

THE 29th DAY OF THE MONTH OF DECEMBER
AFTERFEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
COMMEMORATION OF THE FOURTEEN THOUSAND INFANTS SLAIN FOR
CHRIST'S SAKE IN BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA BY HEROD
& OF OUR VENERABLE FATHER MARCELLUS,
ABBOT OF THE MONASTERY OF THE SLEEPLESS ONES
AT VESPERS

On "Lord, I have cried ...", 6 stichera: 3 for the holy infants, in Tone IV:
Spec. Mel.: "As one, valiant among the martyrs ...":

The iniquitous one, * seeking the hidden Treasure, * slew the innocent babes on this day; * and Rachel was inconsolable, * beholding their unjust slaughter * and untimely death, * and wept for them, her womb wracked with pain. * But she is gladdened now, * seeing them in the bosom of Abraham.

The all-iniquitous king * searched for the timeless King * Who had come under time, * and, unable to find and slay Him, * he cut down a multitude of innocent babes. * Thereby he made them martyrs * and citizens of heaven on high, * though he knew it not; * and they reprove his madness forever.

When Thou wast born of the Virgin, * O pre-eternal Lord, * and becamest a babe in Thy goodness, * a choir of babes were admitted * by virtue of the blood of their martyrdom, * their calm souls illumined, O Thou Who art most just; * and Thou hast made them to dwell in the mansions of everlasting life, * where they denounce the malice of Herod * and His most cruel insanity.

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

A model of abstinence * hast thou shown thyself to be for monastics, * O all-wise and God-bearing Marcellus, * a pillar of fire * extending spiritually from earth to the heavens * through abstinence, O all-wise one, * a converser of purity, * a truly genuine preserver of silence, * an animate tower of courage, * and a most excellent rule of virtue.

The uprisings of the passions * didst thou cause to wither away, O venerable one, * through mighty vigils and instruction in the Scriptures, * by earnest supplications * and the outpouring of tears. * Wherefore, thou hast truly shown thyself to be * a habitation worthy of the Master, * and dost grant healings unto those who approach thee with faith, * having been vouchsafed the delight of immortality.

Delighting most directly * in the beauty of thy Master, * without the mediation of the mirror of the flesh * and present manifestation, * O most blessed one, * pray thou for those who in purity praise * thy most sacred memory * and honor it with psalms and hymns, * that we may obtain mercy on the Day of Judgment.

Glory ..., of the innocents, the composition of Andrew of Crete, in Tone VIII:

The all-iniquitous Herod, seeing the star which is the brightest of all creation, was troubled, and seized the suckling infants from their mothers' arms; but Elizabeth, taking up John, entreated the stone, saying: "Receive thou a mother and her child!" O Lord, Thou treasure which the manger held, Whom the star announced and to Whom the magi paid homage, glory be to Thee!

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

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, that hath He taken upon Himself, without undergoing either confusion or division.

At the Aposticha, stichera of the feast, in Tone VI:

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

An awesome mystery do I behold! For God Who holdeth all creation in the palm of His hand is surrounded in the flesh in a manger of dumb beasts, and He is wrapped in rags Who clotheth the sea in darkness.

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

Our incorporeal God becometh incarnate! He Who is without beginning taketh on a beginning! He Who is full now emptieth Himself through the Virgin in a little cave! And He Who nurtureth every creature is nurtured on milk as a babe.

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

Shepherds dance at Thy nativity and offer up glory with the angels; the star offereth a gift, and magi pay homage; and men, saved, magnify the Theotokos.

Glory ..., of the innocents, the composition of Andrew of Crete, in Tone VIII:

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, the dominion of the Jews was abolished. Let the infants slaughtered for Christ leap up, and let Judea lament; for a voice was heard in Rama: Rachel, weeping, bewaileth her children, as it is written, for the all-iniquitous Herod in slaying the babes fulfilled the Scriptures, filling Judea with innocent blood and staining the earth red with their blood, but the Church of the nations is mystically purified thereby and is arrayed in beauty. The Truth is come! God Who hath been born of the Virgin hath appeared to those who sit in shadow, that He may save us all.

