

THE 27th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
AFTERFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY APOSTLE, PROTOMARTYR AND
ARCHDEACON STEPHEN COMMEMORATION OF OUR VENERABLE FATHER
THEODORE THE BRANDED, THE CONFESSOR, BROTHER OF ST. THEOPHANES
THE HYMNOGRAPHER
AT VESPERS

At "Lord, I have cried ...," six stichera; three for the apostle, in Tone IV:

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

Having enlightened thy thought * with the grace of the spirit, * thou didst appear like an angel * in countenance, O Stephen, * thy body, luminous with inner splendor, * emitting spiritual radiance upon them that beheld thee, * for which cause thou didst receive a vision of light, * for the heavens were most gloriously opened to thee, * thou first among martyrs and their boast.

The castings of stones * were to thee like steps * and a ladder leading up to heaven; * for, entering thereupon thou didst behold * the Lord standing at the right hand of the Father, * stretching forth to thee the crown for which thou wast named * with His life-bearing right hand. * Close before Him dost thou stand * as a worthy victor, the foremost of athletes.

Radiant with signs and wonders, * thou didst utterly destroy the assembly of the most iniquitous with thy dogmas; * and, slain by them, * put to death by stoning, * thou didst pray for the forgiveness * of them that slew thee, * emulating thereby the Savior's cry, * into Whose hands thou didst commit thy spirit, * O sacred Stephen.

And three stichera to the venerable one, in the same tone and melody:

To the bitterness of thine exile * was added the most grievous misery of imprisonment, * O venerable one, * when he that iniquitously usurped the lawful throne * grievously perverted the laws of the Faith * and cast down the all-pure image of the Savior. * But by the grace of God, O favorite of Christ, * thou didst put him to shame.

Neither prison, nor confinement, * nor lightless gloom, * nor wounds, nor beatings, * nor affliction grievous, long and unbearable, * nor lack of food, * could separate thee from thy love for God, * O divinely eloquent father Theodore; * for thou didst steadfastly endure them, * foreseeing the reward of thy labors.

In place of tribulation * hath the just Judge of the contest given thee liberty; * in place of darkness, radiance. * And for that which was graven on thy face, O wondrous one, * thou hast been written in the Book of Life, * and hast been numbered among the firstborn of the Church in the highest, * and hast most joyously come * to the feast of the angels.

Glory ..., in Tone II, the composition of Anatolius:

A most splendid crown is offered to the King and Master of all, Who was born on earth, fashioned not of rubies, but resplendent with the drops of thy blood, O Stephen. Come, ye that love the martyrs, and, taking up hymns as they were flowers, let us crown him, and chanting hymns, let us say: O protomartyr, who illumined thy soul with wisdom and grace, entreat Christ God that He grant us peace and great mercy!

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

A great and most glorious wonder is wrought today: A Virgin giveth birth, yet her womb suffereth no corruption! The Word is incarnate, yet is not separated from the Father! Angels give glory in company with shepherds; and with them we cry out: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!

At the Aposticha, these stichera, in Tone I:

Spec. Mel.: "Joy of the ranks of heaven ...":

Let us hymn Him Who is now worshipped * by angels, shepherds and Magi, * Who shone forth from the Father before the ages, * and, as the Son, ever existeth in the bosom of the Father, * Who in latter times hath sat upon His Mother's arms * as upon a throne.

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

Assembling in Bethlehem, O ye faithful, * let us behold the Creator of all lying in a manger * and them that bear a choice gift of three substances from the land of Chaldea to the King and God, Who for our sake was to lie three days dead.

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

Of the Virgin wast Thou born in the cave, * and, surrounding Thee, the angelic armies cried out: * Glory to Thee, O God, in the highest, Who hast been born in the guise of a servant, * and hast made the world new * in the womb of the Virgin, the Mother that hath not known man.

Glory ..., in Tone VI, the composition of Anatolius:

First among martyrs and deacons hast thou been shown to be, O apostle Stephen; adornment of athletes, confirmation of the faithful, glory of the righteous. In that thou standest before the throne of the King of all, beg thou cleansing of transgressions for us that celebrate thine honored memory, that we be accounted worthy of the Kingdom of heaven.

Now and ever ..., in the same tone and melody, the composition of Gerasimus:

Today all the angels hold chorus in heaven, and men rejoice, and all creation leapeth for joy because of the Lord and Savior born in Bethlehem, for all the falsehood of idolatry hath ceased, and Christ reigneth forever.

