him?" But Herod who fought against God, enraged, was troubled, seeking to slay the Christ.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the only pure Virgin Theotokos, who gave birth to Christ the King.

Herod inquired concerning the time of the star, following whose course the magi worshiped Christ with gifts in Bethlehem; but, guided thereby to their homeland, they left the cruel murderer of the infants behind in mockery.

Refrain: The magi and shepherds have come to worship Christ Who hath been born in the city of Bethlehem.

Herod inquired concerning the time of the star, following whose course the magi worshiped Christ with gifts in Bethlehem; but, guided thereby to their homeland, they left the cruel murderer of the infants behind in mockery.

Then the first choir chanteth the refrain of the second canon:

Refrain: Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Master within the cave.

Canon II

Irmos: It would be easier for us to prefer silence out of fear, for it is not fraught with danger, O Virgin, for it is difficult to fashion hymns fittingly wrought for thee. Yet, O Mother, grant us the power to chant such, inasmuch as it is our will.

And the second choir chanteth the refrain:

Refrain: Today the Master is born as a babe from the Virgin Mother.

And it likewise chanteth the Irmos: "It would be easier ..."

The remaining refrains we chant, one to each troparion:

Refrain: Today the shepherds see the Savior wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger.

O pure Mother, having beheld the indistinct images and dim shadows of the Word Who hath newly appeared through the gates that were closed, but mindful now of His true radiance, we bless thy womb as is meet.

Refrain: Today the Master, Who is intangible, is wrapped in rags as a babe.

O pure Mother, having beheld the indistinct images and dim shadows of the Word Who hath newly appeared through the gates that were closed, but mindful now of His true radiance, we bless thy womb as is meet.

Refrain: Today all creation rejoiceth and is glad, for Christ is born of the Virgin Maiden.

O pure Mother, having beheld the indistinct images and dim shadows of the Word Who hath newly appeared through the gates that were closed, but mindful now of His true radiance, we bless thy womb as is meet.

Refrain: The heavenly hosts proclaim to the world the Savior, Lord and Master Who hath been born.

Having attained their desire and been vouchsafed to see the advent of God, the people who delight in Christ are now consoled by regeneration; for thou bestowest life-bearing grace to pay homage to glory, O pure Virgin.

Instead of Glory ..., we chant: Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the might of the indivisible Godhead in three hypostases.

Having attained their desire and been vouchsafed to see the advent of God, the people who delight in Christ are now consoled by regeneration; for thou bestowest life-bearing grace to pay homage to glory, O pure Virgin.

Instead of Now & ever ..., we chant: Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, her who hath delivered us from the curse.

Having attained their desire and been vouchsafed to see the advent of God, the people who delight in Christ are now consoled by regeneration; for thou bestowest life-bearing grace to pay homage to glory, O pure Virgin.

Then both choirs, joining together, chant the first refrain of the feast, and the Irmos of Canon I, after which they chant the first refrain of Canon II and its Irmos. Whereupon they bow.

Refrain: Magnify, O my soul, the all-pure Virgin Theotokos, who is more honorable and more glorious than the armies on high.

Katavasia I: A strange and all-glorious mystery do I behold: the cave is heaven; the Virgin, the throne of the cherubim; the manger, the place wherein Christ God, the Infinite One, lay, Whom, chanting, we magnify.

Refrain: Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Master within the cave.

Katavasia II: It would be easier for us to prefer silence out of fear, for it is not fraught with danger, O Virgin, for it is difficult to fashion hymns fittingly wrought for thee. Yet, O Mother, grant us the power to chant such, inasmuch as it is our will.

Exapostilarion of the feast:

From on high our Savior, the Dayspring of the East, hath visited us, and we who are in darkness and shadow have truly found Him; for the Lord hath been born of the Virgin. *(Thrice)*

On the Praises, 4 stichera, in Tone IV:

Be glad, O ye righteous! Rejoice, O heavens! Leap up, ye mountains, for Christ Who hath been born! The Virgin sitteth, holding the incarnate Word of God in her bosom, like unto the cherubim. Shepherds marvel at Him Who hath been born; the magi offer gifts to the Master; and the angels say, chanting: O unapproachable Lord, glory be to Thee!