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

O Lord, having arrived in Bethlehem, 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!

Troparion of the innocents, in Tone I:

Through the pangs of Thy saints, wherewith they suffered for Thee, O Lord, be thou entreated; and heal all our pains, we pray Thee, O Thou Who lovest mankind.

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

In thee, O father, that which was created in the image of God hath been manifestly saved; for, taking up thy cross, thou didst follow after Christ, and, praying, thou didst teach all to disdain the flesh as transitory, but to care for the soul as a thing immortal. Wherefore, thy spirit rejoiceth with the angels, O venerable Marcellus.

Now & ever ..., 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

On "God is the Lord ...", the troparion of the feast, once;

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.

That of the innocents, in Tone I:

Through the pangs of Thy saints, wherewith they suffered for Thee, O Lord, be thou entreated; and heal all our pains, we pray Thee, O Thou Who lovest mankind.

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

In thee, O father, that which was created in the image of God hath been manifestly saved; for, taking up thy cross, thou didst follow after Christ, and, praying, thou didst teach all to disdain the flesh as transitory, but to care for the soul as a thing immortal. Wherefore, thy spirit rejoiceth with the angels, O venerable Marcellus.

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

After the first chanting of the Psalter, this Sedalion, in tone V:

Spec. Mel.: "The Word Who is equally unoriginate ...":

The star shining with brilliance, the magi arrived from Persia at the cave of Bethlehem, thankfully offering fitting gifts to the newborn King and the Virgin Mother, being directed to worship Him from among the nations.

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

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

Spec. Mel.: "Thou hast risen from the dead ...":

As the music of the shepherds' pipes fall silent, the angelic choir exclaimeth, saying: "Chant ye divine praise, O ye who watch over sheep! Cry ye aloud, singing, for Christ the Lord hath been born, Whose good pleasure it is, as God, to save the human race!"

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

All-glorious is this mystery, O ye faithful: God is born of the Virgin, as is known. The ranks of angels, marveling at His condescension, cry aloud, chanting, for Christ the Lord is born, Whose good pleasure it is, as God, to save the human race!

Canon of the feast, with 6 troparia; and two canons of the saints, with a total of 8 troparia.

ODE I

Canon of the feast, 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 highest 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 of the Holy Innocents, in Tone IV:

Irmos: Dividing the Red Sea, God engulfed Pharaoh therein, leading Moses across to the wilderness with dryshod feet, and raining manna down as food for the people of Israel, in that He is mighty.

The star shone in Bethlehem and abolished the dark curse of Eden; and a day of salvation is given to the progenitors of our race, for from the Virgin's cloud Jesus shineth forth, Who is the enlightenment of those in darkness.

The contest openeth today for the babes who are faithful to Christ and God, and they denounce the princes and authorities of the enemy and with sense do manfully reprove the infantile rage of Herod.

Theotokion: O pure one, thou art ever truly a divine fortress and impregnable rampart, a noetic bridge and insuperable tower, a foundation and protection, for whose sake we are all saved from misfortunes.

Canon of the Venerable One, in Tone VI:

Irmos: When Israel traversed the deep on foot as though it were dry land, seeing the tyrant Pharaoh drowned, he cried aloud: Let us chant unto God a hymn of victory!

Creation is restored and the nature of mortals is made new again through the flesh of Christ, the Creator of all, Who, in manner past understanding, is born of a pure and all-holy Mother.

Receiving understanding from the God of truth, and seeking Him unceasingly throughout thy pure life, O Marcellus, thou didst please Him with divine virtues.

Theotokion: The land of our forefather's curse, which is in Eden, received deliverance when the Deliverer was born therein through thee, O pure one, and renewed and sanctified it.

ODE III

Canon of the Feast

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!

O Lord Christ, Who, mingling with clay, didst make Thyself conformable thereto, imparting Thy divine essence by participating in fallen 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.