Troparion of the Protomartyr, in Tone IV:

Thou didst fight the good fight, and didst denounce the impiety of the tyrants, O protomartyr and apostle of Christ; for, stoned at the hands of the iniquitous, thou hast received from on high a crown from the right hand of the Lord, and didst exclaim to God, crying aloud: O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!

Glory ..., the Troparion of the Venerable One, in Tone VIII:

Instructor in Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and purity, beacon for the whole world, divinely inspired adornment of monastics, O Theodore most wise, by thy teachings hast thou illumined all. O harp of the Spirit, entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

Now and ever ..., the 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 MATINS

At "God is the Lord ...," the 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.

Then the troparion of the apostle, in Tone IV:

Thou didst fight the good fight, and didst denounce the impiety of the tyrants, O protomartyr and apostle of Christ; for, stoned at the hands of the iniquitous, thou hast received from on high a crown from the right hand of the Lord, and didst exclaim to God, crying aloud: O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!

Glory ..., the troparion of the venerable one, in Tone VIII:

Instructor in Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and purity, beacon for the whole world, divinely inspired adornment of monastics, O Theodore most wise, by thy teachings hast thou illumined all. O harp of the Spirit, entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

Now and ever ..., the troparion of the feast.

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

Spec. Mel.: "This day the Virgin ...":

She that conceived without seed giveth birth unto the Deliverer; Magi come to worship Life, and men and angels give glory. The manger and the cave offer gifts, raising a hymn to the newborn Babe, the pre-eternal God.

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

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

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

How can He that is in no wise limited be contained in a womb? How can He that is in the bosom of the Father rest in the arms of a Mother? He knoweth all things as He hath been well-pleased and hath willed; for, though incorporeal, He willingly became incarnate, and for our sake became that which He had not been, and, without departing from His essence, partook of our nature. Christ hath been twice begotten, wishing to fill the world on high!

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

The first canon of the feast, with six troparia, including the Irmos; and two canons, to the saints, with four troparia each.

ODE I

Canon of the Feast, in Tone I:

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

That which is in the image of God, but which became wholly corrupt through the transgression, having fallen from the blessings of divine life, doth the wise Creator make new again, for He hath been glorified.

The Creator, when he beheld man perishing, whom He had fashioned with His own hands, bowed the heavens also, and came down. And from the divine and pure Virgin He taketh upon Himself all man's nature, becoming truly incarnate, for He hath been glorified!

Christ God, the Wisdom, Word, Power and radiant Splendor of the Father, having hidden His powers, both heavenly and earthly, and become incarnate, hath renewed us, for He hath been glorified!

Canon of the Apostle, the composition of John of Damascus, in Tone V

Irmos: Bringing battles to naught with his upraised arm, Christ hath overthrown horse and rider in the Red Sea, and hath saved Israel which chanteth a hymn of victory.

Come ye, and with wreaths of hymns let us gloriously crown the first martyr of the Church of Christ; and, crowned with the divine grace of Stephen, let us chant a hymn of victory.

Possessed of the meek mind of the Teacher and humility wrought by God through love, O Stephen, thou didst become the most senior of the deacons and an intercessor for widows.

As is meet, thou wast called to help the apostles of Christ; and thou wast a faithful deacon, for which cause thou didst, through blood, pass on to the place where Christ is, O Stephen, thou namesake of crowns.

Theotokion: For men's sake, O Christ, Thou wast borne by the Virgin and wast wrapped as a babe in swaddling clothes; and Thy protomartyr, buried beneath the stones cast at him, sheddeth his human life.

Canon of the Venerable One, the acrostic whereof is: "I weave thy praises, O my brother," the composition of Theophanes, in Tone IV

Irmos: Israel of old, having traversed the depths of the Red Sea with dryshod feet, conquered the might of Amalek in the wilderness through Moses' hands stretched forth in the form of a cross.

The cherubim, beholding the inscription graven on thine honored brow, withdrew from the Tree of Life; and the fiery sword giveth way to thee with all deference, O most wise Theodore.

An inscription was set above the head of Christ the King, written on the Tree of the Cross; but thine inscription was graven on thy face, O most wise one, inscribed magnificently.

Lifted up on the Cross, the Lord was pierced through His side; and thou, stretched out on the rack and branded like a prized lamb, didst patiently endure the red-hot needles, O initiate of the sacred mysteries.