O Virgin Theotokos who gavest birth to the Savior, thou hast abolished the ancient curse of Eve; for thou becamest the Mother of Him in Whom the Father is well pleased, bearing the incarnate Word of God in thy bosom. This mystery is not subject to testing, but with faith alone we all glorify it, crying out with thee and saying: O ineffable Lord, glory be to Thee!

Come, let us hymn the Mother of the Savior, who even after giving birth wast still shown to be a Virgin. Rejoice, O animate city of God the King, wherein Christ, making His abode, hath wrought salvation! We chant with Gabriel and offer up glory with the magi, saying: O Theotokos, entreat Him Who became incarnate of thee, that we be saved!

The Father was well pleased; the Word became flesh; the Virgin gave birth to God incarnate; the star proclaimeth Him; the magi offer Him worship; the shepherds marvel, and creation rejoiceth.

Glory ..., in Tone VI:

Today invisible nature is joined to men through the Virgin! Today the boundless Essence is wrapped in swaddling bands in Bethlehem! Today God guideth the magi by the star, to offer Him homage, announcing beforehand His own three-day burial in their gold, myrrh and frankincense. To Him do we chant: O Christ God Who hast become incarnate through the Virgin, save Thou our souls!

Now & ever ..., the composition of John the monk, in Tone II:

Today Christ is born of the Virgin in Bethlehem! Today the Unoriginate beginneth to be and the Word becometh incarnate! The hosts of heaven rejoice, and earth and men are glad! The magi offer gifts to the Master, and the shepherds marvel at Him Who hath been born! And we cry out unceasingly: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!

Great Doxology. After the Trisagion, the troparion of the feast; litanies and dismissal. First Hour and final dismissal.

AT THE HOURS

Troparion of the feast; Kontakion of the synaxis.

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 8 troparia: 4 from Ode III of Canon I, and 4 from Ode VI of Canon II.

Adam who, though fashioned of dust, partook of higher inspiration, yet was led to stumble into corruption through a woman's deceit, seeing Christ born of a woman, crieth out: O Lord Who for my sake hast become like me, holy art Thou! (Twice)

O Lord Christ, Who, mingling with clay, madest Thyself conformable thereto, imparting Thy divine essence by participating in vile flesh, becoming earthly, yet remaining God, and Who hast lifted up our horn: holy art Thou!

O Bethlehem, thou king of the princes of Judah, be glad! For Christ Who shepherdeth Israel, seated on the shoulders of the cherubim, hath manifestly come forth from thee, and, having lifted up our horn, hath established His reign over all.

God the Word, Who from the beginning was with God, intending to preserve the nature which He Himself shareth with us, now strengtheneth it, which from of old was weak, by another fellowship with it, straightway showing it to be free from the passions. (Twice)

He Who dwelleth in light, and, contrary to His dignity, hath now been well pleased to dwell in a manger, cometh forth for our sake from the loins of Abraham for us who have benightedly fallen into the darkness of transgressions, that, for the salvation of men, He might raise up His children who have fallen low. (Twice)

After the entrance, the Introit:

O Son of God Who wast born of the Virgin, save us who chant unto Thee: Alleluia!

And thus do we sing up to and including the apodosis of the feast.

Troparion of the feast, in Tone IV:

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, * hath shined the light of knowledge upon the world; * for thereby, they that worshipped the stars * were instructed by a star * to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, * and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high. * O Lord, glory be to Thee.

Glory ..., Now & ever ..., Kontakion of the synaxis, in Tone VI:

He Who was born of the Father without mother before the morning star hath today become incarnate of thee on earth without father; wherefore, the star announceth glad tidings to the magi, and the angels and shepherds hymn thine ineffable birthgiving, O thou who art full of grace.

The Trisagion is sung.

Prokimenon, in Tone III: The Song of the Theotokos: My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

Stichos: For He hath looked upon the lowliness of His handmaiden; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS, § 306 [HEB 2:11-18]

Brethren: He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

Alleluia, in Tone VIII: Arise, O Lord, into Thy rest, Thou and the ark of Thy holiness.

Stichos: The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, and He will not annul it.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW, §4 [MT 2:13-23]

When the wise men departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take up the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the

young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Communion Verse: The Lord hath sent redemption unto His people.