Canon of the Innocents

Irmos: O Lord Who hast established the thunder and formed the wind, make me steadfast, that I may truly hymn Thee and do Thy will, for there is none as holy as Thee, O our God.

Our God and Creator, issuing forth through the Virgin's portal, hath ineffably fashioned an abode of flesh for Himself. He hath become a babe and is laid in a manger.

The infant athletes born at the time of Christ's incarnation, have blinded the insane fury of Herod and have shown themselves to be most splendid eyes of the Church.

Theotokion: From thee, O Virgin who knewest not wedlock, did the Lord, born on earth without father and begotten without mother before time began, appear and form Himself supernaturally; and He granteth the restoration of deification to those born of Adam.

Canon of the Venerable One

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

Ye clouds, drop forth the sweetness of gladness upon the earth! For Christ, born in the flesh in a cave past all understanding, hath shone forth from a cloud of light.

Armed with steadfastness of spirit against the noetic foe, O God-bearer, thou didst mightily cut down the hordes thereof and hast been crowned with a wreath of victory.

Theotokion: **T**he Word of God, ineffably incarnate of thine all-pure and precious blood, O pure one, hath, as God, shown thee to be the Mistress of all creatures.

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 of the innocents, in the same tone:

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

The army of infants is offered up as pleasing immolations, sacrificed for faith to Christ Who, as Creator and King, is born today of the Virgin.

Glory ..., that of the venerable one, in Tone IV:

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

Having cleansed thy soul first with the burning embers of purity, thou didst curb thy body for strength incorruptible, O most lauded Marcellus; wherefore, thou hast been shown to be a divine habitation, dispelling infirmities and ever enlightening with faith those who have recourse to thee and praise thee.

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

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

The cruel King Herod marveled when He learned of the young Messiah, and he sought furiously for the King Who was born on earth as for a foe. Consumed with fear and great terror, he sent an army to slaughter with fury the babes born in Bethlehem, attempting to slay thereby the Creator Who, in His compassion, had abased Himself: He had issued forth from the Virgin's womb, seeking to save our race.

ODE IV

Canon of the Feast

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 of the Innocents

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

The Virgin, the means of the Lord's nativity, in manner past understanding hath reconciled heaven and its inhabitants with those of earth; and she hath broken down the middle wall of enmity.

The multitude of infants who suffered martyrdom for the God of all receive the reward of their suffering from Him. For their sake Herod hath been grievously put to shame.

Theotokion: O most immaculate one, having conceived the divine Word in thy womb at the angers awesome word, thou gavest birth to Him in the flesh in manner past recounting. Wherefore, we glorify thee as the Theotokos.

Canon of the Venerable One

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

Seeing Thy descent into the cave, O Lord Christ, the noetic ranks were stricken with awe and hymned Thine inconceivable mercy.

Thy pangs and sweat are mingled with the streams of the infants' blood, O venerable Marcellus, and are offered as precious gifts to Him Who hath been born in the flesh.

Theotokion: The gentiles bearing gifts, seeing in thee one comely with lustrous beauty, shining with the splendor of thy Son, O pure one, hymned this new and all-glorious sight.

ODE V

Canon of the Feast

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 of the Innocents

Irmos: Shine forth upon me the light of Thy commandments, O Lord, for in Thee doth my spirit rise early to hymn Thee; for Thou art our God, and to Thee do we flee, O King of peace.

The material Sun is covered with clouds, and the noetic and all-immaterial One is clad in the flesh in His infinite compassion; and today He is wrapped in swaddling-clothes in a cave for our sake.

Herod is stained with the blood of foul murder; for, seeking to slay God, the Master and King of all, he cruelly rageth in fury against the infants.

Theotokion: With the splendor of thy supplication, O pure Theotokos, enlighten the blindness of my heart, for thou alone hast shone forth the Lord, the Lamp and Sun of glory.