Adorned with all manner of wisdom, O father Theodore, thou didst openly denounce the ruler for his evildoing; and by enduring torments thou didst disquiet his heretical thoughts.

Theotokion: Thou wast the abode of Wisdom all-wise, O all-pure Theotokos; thou alone art the salvation and hymn of the faithful, for today thou hast given birth unto divine Deliverance for us.

Katavasia I: 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!

Katavasia II: 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.

ODE III

Canon of the Feast

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

Adam, though formed of dust, partook of the heavenly breath of life; yet, through the beguilement of the woman, fell into corruption. But now, beholding Christ born of a woman, he crieth out: O Lord, Who hast become like unto me for my sake, holy art Thou!

O Christ, Who hast taken a form of miry clay, by Thy mingling and sharing of our base flesh, Thou hast made us partakers in the divine nature. O Lord, Who becamest man whilst yet remaining God and hast lifted up our horn, holy art Thou!

Be thou glad, O Bethlehem, chief among the princes of Judah, for Christ, the Shepherd of Israel, cometh forth from thee in the sight of all, borne up upon the cherubim. He that hath lifted up our horn reigneth over all!

Canon of the Apostle

Irmos: O Christ, Who by Thy command fixed the earth upon the void and suspended its weight unsupported: Establish Thou Thy Church upon the immovable rock of Thy commandments, O Thou Who alone art good and lovest mankind.

Stephen, the warrior of Christ, having lawfully arrayed himself against the decides, vested in the invincible power of God, denounced all the wicked opposition of the iniquitous.

Aflame with the zeal of the love of Christ and having stripped down for combat, filled with faith and the Spirit of God, O protomartyr, thou didst proclaim to all the divinely appointed preaching of the fishermen.

As a proclaimer of the hidden and truly divine life, heedless of this present life, through deed the protomartyr manifestly showed to all truth triumphant, having assented to death, O Master.

Theotokion: **F**or our sake the Master entered the cave of life through condescension; and Stephen, chief among the martyrs, departeth from human burdens, overcome by the love of the Master.

Canon of the Venerable One

Irmos: **Thy Church doth rejoice in Thee, O Christ, crying aloud: Thou art my strength, O Lord, my refuge and my consolation!**

Unable to say ought against thy doctrines, O venerable one, he that was filled with pagan madness resorted to blows.

Thou didst patiently endure wounds on thy shoulders and breast for Christ's sake, and blows to thy head, O divinely-inspired one.

With spiritual wisdom and zeal of mind didst thou put to shame the impious and iniquitous one by thy most sacred dogmas.

Theotokion: **W**ith prophetic eyes David beheld thee in Bethlehem, O Mother of God, as a coffer bearing the all-divine Infant.

Katavasia I: **T**o 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!**

Katavasia II: **L**ook 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.

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 opened Eden! We have found Joy in a secret place: come, and let us receive the things of paradise within the cave. There the unwatered Root hath blossomed, bearing forgiveness as its fruit. There an unfailing Wellspring hath been found, whence of old David longed to drink. There the Virgin hath given birth to the Babe, quenching the thirst of Adam and David straightway. Wherefore, let us hasten to this place where now is born a young Child, the pre-eternal God!

Sedalion of the Apostle, in Tone I:

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

O apostle of Christ, first among the deacons, wise protomartyr, chief among the martyrs: having sanctified the ends of the earth with thy sufferings, thou hast also illumined the souls of men with miracles. O all-praised Stephen, from all manner of tribulations deliver them that honor thee.

Glory ..., Sedalion to the Venerable One, in Tone III:

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

Thou wast a mouth of boldness, most wisely putting to shame the audacity of the tyrant by the patient endurance of thy sufferings; for, branded on the brow for the most precious icon of Christ, O Theodore, thou didst proclaim to all to honor and glorify Him, begging great mercy for us.

Now and ever ..., Theotokion:

Gazing upon Him Whom she had conceived without seed, the all-immaculate one exclaimed in wonder to Him that was born of her: Even though Thou hast been wrapped in human guise, yet all things proclaim Thee to be God, O unoriginate Child, Who art co-unoriginate with the unoriginate Father and grantest unto all great mercy!

ODE IV

Canon of the Feast

Irmos: Rod out of the stem of Jesse, and Branch of his roots, O Christ, Thou didst spring forth from the Virgin; from the mountain overshadowed and densely wooded hast Thou come, incarnate of her that kneweth not man, O Thou praised and immaterial God. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

O Christ, whom Jacob foretold in days of old, calling Thee the Expectation of the nations, Thou hast shone forth from the tribe of Judah; and Thou hast come to take away the riches of

Damascus and the spoil of Samaria, changing falsehood to faith meet for God. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

O Master, who shinest forth as a star out of Jacob, Thou didst fill with joy the astrologer, who wisely interpreted the words of Balaam, the soothsayer of old. As the first-fruits of the Gentiles were they led to Thee, and Thou didst receive them in the sight of all. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Like the rain into a fleece of wool hast Thou come down into the womb of the Virgin, O Christ, even as the drops that water the earth. Ethiopia and Tarshish and the isles of Arabia, the kings of Saba, of the Medes and all the earth, fell down before Thee, O Savior. Glory to Thy power, O Lord!

Canon of the Apostle

Irmos: Perceiving Thy divine condescension prophetically, O Christ, Habbakuk cried out to Thee with trembling: Thou art come for the salvation of Thy people, to save Thine anointed ones!

Emulating the zeal of the angels, and splendidly adorned with an angelic countenance, thou didst behold the glory of God and the radiance thereof.

The slanderer, judge and tyrant, the slayer of man and father of lies, appeared, O Stephen, but he vanquished himself, laying the very snares into which he fell.

Canon of the Venerable One

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

Stretched out upon the rack, O Theodore, with audacious vehemence and barbaric cruelty wast thou branded as one who venerated the icon of Christ and the Mother of God.

Having served the Master through abstinence from thy youth, O blessed one, placing thy trust constantly in Him, thou wast straightway most splendidly adorned with the blood of thy witnessing.

Luminous as the sun, O God-bearer, thou didst hasten from the East, emitting the rays of thy confession and thine exceeding wise and most valiant opposition.

Theotokion: Blessed is God the Word, Who in His lovingkindness cometh to Bethlehem from thy womb which knoweth not wedlock, O all-pure one. Him do thou now entreat, that He save them that have recourse unto thee.

Katavasia I: 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!

Katavasia II: 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.

ODE V

Canon of the Feast

Irmos: As God of peace and Father of mercies, Thou didst send Thine Angel of great counsel, granting us peace. Therefore, guided to the light of the knowledge of God, and, waking at dawn out of the night, we glorify Thee, O Lover of mankind!

Obedient to Caesar's command that his subjects be registered, Thou hast freed us that are subject to the enemy and to sin, O Christ. For, sharing wholly in our poverty, Thou hast made the very dust godlike by Thy union and communion with it.

Behold, the Virgin, as was said in days of old, hath conceived in her womb and given birth unto God incarnate, and yet remaineth virgin. O ye faithful, let us hymn her that is truly the Theotokos, for through her have we sinners been reconciled to God.

Canon of the Apostle

Irmos: O Thou that art clothed in light as with a garment, I rise at dawn unto Thee, and to Thee do I cry: Enlighten Thou my soul enshrouded in gloom, O Christ, in that Thou alone art compassionate.

More exalted than the heavenly spheres and full of Thine ineffable glory, O Christ, Thy protomartyr hath shone forth like an angel.

With deluges of divinely eloquent words the protomartyr inundated the vile murderers; and, pelted by their countless stones, he received a victor's crown.

The boldness of the divine zeal of the protomartyr was invincible, for manfully did he stand against the deicides, even unto the shedding of his blood.

Theotokion: The protomartyr beheld Him, that came forth from the Mother who knoweth not man, standing in the heavens in the immutable divinity and glory of the Father.

Canon of the Venerable One

Irmos: Thou hast come into the world as a light, O my Lord; a holy light which turneth from the gloom of ignorance them that hymn Thee with faith.

Sojourning in a strange land, thou didst steadfastly endure exile, affliction, wounding, imprisonment, and the vilest of dungeons.

Now thou dost truly rejoice, receiving a victor's crown on the splendid and radiant feast of the godly protomartyr.

The vow of piety which thou didst make in thy childhood, thou didst keep even unto the end, remaining un-perverted, O invincible Theodore.

Theotokion: We brandish thee as an invincible weapon against the foe, O Bride of God, for we have acquired thee as our help and hope of salvation.

Katavasia I: 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.

Katavasia II: 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.