Canon of the Venerable One

Irmos: With Thy divine light, O Good One, illumine the souls of those who with love rise at dawn unto Thee, I pray, that they may come to know Thee, O Word of God, as the true God Who calleth them forth from the darkness of sin.

The cup of Thy compassion overflowed upon all Thy creations, O Christ, and filled all with mercy in abundance when Thou didst appear and wast born in the flesh.

Having rid thy soul of material darkness and all earthly and corrupt beauty with the pangs of thine asceticism, O venerable Marcellus, thou wast shown forth in the world as a peer of the angels.

Theotokion: He Who was born of thee in the flesh in the cave, O pure one, hath poured forth noetic streams of immortality and watered human nature with incorruption, enriching it, in that He is compassionate.

ODE VI

Canon of the Feast

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 of the Innocents

Irmos: The tempest of my manifold offenses doth engulf me, and my soul doth weaken. But, descending, lead up my life, O Lord, in that Thou art merciful.

Today is the divine mystery of the incarnation of the Word accomplished, O Theotokos. For through thee hath the pre-eternal God appeared in the flesh, to deify that which He hath taken upon Him.

Rachel, weeping over her children, foretold of old the infants who received untimely slaughter for Christ. Wherefore, she turned away and would not be comforted.

Theotokion: Thy divine birth giving, O most holy one, cut down the curse which blossomed forth in paradise, and, throwing open the way to the tree of life for men, it hath poured forth blessing.

Canon of the Venerable One

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

The earth in itself hath exuded a most fragrant myrrh: Him Who, past understanding, was poured forth as myrrh, poured forth in the flesh from the Virgin, and hath filled men with divine fragrance.

Wisely passing over what is transitory and unstable in life, O Marcellus, thou didst send up a spiritual desire for things which abide eternally, which thou hast obtained by the pangs of asceticism.

Theotokion: God, the timeless Word, is born in the flesh of thee, O all-pure virgin, that He may impart unto men everlasting life, an eternal inheritance and glory incorruptible.

Kontakion of the innocents, in Tone IV:

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

The star sent the magi to Him Who was born, and Herod cruelly sent an unjust army, seeking to slay Him Who lay as a babe in the manger.

Ikos: As those in heaven and those below rejoice now together in the appearance of the King of all, only Herod himself and the Jews, the slayers of the prophets, are grieved; for it is fitting that they alone lament, since they shall henceforth reign no longer. But the kingdom of the Lord shall have dominion, putting down the audacity of the enemy and assembling multitudes of the faithful, together with the honored infants, to gaze upon Him Who lieth as a babe in the manger.

ODE VII

Canon of the Feast

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 of the Innocents

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

Bethlehem rejoiceth with us today; for she receiveth the Infinite One in her cave, crying: Blessed art Thou, the only God of our fathers! O Word of God, the innocent and undefiled victims who were slaughtered for Thee beforehand cry out: Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers!

Theotokion: Rejoice, tranquil haven of repentance, wherein finding refuge we say: O Theotokos, blessed art thou, who alone gavest birth to the God of our fathers!

Canon of the Venerable One

Irmos: The Angel caused the furnace to pour forth dew upon the venerable youths, but the command of God which consumed the Chaldeans compelled the tyrant to cry out: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

He Who was born in the cave hath by His knowledge made steadfast all creation, which had been whirled about by ungodliness, but now crieth unceasingly to Him: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

With the fire of asceticism thou didst consume the pleasures of the flesh, O Marcellus; and with the dew of dispassion thou didst water thy soul, crying out to Christ with splendor: Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers!

ODE VIII

Canon of the Feast

Irmos: 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!

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 of the Innocents

Irmos: O Master, Thou hast arranged all things by Thy wisdom and hast established the earth again, like a balance, upon the deep, planting its foundation in the measureless waters. Wherefore, we all cry out, chanting: Bless the Lord unceasingly, ye works of the Lord!