ODE VI

Canon of the Feast

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

Christ our God, Whom the Father begat before the morning star, hath come forth incarnate from the Virgin's womb; and He that holdeth sway over the all-pure hosts, lieth down in a manger of beasts. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes, that looseth the tangled chains of sin.

The Son is born as a young Babe of the nature of Adam, and is given unto the faithful. He is the Father and Ruler of the Age to come, and He is called the Angel of great counsel He is the mighty God, Who holdeth all creation in His dominion.

Canon of the Apostle

Irmos: **O** Christ, Master, still Thou the sea of the passions which rageth with a soul-destroying tempest, and lead me up from corruption, in that Thou art compassionate.

Stephen, the glorious chief of the martyrs, having transcended the faithful laws of nature by grace, is made luminous by the glory of God.

Being a most renowned emulator of Thine honored Passion, O Master Christ, Stephen repayeth his murderers with a blessing.

Preserve Thou them that hymn the protomartyr untouched by vile murder, and vouchsafe them Thine inheritance, in that Thou art compassionate.

Theotokion: **T**hy birth was the beginning of the salvation of the universe and the foundation of the godly confession of the martyrs.

Canon of the Venerable One

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

Still drenched by the sweat of thy struggles, thou didst stand before the Judge of the contest, Who by His just judgment doth govern all creation, O most blessed God-bearer Theodore.

Naught could separate thee from the love of Christ: neither the wounding of thy body, nor the threat of the death sentence, nor the loss of friends, O most blessed Theodore.

As a most radiant son of light and of the day, thou didst repose full of light, growing up towards the radiance of God, ever overflowing with light day and night, O thou that art pleasing unto God.

Theotokion: Having found thee alone to be a lily most pure, a lily of the valley amid the thorns, O Mother of God, the noetic Bridegroom made His abode within thee.

Katavasia I: 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.

Katavasia II: 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!

Kontakion of the Protomartyr, in Tone III:

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

Yesterday the Master came to us in the flesh, and today his servant departeth from the flesh. Yesterday He that reigneth over the flesh was born, and today his servant is slain by stoning. For His sake the godly protomartyr Stephen doth meet his end.

Ikos: Like a radiant star doth Stephen the protomartyr shine forth on the Nativity of Christ, illumining and enlightening the ends of the earth, but casting a pall of darkness over all the impiety of the Jews. Reproving them with words of wisdom, discoursing from the Scriptures, and persuading them that Jesus, Who was born of the Virgin, is the Son of God and God, the godly protomartyr Stephen put to shame their impious wickedness.

ODE VII

Canon of the Feast

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

The shepherds abiding in the field received a vision of light in awesome manner, for the glory of God shone round about them, and an angel cried out to them: Sing ye, for Christ is born. O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

At the angel's proclamation, the hosts of heaven suddenly cried aloud: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men. Christ hath shone forth. O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

What are these tidings? the shepherds said: Let us go and see this thing which is come to pass, even the birth of the divine Christ! And, coming to Bethlehem, they worshipped with her that had given Him birth, chanting: O God of our fathers, blessed art Thou!

Canon of the Apostle

Irmos: The supremely exalted Lord of our fathers quenched the flame and bedewed the children, who sang together: Blessed art Thou, O God!

The iniquitous, gnashing their teeth like beasts and falling upon Stephen with murderous intent, slew him as he chanted in godly manner: Blessed art Thou, O God!

O Stephen, adorned with stones as with many-colored and comely flowers, thou didst offer thyself unto Christ, the Bestower of life, crying out: Blessed art Thou, O God!

Almost insurmountable was the opposition of Paul, who at first persecuted the saints, but later led the Gentiles unto Christ forever.

Caught up by the Holy Spirit, O Stephen, thou didst ineffably behold the Son and the Father, and thou didst cry out to the Trinity: Blessed art Thou, O God!

Theotokion: An animate crown is offered unto Thee, as to a king, O Thou that hast shone forth from the divine and pure Virgin, for in godly manner we chant unto Thee: Blessed art Thou, O God!

Canon of the Venerable One

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!

Aflame with Orthodox zeal, O most wise one, with boldness thou didst spurn the food of vile and grievous heresy, crying out: Blessed art Thou, O Lord my God!

The discourse of wisdom, the discourse of dogmas, the discourse of most pious doctrines did God the Word give unto thee, O father, who cried out: Blessed art Thou, O Lord my God!