The angels glorify the power of Him Who was born; the shepherds marvel, the magi offer homage, and the heavens declare the Creator with a star. And with them we all cry out, chanting: Bless the Lord, ye works of the Lord!

When Thou wast born, O Christ, a multitude of innocents joined battle today with their blood, arming themselves mightily against Herod. Wherefore, we all cry out, chanting: Bless the Lord, ye works of the Lord!

Theotokion: The prophets of God proclaimed thee, O pure one, to be the Virgin, the temple, the portal and cloud, the bush unburnt, the jar of manna, the rod which sprouted forth, the ark and lampstand, the tablets of the law, the holy mountain, from whence the Stone was quarried.

Canon of the Venerable One

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

Creation arrayed itself in radiant vesture and cast off all its former grief when the Renewer and Master was born on earth. Him do we exalt supremely forever!

Armed with the virtues, O venerable Marcellus, thou didst do battle with hordes of the demons and, as victor over them, didst win the trophies of victory, receiving the grace of miracles from God.

Theotokion: He Who was born of thee in a cave, O most immaculate Theotokos, hath prepared everlasting mansions for those who sincerely hymn thee and exalt supremely thine ineffable birthgiving.

ODE IX

Canon of the Feast

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.

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.

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.

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.

Canon of the Infants

Irmos: For the Mighty One hath done great things to me, and holy is His name; and His mercy is upon them that fear Him unto generation and generation.

He Who is in the bosom of the Father is wholly within thee, and the Fashioner of heaven is Himself fashioned and abaseth Himself for my sake; and, wrapped in swaddling bands, He looseth the bonds of my transgressions.

In Rama the bitter lamentation of Rachel is heard, her weeping, contrition and cries of Alas! For Herod, the vile murderous foe, hath assailed the children of Bethlehem.

Theotokion: By thy birthgiving have mortals been deified, O Virgin; for thou gavest birth to God, the Nurturer of all, Who is equally glorified with the Father, and dost feed Him with milk. O what a strange wonder!

Canon of the Venerable One

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

The mercy of Thy love for the nations which passeth understanding is now shown forth, O Christ; for Thou didst impoverish Thyself by taking on flesh, O Master, that Thou mayest cause us to share in higher riches, in that Thou art good and of great mercy, O Lord.

Taking the cross of Christ upon thy shoulder, O blessed father Marcellus, and emulating His sufferings, thou didst crucify thyself wholly to the world; for thou becamest a participant in the resurrection and higher glory, wherein be thou mindful of us.

Theotokion: God Who was born in the flesh through thee, O most pure one, hath made us children of God and imparted pristine dignity to those who accept Him, who earnestly glorify thee, the Mother of God, and magnify thee.

Exapostilarion of the infants:

Spec. Mel.: "The Cross is the preserver ...":

Waging war against God, the accursed Herod, sending forth his soldiers, reaped the yet un-ripened green meadow of the infants; but he was unable to slay the newborn Lord and is filled with all manner of shame.

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

On the Praises, 4 stichera of the innocents, composition of Cyprian, in Tone I:

The first sacrifice to Thine all-pure nativity was that of the infants, O Christ God; for Herod, desiring to lay hold of Thee Whom none can hold, did not recognize Thee, bringing before Thee instead a choir of martyrs. Wherefore, we entreat Thee Who hast become man, that Thou save our souls. (Twice)

In Tone II: Your slaughter hath come to the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, O honored martyrs; for ye shed your blood for His sake, and rest in the bosom of Abraham, and have cast aside the vile malice of Herod forever, through the power of the newborn Christ.

In Tone III: Abominable is Herod's slaughter of the infants because of his vile murder, and pure is the sacrifice of the children, for they were of the same age as Christ, our salvation, and were sacrificed as a new immolation sent up in advance. Weep not for thy children, O Rachel, being mindful of the bosom of Abraham, where is the abode of all who rejoice.