Having shone forth from the East like the sun, O father Theodore, thou didst shine forth the radiance of piety upon the earth, enlightening and teaching it the veneration of icons.

Theotokion: Thou hast been shown to be adorned, most glorious, all-splendid with the light of virginity, O Mother, who gavest birth unto God in the flesh, and who wrapped in swaddling clothes Him that doth manifestly clothe all things.

Katavasia I: 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!

Katavasia II: 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!

ODE VIII

Canon of the Feast

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

From Zion did the daughter of Babylon draw the captive youths of David to herself, whom she had taken with the sword. But now she sendeth her own children, even the Magi bearing gifts, to entreat the Daughter of David in whom God came to dwell. Wherefore, lifting up our voices in song, we chant: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Sorrow silenced the harps of the children of Zion, for they would not sing in a strange land; but Christ, shining forth in Bethlehem, hath destroyed all the deception of Babylon and the music of its instruments. Wherefore, lifting up our voices in song, we chant: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Babylon hath plundered the kingdom of Zion and taken away the riches thereof; but Christ hath brought the treasures of Babylon to Zion, guiding the astrologer kings by a star. Wherefore, lifting up our voices in song, we chant: Let all creation bless the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Canon of the Apostle

Irmos: The children, forming a universal chorus in the furnace, chanted to Thee, the Creator of all: Hymn ye the Lord, all ye works, and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Come, ye that are noetically illumined by the glory of Stephen, let us chant unto God incarnate: Hymn ye the Lord, all ye works, and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

For thee, O Stephen, is fashioned a wreath of sufferings, as for one who hath conquered most wicked deception. Wherefore, thou didst cry out: Hymn the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages.

Christ appeared to thee in the glory of the Father, manifestly promising thee recompense for thy sufferings. Wherefore, thou didst cry out: Hymn the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

The nativity of the Master and the commemoration of the protomartyr are cause for us to join chorus. Wherefore, let us unceasingly hymn the Lord and exalt Him supremely for all ages!

Theotokion: Thee, who in manner past understanding gavest birth unto the Lord, the God-man, yet remainest virgin, O Virgin, all we, the works of the Lord, hymn and exalt supremely for all ages.

Canon of the Venerable One

Irmos: Stretching forth his hands, Daniel shut the lions' mouths in the pit; and the young lovers of piety, girded about with virtue, quenched the power of the flame, crying out: Bless the Lord, O ye works of the Lord!

Trusting, like a lion, in the strength of thy spirit, O most blessed one, thou wast not afraid of the assault of the heretic, the namesake of savagery. And, spitting upon him, rejoicing thou didst cry out to the people: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Having adorned thy soul with manliness and acquired a mind full of understanding, thou didst perfect thy will with chastity, O blessed one, and didst direct thy thoughts with righteousness, and dost cry out: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

By thy chastenings thou didst dry up the rushing torrent of heresy, O venerable father, destroying the snares of the impious with thy most wise instructions, and crying aloud: Bless the Lord, all ye works of the Lord!

Theotokion: God, Who fashioned human nature in the beginning. is therein clothed through thine all-pure and holy womb, O all-pure one, being born today in Bethlehem in accordance with the prophecies. Wherefore, we all call thee blessed, O Mary, Bride of God.

Katavasia I: The 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!

Katavasia II: The children who in the time of the Old Covenant were cast into the fire prefigured 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.

ODE IX

Canon of the Feast

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

The Magi, beholding the remarkable course of the new star shining with a brightness that illumined all the heavens, learnt thereby that Christ the King was born on earth in Bethlehem for our salvation.

The Magi said, Where is the newborn Child King? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship Him. Then Herod, the enemy of God, was exceeding wroth and diligently sought how to slay the Christ.

Herod inquired what time the guiding star appeared, which led the Magi to Bethlehem to worship Christ with gifts. But, brought by the star into their own country another way, they returned not to Herod, mocking the wicked slayer of children.

Canon of the Apostle

Irmos: Rejoice, O Isaiah, for the Virgin hath conceived in her womb and brought forth a Son, Immanuel, both God and man. Orient is His name, and, magnifying Him, we call the Virgin blessed.

O Stephen, thou hast surpassed all the degrees of praise, and with every word thou didst carry away trophies of victory. For the human mind is incapable of weaving a crown of praise worthy of thee.