Glory ..., of the venerable one, in Tone V:

O venerable father, thou gavest neither sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids until thou didst free soul and body from the passions and prepare thyself as a habitation for the Spirit; for Christ, coming with the Father, hath made His abode within thee, and thou art a favorite of the consubstantial Trinity. O Marcellus our father, great preacher, pray thou that we be saved.

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

All creation, beholding Thee, the Creator and Fashioner of all, born in the flesh in Bethlehem, is restored and renewed. The light of the sun hath spread abroad, and the earth rejoiceth; the magi from Persia offer gifts to the King of all; the shepherds, marveling, are amazed and with her who gave birth to God in the flesh bow down before Him. O the wonder! The Nurturer is nourished by a most pure Mother for the salvation and restoration of the world.

At the Aposticha, these stichera of the feast, in Tone VI:

Spec. Mel.: "Ye hosts of angels ...":

The mountains and hills, * the valleys and fields, hymned Christ Who was born of the Virgin; * and from heaven the star showed to the magi * Him Who lieth in the cave as a babe, * clad in the body of a servant. * To Him let us cry: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! * O our God, glory be to Thee!

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

"What is this great and incomprehensible poverty * wherewith Adam hath been enriched with divine gifts?" * cried the Virgin, * holding in her arms Emmanuel, * our God and Creator, * Who received flesh from her. * To Him let us cry: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! * O our God, glory be to Thee!

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

O Virgin, thou didst shine forth Christ, * the Sun, the noetic dawn, * holding Him in thine embrace, * by Whom all rational nature is enlightened * with the effulgence of perfect knowledge, * and is vouchsafed incorruption, * crying out with faith: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! * O our God, glory be to Thee!

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

Now hath appeared on earth a Babe * Who was begotten of the Father before time began. * Rejoice, all creation! * Let the heavens be glad, * beholding those who before were rejected * now reconciled with God once more, * who cry out to Him: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! * O our God, glory be to Thee!

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

With mouths of eternal flame * the heavenly hosts above hymn the One Who was born in a cave * in His ineffable mercy. * May we also be vouchsafed * to chant to Him with our tongues of clay, * unceasingly crying unto Him: * Blessed art Thou Who hast been born! * O our God, glory be to Thee!

AT LITURGY

On the Beatitudes, 8 troparia: 4 from Ode VII of the canon of the feast, and 4 from Ode VI of the canon of the innocents.

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! (**Twice**)

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!"

Today is the divine mystery of the incarnation of the Word accomplished, O Theotokos. For through thee hath the pre-eternal God appeared in the flesh, to deify that which He hath taken upon Him. (**Twice**)

Rachel, weeping over her children, foretold of old the infants who received untimely slaughter for Christ. Wherefore, she turned away and would not be comforted.

Theotokion: Thy divine birth giving, O most holy one, cut down the curse which blossomed forth in paradise, and, throwing open the way to the tree of life for men, it hath poured forth blessing.

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 innocents, in Tone I:

Through the pangs of Thy saints, wherewith they suffered for Thee, O Lord, be thou entreated; and heal all our pains, we pray Thee, O Thou Who lovest mankind.

Troparion of the venerable one, in Tone VIII:

In thee, O father, that which was created in the image of God hath been manifestly saved; for, taking up thy cross, thou didst follow after Christ, and, praying, thou didst teach all to disdain the flesh as transitory, but to care for the soul as a thing immortal. Wherefore, thy spirit rejoiceth with the angels, O venerable Marcellus.

Kontakion of the innocents, in Tone IV:

The star sent the magi to Him Who was born, and Herod cruelly sent an unjust army, seeking to slay Him Who lay as a babe in the manger.

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 VI: Praise the Lord, O ye servants, praise ye the name of the Lord.

Stichos: Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in a house and be a mother rejoicing over children.

EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS, § 180 [II COR. 5: 15-21]

Brethren: Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Alleluia, in Tone V: They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them.

Stichos: Yea, make known among the nations before our eyes the vengeance for Thy servants' blood which hath been shed.

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW, § 4 [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 Hymn: Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; praise is meet for the upright.