Oh, the blessed voice with which thou didst hold forth, O Stephen! Lay not this sin to the charge of my murderers, O Master Christ, thou didst cry, But, as Thou art my God and Creator, receive Thou my spirit as a sacrifice of savor most sweet.

Thou didst receive recompense for thy sufferings: a victor's wreath from the right hand of the Almighty, and now, O most blessed one, standing before the King of all, with glory and grace crown thou them that hymn thee.

Theotokion: The timeless Son, begotten of the Father, hath received from the Virgin a beginning of existence in time. Slain for His sake, Stephen, the emulator of Christ, hath now inherited everlasting life from the Origin thereof.

Canon of the Venerable One

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

Compelled by the will of God, thou didst readily endure the assaults of persecutions, O divinely wise one; and having set at naught the savagery of the persecutor, thou hast received a crown for thy struggles, O father.

Thou hast discovered heavenly riches, and an abiding home instead of bitter imprisonment, exile and wandering. And thou now dost live in rapture, receiving eternal delight.

Offering hymnody unto the Master, O father, cease not to offer entreaties concerning my infirmity, for the sake of our brotherhood and dwelling together; that, as we have lived together, we may also attain deification together.

Theotokion: We magnify thee, O Virgin, as the true Theotokos and divine Maiden, for, in manner surpassing comprehension and recounting, thou gavest birth in Bethlehem unto God the Word and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes.

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.

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: Spec. Mel.: "By the Spirit in the sanctuary ...":

Thou didst behold the all-unoriginate Word standing at the right hand of the Father, and thy face was filled with ineffable light, O boast of the apostles and glory of the martyrs. And thou wast adorned with a crown fashioned of the rocks of thy stoning, and thou didst receive a divine end.

Glory ..., Now and ever ..., Exapostilarion of the Feast:

Having been born as a babe, Thou wast laid in a manger, and the star summoned forth wise men three in number. Shepherds, marveling at the wonder, hastened to behold God become man; and the choirs of angels, amazed, cried out: Glory to God in the highest!

At the Praises, six stichera:

In Tone I, the composition of Cyprian: O ye faithful, let us weave for the protomartyr an athlete's wreath, fashioned of words as of flowers. For he prepared the martyrs' way, and cried out in joy, I see the heavens opened and the Son of God standing at the right hand of the invisible Father! **(Twice)**

In Tone II, the composition of Anatolius: First among the deacons and first among the martyrs hast thou been shown to be, O most holy Stephen; for thou wast a path for the saints and hast brought many martyrs to the Lord. Wherefore, heaven was opened unto thee, and God appeared to Thee. Him do thou beseech, that our souls be saved.

In sanctity wast thou clothed, O blessed Stephen, protomartyr and first deacon, who hast a portion with the angels. Intercede and pray to the Lord, the sinless Savior, in our behalf.

As is meet, let us honor Stephen, the valiant protomartyr, first deacon and favorite of Christ; for, standing in the midst of the iniquitous, he beheld the Son standing at the right hand of the Father.

In Tone IV, the composition of John the Monk: **O** glorious Stephen, citizen of heaven, blessed favorite of Christ: Pray thou in behalf of our souls!

Stephen, the goodly beginning of martyrdom, full of grace and power, working great wonders and signs among the people, was by the iniquitous slain by stoning. Yet he shone forth as an angel, and beheld at the right hand of power the glory of Thee, Who wast crucified for our sake, and was taken away to heaven by the Spirit of grace; wherefore, abiding now with the choirs of the angels, he prayeth that our souls be saved.

Glory ..., in Tone VI, the composition of Cyprian:

O apostle and protomartyr, portal of martyrdom, glory of the righteous, and boast of the apostles: standing in the tribunal thou didst behold the heavens opened, and the Son of God standing at the right hand of the invisible Father. Wherefore thy countenance, shining like that of an angel, in joy thou didst cry out concerning them that were stoning thee to death: Lay not this sin to their charge! And now pray thou for them that praise thee with love, that they receive cleansing of their sins and great mercy.

Now and ever ..., in the same tone, the composition of John the Monk:

An unapproachable mystery is today accomplished in Bethlehem: the Invisible One is seen, the Incorporeal One is incarnate, the Word taketh on flesh, and becometh that which He had not been. A Virgin giveth birth in a cave unto a little Babe, the Creator of nature. A manger is formed into a heavenly throne, and beasts represent the ranks of the cherubim, Shepherds marvel, Magi bear gifts, and angels, chanting, say: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace good will among men, O immutable Immanuel!

At the Aposticha, these stichera, in Tone VI:

Spec. Mel.: "Proceed, ye hosts of angels ...":

All creation riseth with joy to meet the feast, and the heavens rejoice with us; for the Creator, incarnate of the Virgin, hath most gloriously been seen in a manger in Bethlehem of Judah. Let us say to the people: O our blessed God, Who hast been born, glory be to Thee!

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

Being the pre-eternal Word, Thou camest to earth to become incarnate of the Virgin, and wast seen as a Babe, that Thou mightest make mortals heavenly. Wise men didst Thou bring from Persia to worship Thee, O Compassionate One, and with them we cry out in joy: O our blessed God, Who hast been born, glory be to Thee!

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

O Jesus. Who for our sake shone forth from the Father before the ages, for our sake Thou didst appear as a little Babe, wishing to renew all men, who had grown old through the transgression. Wherefore, in thanksgiving we all ever cry out to Thee, O our blessed God, Who hast been born, glory be to Thee!

Glory ..., in Tone VIII, the composition of Cyprian:

Rejoice in the Lord, O crown-bearer Stephen, thou emulator of the Master, for thou wast the first martyr of Christ our King, and hast abolished the falsehood of the iniquitous Jews, praying unto the Lord for us.

Now and ever ..., in the same tone, the composition of John the Monk:

How can I describe the great mystery? The Incorporeal One is incarnate, the Word taketh on flesh, the Invisible One is seen, the Intangible One is touched, and the Unoriginate One hath a beginning in time. The Son of God becometh the Son of man, even Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever!

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, eight troparia: four from Ode I of the canon of the feast, and four from Ode III of the canon of St. Stephen.

That which is in the image of God, but which became wholly corrupt through the transgression, having fallen from the blessings of divine life, doth the wise Creator make new again, for He hath been glorified. (Twice)

The Creator, when he beheld man perishing, whom He had fashioned with His own hands, bowed the heavens also, and came down. And from the divine and pure Virgin He taketh upon Himself all man's nature, becoming truly incarnate, for He hath been glorified!

Christ God, the Wisdom, Word, Power and radiant Splendor of the Father, having hidden His powers, both heavenly and earthly, and become incarnate, hath renewed us, for He hath been glorified!

Stephen, the warrior of Christ, having lawfully arrayed himself against the deicides, vested in the invincible power of God, denounced all the wicked opposition of the iniquitous.

Aflame with the zeal of the love of Christ and having stripped down for combat, filled with faith and the Spirit of God, O protomartyr, thou didst proclaim to all the divinely appointed preaching of the fishermen.

As a proclaimer of the hidden and truly divine life, heedless of this present life, through deed the protomartyr manifestly showed to all truth triumphant, having assented to death, O Master.

Theotokion: **F**or our sake the Master entered the cave of life through condescension; and Stephen, chief among the martyrs, departeth from human burdens, overcome by the love of the Master.

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.

Troparion of the Protomartyr, in Tone IV:

Thou didst fight the good fight, and didst denounce the impiety of the tyrants, O protomartyr and apostle of Christ; for, stoned at the hands of the iniquitous, thou hast received from on high a crown from the right hand of the Lord, and didst exclaim to God, crying aloud: O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!

Troparion of the Venerable One, in Tone VIII:

Instructor in Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and purity, beacon for the whole world, divinely inspired adornment of monastics, O Theodore most wise, by thy teachings hast thou illumined all. O harp of the Spirit, entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

Kontakion of the Protomartyr, in Tone III:

Yesterday the Master came to US in the flesh, and today his servant departeth from the flesh. Yesterday He that reigneth over the flesh was born, and today his servant is slain by stoning. For His sake the godly protomartyr Stephen doth meet his end.

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.

Prokimenon, in Tone VIII: Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Stichos: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaimeth the work of His hands.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES [6:8-7:60]

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said. We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders. and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Then said the high priest, Are these things so? And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed

him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. And God spake on this wise: That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Shechem, and laid in the sepulcher that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not. And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired,

there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord unto him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee back into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him a house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things? Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the

coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man, standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Alleluia, in Tone I: The heavens shall confess Thy wonders, O Lord, and Thy truth in the congregation of the saints.

Stichos: God is glorified in the council of the saints.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW [21 :33-42]

The Lord spake a Parable saying: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Communion Verse: Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.